

WIVES OF ENEMIES OF THE PEOPLE: LIFE IN THE BACKGROUND OF REPRESSION

*¹I. OSPANOVA^{ORCID}, ²Sh. ISHMUKHAMEDOV^{ORCID}

¹«BEST» School (Almaty, Kazakhstan)

²«Turan» University (Almaty, Kazakhstan)

*ospanovaidana@gmail.com, sh.ishmukhamedov@turan-edu.kz

Abstract

The article is devoted to the situation of wives of “enemies of the people” during repression in the USSR between 1927 to 1953, as well as their lives in labor camps, to which they were sent only because they were family members of men accused of treason. Wives of “enemies of the people” often did not even suspect the illegal activities of their husbands, that is, they were accused of crimes against the Motherland unfoundedly. The researchers recognize the situation of this category of Soviet citizens as the most disenfranchised as no trials were held against women and they had no right to appeal. The situation was significantly aggravated by the fact that their minor children were forcibly taken away from them, placing them in orphanages with terrible conditions of detention. Women often died in labor camps, for example, in ALZhIR camp in Kazakhstan due to excessive workload, poor nutrition, epidemics and unsanitary conditions of detention, which also did not correspond to the harsh climate of the region. The author comes to conclusion that such treatment of its citizens does not meet the human rights standards accepted in the international community, and in fact, was the extermination of the Soviet population under a far-fetched pretext.

Keywords: wives of enemies of the people, Gulag, Stalinist repression, Great Terror.

Introduction

The relevance of the study is due to the fact that not only those who were assigned as traitors, but their wives, who were sent to forced labor camps, suffered from repression in the USSR between 1927 to 1953. The scales of these arrests and exiles were enormous: there were approximately 500 thousand prisoners in concentration camps for wives of “enemies of the people” by 1950. Taking into account the fact that there were no exceptions for female prisoners, they had to work equally with men. At the same time another element of pressure on wives of “enemies of the people” was that their minor children were forcibly taken away from them and put in orphanages, where the conditions of detention could not withstand any criticism.

The object of the study is repression in the USSR between 1927 to 1953. The subject of the study is life and destiny of wives of “enemies of the people”. The objective of the study is to identify specificities of situation of Soviet women during the I.V. Stalin’s repression, who were arrested and sent to labor camps with a note “wife of enemy of the people”.

The scientific significance of the study lies in summarizing scattered information from various sources (memoirs of Gulag prisoners, historical essays, articles of Russian and foreign researchers, declassified documents of the USSR) about the situation, life and difficulties of Soviet women, sent to concentration camps on trumped up charges of aiding their husbands, declared enemies of the people.

Main body

The period between 1927 to 1953 is considered to be the period of repression in the USSR, when I.V. Stalin was in power in the country. The repressions were expressed in large-scale socio-political persecution, mainly against representatives of the Soviet intelligentsia. The beginning of the “witch hunt” was associated with the end of the last stage of the civil war in the USSR. The heyday and

apogee of the identification of the so-called “enemies of the people” occurred during the Great Patriotic War, as well as in the post-war period.

Millions of artists, engineers, executives or professors who were considered a threat to the Soviet regime only because they were an educated elite fell under the category of “enemy of the people” in the USSR. Together with non-political prisoners, they were resettled in the Gulag, a system of labor camps throughout the Soviet Union.

Repression became widespread when relatives of “enemies of the people”, including wives, were also exiled to the camps. This began to happen everywhere in 1935, when the USSR Law “On Family members of traitors” was adopted. The situation finally worsened when the leadership of the USSR decided in 1937 to send the wives of traitors to the camps for a period of 5 to 8 years without trial. From that moment, mass relocations of Soviet women to correctional institutions began. Pregnant, sick and elderly women were ordered not to leave their place of residence.

According to historians, the most severe repressions were observed between 1937 to 1938. This period was called the Great Terror or “Yezhovshchina” after the People’s Commissar Nikolai Yezhov [Kochetkova N.A.]. In just over a year, 1.5 million Soviet citizens were sent to prison, and more than half of them were sentenced to capital punishment and shot.

At that time four camps were created specially on the territory of the USSR for the wives of “enemies of the people”. The most famous of them was the Akmolá camp of wives of traitors (ALZhIR), which was built in Kazakhstan. The most of women were exiled there. More than 10 thousand wives of “enemies of the people” were sent to ALZhIR in 1938. This “women’s” camp was known not only for the large number of prisoners, but also for the cruel treatment of those who were kept in it.

The camp was built in the steppe on the territory of 30 thousand hectares, surrounded by barbed wire with surveillance and security towers. There were adobe barracks on its territory, which were not heated in winter. To survive the cold prisoners had to cut reeds on the frozen lake Zhalanash and heat the barracks with them.

Information about how women were kept in the camps can be obtained mainly from memoirs or interviews with eyewitnesses. So, the researchers learned that there was poor nutrition (prisoners were never given meat, the diet included millet porridge and boiling water), hard daily work, no medical care in the “women’s” camps. Women were not allowed to correspond with their relatives, they were forbidden to read books and receive parcels from home. When the prisoners did not work, they stayed in barracks under the supervision of guards. A roll call was carried out twice a day. The women were ordered to build sewing workshops themselves, in which they worked together with young children, who were told to master embroidery. Those who could not sew was engaged in agricultural or construction work. As can be seen the labor and conditions of detention were inhuman.

Children born in the Gulag were almost always immediately taken from their mothers. In many forced labor camps there were special barracks or so-called “orphanages” where both children born in the camp and those who arrived with convicted mothers were kept (it was allowed to take children under the age of 1.5 years).

Their survival depended on the climate in which the camp was located, the length of the prison term and, most importantly in many cases, on the attitude of the camp staff, educators and nurses. Poor child care led to frequent outbreaks of epidemics and high mortality, which for many years ranged from 10 to 50% [Mikhailov M.I., 2010: P.248].

The stories of Gulag children indicate that children were kept separately from their mothers in children’s barracks. Some wives of enemies of the people did not know that they were pregnant when they were taken from home to the camp. Children were forbidden to meet their mothers, despite the fact that they could be kept in neighboring buildings.

Many children separated from their parents recalled that their reunion did not bring them any joy.

The word “mom” was closed to their caregivers, and there were no happy hugs when meeting real mothers. They were often cold and didn’t know how to behave. No connection was formed between the generations.

The ALZHIR labor camp existed until 1950, however, even after its closure, prisoners were obliged not to leave the territory of Kazakhstan for another 8 years.

After their release, the former prisoners of the camps had no right to live in large cities and were forced to settle at a distance of at least 100 km. Finding a job was also a challenge. Often they were forced to rent a dilapidated room or just a corner in the dorm.

Many of them could not even afford to return to their native places and stayed in the settlement closest to the camp. Women and their children born in the camp were often forced to hide their camp past so that there would be no problems at work or in new families. Even if someone managed to return to their place of birth, they often found that the family’s apartment had been confiscated and reallocated.

In 1991, the law “On Rehabilitation of Victims of Political Repression” was adopted, which recognized the children of victims of repression and finally granted them the right to return to their place of birth. Later, the law was amended to allow children born in camps to apply for housing in the city where their parents lived before their arrest.

However, from a bureaucratic point of view, the procedure of “returning home” is extremely complicated. It is necessary to submit “certificates of rehabilitation” and many other documents, after which the applicant must register at the proposed new place of residence – and each subject of the Russian Federation (republic or region) has its own laws, procedures and queues for free housing. Thus, the process can drag on for decades.

Finally, in addition to all the other horrors of the Gulag such as forced labor, starvation, beatings, severe cold and unsanitary conditions, female prisoners were also subjected to sexual violence.

The researchers emphasize that the process of repression of wives of “enemies of the people” from the very beginning to the end was organized in such a way as to completely demoralize women. First of all, no one notified them of the date and time of their arrest. Usually, law enforcement officers broke into the women’s apartments and took the detainees away without explanation. At the same time, they were allowed to take with them only one set of replaceable clothes, underwear and shoes. The apartments of the prisoners of the camps were subject to sealing and confiscation in favor of the state. That is, if a woman returned from exile, then she had nowhere to live.

At the same time, if a woman had minor children, when she was arrested, they were placed in orphanages, and those who were over 15 years old were checked to see if they posed a danger to the Soviet system. According to the archival data of the NKVD, in the two years since the beginning of the Great Terror in 1937, about 20 thousand women – wives of enemies of the people were arrested and sent to camps in the USSR. At the same time, about 25 thousand children were sent to children's institutions, where hunger and abuse were widespread.

Researchers studying repression in the USSR often ask the same question: “How did Soviet people, unjustly convicted and sent to the Gulag, manage to find the strength to survive?”. Another thing is also interesting: how did ordinary Soviet women manage to survive in inhumane conditions, who did not do anything illegal, but were only family members of enemy of the people?

The answers to these questions can be found by studying the memories of those who went through the Gulags. Eyewitnesses in their memoirs write that they worked hard, finding the meaning of life in work not to go crazy (and this was not uncommon). They worked in nurseries, in sewing workshops, in the kitchen, at a construction site [Saltyk G.A., 2012]. They did everything to drown out the psychological pain with physical labor.

Literature review

Destinies of women, who were arrested and sent to Gulag camps with a note “wife of enemy of the people” still worries researchers both in Russia and abroad. Despite the fact that 84 years have passed since the Great Terror, research interest in the status of women does not fade.

N.A.Kochetkova and L.A.Obukhov in their work [Kochetkova N.A., 2007] emphasize the unprecedented nature of the repressions between 1937 to 1938. They emphasize that the wives of “enemies of the people” were the most disenfranchised category of citizens of the USSR. The trials did not take place over them, and the investigation was conducted “for show”. Often the proof of their guilt was a certificate of marriage with “an enemy of the people”. The wording of the accusation sounded the same: “I knew about my husband’s crimes, but I didn’t inform on time.” Further, as N.A.Kochetkova and L.A.Obukhov write, the most terrible thing for the wives was not the incomparable hardships of working in the camp, but the fact that young children were literally taken away from them by force, which many of them were not found later.

D.A.Zaitseva [Zaitseva D.A., 2016], describing the repressions of 1937, emphasizes that, in fact, the state condemned its citizens to suffering on trumped up charges, which were often based on slander and false denunciations. The author emphasizes that those years were imprinted with a shameful stain on the past of the USSR, when the rights of Soviet citizens were severely violated.

N.A.Antipin [Antipin N.A., 2022] agrees with this judgment. The researcher studies repression on a specific territory of the USSR – in the Chelyabinsk region. His work refers to the plight of the wives of “enemies of the people” who were placed in labor camps without trial.

Researchers from Kazakhstan M.Ch.Kalybekova and A.I.Kudaibergenova [Kalybekova M.Ch., 2019] study correctional institutions that existed in 1937 on the territory of the now independent Republic of Kazakhstan. This is the Karaganda camp (Karlaga), a subdivision of which the above-mentioned “women’s” ALZhIR was considered. In the Karlaga, where men were kept, there was also a “women’s” department. The authors write that the main items of income in these camps, which the prisoners provided, were garment factories, an agricultural experimental station, metalworking, production of building materials and glass. Thus, according to the plan of the Soviet leadership, “enemies of the people” and their wives could benefit society and thereby make their amends.

However, as researcher A.N.Timonin writes [2017], repression and genocide were characteristic not only of the USSR. So, since the 18th century there were historically proven cases of extermination of the indigenous population by the United States of America. The author emphasizes that since the declaration of Independence in 1776, the American government has regularly carried out raids, attacking Indian tribes, exterminating them, killing the Indian people. In 1814, a law was adopted that promised a reward of \$ 50-100 to those who brought the scalp of an Indian. Thus, at the beginning of the 20th century, the population of the indigenous people decreased from 5 million people in 1429 to 250 thousand.

History has known more than one case of genocide by Western countries. For example, S.N.Gorbunov [2012] writes about the genocide of the Australian aborigines by the British during the colonization of the mainland. As a result, today there are consequences of such an impact, expressed in the loss of influence and significance by the Aboriginal culture, which led to the loss of adaptive ability and their susceptibility to stress by indigenous peoples.

However, probably the most famous case of genocide is the extermination of Jews by Nazi Germany. Y.M.Antonyan [2021] emphasizes that the ideological foundations of German anti-Semitism were laid by A. Hitler and representatives of his entourage. The legislation of the Third Reich completely excluded the Jewish population from the right field of the German population. The Nazis also referred to the Slavic peoples as “inferior” races. Before the invasion of the USSR, Germany was developing a Master Plan named “Ost”, which provided for the colonization of the USSR, Poland and Czechoslovakia, liberated from communists and inferior races. After the invasion of Poland and the

beginning of the Great Patriotic War, the German leadership began to implement this program. But this Master Plan was not destined to be fulfilled. The successes of the Red Army on the battlefields raised the question of the existence of Germany itself.

Methods

The writing of the article included the following research methods: theoretical (classification, synthesis, analysis of information about the situation of the wives of enemies of the people), analysis of the results obtained, generalization.

Results

During the study it was established that the most severe repression against Soviet citizens were between 1937 to 1938 years. This period was called the Great Terror. Not only “enemies of the people” were arrested that time, but their relatives, including wives.

Based on the collection and analysis of information it was established that during the period of I.V.Stalin’s rule the percentage of female prisoners in Gulag camps reached up to 15% during the Great Patriotic War. This happened because of the sending of male prisoners to the front. In non-military times, women prisoners were about 5-10% of the total number of prisoners. In addition to completely “women’s” camps, on the territory of the USSR, the wives of “enemies of the people” were also sent to ordinary camps, however, they were not exiled to Kolyma and Vorkuta, because the working conditions were difficult there, and women could not cut down the forest in forty-degree frost.

It was also revealed that the conditions of detention of the wives of “enemies of the people” were appalling. For example, the ALZhIR camp, where only this category of people was kept, was built in the remote Kazakh steppe. The air temperature reached minus 40° C in this area in winter. In summer there was a debilitating heat and a strong wind blew all year round. At the same time, there were about 8000 convicted women in the camp, one barrack was designed for 300 people [Udovenko I.V., 2020].

Discussion

As a result of the study, it was possible to establish that the arrests of the wives of enemies of the people were carried out overwhelmingly arbitrarily and on trumped up charges that the women allegedly knew, but did not inform about her husband’s crimes against the Motherland. The evidence of guilt was mainly marriage certificates.

The study showed that women in labor camps had a harder life than men, because their production standards were set equally to the male sex. In addition, the wives of enemies of the people had children who were under 15 years old taken away, placing them in orphanages, which served as an additional measure of intimidation and demoralization of women. The situation was aggravated by the fact that no court sessions were even held over the category of “wives of enemies of the people”. Everything was limited to arrest, interrogation and being sent by stage to “women’s” camps. As a result, the wives of “enemies of the people”, innocent Soviet civilians, were humiliated by their own state.

According to the former prisoners of the camps, who were placed there for “aiding her husband, an enemy of the people,” a stricter regime was applied to such a category of prisoners than the one that applied to criminals. For example, wives of “enemies of the people” could not write and receive letters, parcels, or even just read books.

During the research, an important (and at the same time terrifying) fact was revealed: the essence of the wording “ten years without the right of correspondence” used at that time was clarified only in the 1990s. It meant that the spouse of the wife of “enemy of the people” was shot [Yankovskaya Ts.L., 2018: P.45]. The women were not informed about this, and even after leaving the camp, they continued to search for their husbands, who had been dead for a long time.

If we compare the results of this study with previous studies, in general, the conclusions about the plight of the wives of “enemies of the people” during the years of the Great Terror coincide or are close in meaning. In the studied literature the situation of this category of Soviet citizens is interpreted as the most disastrous, since it was the wives of “enemies of the people” who represented the most disenfranchised category of citizens. It was also established that the system of punishments in the USSR at that time worked in such a way that virtually no wife of “enemy of the people” managed to escape arrest and long years in prison. Obviously, this state of affairs left an indelible imprint on those women who continued to live in marriage, but literally every minute were forced to feel fear that they, just like, for example, a neighbor, could be arrested at any moment. It is difficult to even imagine how these women managed to maintain physical and mental health with such a load on the psyche.

The contribution of this study with the existing knowledge about repression in the USSR is due to the fact that it studied a large array of disparate information and compiled a comprehensive picture of the lives of the wives of “enemies of the people”. The study also revealed how female Gulag prisoners managed to maintain sobriety of thinking. However, it seems that this topic could be further studied in the course of subsequent studies.

Conclusion

As a result of the study the author came to the conclusion that the situation of the wives of “enemies of the people” in the USSR during the years of repression, and mainly during the Great Terror between 1937 to 1938, was depressing. It can be stated that their situation was the worst of all categories of the repressed, because the wives had no rights. The proof of this is the fact that no investigative measures were even conducted against them, there was no trial. There were only one or two interrogations, where the “evidence” testifying to the involvement of women in the crimes of the spouses was only a marriage certificate. Women were not given the right to challenge the verdict, to appeal.

In the “women’s” camps prisoners were separated from their children, which was considered an additional punitive measure against the wives of “enemies of the people.” They were ordered to work equally with men, which fragile women, who often were intellectual workers, simply could not stand and did not live to the end of imprisonment.

In addition, the wives of “enemies of the people” were often subjected to sexual violence by the guards, which often happened during the transfer to the camps so that the guards could easily hide the consequences of their crimes.

Of course, the Gulag system was not the only way to harm women in the Soviet Union. Its disastrous economic policies led to much deeper and more widespread poverty and scarcity than under capitalism (thanks to which the world’s poverty rate reached a record low), which most affected women and other vulnerable members of society. Nevertheless, the Gulag system serves as a vivid example of how the Soviet Union achieved the opposite “liberation” for women despite the proclaimed desire for gender equality.

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Халық жауларының әйелдері: репрессия көлеңкесіндегі өмір

*¹И.Оспанова, ²Ш.Ишмухамедов

¹«BEST» School (Алматы, Қазақстан)

²«Туран» университеті (Алматы, Қазақстан)

Аңдатпа

Мақалада 1927-1953 жылдардағы КСРО-дағы қуғын-сүргін кезіндегі «халық жауларының» әйелдерінің жағдайы, сондай-ақ олардың еңбек лагерлеріндегі өмірі қарастырылады, олар тек Отанына опасыздық жасады деп айыпталған семья отбасы мүшелері болды. Көбінесе «халық жауларының» әйелдері күйеулерінің заңсыз әрекеттері туралы білмеді, яғни олар Отанға қарсы қылмыс жасады деп айыпталды. Кеңес азаматтарының осы санатындағы жағдайды зерттеушілер ең құқықсыз деп таныды, өйткені әйелдерге қатысты сот отырыстары өткізілмеген және шағымдануға құқығы жоқ. Жағдай олардың кәметке толмаған балаларды күштеп алып, оларды ұстау жағдайлары қорқынышты балалар үйлеріне орналастыруымен қиындады. Әйелдердің өздері еңбек лагерлерінде, мысалы, Қазақстандағы АЛЖИР лагері сияқты, ауыр еңбек жүктемесі, аз тамақтану, эпидемия және антисанитариялық жағдайлар салдарынан қайтыс болды, бұл сонымен қатар аймақтың қатал климатына сәйкес келмеді. Автор өз азаматтарына мұндай қарым-қатынас халықаралық қоғамдастықта қабылданған Құқық қорғау нормаларына сәйкес келмейді және іс жүзінде кеңес халқын алдамшы сылтаумен жою болды деген қорытындыға келеді.

Түйін сөздер: «халық жауларының» әйелдері, ГУЛАГ, Сталиндік қуғын-сүргін, Үлкен террор.

Жены врагов народа: жизнь в тени репрессий

*¹И.Оспанова, ²Ш.Ишмухамедов

¹«BEST» School (Алматы, Казахстан)

²Университет «Туран» (Алматы, Казахстан)

Аннотация

В статье рассматривается положение жен «врагов народа» в ходе репрессий в СССР в 1927-1953 годах, а также их жизнь в трудовых лагерях, в которые они ссылались лишь за то, что были членами семьи

мужчин, обвиненных в измене Родине. Зачастую жены «врагов народа» даже не подозревали о противоправной деятельности своих мужей, то есть обвинялись в преступлениях против Родины голословно. Положение этой категории советских граждан признана исследователями самым бесправным, потому что в отношении женщин не проводились судебные заседания, и они не имели права подать апелляцию. Ситуация усугублялась тем, что у них насильно отнимали несовершеннолетних детей, помещая их в детские дома с ужасными условиями содержания. Сами женщины часто гибли в трудовых лагерях, например, таких как лагерь АЛЖИР в Казахстане, по причине непосильной трудовой нагрузки, скудного питания, эпидемий и антисанитарных условий содержания, которые к тому же не соответствовали суровому климату края. Автор приходит к выводу, что такое обращение со своими гражданами не отвечает правозащитным нормам, принятым в международном сообществе, и по сути, являло собой истребление советского населения под надуманным предлогом.

Ключевые слова: жены «врагов народа», ГУЛАГ, Сталинские репрессии, Большой террор.

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TO THE QUESTION OF THE WAYS OF TERM FORMATION IN ARCHITECTURE

^{*1}Zh.S.AKISHEVA , ²Z.K.SEIDAHMETOVA 

¹K.I.Satpaev Kazakh National Research Technical University
(Almaty, Kazakhstan)

²academician E.A.Buketov Karagandy University
(Karagandy, Kazakhstan)

*z.akisheva@satbayev.university, szergul@bk.ru

Abstract

The article pays special attention to the ways of term formation in architecture. The authors emphasize that with the semantic method, terms are formed by changing the meaning of words that previously existed in the language and giving it a new meaning. The semantic way of term formation includes the expansion and narrowing of meaning. The article shows that such terms appear as a result of semantic shifts. These shifts cause a discrepancy between the old and new meanings and call new concepts. Borrowing is defined by the authors as another productive way to replenish the terminology of the subject field "Architecture". Latin, French, German and Italian are named as the most common languages for borrowing architectural terms. In the architectural terminology of Kazakhstan, there is an active borrowing from the Turkic languages. The significance of this method of term formation is associated with the globalization and integration of internal processes in the architecture itself.

Keywords: term, architecture, semantic method, borrowings, architectural terminology.

Introduction

The basis of the architectural text is the architectural term [Mackevich N.A., 2023; Deniko R.V., 2015]. It needs to be said that the interest in architectural terminology in modern science is undeniable. Above all, it proceeds from the actualization of the very direction of terminology. Also, of course, the fact that extralinguistic factors, such as intensive urban development at the present stage, have a great influence on language processes.

Methods

Attracts attention the functioning of Russian-language terminology along with Kazakh is noteworthy in the architecture of Kazakhstan. The Russian-language architectural terminology of Kazakhstan is