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Regime of Detention and Labor and Living Conditions of Special Settlers in the Omsk Region in 1930–1945

Abstract

In modern historical science the study of punitive state policy (deportation of special settlers to Siberia from 1930 to 1945, in particular) is gaining importance. Rethinking national past is necessary in order to eliminate the existing contradictions, including national ones. Introduction of previously unpublished documents from the Archive of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs Directorate for the Omsk Region into scientific use has enabled the author to study the issue in depth. It is quite significant due to general lack of research into detention regime, working and living conditions of special settlers in the regions (the Omsk region, in particular). The article is to study detention conditions and use of special settlers' labor in the Omsk region in the 1930s-40s in the context of the entire Soviet penal system. While preparing the article, the methods of scientific research were used: objectivity, comprehensiveness, historicism. The system approach allows to apply general scientific and special methods. The use of the problem-chronological method allows to study special settlers' activities in the Omsk region in different time periods. The article assesses the nature of detention regime, living and working conditions of special settlers, as well as their relationship with the local population of the Omsk region in 1930–1945. Tightening punitive policy of the Soviet state in the 1930s was expressed in forced deportation to remote areas of the country. Initially, the deportees were relatives of kulaks and "enemies of the people" registered in the NKVD of the USSR and restricted in civil rights. In the early 1940s persons expelled from the Baltic States, Western Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova began to arrive in the Omsk region. In the days of the Great Patriotic War the special settlers of the region were joined by the Kalmyks, the Germans, and residents of the Crimea accused of aiding the troops of Nazi Germany. Special settlers were placed in special settlements in the North of the region, where they were engaged mostly in fishing and fish processing. Housing and sanitary conditions were very basic. There was a lack of accommodation, equipment, utensils, clothing, fuel and a serious shortage of children's institutions. The food ration of a special settler equaled that of a prisoner. Outright poverty of special settlers was connected with the difficult social and economic situation in the country and with underdeveloped logistical system in the region, but also with law enforcement agencies implementing the principle of the inevitability of punishment. Unaccustomed to harsh climate, scarcity of food, and hard physical labor, special settlers were often sick; the mortality rate was high. Number of male special settlers began to decrease significantly since 1941 due to mobilization to the Red Army. Relations between local population and special settlers were ambiguous, ranging from outright hostility to close friendship. Gradually, cohabitation of Siberians and settlers brought mutual assistance and trust. Special settlers' labor made a significant contribution to the economic development of the Omsk region, as well as to the victory of the Soviet troops over Nazi Germany.

Keywords

Historical sources, bodies of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) of the USSR, state policy, special settlers, employment, “enemies of the people,” Germans, Kalmyks, detention regime, living conditions.

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