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Archival Investigatory Record of the Chief of the Political Directorate for the Central Asian Military District, Brigade Commissar N. P. Katerukhin as a Source for Studying the Phenomenon of Mass Political Repression of the Red Army Commanders in 1937-1938

Abstract

The article studies mass political repression in the USSR in 1937-1940s to offer an unbiased reconstruction of the process and to retrieve the historical experience at current stage of democratic transformations in the country. The article is devoted to one of the repressed Red Army command officers, head of the Political Directorate for the Central Asian Military District, Brigadier N. P. Katerukhin, participant in the First World and Civil Wars. It follows the fate of Katerukhin, who was awarded a rank of 'Brigade Commissar' in April 1938. The article focuses on the events of the second half of 1930s in the Central Asian Military District: mechanics of the NKVD investigation, operations and activities of commanders, political agencies, and military justice. Despite his honorable service, energy, initiative, and diligence at a difficult time of political strife, Katerukhin was under suspicion of the relevant authorities. Information on 'sabotage activities' of the secretary of the district party commission N. P. Katerukhin kept coming from ex-director of the military pedagogical faculty of the N. G. Tolmachev Military Political Academy M. G. Fradlin to the supreme bodies of the party since January 1937. The authors have studied N. P. Katerukhin's archival investigatory record to show the nature of the NKVD activities at the time of contraction of mass political repression. The most important evidence against N. P. Katerukhin was 'confessions' of Division Commissar V. K. Kontstantinov, who in 1936 promoted Katerukhin's assignment to the post of director of the district party commission. Kontstantinov admitted under questioning to participation in a counter-revolutionary organization and revealed that he enlisted Katerukhin to the said anti-Soviet organization. By then the investigators had testimonies that at the time of political purges N. P. Katerukhin had expelled blameless members and reinstated enemy elements. The materials of the archival investigatory record are being introduced into scientific use for the first time. Of particular value are the interrogation reports, which contain valuable materials on the military and political history of our country. All this bespeaks the importance of studying archival investigatory files as a source on history of mass political repression in the Red Army.

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Keywords

Historical source, Central Asian Military District, political repressions, commanders, counter-revolutionary crime, court hearing, rehabilitation.

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