

In Search of Salvation

Attempted struggle with bays, forcible policy of nomads' transition to settled life as well as intensive collectivization campaign and meat stocking led to mass reduction of livestock with subsequent famine. Its scale surpassed the leanest years in Kazakhstan, which took place in 1918-1919 and in 1921-1922. This famine carried away almost four million people, the majority of deaths occurred on the territory of the republic.

Authorities did not want and were not able to take any effective measures to save Kazakh population, having left people face to face with starvation. Descendants of great nomads had to make a difficult choice: die or flee without cattle and belongings.

Starting from autumn of 1931 big groups of starving Kazakhs headed for neighboring Russian territories. Mass migrations became one of the forms of collective protest and resistance to collective farming policy, as well as the only right way to avoid death. According to calculations of modern researches, about one million people left the republic those years.

Substantial part of Kazakhs from Northern, Northeastern and Central Kazakhstan started to move in the direction of Western Siberia by steamships, by train and by foot as well. Some of people who had to walk died on their way to Russia.

Official report stated, that the amount of Kazakhs who had resettled in Western Siberia, numbered about 50 thousand people. According to our hypotheses, the number was 5 times bigger. What is the reason for concealing actual number of Kazakh migrants? In the first place, almost until 1933 local Russian authorities had accurate instructions to evict Kazakh migrants from Russian territory. That is why forced migrants, as well as people who sheltered them, tried to pervert real numbers. In the second place, absolute majority of resettled Kazakhs did not have documents, which created certain difficulties for calculating the amount of people who had arrived from Kazakhstan. In the third place, immigrants were quite mobile, constantly trying to find passable conditions for survival and work. In the fourth place, there were cases of mass deaths of Kazakh population. In the fifth place, different diseases were rife and rampant among Kazakh settlers, which hampered the procedure of accurate record keeping. Sixthly, there were serious mistakes made in the sphere of population size counting. Seventhly, T.Ryskulov voiced the number 50 thousand back in 1932. It was just presumable data. Mass migrations took place either in the end of 1932 and in subsequent 1933.

Where did driven by hunger migrants go? In the first place, they made went to few Kazakh auls of Western Siberia, to their countrymen, immediate and remote relatives. Sometimes migrants even founded new settlements on the territory of the region. In the second place, Kazakh settlers went to the cities of Western Siberia, i.e.

Novosibirsk, Slavgorod, Barnaul, Biysk, Omsk. They tried to place their children in orphanages and find a job and lodging in order to survive in hard conditions. In the third place, labour demand was the highest in mines and railway constructions. In the fourth place, moving deeper into western Siberia, migrants found themselves in different peasant villages.

Multiple problems awaited migrants from Kazakhstan in western Siberia. Hungry Kazakhs overcrowded all stations of the West, mostly local kolkhozes refused to accept settlers because of strict instructions about their immediate eviction back to Kazakhstan. Cities and mines offered unsatisfactory accommodation. Often they were short-changed on salary days. Kazakhs were provided only with low-paid and plain jobs. Frequently, Kazakhs were not accepted for employment because they could not speak Russian. Different diseases, including smallpox, tuberculosis, and scab, typhoid and camp fever were rife and rampant there. Besides, there were acute food shortages and deficiency in orphanages.

Sometimes Kazakh migrants were subjected not only to psychological and moral violence, but also to manhandling and even murders.

In August 1934 some Kazakhs started to come back home, but mostly they stayed in Western Siberia. Even today, descendants of Kazakhs who escaped from Kazakhstan in search of salvation, live here.

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