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**DEPORTATION OF THE SPECIAL SETTLERS OF THE NORTH**  
**CAUCASUS DURING WORLD WAR**

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**Abstract**

The article describes the interest of fascist Germany in the North Caucasus, about the policy of the German command in relation to the North Caucasian peoples aimed at attracting them to their side. The authors show how these attempts failed, debunk the myth of betrayal, mass collaboration and cooperation with the fascists of the peoples of the Caucasus, and that anti-Soviet sentiments were widespread. Those Chechens and Ingush were deported, into whose territory the German invaders could not even reach, which proves the inconsistency of the myth of collaboration. The article analyzes the factors and reasons for the implementation of the deportation policy during the ongoing war with the involvement of a significant number of military, transport and material resources. The living conditions and life of the special settlers from the North Caucasus in the places of settlement in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are considered. Lack of food, clothing, poor or complete lack of medical care became the main factors in the high mortality rate of children, the elderly and women from among the special settlers for the first time in the settlement. For the deported North Caucasian peoples, labor was a factor of survival and adaptation in places of special settlements. Despite all the hardships and difficulties of the first years of deportation, the Karachais, Chechens, Ingush and Balkars with their labor debunked the myth of the traitorous peoples and made their contribution to the national economy.

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*Keywords:* Deportation policy, social welfare, special settlers, housing, labor, adaptation



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## **1. Introduction**

In the Soviet Union during the Second World War, the state stepped up repressive measures and pursued a deportation policy. So far, the true goals of this policy have not been identified. The researchers note that the deportation policy was carried out as a preventive measure, as a punishment for collaboration and cooperation with the Germans, to solve demographic problems, but all these reasons, when seriously analyzed, turn out to be untenable. 16 peoples were subjected to deportation, and 10 peoples were subjected to total deportation, of which 7 (Russian Germans, Karachais, Kalmyks, Chechens, Ingush, Balkars, Crimean Tatars) lost their statehood. Representatives of these peoples from the very first days of the war fought on the fronts of the Great Patriotic War, and those who remained in the rear worked to meet the needs of the front in food, clothing, and weapons. During the deportation, significant damage was done to the economy of the places of residence of the deported peoples, since in most cases, their places of traditional residence were abandoned for many years. The deportation also led to serious demographic losses due to the death of almost a third of the deported (mainly children and elderly people). The deportation led to serious problems in the field of interethnic relations, and to date they have not been fully overcome. The peoples who underwent forced displacement during the war years, found themselves in special settlements, deprived of a number of civil rights, worked and contributed to the national economy and brought the victory over Nazi Germany closer.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The deportation policy of the USSR during the Great Patriotic War led to significant economic and demographic losses, became one of the reasons for the deterioration of national policy, both in the Soviet period and in the 1990s, and its consequences are still felt. Revealing the reasons for the deportation and debunking the myth about the collaborationism of the peoples of the North Caucasus remains one of the urgent scientific tasks.

## **3. Research Questions**

The deportation of the peoples of the USSR is one of the urgent problems of historical science and until now its true reasons have not been identified. The available data refute the myth of the massive collaboration of peoples subjected to forced eviction, since deportations were made to the peoples whose territory the Germans did not get to (Chechens, Ingush, Meskhetian Turks, etc.). The deportation was carried out at a time when the entire adult male population fought on the fronts of the Great Patriotic War, for example, Karachais and Balkars, who were subjected to total deportation. The deported peoples were settled in small groups over a vast territory; due to poor social conditions, hunger, cold, disease, a significant part of them died in the first two years of special settlements. From the very first days of their residence in the places of settlement, representatives of the deported peoples voluntarily got a job and made their contribution to the development of the national economy. The consequences of the deportation policy can be traced to the present day and one of the urgent tasks of historical science is the study of the

reasons for deportation. An analysis and study of the life of the deported North Caucasian peoples in places of special settlement debunks many myths about these peoples.

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

The purpose of the article is to analyze the deportation policy towards the peoples of the North Caucasus, to study their social and everyday problems during the Great Patriotic War, everyday life in a special regime and labor contribution to the national economy.

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

The article uses the general scientific principles of objectivity, historicism, consistency. In their totality, these methods made it possible to study: the nature of the deportation policy; to identify the causes of high mortality in the first years of the highlanders' stay in places of special settlement; to show the role of labor in the process of their adaptation in the host community.

#### **6. Findings**

The German command paid great attention to the Caucasus and pursued the goal of expanding and strengthening its influence in the North Caucasus, while resorting to the use of such techniques as bribery, intrigue, ingratiating with the Muslim clergy and influential people among the population, in order to involve them in the struggle against Soviet power. The plan of the Hitlerite command originated from the of the “Shamil” plan developed by military intelligence of Admiral W.F. Canaris in January 1942, according to which Grozny, Maikop and other oil-bearing regions were to be seized by landing operations. The inserted spies and saboteurs were supposed to rely on anti-Soviet elements. “In the Caucasus, like nowhere else in Russia,” said one of the German documents,

*adats and Muslim Sharia laws still firmly hold most of the mountain population in their hands. Highlanders are very trusting by nature and it is easier to work with them than with other nationalities... We need to arm the local bandits well, hand over important objects to them before the arrival of the German troops, which they will keep for us. When Grozny, Malgobek and other areas are in our hands, we will be able to seize Baku and establish an occupation regime in the Caucasus, send the necessary garrisons into the mountains, and when calm comes in the mountains, we will eradicate all the highlanders. (Dyachenko, 2013, p. 117)*

German troops sought to quickly capture the North Caucasus, but the fierce resistance of the Soviet troops exhausted them, and in September 1942 they were stopped in the Malgobek area. The Nazis were able to approach the foothills of the Caucasian ridge and the Terek River, but suffered huge losses. The turning point in the battle for the Caucasus was the defeat of the Germans at Stalingrad. After that, the Wehrmacht forces were forced to retreat due to the threat of encirclement, and in January-February 1943 the North Caucasus was liberated from the Nazi invaders.

In the republics of the North Caucasus, which were captured by the Germans and those who passed this fate, people worked under the same slogan “Everything in the name of the front. All for the sake of victory.” During the same period, the country's authorities were developing a plan for the deportation of the peoples of the North Caucasus. Until now, the true reasons for this action have not been fully disclosed, and most researchers regard deportation as the nature of the totalitarian system. The reason for the deportation is also seen in the reaction of the peoples of the North Caucasus to the policy of the Soviet government in general. For instance, Sabanchiev (2013) notes that the Soviet modernization, which was especially difficult in the national autonomies of the North Caucasus, was perceived ambiguously by the mountain peoples. The driving motives for the discontent were the extremes of collectivization, the persecution of Islam and disregard for traditional folk customs. The desire of the peoples of the region to preserve their ethnic and religious identity was accumulated by traditionalist and nationalist sentiments, which took an anti-Soviet form among a part of the population and manifested themselves during the Great Patriotic War. The totalitarian regime found in this an opportunistic explanation of repression and the violent solution of the problems of ethnopolitical life (Sabanchiev, 2013).

As a rule, all actions for the resettlement of a particular people, groups of the population had a certain legal basis: decisions of the State Defense Committee, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, the decision of the Central Committee of the party, decrees of the Council of People's Commissars or other state structure, which gave them an allegedly legal character. However, some of these legal acts appeared after the expulsion of people from the territories of their residence.

The deportations being carried out were “explained” by a whole range of reasons: “unreliability”, preventive measures, confessional factor, opposition to reformatory measures, participation in bandit formations, collaboration, etc.

The deportations of the peoples of the North Caucasus and other peoples pursued the following strategic goals of Stalin's national policy: 1) instilling fear in order to rule the country; 2) the desire to split the internal unity of peoples and the formation of ethnic assimilation; 3) the desire to shift the blame and responsibility for the military-political and economic miscalculations of the ruling regime onto the repressed peoples; 4) an increase in the population of uninhabited regions of Siberia, Kazakhstan, Central Asia; 5) providing productive forces to the formerly backward regions of the USSR (Guboglo et al., 2001).

Karachais were the first to be deported in the North Caucasus. On the basis of the Decree of the PVS of the USSR of October 12, 1943 and the resolution of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR of October 14, 1943, all Karachais were subject to resettlement to the Kazakh and Kyrgyz SSR. On November 2, 1943, 69,207 people (14,774 families) were deported from the Karachay Autonomous Region. 424 Karachais identified in the neighboring regions were also evicted. The bulk of the Karachais were accommodated in the South Kazakhstan and Dzhabul regions (25,212 and 20,285 people). Later they were joined by 2,500 demobilized from the Red Army (Kaziev, 2015). In December 1943, the Kalmyks were deported.

Preparations for the eviction of Chechens and Ingush began in 1943, but there is no unity among researchers on this issue. Some authors believe that preparations for the forcible eviction of Chechens

began in the first half of 1943, while others believe that the decision to deport was made in the fall of 1943.

On December 14, 1943, 3 months before the eviction of the Chechens and Ingush, the resolution of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR was issued, providing for a set of measures before the deportation of the repressed peoples and their resettlement on the territory of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. To maintain order in the new places of settlements, it was planned to open 145 district and 375 village commandant's offices out of 1,358 employees. Thus, the decision to settle the repressed peoples in the places of deportation was made before their forcible eviction.

To organize the forcible eviction of Chechens and Ingush, military formations of military units of the North Caucasian Military District, NKVD troops, cadets of military schools were pulled into the republic. The concentration of the military in Chechen-Ingushetia was explained by the forthcoming tactical exercises of military units in mountainous conditions. 19 thousand officers and soldiers of the NKVD were involved in organizing and carrying out the forced eviction of Chechens and Ingush.

On January 31, 1943, the State Defense Committee of the USSR approved a decree on the eviction of Chechens and Ingush; on February 21, an order of the People's Commissar of the NKVD of the USSR was adopted, and on March 7, 1944, followed a decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on the liquidation of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR. The territory of the Chechen-Ingush Republic was divided between neighboring subjects: the North Ossetian and Dagestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics, the Georgian SSR and the Stavropol Territory, and the rest of the Grozny region was formed with the administrative center in the city of Grozny. The Grozny region included 20 administrative units (cities and districts). The resolution was approved by the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR on March 22, 1944.

In March 1944, the Balkar people underwent total deportation, which in one day on March 8-9 was loaded into trains and sent to the east of the country, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Because most of the Balkar men fought on the fronts of the Great Patriotic War, mostly old people, disabled people, women and children were subjected to forced resettlement. And on April 8, 1944, the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the SSR was signed on "Resettlement of Balkars living in the Kabardino-Balkarian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic and on renaming the Kabardino-Balkarian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic into the Kabardian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic" (Akkueva, 2019).

In July 1944, L. Beria wrote an internal report to I.V. Stalin: "In pursuance of the decree of the State Defense Committee of the NKVD, in February-March 1944, 602,193 people were resettled for permanent residence in the Kazakh and Kyrgyz SSR, residents of the North Caucasus, of which 496,460 people were Chechens and Ingush, 68,327 Karachais and 37 406 Balkars".

As a result of the eviction of the North Caucasian peoples (Ingush, Chechens, Balkars, Karachais), an area of 35 thousand square meters (almost the size of Switzerland) were depopulated (Polyan, 1994). The territory on which the deported peoples lived for centuries was ceded to Georgia, North Ossetia, the Kabardian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, Dagestan, etc.

The deportation negatively affected the state of the economy of the region, from where the Chechens, Ingush, Karachais and Balkars were forcibly expelled. As a result of the eviction of peoples, vast areas of land fell into desolation, a severe blow was dealt to the traditions of animal husbandry and

agriculture, the traditional crafts of the deported peoples. For a long time, the local authorities failed to establish a normal economic life in the region, from where the peoples were forcibly evicted.

For the general management of the reception and placement of special settlers under the government of the Kazakh and Kirghiz SSR, special republican commissions were created consisting of the secretaries of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) (chairmen), chairmen of the Council of People's Commissars and the People's Commissars of Internal Affairs of these republics. All events related to the reception and accommodation of special settlers arriving in a particular region were entrusted to the regional commissions, where the chairmen of the regional executive committees, secretaries of the regional committees and the heads of the NKVD were appointed.

In each area of the settlement of special settlers, a troika was organized, consisting of the chairman of the district executive committee, the secretary of the district committee and the head of the district office of NKVD. Responsible representatives of the Council of People's Commissars of the republic were sent to the places of special settlements to carry out organizational and economic-preparatory measures for the accommodation of arrivals.

In the Kazakh SSR, on the basis of the existing departments for the economic structure of the deported population, the Resettlement Administration was created under the Council of People's Commissars of the republic, which was entrusted with solving all issues related to special settlers. The same functions in the Kirghiz SSR were performed by resettlement groups organized in the Osh, Jalal-Abad and Frunzensk regions under the regional executive committees of up to 5 people.

In addition, the NKVD of the USSR organized special commandant's offices in the regions and areas where special settlers were settled. The economic and labor organization of the special settlers was to be carried out by the Council of People's Commissars of the Union republics and regional executive committees in accordance with the decisions of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR.

Usually, in the organs of the NKVD of the USSR, work on the placement of special settlers began a month and a half before the eviction. Thus, the arrival of special settlers from the Georgian SSR in the republics of Central Asia was already known by the end of July 1944, and the local authorities had a plan for their deployment in regions and districts (Bugai, 1994).

In preparation for deportation, a whole range of measures was envisaged aimed at the economic arrangement of resettled families. However, it turned out to be difficult to implement these measures on the ground due to both objective and subjective reasons. Lack of material and economic resources, harsh climatic conditions, and in some cases negligence of local authorities affected the difficult living conditions of the special settlers in the region. As a result, morbidity and mortality led to demographic losses among the special settlers (Isakieva, 2014).

For example, in the fall of 1944, almost 10 thousand families lived in premises that were considered completely unsuitable for living. Almost 26 thousand more families were accommodated in the yards of local residents, and the owners allocated unheated or dilapidated premises to the special settlers (SARF).

The instructor of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Kyrgyzstan, in a certificate on the economic and labor structure of the special settlers in the Kurshab district of the Osh region, noted that 907 families in the amount of 3,483 people, of which more than half were children,

“were settled extremely unsatisfactory in 17 collective farms and two enterprises: they live in unsanitary conditions, very crowded, 2–3 families with 5 to 10 people live in rooms of 6–12 square meters. In the collective farms of the Frunzensky district of the Osh region in the summer of 1945, 5–7 families lived in one room”.

The real situation of the migrants settled in the city of Karaganda is reflected in the Resolution of the Bureau of the Civil Code of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of this city dated October 13, 1944 “On the living conditions and employment of special settlers from the North Caucasus in the Samarkand group of enterprises.” The Bureau notes: “All immigrants are housed in 2 standard barracks and 2 dugouts. The standard barracks are very cramped; for example, 80 people are accommodated on 35 sq. meters, the beds are in two tiers, so the room is dirty and stuffy. A completely intolerable situation in dugouts, where about 400 people are housed, dugouts are completely unsuitable for housing, they are damp, stuffy and there is no natural light. All those living in the dugouts are completely naked and have no bedding. As a result of these conditions, people have weakened and are unable to go to work. Such an attitude towards people created a threatening situation, and in a short period in Metallurgstroy alone 35 people died”.

The authorities planned that the special settlers would immediately start working on collective farms and at other facilities; apparently, they did not know that the settlers were mainly children, old people, disabled people and women. So, according to the archives of the Council of Ministers of the Kyrgyz USSR, among the Balkars who arrived in the special settlement in 1944 were men – mostly old, invalids and those on reserve – accounted for only 18% of the total number of immigrants. There were about 30 % of women, and the rest, i.e. more than half, were children.

The overwhelming majority of the deported were placed in rural areas and were included in the collective farm system of employment and material support. Most modern historians equate the work on state and collective farms in the 1940s-1950s to serfdom and assess it as a manifestation of economic coercion. Forced labor in those years became the basis of the collective farm system, and for representatives of the deported peoples it became a categorical imperative of existence (Shadt, 2011).

In accordance with the decisions of the central authorities, the resettled Balkars, Karachais, Chechens and Ingush were to receive household plots, livestock and grain in a short time in exchange for what was received from them at the places of eviction. In the Resolution of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR adopted in May 1944, it was envisaged to give each family of special settlers – Chechens, Ingush, Balkars, Karachais and Kalmyks – one cattle, an average of 200 kg of live weight each, and, in the absence of cattle, give sheep and goats instead at the rate of 200 kg of live weight per cattle (RSASPH). This circumstance somewhat improved the difficult financial situation of the deported. However, having endowed the special settler with a cow or sheep, he was immediately taxed in kind and in cash. And often people sold the same cow to pay the tax. In 1945, the special settlers were exempted from taxes (SARF).

Despite the measures taken, the situation of the deportees remained difficult, the living conditions were appalling, food was scarce, there were no clothes and shoes, and medical care was practically not provided.

For example, in Kazakhstan in 1944, 32,502 people died, and 32,111 people died in 1945. And the highest mortality rate refers to the second half of 1944 and the first half of 1945, i.e. autumn, winter and spring seasons of the first year of acclimatization, which also coincided with food difficulties and lack of adequate clothing and footwear (Kozlov et al., 2011). For instance, in the Jalal-Abad region of the Kirghiz SSR, out of 26,378 people who arrived in March 1944, 10,366 people died by June 1946. In some districts of this region, the mortality rate of immigrants was even higher. So, in the collective farms of the Alabuginsky district, 1610 people out of 2664 died, or 60 % of all Chechens and Ingush resettled here. This is for the period March–December 1944 (Maksudov, 2010).

There were many reasons for the high mortality rate, but the main ones were:

1. A radical change in climatic and living conditions, which especially affected the elderly and children, who were the main reason of increased mortality.
2. Mass distribution of typhus among the special settlers during their stay.
3. Insufficiency of food, both in quantity and in calorie content, which led to a decline in nutrition and significant depletion, including those taking acute forms (dystrophy).
4. Lack of warm clothing and footwear, contributing to colds, which weakened organisms could not cope with.

The deported peoples settled in sparsely populated and uninhabited areas. In Kazakhstan, more than 21 thousand people were settled in 83 districts of 7 regions; in Kyrgyzstan, more than 16 thousand people were settled in 31 districts of 4 regions. In addition to the main areas of the settlement, the resettlement of the deported was carried out in other places. Separate groups of families were sent to different republics: 419 people to the Uzbek SSR, 44 people to the Tajik SSR, 20 to Irkutsk Oblast, and 14 to the districts of the Far North. People were settled in small groups, no closer than 20 km from railway tracks and stations, and these principles were observed very strictly. They were used as cheap labor for agriculture, mining and construction. The deported peoples, especially at the initial stage of the eviction, were subjected to moral and social oppression, were restricted in movement, and many families were divided. The right of ownership and safety of the personal property of the special settlers was not ensured, although this right was stipulated in official documents (Isakieva, 2017).

From the first days in the places of forced settlement, representatives of the deported peoples, everyone who could work, began to find jobs. Chechens, Ingush and Balkars ended up in the places of settlement in March, i.e. by the beginning of the period of agricultural work, when workers are very needed. According to the reports of the NKVD and the department of special settlements, all able-bodied people, and the overwhelming majority were elderly people, women and adolescents, went to work in collective and state farms, to construction and other organizations. The overwhelming majority of those who arrived in the very first days after resettlement started to work, “and it is characteristic that people went to work of their own accord” (Akkieva, 2017, p. 184).

There was a lot of work on the collective and state farms, however only hard physical work. The special settlers did not know either the rates or the production rates, they were cheated at every step. In some areas, they were not admitted to collective farms and were not put on economic records. The workers admitted to the agricultural cartel were not given work books, they had no idea how many workdays they worked out. As for the remuneration of the special settlers, although it was recommended



to establish “on equal terms with other members of collective farms,” in fact, this was not the case. At first, work in a specialty was out of the question (Akkueva & Sampiev, 2013).

The special settlers officially retained the status of citizens of the country, but could not leave the place of residence established by the state, which negatively affected their social life, which was based on mutual support and mutual assistance of family members and relatives. During the deportation, many families were scattered. In their reunion a certain role was played by the organs of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which did a great job of finding such families and helped people find out the fate of their relatives and friends.

The deported peoples of the North Caucasus during the war period endured incredible hardships. Overnight, their economic and labor life was disrupted, family ties were severed, they were scattered across the territory of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, settled in deserted, climatically difficult regions and were forced to engage in difficult types of labor. But, despite all the hardships of life, Karachais, Balkars, Chechens and Ingush worked to meet the needs of the front in food and uniforms.

## 7. Conclusion

Thus, the policy of fascist Germany in the North Caucasus failed, and the German command failed to win over the peoples of the North Caucasus and create a broad anti-Soviet front. However, the Soviet leadership in 1943–1944 organized political repression against some of the peoples of the North Caucasus and for a short time carried out their total deportation, not sorting out the right and the guilty. The deportation was carried out despite the fact that the entire adult population of the deported peoples was at the front. The reasons for the deportation are still not completely clear, and its goals are also not obvious. A significant number of the military were involved in carrying out the deportation, apparently fearing armed resistance. But children, old people and women could not resist. The eviction was carried out by harsh measures and in inhuman living conditions. The deportees settled in small groups in the vast territory of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, etc. Due to poor social conditions (lack of housing, food, clothing, overcrowding), there was a massive death of special settlers. From the very first days of the war, old people, women and adolescents began to work on collective farms, state farms, mines, etc. Labor for them has become a factor of survival and adaptation in places of residence.

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