

## **Religiousness of deported peoples as a protest form during the post-war period in North Kazakhstan**

**Totalitarianism encroached on freedom of thought in such a way that it could not have been imagined before...**

A famous British researcher George Orwell describing totalitarianism noted its main peculiarity: "Totalitarianism encroached on freedom of thought in such a way that it could not have been imagined before...it is dictated what exactly to think; an ideology is embraced which must be accepted by the personality, they strive to manage his or her emotions and impose behavior forms on him or her... At least a totalitarian state does its utmost to control thoughts and feelings of its subjects so efficient that it controls their actions...". Just the control of actions, freedom of thought and feelings of "homo soveticus" became the main task of repression mechanisms of the Soviet state.

One of the most important orientations of policy of repression was the struggle against religiousness of country's population which had led to the destruction of church institutions and liquidation of the clergy as a class.

Taking into account public mood, moral and pecuniary aid of the state to church, the government of the state made partial concessions to the believers during Great Patriotic War. In 1943 the Soviet regime legalized religious associations in the whole territory of the USSR. Legalization was partial and concerned Islam, the Orthodoxy and Baptism on extremely limited scale. The next activity on relaxation of attitude to religion was Decree of the Council of Peoples Commissars of the USSR of November 19, 1944 "On the procedure of opening of meeting-houses". As a result at the turn of the year 1945 in the territory of North Kazakhstan there were 9 meeting-houses, in 1946 – 28, and in 1947 there were 31 ones.

Liberalization of the state policy in relation to religion led not only to ordinary increase in number of churches and mosques, but also to gradual restoration of ideological opposition of the authorities and the believers. This opposition was seen especially impressive among deported peoples; religious communities and sects became widespread in their milieu. The most active of them were occupied not only with religious actions in the narrow circle, but also with anti-Soviet agitation. One of them was V. Prokofiev who lived in the village Novo-Sukhotino, Krasnoarmeisk Raion, Kokchetav Oblast and carried on the agitation among the faithful Catholics and Lutherans. He was arrested because of his activity by the organs of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Another alternative thought could not be extended in a totalitarian state where the Soviet ideology dominated and everything what did not agree with their party purpose was strictly nipped in the bud.

Nevertheless, in the early fifties regional authorities stated active implication of special settlers in various religious sects. It is reported about coexistence of religious actions equally with anti-Soviet agitation in the "Reference" on special settlers of Chkalov Raion dated December 10, 1952. For instance, "A religious group leading by A.G. Schultz and V.A. Volsky was liquidated in 1951 in the village Kalinovka. They gathered up to 30-40 people for religious actions and once they led out up to 400 kolkhozniks to the cemetery for prayer service. Organizers were arrested and instituted criminal proceedings under Article 58 of The Criminal Code of the RSFSR".

Suffering from moral and psychological pressure from the authorities deported peoples sought for spiritual support which they found in religion. The most impressive religious views had the Germans and the Poles who united in various sects. It is difficult to define if it is worth to

consider majority of religious associations of special settlers to be really sects who threatened people's health or they were only ordinary believers' communities who tried to keep their own ethno-cultural traditions. It should be noted that many preachers and priests were killed because of the repressions against the clergy in the 1920s and 1930s.

Mass repressions of the clergy led to the formation of religious vacuum, and spiritual impoverishment of the believers. In spite of prohibitions of the authorities considerable quantity of the Germans and the Poles who lived in some raions of Kokchetav Oblast took an active part in the work of religious communities and sects. Sects were represented as various branches of Christianity. In the territory of the oblast there were sects of Lutherans, Baptists and the Mennonites. An illegal Lutheran Church worked in Shchuchinsk, the organizers of it were two elderly people. Church board and auditing committee were chosen, a special church service house was rented. Besides gatherings sectarians carried on an active work with people, visited neighboring villages, and kept in touch with other sectarians.

It is very difficult to determine numerical strength of the sectarians because many of them concealed their attitude to religion and sects. The next villages Zlatopolye (Shchuchinsk Raion); Aidagul, Dorogovka, Karashilino, Malo-Pakhtinskoye, forestry (Zerenda Raion); Yasnaya Polyana, Donetskoye, Kalinovka, Zeleny Gai (Chkalov Raion); Yuzhnoye, Bogodukhovka, Leonidovka (Kellerovka Raion); Zauralnoye (Enbekshilder Raion); and kolkhoz named after Thalmann (Kyzyl-Tu Raion) were mentioned in the reference "On the condition of political and educational work among special settlers of Kokchetav Oblast". In these villages implication of youth and children in religious sects was dominant.

The activity of the sects was contrary to the ideology of Soviet authorities, therefore conflicts between these structures were unavoidable. Involving the believers in the communities, priests noticed them implement religious actions at full capacity. It's all led to special settlers' refusal of work on Sundays and religious holidays. Hence, for the regional authorities the believers were people who sabotaged economic activity.

Implication of children and youth in religious sects and active consideration of imperfection of the Soviet regime by the believers led to new persecutions. Sects' organizers were persecuted with tried and tested methods and means. Penetrating into informers' community the organs of the Ministry of Internal Affairs collected information against sects' organizers and it led to the institution of criminal case against them and demonstrative judicial proceedings. At that time the main punishment measure was prison camp placement for 25 years plus incapacity for 5 years. "In this case the majority of Baptist and Mennonite inmates under Article 58 and its Republican analogs got to special prison camps including Steplag and Luglag (Karaganda oblast)".

There were explanatory conversations with sects' members, exposing articles were published, and they had obstructions at work and study. By means of ideological pressure regional authorities strived to put an end to active participation of special settlers in the work of religious sects. Intrusion of the Soviet ideology and religious persecutions provoked indignation of special settlers and led to the following statements. A special settler, a German woman, Alitsa Ivanovna Gaufler, born in the year 1892, spoke: "Soon the God will send poisonous substances and those young people who at present go to the cinema, dance in the club, wear beautiful shoes, powder their face, have their hair curled, and do not admit that the God exists will suffocate".

Special settlers from the North Caucasus also give their similar view on it. A special settler, an Ingush, Yakhyat Zilbukharov, spread the following rumors among the faithful Ingush: "According to the Koran, the Soviet power will not exist for a long time... capitalist countries send out their spies to the USSR who will together carry on the agitation and afterwards in the

USSR will be a revolt which overthrew the Soviet power with the help of other capitalist countries”. Many statements of these people were with a great part of imagination but on the whole, they showed their expectations for the forthcoming liberation.

It should be noted that in several raions there were some sects among the Ingush and Chechens. In the reference “On the condition of political and educational work among special settlers of Kokchetav Oblast” it was noted that among the Chechens and the Ingush the most widespread sects were “Kunta-Khadzhi”, “Deni-Sheikh”, and reactionary sect “Batal-Khadzhi”. Meetings of the sect “Kunta-Khadzhi” were regularly held in the villages Gavrilovka, Andreyevka (Ruzayevka Raion); Aryk-Balyk, Takhtabrod (Aryk-Balyk Raion), in Shchuchinsk and Kokchetav.

Equally with religious meetings patrimonial vestiges were developed at great pains. Among the youth there were such people who were openly hostile and strove for the formation of national groups.

Tendency of the Ingush and the Chechens to unite on the religious basis in Kokchetav Oblast met with difficulties because of their dispersed habitation and high security of the special settlement. Because of these circumstances religious and ethnic traditions concentrated in their families but not in the communities. There was a dominant latent resistance to the Soviet ideology in the milieu of the Chechens and Ingush which was expressed in prohibition of study for the family members (especially for girls), of going to the cinema, clubs, of joining the Komsomol and so on. Having had so many problems because of the Soviet regime, being moral depressed, deported people tried to merge into the religion as far as possible. “And indeed what except the religion deported people could appeal to, the authorities had put them in the position of outcasts. The cultural-educational work was completely ceased – there were no newspapers, no books, and no films in mother tongue. It’s all created favorable conditions for the intensification of religious influence which historically had been both anti-Russian and anti-Soviet to a certain extent. And just the religion was the keeper of ancient traditions and customs”.

Opponency to the authorities from the position of the religion was not the only tendency of protest moods of special settlers. The majority of special settlers protested not only against deportation itself but also against injustice and heavy living conditions in special settlements. The maintenance of inhuman regime in special settlements contributed to the growth and intensification of protest moods among deported peoples. Protest moods of special settlers were expressed in different forms: prison breaks, public speech, and latent sabotage of those socio-economic and cultural state policies which were pursued by the government of the country. Intensification of protest moods was connected with the unification of special settlers under the aegis of the religion in the communities and sects. There was a revival of spirituality and ethnic culture in them, and intensification of religious ideology which developed defense mechanism against repressive Soviet reality. Repressive state policy directed against the clergy and the believers in the post-war years could not crush people’s faith in God and their will to freedom.

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