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**ЖАҢА ЖӘНЕ
ҚАЗІРГІ ЗАМАН ТАРИХЫ**

**NEW AND MODERN
HISTORY**

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DEPORTATION AS A FORM OF POPULATION RESETTLEMENT IN THE 1930-40S (the Case of Kazakhstan)

Abstract. The history of deportations is closely connected with the problems of population movement in the Soviet Union. In the article, based on the archival research, these tragic events are to be shown with a special focus on the adaptation practices of the people who were suddenly deprived of their rights, property, houses and very often of professional activities. Some sensitive issues will also be touched upon dealing with how regime forced citizens to be ranked as second-class citizens and how the receiving communities interacted with them. The process of adaptation of the deported people, particularly Germans, to new inimical environment, and emergence of new practices of survival and even success is studied through the lens of migration detention theory. Expelling of unwanted people could ease the labor deficits in those industries where the Soviet administration faced troubles due to a severe shortage of labor force. It became a new practice to delegitimize victims of deportation into second-class citizens – main source of cheap labor to promote and successfully realize goals of Soviet modernization. Thus, a crucial part of the deportation campaign was dictated by economic needs of the state. Historical memory of the deported groups mirrored in the archival documents, contains information concerning the most difficult periods of their work in different industries of Kazakhstan as well as in other Central Asian republics.

Keywords: Soviet migration policy, deportation, resettlement of ethnic groups, Soviet Union.

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1930–40 жж. Халықты қоныстандырудың бір түрі ретінде жер аудару (Қазақстан мысалында)

Аңдатпа. Жер аудару тарихы Кеңес Одағы кезеңіндегі халық қозғалысы мәселелерімен тығыз байланысты. Мақалада архивтік зерттеулер негізінде бұл қайғылы оқиғалар сипатталып, әсіресе, кенеттен құқығынан, мүлкінен, баспанасынан және жиі жағдайда кәсіби қызметінен айырылған адамдардың бейімделу тәжірибесіне ерекше назар аударылады. Сондай-ақ азаматтарды екінші сортты азамат ретінде тануға мәжбүрлеген режим және қабылдаушы қауымдастықтардың олармен өзара әрекеттесуі сияқты бірқатар нәзік мәселелер де қозғалады. Жер аударылған халықтың, әсіресе немістердің, жат әрі қолайсыз ортаға бейімделу үдерісі, сондай-ақ аман қалу мен табысқа жетудің жаңа тәжірибелерінің пайда болуы – көші-қонды шектеу теориясы (migration detention theory) аясында қарастырылады. Кеңес билігіне қажетсіз деп танылған адамдарды жер аудару арқылы, жұмыс күші тапшы болған салаларда еңбек ресурстарының жетіспеушілігін жоюға тырысты. Бұл – жер аударылғандарды заңды мәртебесінен айырып, оларды Кеңес модернизациясының мақсаттарын жүзеге асыру үшін арзан жұмыс күші ретінде пайдалануға негізделген жаңа тәжірибеге айналды. Осылайша, жер аудару науқанының маңызды бөлігі мемлекетке қажет экономикалық қажеттіліктермен айқындалды. Архивтік құжаттарда көрініс тапқан жер аударылған топтардың тарихи жадында олардың Қазақстан мен басқа да Орталық Азия республикаларындағы түрлі салалардағы ең қиын еңбек кезеңдері туралы мәліметтер сақталған.

Түйін сөздер: Кеңестік көші-қон саясаты, жер аудару, этностарды қоныстандыру, Кеңес Одағы.

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Introduction

Some of the Soviet nations had experienced a number of painful deportations in the 1930–1940s. Tragedies of deportations also affected the Soviet Germans who mainly lived in Russia, Ukraine, Belorussia and other European territories of the former Soviet Union. Nazi Germany’s invasion of the USSR on June 22, 1941 marked the beginning of a new bloody war known as the Great Patriotic War in Soviet history. For four years, the USSR fought fiercely against Nazi Germany and its allies. The war (1941–1945) and the events surrounding it played a crucial role in the fate of the deported peoples.

Soviet Germans came under a double blow. First, they were blamed as traitors of the Soviet state although there was very little evidence of it, and second, they were finally deprived of the rights of full citizens of the country. Depriving Soviet Germans of citizenship meant the impossibility of finding their homeland again. Unlike many other deported nations, Germans lost their autonomic republic and their identity had changed [Pohl, 2017: 80]. Despite the growing interest of researchers in the problem of Soviet German deportation to the USSR, it still raises a lot of questions. Why were the Soviet Germans punished as traitors and deported? Why was the Soviet government interested in keeping deported Russian Germans out of the Russian Federation territory during and after World War II? Why were they not given the opportunity to restore the Volga German Autonomous Republic in Russia?

However, as Scarborough rightly points out, despite the beginning of a new life full of deportees’ tragedies, “they staked out their place within Soviet society” [Scarborough, 2017: 94]. Perhaps this was the decisive circumstance that allowed them to return to their native lands after the war – excluding the case of Soviet Germans. Consistent with Scarborough’s conclusion that the lives of the deportees represented an extremely difficult version of the rest of the Soviet people, this article argues that the positions of the party and state leadership regarding the destinies of the Germans coincided in another way. The Germans were to be deprived not only of full citizenship, but also to cease being part of nation-state building. That is, the loss of their national

autonomous republic meant not only second-rank citizenship for the Soviet Germans. As individuals they may have earned their place in Soviet society; however, as a national unit they lost their position in the hierarchy of Soviet nations.

Brubaker, in his work devoted to the formation of nations in France and Germany, put forward the idea that citizenship “is not a mere residence; it is an enduring personal status” [Brubaker, 1992: 15]. In the context of Soviet state-building, the personal status of a citizen was higher the more respected his national republic was. For instance, Russians were more respected for their achievements as a nation in comparison with others. Aligning with Terry Martin’s statement that the Soviet Union was not a traditional empire [Martin, 2001: 19], this paper argues that the USSR was a state with some imperial features which preferred to work with national units created by Bolshevik power. Unlike some other Soviet nations – for instance, Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Tajiks – the Soviet Germans had a stable identity formed long before the realization of Stalin’s national projects in the 1920–1930s.

Along with these considerations, the Soviet Union was interested in having a highly qualified labor force (Germans) participate in modernization projects. But as a state with some imperial features, it was wary of German autonomy, whose residents had their own identity on a legal basis and thus could claim a higher status in the Soviet project. Another focus of the article is the adaptation practices of people who suddenly lost their homeland, rights, property, and homes. Some sensitive issues will also be touched upon, dealing with how the regime forced citizens to be ranked as “homeless aliens” in a new inimical environment [Carmack, 2019: 102; Pavel, 2004: 88].

Theory and methodology

Brubaker also insists that the state is a membership organization, not a territorial one [Brubaker, 1992: 21]. Based on these premises, we can say that the task of the Soviet state during the war was the formation of the image of a class enemy transformed into the image of a German enemy. Germans who had lived in Russia for generations were turned into class and state–society enemies, while government

agencies needed cheap, qualified forces to serve the needs of the defense industry.

As Pohl points out, “the Soviet state deliberately used forced labor as a means to exact collective punishment upon ethnic Germans in the USSR during World War II” [Pohl, 2017: 80]. This double interest produced various short- and long-term outcomes that were multifaceted and ambiguous. Germans were turned into second-class citizens deprived of their rights, property, houses, and very often of professional activities. The punishment of possible or real collaborators was justified by the necessity to clean out the rear of the army to keep the front-line safe. So, the way deportation was processed included not only judicial aspects but also military ones. The latter circumstance contributed to the final consolidation of the enemy image for the Soviet Germans. As Pohl noted, legal restrictions and the financial situation of deportees were close to those of GULAG prisoners [Pohl, 2017: 85]. Also, during the war, the Soviet state was interested in cheap labor against the backdrop of the catastrophic military retreat of 1941–early 1942. The main role in the future victory over Nazi Germany was played by the rear, or rather how successful the defense industry was. The combination of these factors forced the country’s authorities to look for serious justifications for the implementation of the goals of deportation and the use of deportee labor. Migration detention theory can shed light on how the process of transformation of full citizens into second-class citizens was carried out. Though De Genova in his work suggests a critical vision on the problem of migrants’ detention, this approach can also be useful for understanding the problem of transforming the concept of citizen. How does the state carry out the process of transferring citizens to the category of second-class citizens?

De Genova insists that migrant deportability is a necessary condition of the “economy of deportability” that any modern state uses unequally nowadays [De Genova, 2010: 38]. He also introduced the term “economy of deportability” to describe how not all non-citizens are deported due to state policy, or in other words, it is “an unequal distribution of the various forms of this particular power over non-citizens’ lives and liberties” [De Genova, 2010: 41]. The Soviet citizens who went through deportations in the 1930–1940s were not migrants, but in general, the techniques and technologies of Soviet deportations could be partly explained through the lens of this theory. Though De Genova suggests the term “economy of deportability” as a means to explain

how unequally migrants have become subjects of labor or other exploitation, it encompasses both political and economic fields, representing a phenomenon operating in a wider social context.

Developing the author’s idea, we can say that the concept of migrants can be replaced by another group of non-citizens in order to explain how state–society interaction could affect the situation of citizens, transferring them to the status of second-class citizens. Thus, these citizens could be deported, making them part of the machinery of the “economy of deportability”.

In the 1930s, the main task of the government was the industrialization of the USSR. The implementation of this project required the transfer of a huge amount of labor to different regions of the country. The deportation of Soviet Germans is a phenomenon that can be studied as part of nation-state building, when some republics rose in the Soviet hierarchy, and some ceased to even exist. Russian Germans belonged to the latter group. To answer the question about the tragic fate of the Volga Germans, it is necessary to understand the historical reasons for the distrust of the Soviet authorities toward this national group. This explanation is impossible without a historical excursion that will help to understand the place and role of Russian Germans in the life of the country. Indeed, they have always enjoyed special respect as a hardworking and successful national group in tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union. However, the existence of the Autonomous Republic of Volga Germans raised a number of uncomfortable questions – for instance, the territory where Soviet Germans had lived and the language they spoke. The deterioration of relations with Nazi Germany in the 1930s and a possible military conflict also did not contribute to the desire of the authorities to maintain the existence of the republic. Historical analysis provides a lot of evidence of how quickly the attitude of society and the state toward Soviet Germans changed. The Great Patriotic War (1941–1945) played an extremely important role in the history of the Soviet Union; it touched nearly all sides of Soviet people’s lives, starting with participation in the military conflict and work in the rear.

In 1990–1991, V.N. Zemskov, who studied the period of 1930–1950 focusing on deportation, resettlements, and GULAG problems, suggested the hypothesis that part of the mobilized Soviet citizens – namely Germans, Finns, Italians, Hungarians, and others – had formed the so-called Labor Army [Zemskov, 1991: 67]. Members of the Labor Army worked on NKVD and other ministries’

construction sites. These working battalions were placed within the GULAG system to use deportees' free labor. N.E. Vashkau insisted that deportation finally solved the problems of the labor front in order to meet the growing demands of the front [Vashkau, 1993: 52]. Moreover, A. Herman concluded that Soviet authorities formed the Labor Army from deported Germans not only to solve labor shortages but also to ease tensions in places of residence of deportees [Herman, 1995: 44]. All these visions of the deported people's destinies and their role in the Soviet military-economic system look true and convincing. In this article, the author suggests an alternative order of the tasks which the Soviet government tried to solve in the case of the deported Germans. The peak of the most intensive exploitation of Soviet German citizens refers to November 1941 – December 1943, when not only men but also women were mobilized into the Labor Army. This coincided with the following: at the beginning of the war, the Red Army consisted of 5,434,729 soldiers and officers, while during the whole war period the government drafted around 32 million people into the army [Carmack, 2019: 106]. Probably, here is rooted the inhuman politics of the Soviet Union toward its own citizens. Mobilization of 32 million able-bodied citizens, along with appalling losses of civilians who were partly left on the occupied territories, forced the government to implement this illicit policy toward deported nations. As we can suggest, Germans had become the center of this cruel policy not only because of their national belonging but also due to their professional work qualities. In spite of the intensive exploitation of prisoners of war – who became the main source of free labor in the USSR especially since 1944 – the life of deported people did not change for the better [Pavel, 2004: 88].

Discussion and results

The life and destinies of the Russian and later Soviet Germans remained a taboo topic in Soviet historiography for decades. Nevertheless, several works devoted to the German language and its dialects appeared, and by the 1960s–1970s, the scope of research expanded. Since the 1980s, the German population of Kazakhstan became a distinct focus of scholarly inquiry. In the 1990s, L.A. Burgart actively studied the history of Kazakhstan's Germans alongside the well-known Kazakhstani scholar I.V. Erofeeva. T. Volkova addressed the uneasy issues of the 1920–1930s, while G. Belger raised acute questions concerning deportation and the contem-

porary situation of Germans in Kazakhstan [Belger, 1999: 42]. By the end of the 1990s, a range of topics emerged concerning German migration, deportation, special settlements, and the revival of the German ethnos in Kazakhstan. However, deeper issues such as the composition of the deported population, living conditions, adaptive practices in hostile environments, and interactions with local communities remain underexplored. Detailed studies of everyday life among deportees could form a separate branch of historical research in Kazakhstan. While working on this article, the author utilized archival materials from the Republic of Kazakhstan related to deportation processes, places of residence, complaints, and logistical problems caused by the hasty and poorly organized transportation of Germans. Sources included the Central State Archive and the Archive of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. In the 1990s and especially in the early 2000s, collections of archival documents were published, shedding light on deportation procedures and governmental responses to deportee challenges [Erofeeva, 2003: 57].

Memoirs of German special settlers and materials from international conferences were also widely used. These memoirs serve as valuable historical sources, revealing the extent of Soviet repressive policies and the formation of German settlers' identity in new environments, as well as their survival strategies during and after the war [Volkova, 2001: 63].

History of German Migration to Kazakhstan

Understanding the deportation of Soviet Germans requires a preliminary excursion into the history of German migration to Russian lands and later to Kazakh provinces of the empire. The lives and tragedies of forcibly deported Germans in Kazakhstan are intertwined with the experiences of those who had settled in Kazakh lands since the 18th–19th centuries. German settlement in the Russian state dates back to the late 15th–17th centuries, when, following the Mongol yoke, the Moscow state reestablished relations with European powers. From the 16th century onward, rulers like Ivan IV and Boris Godunov invited foreign specialists and allocated land in Moscow for their accommodation. However, significant migration occurred during Peter the Great's reforms and the foundation of the Russian Empire. Peter I promoted the transformation of invited foreigners into imperial citizens, and Catherine II attracted large numbers of German colonists to the Volga region, integrating them into Russian society

[Герман, 2000: 10]. The 1763 decree exempted German settlers from taxes for 30 years, allowing them to occupy specific economic niches. Colonization of the Volga region demonstrated the economic success of skilled German farmers, especially in wheat production. As noted, the country “needed colonizers, who having settled there, promoted in the new lands civic consciousness to make it safe and useful for the state” [Герман и Плева, 2002: 18]. Behind the settlers’ success stood not only personal resilience but also structural factors: the Russian serfdom system restricted peasant mobility, making foreign colonists essential for cultivating new lands. Thus, the Russian government gained extensive experience in using invited specialists to solve acute economic challenges. By 1914, approximately 400,000 Germans lived in 200 colonies along both banks of the Volga River. Nearly 75% of households were classified as *serednyaki* and *kulaks* (middle and wealthy peasants). In addition to grain, they produced flour, leather goods, agricultural tools, and operated small wood-processing factories [Герман, 2000: 10].

However, the outbreak of war with Germany in 1914 quickly turned prosperous German citizens into outlaws. They faced moral, political, and economic discrimination, though many remained loyal to Russia, serving in the army and working in the rear. Their support for the February Revolution stemmed from hopes for reform, which were later dashed by the Bolshevik victory in October 1917.

The Autonomous Republic of the Volga Germans was founded in 1924, based on the earlier German Autonomous Oblast (1918–1923). Despite the sharp population decline during the 1933–1934 famine, by the onset of the Great Patriotic War (1941–1945), the republic had restored its population (around 606,000) and economic vitality [Герман и Плева, 2002: 22]. German migration to Kazakhstan coincided with broader Russian expansion into the empire’s eastern territories from the 18th century onward. Initially, German migrants were mainly military personnel and their families, integrated into the Russian imperial administration and not considered a separate ethnic group. German scientists such as F. Miller, I. Buhgoltz, S. Pallas, and Y. Eversman played a significant role in early geographical and natural resource exploration of Kazakhstan, including regions like Western Siberia, Northern Kazakhstan, the Altay, and Zaisan Lake [Kurmanova, 2014: 5]. Contributions to historical studies of Kazakh lands were made by V. Bartold and F. Radlov, whose works laid the foundation for ethnographic and linguistic research.

By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, German citizens of the Russian Empire controlled approximately 10% of business activity in Kazakhstan [Atantayeva et al., 2023: 10]. Settlements such as *Rozhdestvenskoye* (Fridensfeld) were founded in 1885, followed by dozens of colonies in Northern Kazakhstan between 1905–1911, including *Alexandertal* and *Altenau*.

The Stolypin agrarian reforms (1906–1911) accelerated German migration to Akmola region. By 1915, 58 settlements housed 27,000 Germans, attracted by the offer of 15 *desyatins* of free land, with average holdings reaching 54 *desyatins* per family [Abuov & Kartova, 2024: 215]. In rural Kazakhstan, Germans comprised 66% of the total German population, with early southern settlements founded by Mennonite families in the 1880s. The 1897 Russian census recorded 5,399 rural Germans versus 1,650 urban, though Germans were disproportionately represented in business, medicine, administration, and agriculture.

By World War I, approximately 70,000 Germans lived across Kazakhstan and Central Asia [Kurmanova, 2014: 6]. Following the Bolshevik victory, the Volga German Autonomous Republic was established in 1924. However, its prosperous farmers and distinct labor structures drew suspicion. From the late 1920s, Soviet authorities launched “*raskulachivanie*” campaigns targeting wealthy Germans, accusing them of espionage and subjecting them to arrest, exile, or execution [Kurmanova, 2014: 7].

The first wave of migration to Kazakhstan during the Soviet period included Germans from Ukraine, Crimea, and Leningrad oblast, fleeing repression and the abolition of all German national-territorial units except the Volga Republic. This marked the erosion of German prestige in Soviet society, with many changing surnames to avoid persecution. The adaptation of deported Germans and Poles to hostile environments is analyzed through migration detention theory, which frames deportees as second-class citizens and a source of cheap labor for Soviet modernization [De Genova, 2010: 40]. Archival records reflect the harsh conditions and labor exploitation in Kazakhstan’s industries. Despite this, Germans were quickly recognized as industrious and educated, contributing significantly to the republic’s development. Rita Sanders describes this as a “labor metanarrative”, portraying Germans as responsible and resilient citizens of their new *petite patrie* [Sanders, 2015: 88]. As of the 2009 census, Germans ranked as the 7th largest ethnic group in

Kazakhstan, numbering 178,409 people [Census, 2009].

The Nazi invasion on June 22, 1941 triggered mass arrests and deportations of Soviet Germans as “unreliable elements.” Initial victims from Belarusian Polesie were relocated to Eastern Kazakhstan, Akmola, Aktobe, Almaty, and Taldy-Kurgan. From August 15, 1941, Crimean Germans were sent to Jambyl, Karaganda, Kyzylorda, and South Kazakhstan [Kurmanova, 2014: 9]. The August 28, 1941 decree by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet ordered the resettlement of 1,250,000 Germans, accusing them of espionage and collaboration. This policy aimed to dismantle German identity and provide free labor for relocated industrial enterprises in the east. Soviet press, including Ilya Ehrenburg, reinforced the enemy image, equating “Germans” with “fascists.” This narrative justified subsequent “deportations of revenge” targeting Kalmyks, Chechens, Crimean Tatars, and others.

Over 80% of all German deportees received Kazakhstan [Kurmanova, 2014: 74]. The property and cattle of the Germans were sold for symbolic price to the locals. Soviet authorities also declared that property could be left on loan terms to be repaid for 7 years. However, this promise was not fulfilled. The resettlement act issued by Sovnarkom (Ministers’ Council) of Kazakh SSR and NKVD determined the order of the deported Germans accommodation. Around 440,000 Volga Germans were deported and only 117,700 of them were settled in 6 Kazakhstan regions (oblasts) [Kurmanova, 2014: 74]. Kazakhstan researcher T. Volkova states that due to mass deaths of the people, chaotic movement of various groups, and mobilization into Labor Army there is discrepancies in statistical data. However, in total as NKVD of USSR data showed during the period 1941–1945, 444,005 Germans were expelled to Kazakhstan; at that moment 333,775 were deported by the act of the Soviet government and others due to orders of Fronts and Armies Councils [Pohl, 2017: 75]. The transportation of the expelled Germans was badly organized and didn’t fit any requirements to keep deportees healthy. A lot of the people passed away during this long way to their new place of settlement. Moreover, this barbaric transportation of the deported people contributed to the spread of infectious diseases which also affected local population to become the victims of these illnesses [Atantayeva et al., 2022: 41].

By 1942 around 420,000 Germans were placed in Kazakhstan and most of men were immediately mobilized into Labor Army. A lot of the German

children whose parents were mobilized to Labor Army were placed in Russian and Kazakh villages of Kazakh SSR with the permission to live in the families of collective farmers. Housing problems of the new settlers were not less acute as problems with food supply. For the German migrants “who were moved by special government’s decision” was created plan of individual housing construction. It was planned to build 1,609 houses in 1942 in Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic but finally only 548 houses were ready. The Soviet government adopted a decision to provide a credit for newcomers estimated as 3,500 rubles per family which for this time was enough for house building but, unfortunately due to absence of building materials, first of all wood, glass, nails and others staff most of German families gave up the idea of taking out the loans [Kurmanova, 2014: 76]. Poor organization of the deportation process was disturbing Soviet administration including omnipotent NKVD. They realized that in such circumstances expelled Germans couldn’t be an effective labor force to fulfil the tasks assigned by the Soviet authorities. Representatives of the administration and security forces asked the government to provide assistance in improving working and living conditions of special settlers describing their plight. For instance, instructor of the Central Committee of Communist Party (b) of Kazakh SSR K. Anisimov informed in his report: “I think it is necessary at an early date to send for 15 days a team of Central Committee of Communist Party (b) and Sovnarkom with emergency powers to liquidate the foci of diseases to prevent typhus epidemic. And also to realize a number of measures to accommodate a great number of families who were still suffering without dwellings in winter time” [Atantayeva et al., 2022: 44].

However it will be wrong to insist that local authorities were indifferent or didn’t provide any assistance to the new settlers. Since autumn 1941 Kazakh authorities were intensively preparing to receive new labor migrants. Most problems with Germans accommodation were caused by huge flows of refugees and evacuees from the European part of Soviet Union occupied by Nazi forces or where the intensive battles were conducted. Kazakh republic authorities faced a lot of troubles in order to provide housing and food supply for all these new residents. According to L. Beria’s order (People’s Commissar of the Narkomat (Ministry) of Internal Affairs since 1938, deputy chair of the Ministers’ Council of the USSR – since February 1941) majority of the

expelled Germans should be moved to Kazakhstan [Kurmanova, 2014: 75].

In Kazakhstan despite the efforts of the local administration new settlers were unable to get any food supplies. For instance, letters sent by German deportees to the Central Committee of the Communist Party (b) of Kazakh SSR in 1944 and addressed to the 1 secretary of Karaganda obkom CPK (b) Galaidin. There were complains of miner N.V. Tzeber who's salary 250–300 rubles was not enough to buy food and clothes: he was starving; I. Shelenberg – this woman worked in coal mine for 12 hours and didn't receive any salary, starving. In this letter were listed not only German last names but a lot of the Russians. And all these cases were ordinary in war time [Atantayeva et al., 2022: 45]. In 1942 deported Germans met new challenges – mobilization into Labor Army. State Defense Committee earlier in September 1941 started to form so called “Labor Army” or (Trudarmiya) when the NKVD construction battalions were disbanded. In the beginning of the next 1942 year GKO issued special decrees on January 10, February 14 and October 7 to launch mobilization of adult German men into the Labor Army. By the Decree dated 13 February 1942 all men (16–55) and women (16–45) were mobilized. Survived Germans after extremely difficult way to Kazakhstan were again forced to leave their new placements. Soviet power adopted a new cynical act concerning the interests of the deported people. On November 18, 1941 Soviet authorities gave a permission to move to previously German populated collective farms new settlers from the other districts. All stray livestock should be distributed among new settlers in these collective farms [Pohl, 2017: 82].

The other few in number German settlers who were not covered by this decree had to work hard to fulfil tasks assigned by the authorities. The old men, women and teenagers' work was not as productive as of the young and healthy men so local authorities sent reports complaining about these circumstances. Mobilized into Labor Army Germans were enrolled in newly formed working battalions with the regime of army camp where nutrition standards fit GULAG norms. In the memoirs of Hogan Eisner – one of the Germans mobilized into Labor Army – indicated that in order to get 750 grams of bread per day it was necessary to produce 6 cubes of wood. This norm was possible only for the young and healthy men while majority were unable to do it. Thus, starving was one of the most tragic things that characterized life of the Germans in Labor Army. A lot of them passed away during

first year in the Labor Army including able-bodied young men [Pohl, 2017: 90].

In 1993 J. Schmal, a Russian-German writer published memoirs about his work in one of the labor camps. His friend Y. Felde was mobilized with his adult son. Their task was to load timber into wagons, it was physically difficult work and they were starving. A year later they both passed away. Series of the new orders to mobilize German settlers were issued in April and August 1943. Finally it can be stated that Soviet state initiated during the war a compulsory employment that led to mobilization of nearly all able-bodied population including women. One of the inspections of German settlers' hostel which was conducted by Kazakh authorities in 1941 revealed “exceptional lice infestation”. All the women living in this hostel were mobilized in Labor Army: the hostel had no heating system and it was not suitable for housing. One of the women died and nobody agreed to take care of the dead body until militia came. Women were the most suffering members of labor army: they had no winter shoes and clothes, bedding, personal care products and many other things which any woman needs. Men also were prepared for the service in Labor Army due to absence all necessary things. Cold weather made their work particularly difficult. Even those Germans who were unable to work due to poor health conditions anyway were sent to construction sites [Atantayeva et al., 2022: 46].

However, it will be wrong to insist that labor army was fully consisted of the deported people. Local population also became the victims of this politics. Archival documents contained the information about 257,000 mobilized Kazakh SSR citizens: most of them were Kazakhs [Atantayeva et al., 2023: 15]. The old men and women who were unfit for military service were forcibly enlisted in the labor army. There were recorded cases how pregnant women were mobilized to work in the mines. Soviet society experienced conflicting feelings towards Germans and other deported people. For instance, journalist I.M. Sanovich in his letter addressed to authorized commissioner of Party Control commission under Central Committee of All-Union Communist Party (b) for Kazakh SSR suggested to tighten the exiting politics towards deported Germans while estimated it as “wise measures of Soviet government” against “unreliable Germans”. Copy of this letter was sent to People's Commissar of L.P. Beria – head of NKVD. Of course, this letter and a lot of the similar documents did not reflect the full picture of reality. Another part of the Soviet society, including Ka-

zakh citizens, tried to support the deportees due to their distressful situation. They shared the little they had including first of all, food. Many deported Germans in their memoirs wrote about these facts [Atantayeva et al., 2023: 17]. Zh. Kulmuhambetova, a Kazakh citizen from Kostanay region, Denisovka village remembered how local authorities tried to persuade them that Manvailer family (German deportees) were our “people’s enemy”. So, Kazakhs were waiting for a while to get an idea about them. But later they were amazed by their hard working and patience. Finally she said: “what we had on the table was also what they had”.

Considering the problems of deported Germans it should be said that at least, official documents found in Special files “Resolutions KazSSR Sovnarcom..” dated by September 1, 1941 stated that for the successful reception, placement and economic structure...of the deportees.. Sovnarcom and VCIK of KazSSR obliged obkoms’ first secretaries of Communist Party of Kazakh SSR (b) to use all resources for providing better living conditions for the deportees. Kazakh SSR authorities should have been repaired existed houses with building materials of resettlement administration and also used functioning houses of the administration. This document consists of 10 points where in detail were explained the measures necessary for the proper placement of the deported Germans. For instance, in point 5th it was indicated that local authorities had to allocate land plots provided by water, pastures and arable areas newly formed German collective farms. Unfortunately, most of the assigned tasks were not fulfilled due to various reasons [Kurmanova, 2014: 76]. German deportees were mainly settled in the following oblasts (regions): Karaganda, Kostanay, Tselinograd, Pavlodar, Semipalatinsk, Kokchetav and Jambul. Only in 1955 by the decree of the Soviet government (December 30, 1955) they finally received the rights to move to the other regions of the Soviet Union except those they lived before the Great Patriotic War [Kurmanova, 2014: 77].

Where deportees worked

Karlag. Karaganda forced labor camp was a branch of GULAG situated on the huge territory of Kazakh SSR. Karlag history inextricably linked with the most tragic period of the Soviet history – Stalin’s terror. During war time over 85,000 special settlers including Germans and prisoners of Karlag were exploited as free labor force in all economic spheres. One of the main tasks of Karlag was creation of a large food base for the rapidly developing

coal and metallurgy industry of Central Kazakhstan. First settlers built railroad, barracks for prisoners and houses for the camp administration. Karlag was a huge institution with real power at its disposal: weapons, vehicles, post station and telegraph. Its numerous branches had to fulfil state plans so the prison labor was used in light and heavy industries and also various scientific projects. On the basis of Karlag was founded state farm “Gigant” which started to operate in 1931. By the beginning of the war in 1941 Karlag had 17 branches of “Gigant” with 52,366 arable lands, 70 sheep farms, 20 garden and 40 field plots. The work for Karlag prisoners never ended: in summer and spring they cultivated land, raised livestock while during winter and autumn worked in factories and plants. Unfortunately, it’s still impossible to determine an exact number of the deported Volga region Germans, their number from the other republics and those who had lived in Kazakhstan before the war imprisoned in Karlag and died as the results of hardships, malnutrition and illnesses [Karlag, 2024]. In 1942 (September, 26) Sovnarkom SSSR issued a decree to provide labor force to for the construction of pipeline and Kazakhstan oil plant. In total 2,350 body-abled populations were mobilized. Later from those who were unfit for military service were sent for underground works in mines, enterprises of Narkomzvetmet (Ministry of non-ferrous metals) and Narkomstroy (Ministry of construction) by decree issued by Sovnarkom. Around 1000 of special settlers were working on the construction of Balhash copper smelter factory and 1,800 in various construction sites and enterprises [Kurmanova, 2014: 78].

By the end of 1942 on the territory of Kazakhstan were functioning 30 different Narkomats where 60,293 special settlers were working. It’s an important fact because before the 1943–44 deportation of the other nations main labor force in all these industrial and agricultural enterprises were working Germans living in 58 labor camps [Atantayeva et al., 2023: 19].

Life and tragedies of deportees

Deportations of the 1930–40s were not an unknown phenomenon in Russian state history. With the beginning of the World War I (1914–1918) Russian political elites hatched plans of forced relocation of the Russian Germans in 1915 while their property could be confiscated and distributed among so called patriots. Nicolas II was ready to start realization of this plan in 1917. Only February revolution of 1917 interrupted this process. However,

during war time for the ruling elite “search of the enemies” always was and still is the best way out of any political crisis.

Conclusion

Deportations of the numerous Soviet nations before and during the war (1941–1945) were one of the most tragic periods in the history of the Soviet Union. Why again and again not only German researchers and public figures raise these problems? A well-known Kazakh writer and translator Gerold Belger insisted that future of the Russian Germans was/is very problematic. Following L. Gumilev’s idea that any ethnos is a continuation of land it populates, Germans are doomed. Our land was taken away. Ethnos is land, language, spirit and genes. We lost land and language. Split of our national traditions and generations is the worst tragedy. So, how we should construct our destiny? We have turned into nomads of the XX century: “forbidden people”, “torn people”, “crippled people” we had lost in 1941 small homeland while in 1991 – our country. We have become twice rootless. Unfortunately, even now the Russian-German protocol signed in 1992 about the restoration of the Russian Germans’ statehood was not realized. How it happened that for the Germans was abandoned any opportunity to restore their national unit? After the war in 1948 (November, 26) by the decree of Presidium of USSR Supreme Council the Soviet government prohibited any escapes from the places of

settlement. The document stated that: “resettlement has a permanent character with no rights of return of Chechens, Ingush, Kalmyk, Germans and other nations...” In 1964 (December, 29) the new decree of Soviet Presidium abandoned all accusations addressed Germans but however, they had to live in their new placements defined by the previous decrees. Khrushchev’s policy aiming to rehabilitate, at least, part of the Soviet people also covered Russian Germans. But, unfortunately for Germans Khrushchev’s pet project – virgin lands campaign was more important than their destinies. Soviet government didn’t want to lose hard working, disciplined Germans who greatly contributed to the success of virgin lands campaign. Thus, the Soviet authorities preferred to mention historical reasons as impossibility to restore the German autonomy because they couldn’t pretend for the status of indigenous people. In 1972 (November 3) by the decree of Presidium of the USSR Supreme Council “On removing restriction on housing choice for the for certain categories of the citizens” German population had finally received the right to move free in the country. Thus, in 1970s on the territory of Kazakhstan was living a numerous community of the Germans consisted of former deportees from the occupied regions of the Soviet Union, citizens of the abolished Volga Germans Autonomic Republic, repatriated after the war. Only 15% of the German population was the descendants of the settlers who had moved here in early XX century. By 1978 around 1,000,000 of the Kazakh SSR population.

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