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## MEMORIES OF CHECHENS AS AN IMPORTANT SOURCE OF HISTORICAL INFORMATION ABOUT DEPORTATION

Tsutsulaeva Sapiyat Saypuddinovna (a)\*

\*Corresponding author

(a) Chechen State University, 32, Sheripova str., Grozny, 364021, Russia, sapiyat\_univ@mail.ru

### *Abstract*

The topic of deportation on ethnic grounds during the years of World War II is considered in the manuscript. The author of the article made an attempt, based on field materials (and published) collected on the territory of the Chechen Republic, to recreate the history of deportation of peoples to the USSR during the war years according to key events: “Preparations and Eviction”, “Road”, “Special Settlement”. According to the Basic Law of the State, all citizens of the Soviet Union were endowed with equal political rights, the most important personal and political freedoms were declared: conscience, speech, press, meetings and rallies, marches and demonstrations, unions and public organizations, inviolability of person and home. Meanwhile, according to published memoirs of direct witnesses of forced evictions of a number of peoples during the Great Patriotic War, all these rights were only declared, since a special regime of residence was established, an extensive network of special commandant was deployed, which had numerous informants who controlled not only compliance with the special settlement regime by Chechens, but also supervision of mindsets. The memories of the deportees about the period of their stay in the special settlement are saturated with tears and grief and are very similar. Under the conditions of a totalitarian political regime, the deported peoples practically did not have the opportunity to fight and defend their rights; this could only aggravate the difficult situation, but the thought of the injustice of the deed towards whole nations did not leave them.

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**Keywords:** Great Patriotic War, deportation, Chechens, decree, memories, source.



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## **1. Introduction**

Speaking about the problems of studying the history of repressed peoples, it should be noted that the topic of mass forced deportation of peoples, organized and carried out during the years of World War II by the totalitarian Stalinist regime in the USSR, is more important than ever to study today, when reanimation is taking place in new geopolitical, cultural and historical conditions public and scientific interest in national history.

Despite the fact that many scientific works have been written about mass ethnic deportations in the territory of the former USSR, it cannot be argued that science has covered the whole range of problems associated with this process, that all historical evidence of that time has been studied and the dimensions and consequences of the tragedy of repressed ethnic groups have been fully recognized (Germans, Chechens, Ingush, Kalmyks, Karachais, Balkars, etc.). The topic of deported peoples continues to remain highly politicized today and is often used in the political space as an applied tool by various political forces, which is further evidence of the need for a deeper study of the history of mass ethnic repressions and the extent of crimes of the totalitarian regime in the USSR.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The repressive act against the Chechen people was conceived and carried out during the Great Patriotic War by the state of the USSR. On February 23, 1944, the Chechen people were completely deported to Central Asia and Kazakhstan, and the republic – the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic – was abolished. The territory of the republic was divided and included in the neighboring republics, the consequence of which to this day is an unresolved territorial issue – the lands of the Prigorodny district of Ingushetia, which went to North Ossetia. In this regard, as a documentary source of sources, researchers mainly have decrees of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, decisions of the State Defence Committee, resolutions of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, a number of orders and instructions of the people's commissariats, primarily the NKVD of the USSR, i.e. normative documents and various kinds of official notes, reports, materials from various meetings, etc. The content of these documents is limited by their functional task, on the one hand, and on the other, like any other documents of this kind, they are formal.

## **3. Research Questions**

Memoirs are a specific genre of literature, documentary, which is based on the testimony of eyewitnesses of the described events. Memories help restore many facts that are poorly reflected in other sources. Of interest are not only the facts cited by the authors, their description of specific situations, but also personal assessments of events, the portraits of contemporaries painted by them, the pulse of life of a bygone era is conveyed. These assessments, of course, bear a subjective imprint, which is characteristic of all memoir literature. However, the publication of materials of memoirs is important, because they give rise to thoughts, they call for a creative dialogue. After all, memories are not only an impassive fixation of the events of the past, but also confession, and excuses, and accusations, and meditations of the individual (Danilevsky, Kabanov, Medushevskaya, & Rumyantsev, 1998).

Personal memories as a valuable source help to recreate the true concrete picture of the morning of February 23, 1944 and the following days. In addition, they allow tracing the mechanism of this cynical operation. It is clear that the past years have erased some details: names and family names in the memory of Chechens, but the most important moments of eviction of an innocently injured person will never be forgotten!

When writing this article, the works of Russian scientists and researchers Milova (1992), Bugai (1990, 1992, 1995), Aliev (1994), Lidzhiyeva, (2014), Tsutsulaeva (2011, 2019) and others were used, which collected documents and materials on the history of the deportation of peoples during the Great Patriotic War.

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

In the framework of this article, the author set a goal—to show the reflection of ethnic deportation in the memory of Chechens on the basis of published materials, as well as those obtained from the surveys of people who were direct witnesses of forced evictions and special settlement regimes.

#### **5. Research Methods**

The methodological basis was the principles of objectivity, scientific character and historicism, implying the study of facts and phenomena in all their diversity, in the concrete historical conditions of their occurrence and development and allowing both the positive and negative sides of the problem under study to be highlighted. The work is based on an integrated research approach; methods of objective historical comparison and comparative analysis are used.

#### **6. Findings**

Deportation (Latin *deportation* 'exile') of an entire nation is a special type of state crime. Therefore, the documentary base of sources, which consisted mainly of documents of state institutions, fully carries the version of the criminal himself on deportation. Therefore, this base can be considered by us as evidence of the criminal himself.

Memories of special settlers are one of the most important sources in the history of the deportation of people. A people is a form of the historical community of people, which is a complex self-organizing social system that lives according to its objective laws. Therefore, when restoring all the manifestations of the life of a whole nation, as well as its individual words, individuals, memories acquire special value.

The work on collecting memories deported during the Great Patriotic War was first organized at Kalmyk State University and was carried out by its staff and students of the History Department on a compiled list of issues. In particular, the author of this work, being a 3rd year student of the Faculty of History, has collected 27 memories. Each conversation was recorded. Subsequently, this work was continued at Chechen State University. Over the years, the author has collected a considerable number of memories of deported Chechens.

The materials collected are of particular value. They are invaluable because they allow penetrating into the inner world of a person, his thoughts, feelings and moods, and through them to understand the

attitude of the slandered people, plunged into the tragedy of eviction, or rather cynical and cruel dispersal in the regions of the Central Asian republics.

The circle of researchers in the history of the forced deportation of Chechens is expanding. A considerable number of memories have been put into circulation. However, in our opinion, only their first, superficial layer is raised that meets the needs and problems of the initial period of studying the problem. That is why when using memories, information is more often requested about what losses were suffered by the family of the recaller or other families with whose life they came into contact, how exactly the process of eviction from their native places was carried out, what specific events occurred on the way, at places of reception, resettlement, etc. Often, recallers themselves intuitively restrict their memories. At the same time, evidence of how relationships between people, relatives and non-relatives, their behavior, psychology, the cultural side of life, what people and values became its support, etc., turn out to be unclaimed.

Since the late 1990s, the first memories of the eviction of Chechens and the period of life in the republics of Central Asia and Kazakhstan appeared on the pages of the press. Finally, Chechen memoirs were published in the book *White Paper: From the History of the Eviction of Chechens and Ingush. 1944–1957*". This book contains 81 memories of the deportation of Chechens. Memories vary in volume and content. But behind each of them, even the smallest plot, is the fate of an individual, their relatives, family. Memoirs dispassionately testify that the beginning of life in a special settlement brought the expected results. Hunger, cold, life in unsanitary conditions in completely unsuitable rooms turned into mass death. In a particularly difficult situation were families in which there was not a single able-bodied person. These are mainly families of Red Army soldiers who were at the front or who died before the Chechens were evicted. Some families died out completely. And from the torment they suffered, the completely meaningless and inexplicable losses that fell on their lot, there was a nationwide tragedy, the real scale of which, unfortunately, has not yet been comprehensively understood and objectively estimated by us.

Here are just some excerpts from the recollections of the deported Chechens: "I had eight children ... They brought us to Atbasar station in Akmola region. We dug a dugout, put some hay in it, and settled there. Cold and hunger took away our strength. The husband did not live even two weeks, he died ... While I was committing the husband's body to the earth, the youngest child died ... One by one, five children died ... My parents, brothers and sisters died. There was no one left!". "We were landed in the Kustanai region, our life was unenviable. On the first night, the younger sister Zanet died, a week later Manet. Sister Siyat and brother Aldam did not last a month. They all starved to death. My sister Amilat and I remained...". "... But the fate of many was harder than mine. For example, out of the eighteen family members of my uncle (mother's brother), only one girl remained...". "They brought us to Atbasar station in Akmola region... Of the families of his father and his five brothers, thirty-three people died. Many relatives died from the side of the mother. The families of her three brothers had twenty-seven people, of whom only one boy survived. The family of our neighbor Murtazaliev Mezhid consisted of eleven people, of whom one daughter Kemist survived. All of the families of the cousins of his father died: Doda, Abdurakhman and Abdul-Halim Magomadov.

Many relatives of my wife Zaidat also died, including her father Shemal, Shosh's mother, the Daman brothers, Denilbek...". This list goes on for a very long time. Each Chechen family lost relatives during the years of deportation, and some families died out completely.

From the moment the Chechens resettled in places of special settlement and until the death of I. Stalin, the regime of residence of special settlers was tightened year after year, as well as criminal prosecution, administrative punishment and moral repression. "We were deprived of the right to go to the station, go out of the village or city, go from one settlement to another to friends or relatives. For violation of these installations imposed a fine or tried for 5 days in prison. There was nothing to pay the fine, because I had to serve a term in custody...". "... I ended up in Kostanay. I do not presume to tell how much grief and humiliation I had to endure, a boy deprived of relatives and friends. Only in 1947, through people unfamiliar to me, did I find out that my parents were in Semipalatinsk, only my sister was left alive. I decided to meet her by any means. But the commandant did not give permission. I made three attempts to secretly leave Kostanay. But every time I was arrested...". "... My cousins Tahir, Ziyavdi and Alaudi Magomadov lived in a neighboring village eight kilometers from us. But we were registered with the commandant's office and didn't have the opportunity to go outside the village. For violation of this law you were sent to prison. Therefore, for several years we could not see each other...". "... It was enough that you are a Chechen so that everyone can humiliate, beat, or even kill you. Young people began to resist. Then the situation was difused ... But how many innocent young people had been sentenced to 20–25 years before and sent to Siberia?!". It was as if someone wanted to, if they did not physically annihilate the whole people, then by any means suppress the will of the Chechens who remained alive, instill in them a pathological fear of the authorities, the "system", force them to reconcile themselves with their own inferiority, delete them from memory and betray oblivion of the true history of the people.

The attitude of the local population towards Chechen special settlers from the very beginning was ambiguous. Some were wary, others were clearly unfriendly, others were simply hostile. "... They brought us to Pavlodar. Local residents were very afraid of us, because they had been warned in advance that cannibals were coming to them. They were very cruel to us...". "When we arrived at the place, we were assigned to our homes. I got one corner. How awry the Kazakhs looked at us...". "... The locals looked at us in disbelief. Beria's servants conducted a corresponding "propaganda" among them, claiming that all Chechens are traitors...". It could not be otherwise: the official authorities, primarily the NKVD services, hiding behind the notorious Decree of March 7, 1944, intensified the slander that the Chechen people were exiled for treason and cooperation with the Nazis. Here it is appropriate to cite the memoirs of the former secretary of the Chechen-Ingush regional party committee Vasily Ivanovich Filkin:

"A certain V. Belovezhsky in his article "All the Truth" in the Literary Newspaper writes: "One can only guess that one of the reasons for the eviction is the Chechen uprising in the rear of our troops." There is nothing to guess. There was no uprising in Chechen-Ingushetia. The people of Chechen-Ingushetia were not a traitor to the Motherland, they were not for sale to the fascists, they did not present Hitler the white horse. They made a worthy contribution to the defeat of the Nazi invaders. In the very first days and weeks of the war, more than 12,000 communists and Komsomol members of Chechen and Ingush ethnic groups entered the army. More than half of them fell in battle.

And yet was there banditry? Yes. According to the archival data of the NKVD, there were 51 bandit groups, which included 335 participants. According to the same data, they had 1,436 rifles, 48 machine guns, 150 automatic rifles, 122 revolvers.

Why do I emphasize “according to the NKVD”? The fact is that at that time their organs in the republic were headed by S. Albogachiev... (Question: is this that Albogachiev who processed the case of Academician Vavilov?)

It was him. Prior to that, he worked in the central apparatus of the NKVD of the USSR. He was keen on creating false situations. I myself had to go to the mountains more than once to check his data, including on the uprisings. They, as a rule, were not confirmed. They wanted to remove Albogachiev, but Beria intervened.

Of course, there were gangs. And there were traitors, in central Russia, Ukraine, the Baltic states and in Dagestan. The regional committee of the party raised the population, party and Soviet activists to fight against banditry, and these, of course, were also Chechens and Ingush”.

Indeed, Vasily Ivanovich Filkin was one of those leaders of the republic who resolutely and uncompromisingly fought against such provocations and fabrications of the NKVD. In addition, he helped many Chechens who worked in various leadership positions before being deported and then subjected to unreasonable repression, helped to recover in the party and get a job. This beautiful person is not with us today, but the memory of him is alive in the hearts of those who knew him, who worked with him and communicated. But this memory must be passed on to the younger generation.

## 7. Conclusion

I would like to believe that the collection and publication of the memoirs of the victims of repression will be continued, since not only one, but even several books cannot exhaust this topic. The author soon plans to publish the memoirs of deported Chechens. And each new work will serve the interests of ascertaining the true extent and depth of the tragedy experienced by our people, and the reconstruction of a more complete historical truth about the deportation of the Chechen people. In this regard, the collection of memoirs of those who were directly subjected to deportation made up for the part that was not and could not be documented and recorded. Undoubtedly, the reconstruction of the real picture of the life of a people forcibly resettled in the eastern regions of the country will make it possible to take a fresh look at its past and correct the false ideas about it that have entrenched in totalitarianism, significantly reduce the number of “white spots” in history, reduce the degree of interethnic tension, adequately to forecast and implement a set of political and social measures aimed at consolidating our society.

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