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DEPORTED CHECHENS AND INGUSH RETURN AND THEIR
AUTONOMY RESTORATION

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Abstract

On January 9, 1957, the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR “On the restoration of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR within the RSFSR” was issued and approved by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR at the sixth session in February of 1957. This Decree was preceded by a long, persistent and selfless work of the representatives of the Chechen and Ingush intelligentsia. All thirteen years of exile these people forcibly evicted from their homes and abandoned in remote cities, towns and villages of the Central Asian republics never lost hope of restoring justice to their long-suffering people. They believed that the Chechen and Ingush peoples were innocent and that the time would come when the Chechens and Ingush would return to their homeland. Real hope appeared after the 20th Communist Party Congress, when N.S. Khrushchev, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR made a report “On the personality cult and its consequences” at a closed meeting on February 25, 1956. Exposing the personality cult of Stalin and his despotism, N.S. Khrushchev named one more his crime being the repressions against peoples. Now, the main problem was to restore autonomy.

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1. Introduction

In February 1956, at the 20th Communist Party Congress Khrushchev (1989) being the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR made a report “On the personality cult and its consequences” and noted that it did not fit in the minds of a reasonable person how one could blame entire nations including women, old people, communists and Komsomol members for the hostile actions of individuals or groups, and subject them to massive repression, hardship and suffering (Izvestia of the Central Committee..., 1989).

After the congress, the process of the repressed peoples’ rehabilitation accelerated significantly. At first, it was assumed that the restoration of the Chechen-Ingush autonomy regarding the large number of the population subjected to resettlement would be impossible. S. Kruglov, the Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR wrote in this regard that it would be possible to consider the issue of creating regional autonomy for the Chechens and Ingush on the territory of the Kazakh (on the border of Kazakhstan and China) (Ermekbaev, 2009) and Kyrgyz SSR. However, the Chechens and Ingush wanted the republic restoration in its former borders and at the same place.

2. Problem Statement

The changed political situation in the country at that period made it possible to start taking measures to rehabilitate the peoples and groups of the population subjected to deportation. However, it is worth pointing out that these measures were of a half-hearted nature, specifically, the people got only freedom of movement. Former special settlers did not have the right to return to their homes, receive monetary compensation, property. There was an obvious reluctance to criticize the ongoing policy of mass deportations (Isakieva, 2016).

Despite the fact that on July 16, 1956, the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Commander of the USSR “On easing the restriction on special settlement from Chechens, Ingush, Karachais and their family members evicted during the Great Patriotic War” was issued but did not mention any political rehabilitation. They were considered “enemies of the people” and they remained in this kind, they just turned from the punished into the pardoned. It was especially emphasized that the removing people from the special settlement registration did not entail the return of their property and that they had no right to return to their former residences. Under the guise of familiarization with the Decree, they took signed promises from people about it. However, in October 1956, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Kazakh SSR reported to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR that 55,117 Chechens, Ingush and Karachais out of the 195,911 ones deregistered in the republic special settlements refused to sign a promise that they had been announced to be released from the special settlement and that the Decree of 16 July, 1956 was cleared up to them (Zemskov, 1991).

On November 24, 1956, Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR adopted a resolution “On the restoration of the national autonomy of the Kalmyk, Karachai, Balkarian, Chechen and Ingush peoples.” This historical document stated that the mass eviction of entire peoples was not caused by necessity and was not dictated by military considerations but was one of the manifestations of the personality cult alien to Marxism-Leninism, a gross violation of the basic principles of the national policy

of the party (CPSU, 2003). After making decisions on the political rehabilitation of the repressed peoples, the development of practical measures aimed at implementing the tasks of re-creating the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic began (Tsutsulaeva, 2017).

3. Research Questions

The decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of January 9, 1957 “On the restoration of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR as part of the RSFSR” marked the official end of the thirteen-year deportation of Chechens and Ingush. On January 9, 1957, by the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR “On the approval of the Organizing Committee for the Chechen-Ingush ASSR”, the creation of this temporary working body was legally formalized. Gayrbekov Muslim Gayrbekovich was appointed as its chairperson. The session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR for the organized return of the deported peoples recommended doing it in small groups and on time, in order to avoid difficulties in the work and everyday life of the repatriates. The long period for the restoration of the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was established, specifically, 1957–1960 (Supreme Soviet of the USSR, 1957).

On February 21, 1957, the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR adopted a resolution “On measures to help the Chechen-Ingush ASSR”. In accordance with it, the Bureau of the Regional Committee of the CPSU and the Organizing Committee for the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic approved a plan for the organized reception and settling of the population. On October 26, 1957, the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR adopted a resolution “On measures for economic, cultural and household construction in the Chechen-Ingush ASSR in 1958–1960 due to the resettlement of Chechens and Ingush from the Kazakh SSR and the Kirghiz SSR”. Attention was paid to education, science and culture. From July 1, 1957, literary and artistic almanacs and newspapers in the Chechen and in the Ingush languages started to be published. On June 7, 1957, the Chechen-Ingush Scientific Research Institute of History, Language and Literature was restored and etc.

When writing this article, the works of Russian scientists-researchers Isakieva (2016), Bugaev and Muzaev (2013), Maksimov and Lidzhieva (2014), Akhmadov (2006), Tsutsulaeva (2017, 2019), Patiev (2004) and others, who considered the problem of the return of Chechens and Ingush to their historical homeland, were used.

4. Purpose of the Study

Within the framework of this article, the author sets the goal to show how Chechens and Ingush returned to their historical homeland after the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of January 9, 1957 “On the restoration of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR within the RSFSR”.

5. Research Methods

The methodological basis was the principles of objectivity, scientific character and historicism implying the study of facts and phenomena in all their diversity, in specific historical conditions of their emergence and development, enabling to highlight both the positive and negative aspects of the problem

under study. The work bases on an integrated research approach and the methods of objective-historical comparison and comparative analysis.

6. Findings

The repressive act against the Chechens as well as other peoples subjected to resettlement to the eastern regions of the former USSR was initiated and considered to the finest detail in the highest echelons of state power (Tsutsulaeva, 2019). Let us remind that on February 23, 1944, the Soviet government accused the Chechen and Ingush peoples of treason and organized their mass deportation to Central Asia (mainly to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan). About 500,000 people were deported (more than 400,000 Chechens and 90,000 Ingush). Not only ordinary citizens of the republic were expelled but also party and Soviet workers, participants of the Civil War, honored front-line soldiers as well as members of their families. The deportation order applied to everyone who was a Chechen or Ingush by nationality (Dobaev, 2000).

The methods and conditions of peoples' eviction were determined by orders of the NKVD of the USSR (Tsutsulaeva, 2019). The operation to evict the Chechens and Ingush, codenamed "Mountains", lasted three days and had the following procedure: Soviet troops were brought into the republic, supposedly for mountain maneuvering, and were carefully deployed around all Chechen and Ingush villages. On February 23, 1944, in the morning, all the villagers were suddenly arrested, forced into trucks and taken to the trains ready for departure. Each family was allowed to carry only 20 kg luggage. Due to the inhuman conditions of transportation (the deportees were transported in cattle cars for several days without food and water), thousands of people especially the elderly and children died on the way. Thousands of Chechens and Ingush died of hunger and disease in places of deportation, where they were often dropped off right in the open steppe without housing or food at least for the first days. Some mountain villages of Chechens and Ingush, whose inhabitants for various reasons could not be deported from the Chechen-Ingush Republic on that day were subject to physical violence along with the inhabitants. For example, on February 27, 1944, in the high-mountainous Chechen village of Khaibakh, many old men, women and children were killed, as it was presented, while they were fleeing the scene, although the oldest of them was 110 years old (Gaev et al., 2012). Other Chechen villages of Mazgara and Matskara and the Ingush villages of Targim, Guli and Tsori also shared the tragic destiny of the high-mountain village of Khaibakh (Anchabadze, 2002).

In special places for the residence of exiled special settlers, a barracks-regime position was established. Special settlers could freely move only within the area at a distance of 3 km. For more distant journeys, it was necessary to obtain special permission from the commandant's office. Armed posts of the NKVD troops were located between the settlements of the special settlers, and barriers were installed. For each special settler, a personal file was generated. Adults were required to register with the special commandant's office once a month.

On March 7, 1944, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR adopted a decree "On the liquidation of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR and the administrative structure of its territory." Having deported Chechens and Ingush to Kazakhstan and Central Asia, the Soviet government decided to liquidate the Chechen-Ingush republic. The territory of the republic was divided into four unequal parts. Specifically, almost the entire

territory of Ingushetia was transferred to the North Ossetian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, the lands of Eastern Chechnya were included in the Dagestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, the southern highland region was part of the Georgian SSR, and the northern and central regions of the former Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic with the name The Grozny District was included in the Stavropol Territory of the RSFSR. The names of the Vainakh settlements were changed very quickly and the artefacts of the peoples were destroyed. Everything was done to cast a veil over the Chechens and Ingush as soon as possible (Dzhandarov, 2005).

While committing collective repressions against individual peoples on a national basis, the state deliberately separated the deported peoples from the rest, which made up a solid “family of Soviet peoples.” When it came to the deported peoples to return home, this subtraction became one of the main causes of interethnic tension. The deportation has seriously complicated the uneasy relationship between the deportees and emigrants. “The Soviet state involving thousands of families in the economic and settlement development of the deportation territory,” said the researcher Tsutsiev (2006), “transfers its responsibility for the political crimes committed to them, makes them hostages of future conflicts” (p. 9).

After the death of Stalin and removing Beria from power, the Soviet party and state bodies began to revise the earlier decisions on the deportation of various peoples. In 1955–1956, restrictions on the rights of ethnic exiles were eased. People were discharged from the administrative supervision of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. “Although the rehabilitation was based on legal provisions related to the innocence of the overwhelming majority of the repressed and the illegality of their expulsion, they motivated its general political course of the Soviet state to restore and strengthen “socialist legality”. Real rehabilitation, which relied largely on the initiatives of the deported peoples, was actually limited to a complex of opportunistic political moments and economic justifications of the authorities at various levels (Tsutsiev, 2006).

At the initial stage, rehabilitation certainly did not imply the return of the deported peoples to their historical homeland (in particular, the prospect of creating an autonomy for the Chechen-Ingush Republic within the Kazakh SSR, in fact, in the regions of their exile, was discussed). The restraint of the central authorities in making decisions on the return of the Caucasian peoples was associated with a number of circumstances. Specifically, these were the risk of interethnic excesses between the exiled people being deportees and settlers in the Caucasus and the need to return the latter to their former places of residence. However, in fact, the departure of Chechens, Ingush and representatives of some other peoples of the North Caucasus to their historical homeland, which had already begun, forced the central authorities by the fall of 1956 to start restoration of the liquidated autonomies. By the decrees of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR dated January 9, 1957, most of the deported ethnic groups received permission to return to their historical homeland. The same legal act restored the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, and the Chechens and Ingush began to return to their homeland.

The Soviet state began to restore the previously deported national groups to their status as loyal Soviet citizens, provided them with funds for acquiring establishments and housing (if it was lost or not returned). Migrants from neighboring republics and autonomies started leaving the deported regions transferred to the disposal of the revived autonomies. However, autonomy restoration in 1957 did not

imply a complete return of the administrative-territorial boundaries of deported peoples' residence to the situation in 1943–1944.

During the restoration of the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, a part of the Prigorodny District, which was part of the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic until 1944, was not returned to its structure. That part of the Ingush territory around the city of Vladikavkaz (Prigorodny district) adjacent to the capital of the Siberian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic and economically connected with the city remained the part of this republic. Ossetians being the immigrants from other regions joined to the Chechen-Ingush ASSR moved there. At the same time, administrative measures to restrict the return of the Ingush population to the Prigorodny region were taken. As part of North Ossetia, a narrow strip of land also remained a part of its main territory with the Mozdok region, which, after the restoration of the Malgobek and Nazran as parts of Chechen-Ingushetia, could become an enclave (Tsutsiev, 2006).

It was decided to preserve the Naursky, Shelkovsky and Kargalinsky districts of the abolished Grozny region with the Cossack and Nogai population, economically allegedly gravitating towards Grozny, the capital of the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, as part of the restored Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. The Achikulaksky and Kayasulinsky districts of the abolished Grozny region were included in the Stavropol Territory, and the Karanogaysky, Kizlyarsky and Krainovsky districts were included in the Dagestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. In addition, the territory of the former Kizlyar Okrug was administratively divided between Dagestan, Checheno-Ingushetia and Stavropol (Dzhandarov, 2005).

The Aukhov (Chechen) region of the Dagestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic created at the end of 1943 and liquidated together with the deportation of the Chechens and Ingush on February 23, 1944 was not restored either. In 1957, the authorities in Moscow decided not to start a campaign to resettle the Laks and Avars, thereby providing the Akkins with opportunities to settle in neighboring regions of Dagestan, simultaneously limiting their return to the former Aukhov (Novolak) region (Tsutsiev, 2006).

7. Conclusion

Thus, with the creation of legitimate institutions of power, the constitutional revival of the national statehood of the Chechen and Ingush peoples, whose main result was the political rehabilitation of the Chechen and Ingush peoples, was completed. Thus, a very important period in the life of the Chechen people when they again got the opportunity to develop their economy, culture, science and education to varying degrees within the framework of the autonomy presented was terminated.

The rehabilitation of the Chechen and other repressed peoples turned out to be a very difficult task associated with overcoming numerous obstacles. By 1963, virtually everyone willing to return home was able to do it. Out of 524,000 people (418,000 of Chechens and 106,000 of Ingush) living in the Kazakh and Kirghiz SSR, 468,000 (384,000 of Chechens and 84,000 of Ingush) arrived at the Chechen-Ingush ASSR, the others went to the Dagestan and North Ossetian ASSR, some chose to stay in places of deportation (Ibragimov, 2003).

Despite certain difficulties in returning the deported peoples home, and, in particular, the Chechens and Ingush (the events in Grozny in 1958, when a part of the Russian-speaking population put forward demands for the separation of Grozny from the Chechen-Ingush ASSR or the restoration of the Grozny region), the Soviet state in general succeeded in maintaining stability in the country, and starting from the 1960s in deploying a new large-scale political ideological doctrine being the creation of a “single Soviet people”.

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