

Forms of Chechen Resistance to Soviet Totalitarian Regime During Deportation (1944 – 1957)

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***Abstract---** One of the important topics in contemporary historical studies is the problem of forced displacement. Many scientifically important aspects of repressed people's deportation to Kazakhstan in need of concrete historical study and of the historical and theoretical understanding. In this article, based on archival sources, various forms of Chechens and Ingush resistance to the totalitarian regime are analyzed. The reported facts show special settlements forced nature of the system and the existence of significant administrative barriers to socialization of special settlers from the North Caucasus. The author details the nature of the relationship of local authorities and deported peoples, identifies areas of ideological work of local authorities, especially the formation of protest moods of the peoples and their forms of manifestation. Deported peoples were harassed in moral and social ways, were limited in moving, many families were separated. It was not guaranteed the right of property and the safety of the personal property of the special settlers, although this right was stipulated in the official documents. However, special immigrants from the North Caucasus, as well as other deported peoples, while in inhumane living conditions in places of settlement, not broken and constantly nurtured the idea of returning to their homeland, resisted the current regime.*

***Keywords---** Deportation of the Chechens, Forms of Resistance, Escape, Protest, the Ingush, The Special Settlement Regime.*

I. THE DEPORTED CHECHENS AND INGUSH LEGAL STATUS AND SOCIAL PROTEST THEIR SPECIAL SETTLEMENT REGIME

On February 23, 1944, Chechens and Ingushes were forcedly evicted from their ancestral lands to remote areas of the country (Kazakhstan and Central Asia) by the Soviet government [1]. They shared the destiny of other nations of the North Caucasus – Karachays, Kalmyks (deported earlier), Balkars and Crimean Tatars (deported later). The decision to liquidate the autonomy of these and other nations taken by the leaders of the country was caused by the lawlessness in the totalitarian state at that time. It was the largest political crime of the XX century.

The convicted Chechens were deprived of the rights to freely travel and were dependent entirely on the commandant's office. They could not be nominated or elected even in the most primary authorities and public entities. Special settlers were also discriminated occupationally. They were prohibited to study in the universities and colleges. Moreover, teachers of the Chechen origin were dismissed from their jobs. However, the children of special settlers were obliged to study at secondary schools.

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Poverty and diseases, which raged during the first years of the Chechen exile, claimed lives of both young and aged people. Many children died too. People mostly lived in barracks and slums without any food or clothes (people in the Chechen-Ingush Republic sent everything to the front-line). A few persons lived in more or less normal conditions.

The survived Chechens were abused and humiliated. They were doomed to die of a starvation. They were made pariahs. They lost their relatives and close ones. They were deprived of basic human rights and basic living conditions. They were restricted in travelling and scattered throughout the vast areas of Kazakhstan and Central Asia. The survived Chechens were forcefully separated, because the Soviet government wanted them to lose their national traits as morally subdued communities and dissolve into other, more numerous nations.

The USSR PCIA (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs) department on special settlements worked out the plan to deport Chechens and Ingushes. According to this plan, 310,620 Chechens and 81,100 Ingushes were to be evicted to Kazakhstan and Kirghizia in “the period of first columns” [2].

Evidently, these data concern only inhabitants of the plains and relatively available submontane areas of the republic.

How were the echelons with Chechen and Ingush special settlers accepted and discharged in the Kazakh and Kirghiz SSRs (the regions of their densest concentration and settlement)? The Summary of the USSR PCIA department on special settlements prepared by its head P.I. Maltsev contained detailed information about it.

Thus, the Report on the transportation of special settlers by the Ordzhonikidze railway of March 17, 1944 prepared by Volkov, deputy head of the USSR People's Commissariat for State Security third department, and Arkadiev, the head of the USSR PCIA transportation department, gave detailed information about the arrival of railway columns with Chechen and Ingush special settlers and their distribution. Thus, it was reported that, “180 railway columns were embarked at that period, 171 columns arrived at places, while 9 were en route. For the period, 468,583 people arrived at the place of destination and disembarkation. They were sent to: Jalal-Abad Region (2,428 persons), Osh Region (9,908 persons), Frunze Region (34,110 persons), Jambyl Region (16,665 persons), Almaty Region (29,089 persons), East Kazakhstan Region (34,542 persons), Kyzylorda Region (65,14 persons), Kostanai Region (45,665 persons), Aktobe Region (20,309 persons), Semipalatinsk Region (31,236 persons), Pavlodar Region (41,230 persons), Akmola Region (60330 people), and Karaganda Region (37,938 persons). There were no incidents. In general, the transportation was finished. Five railway columns out of nine (which are en route) will be led to the places of destination today. Another four railway columns that are going to the East Kazakhstan Region will be delivered to the places of destination on March 21, 1944. A total of 180 railway columns or 494,456 people arrived in the Kazakh and Kirghiz SSRs and were disembarked there. 147 railway columns arrived in the Kazakh SSR (405,941 persons) and 33 railway columns – in the Kirghiz SSR (88,515 persons)” [3]. We should note that, in some cases, so-called “disembarkation stations” were a bare steppe.

The Chechen nation, like other deported nations, was scattered throughout the vast areas of Central Asia and Kazakhstan. The deported Chechens were settled in other places too, apart from these main districts of settlement. Thus, some groups of the deported families were sent to the Uzbek SSR, Tajik SSR, Irkutsk Region, and Kostroma

region. In July 1944, Beria gave a secret memorandum to J. Stalin, V. Molotov and G. Malenkov. It reported that the eviction of the Karachays, Chechens, Ingushes, and Balkars from the North Caucasus (602,193 persons in total) and “their settlement in new areas” was conducted satisfactorily. 428, 948 persons were lodged in kolkhozes, 64,703 - in sovkhozes, and 108, 542 persons were sent to work in industrial enterprises”[4]. Despite the fact that the nation was successfully evicted, the Soviet party authorities arranged the work of agents and informants in the places of exile. The archives of Kazakhstan and Central Asia contain reports and information materials of local authorities devoted to the work of agents and informants among special settlers. These documents prove that people were not silent even at the initial stage of eviction. People were engaged in various forms of social protest, either spontaneous or conscious. People escaped, refused to follow the regime for special settlers, and repeatedly addressed to local and central authorities, prominent political and military leaders.

The escape from the place of exile was the most common form of resistance to the authorities among the deported Chechens. The reports of commandants and information summaries on every area of their residence contain the data on escaped special settlers. Thus, on April 1, 1944, anti-escape activity had the following data: 1,079 Chechens and Ingushes escaped from the place of residence, 1,079 persons were detained and 290 escapes were prevented [5]. Thus, 91 special settlers escaped because of unsatisfactory living conditions in the Buysk district of Kostroma Region in July, August and September of 1944. Sixty-two persons were detained. In most cases, they were former soldiers, who showed courage and heroism in defending their Motherland from fascist invaders. They were recalled from active front-lines and exiled only because of their ethnicity. Thus, Khanpashi Nuradilov performed a heroic deed and killed more than thousand fascists from his machine gun. However, his relatives were deported as traitors to their country! So it was with all the soldiers originated from the deported nations.

The problem of separated families was one of the most numerous social problems that appeared during deportation. In practice, the leaders of families either were settled separately from them or were enrolled as volunteers to build industrial objects: electric power stations, mines, railroads etc. A special settler could ask his authorities to let him to reunite his family only after several years, in case of perfect discipline and work.

The application had to pass through several instances and was shelved for months and even years before the issue was solved [7].

The authorities made arrests and conducted general meetings of special settlers to end with escapes and unauthorized leaves of settlement places. They explained the order of the established regime to each settler. Besides, they made announcements against receipt that the deported people would be subject to strict prosecution for escapes and unauthorized leaves of settlement places.

The regime of special settlement became more severe after the war. Thus, the USSR Prosecutor General’s office issued a circular “The order of prosecuting special settlers for escapes from settlement places” on February 14, 1947. The order allowed severe sanctions to be imposed – up to 10-15 years of imprisonment. Investigatory cases on the escapes of special settlers were executed at the place of their detention and were sent to the USSR MIA (Ministry of Internal Affairs) Special Meeting (SM) for the final decision after the investigation had been finished. The bylaws of

the Special Meeting concerning the special settlers convicted of escapes were sent to MIA or DMIA (Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs) of the region of escape.

From that moment, unemployable special settlers (minors and persons who had large families) should not be held liable for an escape at the place of their detention. Instead, they should be sent at the disposal of MIA-DMIA at the place of permanent settlement, from where they had escaped. Thus, 15,992 persons out of 451,724 special settlers from the North Caucasus escaped from special settlements and 2,637 persons were fugitives on October 1, 1948 [8]. This report does not provide particular data for Chechens and Ingushes.

On November 24, 1948, the USSR Council of Ministers issued a bylaw “Evicted persons”, which stated the facts of continuing escapes from the places of obligatory settlement and returns to the places of previous residence by people evicted to remote eastern areas of the USSR. Sometimes, the USSR MIA permitted the settlers to return to the places of their previous residence.

However, an unauthorized leave (escape) was punished by 20-40 years of hard labor. Besides, the bylaw defined person to be punished for sheltering the evicted, helping them to escape and giving them permissions to return to residence places. The bylaw also defined a term of imprisonment for those who violated the regime of special settlement – 5 years.

The bylaw enabled to prosecute special settlers who ignored a socially useful work and sentence them for 8 years of imprisonment. Ministry of State Security toughened measures to identify, detain and arrest the evicted persons who had escaped from the places of obligatory settlement.

In two days, on November 26, 1948, the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Council issued a new decree “Prosecuting persons evicted to some districts of the Soviet Union during Great Patriotic War for escapes from places of obligatory settlement.

Once again, the decree established a life-long residence in the remote areas of the Soviet Union for special settlers without the right to return to previous places of their residence. People guilty in unauthorized leave from the places of obligatory settlement were prosecuted – 20 years of hard labor.

People guilty in sheltering the escaped or assisting their escape were imprisoned for up to 5 years. It was done to terrify people and make the deported nations including the Chechen nation to subdue to the authorities and accept the thought that they had been exiled forever.

However, despite the adoption of legislative acts, special settlers went on escaping. A special report on the escapes and detentions of evicted persons reported that 15,424 persons escaped and then were detected in 1948 (13,761 of them had escaped before). The authorities detained and prosecuted 5,403 persons. According to shared data of the ethnic composition of the deported, 2,208 escaped special settlers were from the North Caucasus.

The order of the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs and the USSR General Prosecutor’s office of December 22, 1948 “The Order of Prosecuting the evicted persons for the escape from the place of settlement and ignoring a socially useful work” was another measure to enforce the punishments of special settlers for escapes. This order established a life-long settlement for persons who had been evicted to remote areas of the Soviet Union during the

Great Patriotic War. Besides, the statute on 20 years of imprisonment for unauthorized leave (escape) from the places of obligatory settlement was preserved.

The letter addressed to the Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers of January 7, 1949, reported that “the authorities of MIA and Grozny Region detained 47 escaped settlers thus far (from the moment of eviction to January 1949); 22 of them were arrested and prosecuted; 9 aged persons and minors were convoyed to the places of settlement...” [10].

The list of escaped and wanted displaced people from January 1 to April 1, 1949 included 11 persons of the Chechen origin. Among them were Aziyat Mukaeva, Ziva Shakhgirieva, Khamid Arsannukaev and Zardan Berdaeva from the Jambyl Region; Akhmed Eldiev, Sasa Kholukhaeva, Khusein Kholuhaev and Ulorvali Makhmudov from the Karaganda Region; Rubi Kagermanov and Magomed Dosiev from the Kostanai Region [11].

In 1954, the MIA authorities allegedly went on maintaining public order in the places of settlement, struggling against the escapes of special settlers and searching for the escaped. At the same time, the authorities focused on checking whether some categories of the repressed persons were placed in the settlements for good reason. On September 1953, the USSR MIA designed the offers to reduce the amount of special settlers and represented them to the CC of CPSU and the USSR Council of Ministers. Besides, it designed and represented the offers to abolish the Decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Council published on November 26, 1948, which established prosecution for escapes, and remove children of all special settlers from a per-family account.

The deported people resisted to severe administrative regime of the country in other ways. Many Chechens disagreed with the illegal deportation of the nation and considered it a blatant injustice. They wrote about it in the letters addressed to J. Stalin, L. Beria and other political leaders in Moscow. Ex “red guerillas” Gaisumov, Tataev and Elmurzaev, professor and the war participant Yu.D. Desheriev, and other people expressed their opinion on the deportation of Chechen and Ingush nations in the collective letter to the Presidium of the CC of CPSU. Besides, they expressed offers on their further destiny. They wrote, “Our nation was evicted without need and reasons, while Beria, Abakumov and other worst enemies of our state contributed to some treasons instead of preventing them and fighting with true enemies; they directed measures to struggle against traitors against honest Soviet nations. The party condemned the act of illegality and abuse. Now our nation has a natural desire to be rehabilitated as soon as possible, to restore the truth about our history and remove slander disseminated against us in fiction and scientific literature” [12].

We hope that these measures will not be taken against the Chechen nation and all the nations of our country anymore.

The Chechen children from the Leninogorsk schools in the East Kazakhstan Region wrote to L. Beria, “...as children of the most democratic socialist country in the world, we cannot agree with the violation of national and civil rights of our nation and ask you do to what you can to restore the Chechen-Ingush ASSR and return Chechens and Ingushes to their Motherland...”[13].

On February 20, 1954, the Chechen schoolchildren whose parents had been deported wrote a letter to K. Voroshilov, The Chairman of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Council. Thus, they said that “prisoners of war from Japan and fascist Germany, soldiers and officers, were returned to their native lands. The Soviet press and radio deliver words appealing to protect rights and liberties of the oppressed nations in the colonies throughout the world. Somberly, we note instead that we forget for some reason that more than 3 million Chechens, Ingushes, Karachays, Balkars, Crimean Tatars, and Germans in the Volga region live in our socialistic country without any civil rights...” [14].

M.A. Mamakaev, a famous Chechen writer, said in his speech during the Meeting of Soviet historians that took place in the Institute of the USSR History of the USSR Academy of Sciences on November 16, 1956, “...We must immediately stop stigmatization and destroy the monuments to those who ruined and killed our mountainous nations... Ridiculous judgements of the entire nation abuse the very essence of the Soviet government and Lenin’s great national doctrine in global public opinion” [15].

II. RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES AND ANTI-SOVIET INSURGENCY AS A FORM OF PROTEST THE TOTALITARIAN SYSTEM, SPECIAL SETTLERS FROM THE NORTH CAUCASUS

There are a few letters left, which were addressed to J. Stalin, L. Beria and other political leaders. However, they are bright testimonies of the experienced sufferings, a cry and pain. People did not want to admit that their national identity had been destroyed.

At the same time, the PCIA agents went on slandering about the growth of anti-Soviet moods among special settlers.

Thus, the report on special settlers evicted from the North Caucasus and materials from the provincial authorities reported that many special settlers from the North Caucasus, especially Chechens and Ingushes, were hostile to the Soviet system, hated the Russian nation and practiced their backward customs and traditions in the places of settlement. Besides, the most hostile persons allegedly maintained organized anti-Soviet activities and distributed rumors about a forthcoming war between the United States and the Soviet Union and the loss of the USSR in this war. Some people allegedly expressed intentions to commit the acts of terror. The MIA– DMIA documents report strong atmosphere of departure among the Chechen special settlers, created by the Muslim clergy and some former senior officials.

Thus, the agents allegedly detected that ex-mullah Kh. Kurgaev resided in the Konyukhov district of the North Kazakhstan Region convinced the Chechen special settlers that they would return to the North Caucasus soon. Therefore, “there is no use to build houses, instead, we should store the products for travel right now, slaughter the cattle that we received and dry the meat” [16].

Besides, the agents reported that A. Taramov, ex-secretary of ACP (b) (All-Union Communist Party, Bolsheviks) in Kazakhstan, and M. Bakriev distributed rumors among special settlers before the Chechens were displaced. According to those rumors, the CC (Central Committee) of the ACP (b) decided to create a commission aimed to return special settlers from Kazakhstan to the North Caucasus soon.

The agents also reported that A. Sultanov, ex-district prosecutor, Resided in the Konyukhov district of the North Kazakhstan Region expressed extremely “hostile” mood and claimed, “Never mind, soon we will go back to the Caucasus”. The activity of special commandant’s offices in the Kazakh SSR PCIA in 1944 resulted in the arrest of 2,196 special settlers for so-called “anti-Soviet” activities [17].

The data fabricated by agents and informants reported that Chechens were persecuted even for expressing grievance against the Soviet regime, which was considered as anti-Soviet insurgency. Moreover, even in the places of deportation, the authorities went on “detecting”, arresting and condemning so-called “enemies of the nation and party”, the Muslim clergy or people “offended by the Soviet regime”, “discontent with the Soviet regime” etc. and people with anti-Soviet moods by extrajudicial means.

The activity of so-called anti-Soviet groups was another kind of protest against the regime of special settlement existed at that time. M. Gairbekov, ex- secretary of the Chechen-Ingush regional committee of ACP (b) in propaganda, S. Mollaev, ex-chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of Chechen and Ingush ASSR and others allegedly were the members of such group, which was reported to function in the Kazakh SSR. So-called “anti-Soviet” group was revealed in the Talas Region of the Kirghiz SSR. According to PCIA reports, it disseminated rumors that special settlers would return to the North Caucasus and summoned people to prepare for departure.

A sectarian group “Kunta Hadzhi” was allegedly created in the Kazakh SSR. It involved D. Saidiev who had a secondary religious education and A. Vakhobov (both special settlers were drivers). They were accused of “anti-Soviet campaign and propaganda”. Mullahs and religious authorities were against so-called “housing of special settlers” and permanent settlement in the places of deportation. They tried to establish links with the Kazakh Muslim clergy [18].

The authority of PCIA throughout the Osh Region of the Kirghiz ASSR even put a case called “Runaways” against eight Chechens and Ingushes headed by Gavleev and Azerbaev. The members of the groups were accused of attempt to create gangs and escape to the North Caucasus to arrange an “armed struggle against the Soviet power” [19] etc.

On April 1950, the authority of Ministry of State Security throughout the Pavlodar Region of the Kazakh SSR arrested and prosecuted D.Mezhidov, S. Ismailov, A. Eltsabekov and A.Eltaev. These persons were reported to regularly conduct anti-Soviet and nationalist campaign and create a youth group “Committee of Socialist Labor” in the Maikain settlement of Bayan-Aul district in the Pavlodar Region [20].

They were accused of talking about the situation with the Chechen nation. Those persons were convinced that neither they nor their relatives nor all the Chechens had betrayed their Motherland. The Chechens, like other nations of our country, defended our Motherland from the first days of war. According to a historian M.M. Ibragimov, national character of this resistance is expressed "in the fight for the preservation in extreme conditions ... the main characteristics of the national identity of the Chechen people, the most important components of which are ... compliance with national traditions and customs, as well as belonging to the Muslim religion," [21].

III. CONCLUSION

Thus, the USSR authorities both evicted the Chechens and other nations to the eastern regions of the country and took additional measures to toughen the regime of their residence in the places of settlement. Here the Chechens were openly supervised and shadowed by the internal affairs authorities with special commandant's offices and secrete extensive network of agents. Deported nations, including Chechens, lost all basic civil rights guaranteed by the USSR Constitution from the first days.

The Chechen special settlers who, like other deported nations, lived under inhuman conditions in the places of settlement were not broken. They always thought about returning to their Motherland and resisted the existing regime.

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