

Time to remember

May 31 is the day when Kazakhstan people honor the memory of victims of political repressions and famine of the thirties of the XX century. This day we recall those who were tragically deprived of their lives, their relatives and descendants.

One of the first laws adopted at dawn of Kazakhstan independence on April 14, 1993, was Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On rehabilitation of victims of the mass political repressions”. In accordance with legislation more than 340 thousand illegally repressed citizens were rehabilitated. From 1997 by the decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, on May 31st, Day of memory of the victims of political repressions has been commemorated. Common tragic history is something that unites us, gives a chance to imagine all the scale of several generations’ tragedy, to pay a tribute of respect to innocent victims of the regime and honour the memory of the deceased.

This memory has a special meaning for Kazakhstan. Circumstances weighted in a way that our Republic became a place for eviction and deportation for millions of Soviet people. Deportations were one of the forms of political repressions: a great number of people had been moved to far, unknown and risky habitat. During the period of repressions about 15 million people were deported to Kazakhstan, there were 800 thousand Germans, 102 thousand of Poles, 19 thousand of Korean families, 507 thousand of different nations from Northern Caucasus among them.

More than 100 thousand people had been convicted from 1921 to 1954 in Kazakhstan, 25 thousand of the convicted were administered extreme penalty i.e. shooting, representatives of the Kazakh elite were among executed{ not only active antagonists of Bolsheviks could become repressions’ victims, but also those who did not accept their policy. 183 Kazakhstan organizations were “denounced” by NKVD, the number of “agents” made 3720 people, about 18% of members of the party organization in Kazakhstan were declared public enemies. National liberal intelligentsia was exterminated, including cultural and political figures such as Shakarim Kuday-berdyuly, Akhmet Baytursynuly, Myrzhakyp Dulatov, Mukhamedzhan Tynyshpayev, Magzhan Zhumabayev, Sanzhar Asfendiyarov, Uraz Dzhandossov, Turar Ry-skulov, Saken Seyfullin, Ilyas Dzhansugurov, Beimbet Maylin, Sultanbek Khotzhanov and many others.

In a period of mass repressions starting from 1937, 953 camps and colonies functioned in Kazakhstan among them the biggest camps were of the GULAG structure: ALZHIR, Steplag, Karlag and others. The whole region turned into a big prison. More than 5 million people were exiled to Kazakhstan camps during the years of repressions. Camps system was aimed at erasing all human traits of prisoners.

In comparison with the number of repressed, number of people who died of starvation amounts to 2,5 - 4,5 million 130 thousand. Famine in Kazakhstan from 1932 till 1933 was a part of all-union famine, caused by official policy of “eradication of the kulaks as a class”, collectivization, confiscation of cattle and

excessive plan of provision stock of central authorities.

People in Kazakhstan used to call this famine “Goloschekin’s”, after the name of Philip Goloschekin who ruled the region and pursued policy of Malyi Oktyabr. As a result of cattle confiscation only one tenth part of 40 million head of cattle left which led to to human losses because of hunger and emigration to Kirghizia, China, Mongolia, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Policy of preserving memory of victims of political repressions and famine is being pursued in Kazakhstan. During the years of independence 14 “Books of sorrow” have been published in Kazakhstan, those books keep names of almost 146,5 thousand of our compatriots who suffered guiltlessly. We should be aware of the cruel lessons of the past and we are obliged to do our best in order to avoid such tragedies in future.