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# REHABILITATION AND RESTORATION OF NATIONAL AUTONOMY OF THE CHECHEN PEOPLE: HISTORIOGRAPHIC PROBLEMS

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### *Abstract*

For many decades, the issues of deportation and rehabilitation of repressed peoples were banned in Russian historiography. New approaches to studying the history of the country began to be allowed in the late 1980s. From this period, the intensive work of researchers to study this problem begins. The article presents an analysis of the current problems of source study on the rehabilitation of the repressed peoples of the North Caucasus. The bulk of the documents on the issue under study are concentrated in the Central State Archives of the Russian Federation and in the State Archive of Socio-Political History. They contain party and government decisions, decrees, and minutes of meetings of the plenums of the Chechen-Ingush regional committee of the CPSU. Also, documents on the rehabilitation and restoration of national autonomy of Chechens and Ingush are stored in the archival administration of the Chechen. The gradual opening of the respective funds in the central and regional archives of Russia and other countries of the former USSR led to a surge of interest in this issue and numerous publications. Starting from the end of the 80s of the last century, publications began to appear in which the theme of deportations in the 30-50s of the 20th century was discussed on all-Union materials. Individual peoples, nationalities and population groups. The first scientific publications and collections of documents and materials on the rehabilitation of repressed peoples of the North Caucasus and the restoration of their national autonomy appear.

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**Keywords:** Deportation, rehabilitation, restoration, national autonomy, Chechens, documents.



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## 1. Introduction

The problem of rehabilitation and restoration of the autonomy of repressed peoples is multilateral and difficult. The rehabilitation process began very difficult and was accompanied by mass protests from some representatives of the party organization, members of the bureau of the CPSU regional committee. Considering the process of the return of Chechens to their homeland, their rehabilitation and the restoration of national autonomy can be emphasized.

One of the means of solving problems at the state level, which was in the arsenal of the power of the Soviets, was the forcible resettlement of peoples. For the first half of the 20th century, for one reason or another, more than a dozen peoples were deported, both on national and ideological principles. A separate group of peoples subjected to forced resettlement during the Great Patriotic War was also deprived of national statehood, including the Chechen people.

Considering the deportation process, using the example of the Chechen people, three stages can be distinguished: the eviction operation itself, its being in a special settlement, and its return. Based on this, at the present stage, in the process of reconstructing the deportation of the people, when conducting a source study, three thematic blocks of sources of different species origin should be classified.

## 2. Problem Statement

The problem of the rehabilitation of repressed peoples and the restoration of their national autonomy in Russian historiography was forbidden to study. With the advent of favorable conditions for a comprehensive review of this topic, in the late 1980s. after perestroika by Gorbachev, began the study of this issue not only as a whole, but also separately for each people. Today, it seems especially important to study and analyze in detail all the historical evidence of this process. For a more complete presentation of the process of restoring Chechen autonomy and their rehabilitation, it is necessary to study archival material that is stored in the archives of our country.

For several decades, domestic researchers have done extensive work on the analysis of this issue and published many works. Thanks to the opening of many archival collections with previously classified documents and materials, researchers were given the opportunity to evaluate the rehabilitation policy of the Soviet authorities in relation to repressed peoples and restore unreasonably liquidated national autonomies.

Based on archival materials in published documents and materials, the authors made a comprehensive analysis of the policy of rehabilitation of repressed peoples of the North Caucasus and the restoration of national autonomy.

## 3. Research Questions

In connection with the transformations that began in the USSR in the 1980s, scientists began a comprehensive review of state national policy, including aspects that were not previously studied. Domestic researchers drew attention to the topic of deportations of peoples and various social groups.

A huge role was played by the appearance of Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of the USSR of March 26, 1991 No. 225 (P) "On the Declassification of Normative Acts and Materials Related to the

Unlawful Forced Resettlement of Individual Peoples from their Places of Residence”, as well as the illegal liquidation of some national-state formations. This order became fateful for many deported peoples of the USSR. In addition, just a month later, on April 11, 1991, the Law “On the rehabilitation of repressed peoples” was adopted.

As a result, many documents under the heading “top secret” and “not to be disclosed” became available to researchers. Subsequently, the works of Milova (1992), Bugay (1990; 1992; 1995), Aliev (1994), Artizov, Sigachev, Khlopok, and Shevchuk (2000, 2003), Bugaev and Muzaev (2013), Bugaev, Muzaev, and Aydamirov (2016), Tsutsulaeva (2001; 2019), Isakieva (2016) and others were published who are considering the rehabilitation of Chechens and the restoration of their national autonomy.

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

The purpose of this article is to study the rehabilitation of Chechens and the restoration of their national autonomy based on an analysis of documentary materials published by researchers over the past decades in Russian historiography.

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

In the process of research, the principles of historical knowledge were applied: objectivity, scientific character, historicism, which imply the study of phenomena and facts in all their diversity, in the historical conditions of their occurrence, allowing us to answer all the positive and negative sides of the historical literature under consideration. Based on the principle of historicism, the authors analyzed the views of domestic researchers in a concrete historical setting and in chronological sequence. The authors used comparative historical and source study methods of analysis.

#### **6. Findings**

The document that played an important role in resolving the issues of rehabilitation of repressed peoples was the Law of the Russian Federation “On the rehabilitation of repressed peoples” dated April 26, 1991 No. 1107-1. The preamble of this Law says that, based on international acts, the Declaration of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of November 14, 1989 "On the recognition of repressive acts against peoples subjected to forced resettlement and securing their rights as illegal and criminal," the resolution of the congresses of people's deputies of the RSFSR, as well as the current legislation of the RSFSR and the USSR, enshrining the equal rights of the Soviet peoples, and, striving to restore historical justice, the Supreme Council of the RSFSR proclaims the abolition of all illegal acts, in taken in relation to repressed peoples and adopts this Law on their rehabilitation.

On August 3, 1992, the Board of the Ministry of Security of the Russian Federation decided to take measures to implement the rehabilitation legislation and other normative acts aimed at restoring the rights and legitimate interests of unreasonably repressed people. Starting from this period, corresponding archives gradually began to open in the central and regional archives of Russia and other CIS countries, including the funds of the NKVD of the USSR, the USSR Prosecutor's Office, which led to an increase in the interest of many researchers in this problem with the appearance of numerous publications.

In the 90s of the XX century the historiography for each of the deported peoples has formed. Initially, the works were published in which the problem of deportation was considered in a generalized form or by individual nationality. In the same period, the rehabilitation work of each of the repressed peoples appeared. These processes in the history of the country occupy an important role; their study is important not only from a scientific, but also from a practical point of view. For this reason, the works dealt with the processes of deportation and rehabilitation not only from the legal side, it showed all the difficulties associated with territorial rehabilitation and disclosed the measures applied to each people. Historians, politicians, ethnographers, geographers, archivists from different regions of the country took up the study of the problem under study.

Since the end of the 1990s, candidate and doctoral dissertations on the deportation and rehabilitation of repressed peoples were defended. For example, among other works, in 2001 at Kazan State University S.S. Tsutsulaeva defended her thesis on “Repressed peoples of the North Caucasus during the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945, problems of historiography”, in 2016 Isakieva defended thesis on “Labor contribution of deported Chechens and Ingush to the mining industry of Central Kazakhstan in the 40–50s of the XX century”.

In addition, during this period, the publication of archival documents and materials on the deportation and rehabilitation of exiled peoples during the Great Patriotic War begins. For instance, in 1992 a collection of sources was published “Deportations of the Peoples of the USSR (1930–1950)” (Milova, 1992). The collection contains the main set of official documents on the problem of deportation of the peoples of the USSR in the 1930s and 1950s stored in the SARF. Most of the documents were published for the first time as a result of extensive work on declassifying documents in accordance with the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of the USSR of June 6, 1991. The most important regulatory documents were selected regarding the authorization of deportation, the course of operations to evict repressed peoples, etc. Interesting documents were also published containing statistical information on the status of special settlements in 1948, 1950 and 1953. This collection contains a number of official documents, information, statistics related to the deportation and legal status of Chechens of special settlers.

In the 1990s, a number of works by Doctor of Historical Sciences N.F. Bull were published. For example, in 1992 in Moscow there was a collection of documents and materials “They must be deported”. The collection includes previously classified materials of the NKVD and the NKGB of the USSR, which recorded the most dramatic events in the life of our country, the eviction of entire nations from their places of residence.

The following collection of documents and materials “Repressed Peoples of Russia: Chechens and Ingush” was published in 1994. It included official documents and materials that were stored until the beginning of the 90s of the XX century for the most part under the heading "secret" and "top secret" and therefore inaccessible to researchers. The collection includes 240 documents from state archives, as well as documents from the republican archives of Chechnya, North Ossetia, Kabardino-Balkaria. The vast majority of these legal documents are published for the first time.

Despite the fact that the contents of the published documents in this collection are very valuable, quite complete historical sources for studying the history of the Chechen people during the deportation

period, they nevertheless require a critical analysis, especially an ideological, political assessment of the events of the eviction, in solving the national question, the activities of the party organs, etc.

Of particular note is the collection: “Ingush: deportation, return, rehabilitation of 1944-2004”, Compiled by Patiev (2004). The collection of documents is based on many acts previously published in various print media. There are a number of unpublished documents. In total, the collection includes 328 documents, which are distributed in seven sections. Historical sources published in this collection testify not only to the deportation and years of exile of the Chechen and Ingush peoples, but also compactly, in a logical, chronological and historical sequence, documents are published on the elimination of documented charges, on the rehabilitation of the people, the restoration of their statehood, national sovereignty.

Despite the fact that, from the point of view of socio-political evolution, it would be more correct to separate volumes according to other chronological indicators, since the rehabilitation process has always been connected with the views of the ruling party-state ethics on the past, present and future of the Soviet Union, the author of the work chose just such chronology of volume separation. A more accurate separation of the two volumes seems possible, marking the middle of the end of the 60s, when the Khrushchev’s “thawing” was replaced by the period of Brezhnev’s stagnation. But with such a separation, the first volume would be too enormous, during which the bulk of the acts, laws and directives were adopted, and the meager second would make each of them inconvenient to use. In the first volume, according to documents preceding the 20th Congress of the CPSU, sharp discussions of the party-state leadership of the USSR about the attitude to the repressive policy of Stalin are noted, as a result of which an official position was developed that was far from the truth, according to which the closest associates of the leader of the people did not represent the real goals of the repressive policy, and only after a special investigation of this issue could they imagine what the goals of this policy were.

In the second volume, the author in the introduction notes that by the end of the 1950s. rehabilitation policy slowed down, and measures for the rehabilitation of repressed peoples were half-hearted. This could be affected by the fact that by this time the main part of associates of Stalin was removed from power, and accordingly, Khrushchev no longer needed to use the rehabilitation process in the struggle for leadership.

The third volume of the collection of documents published in 2004 completes the history of the rehabilitation of the peoples and citizens of the Soviet Union repressed for political reasons during the period of the USSR. The peculiarity of the last years of rehabilitation in the USSR is not so much the liberation of honest people from camps, prisons and exiles as the development of objective political assessments of the past, the creation of legal mechanisms to return to all innocently convicted and repressed good name, violated rights, confiscated property.

The collection contains rehabilitation laws and their drafts, other decisions of the highest authorities and materials on collective rehabilitation issues, as well as all the preserved protocols and transcripts of the Commission of the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee on the additional study of materials related to repressions that took place between 30s and 40s and the beginning of the 50s. In total, about 300 documents were revealed.

Undoubtedly, the collection of documents and materials “Restoration of the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (1953–1962)”, published in two volumes (Restoration of the

Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (1953–1962), 2013, 2016), is of great scientific value. The compilers of the collection are Bugaev (2016). Certainly, a significant role belongs to the candidate of historical sciences, associate professor Bugaev (2016), who did a great job in the archives to collect material for the collection. The first volume of the collection of documents, published in 2013, includes archival documents and materials consisting of legislative acts, directives, decrees, minutes of meetings of plenums of the Chechen-Ingush regional committee of the CPSU, etc. from 1953 to the beginning of the 1960s, reflecting the stages of the formation of the state policy for the rehabilitation of repressed peoples. The collection consists of two sections: the first section is rehabilitation: the initial stage, the second is repatriation. In total, it includes 100 documents that show the political and legal rehabilitation of the Chechen people and their return to their historical homeland.

The second volume, published in 2016, covers documents from the archives of the Russian Federation on the restoration of the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic until the end of 1962. The author pays great attention to the issue of restoring the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. In addition, the collection publishes documents first introduced into scientific circulation, illustrating the versatility of the current party organizational and ideological work of the regional party organization, its local structures, as well as state institutions, both republican and local. In total, the collection includes 21 documents from the funds of the Russian Archive of Socio-Political History and the State Archive of the Russian Federation, copies of which were transferred to the Archival Department of the Government of the Chechen Republic.

## 7. Conclusion

Thus, over the past decades, researchers have published a considerable number of archival documents and materials stored for many years under the heading "Top Secret" and "not to be disclosed." Using materials and documents identified in the archives of our country, researchers can reproduce as far as possible the events that took place in the North Caucasus during the Great Patriotic War. Of course, work in this direction should be continued, since there are still many "white spots" in the history of deported peoples.

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