

LEGAL SITUATION AND FACTUAL POSITION OF NON-RUSSIAN NATIONS IN THE USSR IN THE 1920's AND 1930's. SELECTED EXAMPLES

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The Soviet Union was frequently called "a prison of nations". In fact, in any country in the world there were not so many national minorities and countries, often with centuries-old traditions of statehood, like Georgia or Armenia, which were occupied by force by the USSR. The Soviet constitutions sumptuously guaranteed them the plenitude of cultural and religious freedoms, and even the possibility of withdrawal from the USSR. However, in practice, non-Russian peoples, like the Russians themselves, were deprived of basic civil liberties. Soviet authorities, in addition to arrests and executions, resettled entire nations in mass deportations, far from family homes, often into areas with harsh climate without providing them with the conditions for survival. This resulted in high mortality in those populations.

Keywords: *USSR (1917-1941), national minorities, religious policy, displacement, human rights, Caucasian republics, Turkestan, Idel-Ural, Ingria, Karelia*

INTRODUCTION

The collapse of the Russian Empire contributed to the founding the new countries on its ruins. In this way, independent Poland and Lithuania could be reborn and new states, which had not existed before, came into being: Latvia, Estonia and Finland. In May 1918 significant changes occurred also in the Caucasus – the Mountainous Republic of the Northern Caucasus¹ was established. Soon afterwards Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia announced independence as well. Nevertheless, in the years 1920-1921, they were incorporated forcibly into the Soviet Union. The attempt to create the Ukrainian state failed likewise. Nothing came also of the Cuban and Don Cossacks, the Crimean and Idel-Ural Tatars and Turkmenistan's aspirations for independence. In the twenties, armed uprisings against Soviet rule were breaking out, but ended up with failures as well as with repressions and significant losses of the populations.

¹ In Polish literature one can find the name of the Republic of the Northern Caucasus - a state that existed between 1917-1920 approximately within the area of today's Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia and North Ossetia. In Russian literature it is mostly Горская республика.

However, the political elites of these nations did not cease to fight for their freedom. A considerable part of them went into exile – mainly to countries bordering the Soviet Union, such as Poland, Finland, Czechoslovakia, Turkey, Persia and remaining under Japanese control Manchuria. Quite strong and well-organized emigration communities of those nations were in Paris, in the second half of the thirties also in Berlin. In exile, in scattering, the idea of those nations' independence was cultivated. Many representatives sought in Poland help in their struggle. Some Polish circles, particularly related to Marshal Pilsudski, considered that the independence aspirations of those nations should be used in the interests of Poland².

This paper presents human rights and laws of the non-Russian peoples being under the Soviet power, the Soviet legislation in this area and its implementation on a few selected and less well-known in Poland examples.

1. THE CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS OF INDIVIDUALS AND PEOPLES IN THE USSR

The Declaration of Rights of the Working and Exploited People of January 25, 1918, was the first constitutional act of the Bolshevik regime created after the Russian Revolution. The declaration consisted of four parts. In the first part there was a statement that Soviet Russia is a form of a dictatorship of the proletariat and, as relevant to the topic of this paper, is a free association of free nations as a federation of Soviet national republics.

The second part regulated ownership relations within the newly formed state. There were wordings on removing private land ownership, banks nationalization and the establishment of the Red Army. However, there were also restrictions on personal freedom - *the Declaration* deprived an individual of the right to possess not only *all the forests, land riches and water*, but also *the whole living and dead livestock*. A limitation of personal freedom was also establishing a general obligation to work.

In the next part there were basic principles of the Soviet state's foreign policy. So it contained famous propaganda statement *about peace without annexation and contributions, and the principle of free self-determination of peoples*. The complete independence of Finland was confirmed and Armenia's right to self-determination was also declared.

In the last part, withdrawing exploiting classes from government and also leaving *the workers and peasants of each nation free to decide on its own accredited Congress of Soviets that he wants to and on what terms to participate in the federal government and other federal Soviet organizations*³ were declared.

² So far in Polish literature this problem has been described the most extensively in general terms by S. Mikulicz, *Prometeizm w polityce II Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa, 1971, but since its release, plenty of valuable, although partial publications have been issued. In Russian literature the almost completely unknown in Poland work by L.Sockow treats this subject (the author is known otherwise for his controversial collection of documents about Secrets of Polish politics before the outbreak of World War II) - *Неизвестный сепаратизм: На службе СД и Абвера: Из секретных досье разведки*, Москва 2003.

³ Deklaracja praw ludu pracującego i wyzyskiwanego (The Declaration of Rights of the Working and Exploited People), *Internacjonalista*, <http://www.internacjonalista.pl/konstytucja-rosji-radzieckiej.html>, (accessed on July 2, 2013). In the original version among others: Декларация прав трудящегося и эксплуатируемого народа, the official website of the History Department of Lo-

Thus to summarise – *the Declaration* in its second part limited an individual's freedom to ownership and introduced a general obligation to work, but in the other three parts there were statements of a free union of free nations, free self-determination and free peoples' decisions.

The Declaration was approved by the Third All-Russian Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils and later by Peasants' Councils. This document was included as chapter one in its original form in the constitution of the Russian SFSR in July 1918⁴. On the basis of the Constitution citizens were granted fundamental freedoms: of religion, speech, press, demonstration, association, which, moreover, the State committed to provide with all necessary measures⁵. The obligation to work⁶ and defend the socialist homeland⁷ was one of primary civil duties, whereas disconnecting a part of the republic territory or approval of its separate parts leaving the group was in the power of the All-Russia Congress of Soviets and the All-Russian Central Executive Committee⁸. The Constitution became a model for constitutions of other forming Soviet republics⁹.

The Constitution of 1924 in the first part concluded that the USSR is a voluntary union of equal nations and that each republic has the right to leave freely¹⁰. However in practice, the union republics had virtually no sovereignty¹¹. The Constitution primarily complemented the union agreement signed at the end of 1922, which was indeed attached to it as the second part.

The Constitution of 1936 was the development and complement to the Constitution of 1924. It defined the Soviet Union as a federal state functioning on the principle

monosov Moscow State University. Lomonosov, [online] [accessed on July 2, 2013] Accessed on internet: <http://www.hist.msu.ru/ER/Etext/DEKRET/declarat.htm>.

⁴ P. Sydor, P. Domagała, *Prawa człowieka w konstytucjach ZSRR*, in: *Prawa człowieka – idea, instytucje, krytyka*, edited by. M. Sadowski, P. Szymaniec, Wrocław 2010, p. 349-350.

⁵ Deklaracja praw ludu pracującego i wyzyskiwanego, par. 14-16

⁶ Ibid., par. 18. There were added the following words: "*He who does not work, neither shall he eat!*"! Similar wording was used in the Art. 12 of the Constitution of 1936, in which work in addition to be an obligation became a matter of honour as well. There was also the famous statement - *From everyone according to his ability, to everyone - according to his work.*

⁷ Ibid., par. 19. However, the full right to defend the revolution *with a gun in his hand* had *only workers, on not working ones other war contributions are imposed.*

⁸ Konstytucja Rosji Radzieckiej 1918 (The Constitution of Soviet Russia 1918), Internacjonalista, <http://internacjonalista.pl/historia-i-wspoczesno/spor-o-rewolucj-padziernikow/1290-konstytucja-rosji-radzieckiej.html>, (accessed on July 2, 2012); Конституция (Основной Закон) Российской Социалистической Федеративной Советской Республики (принята V Всероссийским Съездом Советов в заседании от 10 июля 1918 г.) (прекратила действие), the official website dedicated to the Constitution of the Russian Federation, [online] [accessed on July 2, 2013] Accessed on internet: <http://constitution.garant.ru/history/ussr-rsfsr/1918>.

⁹ Of Belarusian, Ukrainian (1919), Azerbaijan (1921), Armenian, Georgian and Transcaucasian (1922) - J. Kowalski, *Konstytucja Federacji Rosyjskiej a rosyjska i europejska tradycja konstytucyjna.*, Warszawa-Poznań 2009.

¹⁰ The same was also repeated in the second part of the Constitution.

¹¹ Конституция (Основной Закон) Союза Советских Социалистических Республик (утверждена II Съездом Советов Союза ССР от 31 января 1924 г.), the official website dedicated to the Constitution of the Russian Federation, [online] [accessed on July 2, 2013] Accessed on internet: <http://constitution.garant.ru/history/ussr-rsfsr/1924/red1924/5508660/>.

of voluntary membership of individual republics¹². Furthermore, it stated that each union republic had the right to withdraw from the USSR¹³. Chapter X was devoted to citizens' laws and duties. In addition to many social benefits, it guaranteed Soviet citizens equality regardless of their nationality or race in all areas of public and social life. What is more, any legal restrictions or, on the contrary, the creation of privileges, because of their racial or national affiliation, should be punished. Another article regarded the separation of Church and state and freedom of religion, but also the right of anti-religious propaganda. *In accordance with the interests of workers and to strengthen the socialist system* the Soviet constitution guaranteed its citizens freedom of speech, press, assembly and demonstration. It also allocated for this purpose all necessary measures such as printers or means of communication. The right to establish any unions, associations or organizations which, however, were to unite with the Communist Party was assured. The inviolability of the home and privacy of correspondence as well as personal inviolability were guaranteed. No one could be arrested without a decision of a court or public prosecutor's office¹⁴.

The Constitution of 1936 is regarded in the literature as the crowning achievement of Stalinism. It contained a broad catalogue of freedoms and civil liberties. However, it lacked any control bodies of civil rights. Its liberal nature did not indicate the totalitarian nature of the Soviet Union. However, law served the extensive system of terror and the repressive instrument of power became the penal code of 1926¹⁵. First of all, it had to protect the workers and peasants' socialist state and the rule of statutory law against socially dangerous acts (crimes)¹⁶ which were divided into targeted against the foundations of Soviet power and *any other ones*¹⁷. The aggravating circumstance was a crime aimed at the bourgeois regime restoration¹⁸. Particularly repressive was extremely developed Article 58 regarding *counter-revolutionary crimes*, in which people for just contacts with *the international bourgeoisie* were threatened with long-term prison terms¹⁹.

In 1932, a decree *About the protection of property of state-owned enterprises, collective farms, cooperatives and strengthening social (socialist) property* popularly known as *The Decree of three spikelets*²⁰ (Закон о трёх колосках) was issued, as stealing even a small amount of grain from the fields, food and other goods carried the death penalty and confiscation of the entire property²¹, but it was mostly long-term punish-

¹² Конституция (Основной закон) СССР в редакции от 5 декабря 1936 г., Art. 13., the official website dedicated to the Constitution of the Russian Federation, http://constitution.garant.ru/history/ussr-rsfsr/1924/red_1924/5508660/, (accessed on July 2, 2013).

¹³ Ibid., Art. 17.

¹⁴ Ibid., Art. 123-128.

¹⁵ Уголовный кодекс РСФСР 1926 года, Юридическая Россия Федеральний правовой портал, <http://law.edu.ru/book/book.asp?bookID=1315793>, (accessed on July 1, 2013).

¹⁶ Ibid., Art. 1.

¹⁷ Ibid., Art. 46.

¹⁸ Ibid., Art. 47.

¹⁹ Ibid., Art. 58.

²⁰ In Polish literature the term of the right of five spikelets is often met.

²¹ Постановление от 7 августа 1932 года *Об охране имущества государственных предприятий, колхозов и кооперации и укреплении общественной (социалистической) собственности*,

ment of exile to the gulag. It was of significant importance for *Great Famine*-stricken Ukraine. According to some studies, in the period 1932 to 1939 based on to the Decree 183 000 people²² in total were put on trial. Further decrees were, in some measure, *preparing* for the future Great Terror. This one from 1934 about *The betrayal of the homeland* introduced the principle of collective responsibility, in accordance with which the guilt and penalty was also extended to political criminals' family members. On the basis of it, family members aware of their loved ones' crimes were punished by exile to prison camps for two or three years, while, paradoxically, those who knew nothing about it received five years of exile²³. The following year, the use of all penalties, including the death penalty, were extended also to minors from the age of twelve²⁴. In 1937, the political trials were simplified. Their transparency and possibility of appealing or requesting for pardon was removed. Sometimes they lasted only a few minutes. The system of Soviet camps known as the Gulag filled with millions of prisoners. Those camps became a method for the extermination of *enemies of the people*. In the years 1936-38 only 10% of inmates were to survive²⁵.

In 1934, the Soviet Union was accepted into the League of Nations. For non-Russian populations living in the territory of the Soviet Union the initial part of the Article 23 of the Statute of the League of Nations with the following provisions could be meaningful: *Subject to and in accordance with the provisions of concluded international conventions and those that will be included in the future, members of the League: a) will use all the reasonable endeavors to secure and maintain fair and humane working conditions for men, women and children, both in their own territories, as well as in all the countries where their trade and industry relations extend, and to establish and maintain international organizations necessary for the purpose, b) undertake to ensure the fair indigenous peoples' behaving in the territories subjected to their government (...)*²⁶.

The Soviet constitutions could pass for citizens friendly and, above all, *for the working people of town and country*. They proclaimed the freedom of speech, religion, and individual nations were granted the right to withdraw from the USSR. The authorities' repressive instrument was the criminal code introducing draconian penalties often for quite trivial offenses, as well as extensive security agencies.

In the Third Reich a citizen of that state holding full civil rights, unless he acted against the State, did not need to fear any repressions. In a different situation were Soviet citizens. In this case, the victim of repression could be anyone, they were often com-

Некоммерческие интернет-версии системы КонсультантПлюс, [online] [accessed on July 2, 2013] Accessed on internet: <http://base.consultant.ru/cons/cgi/online.cgi?req=doc;base=ESU;n=6541>.

²² В. Попов, *Государственный террор в советской России, 1923—1953 гг. (источники и их интерпретация)*, „Отечественные архивы” 1992, № 2, с. 26.

²³ Tsarist Russian authorities did not use collective responsibility even towards families of terrorists carrying out attacks against the highest representatives of the Russian authorities and tsars alike. The repression did not include the Ulyanov family for Alexander Ulyanov's (Lenin's brother) participating in a conspiracy preparing the assault against Tsar Alexander III's life.

²⁴ G. Cwietkow, *Sowieckie ustawodawstwo i organy represji w latach 20-30. XX wieku*, „Zesłaniec” 2008, No.33, p. 75; J. Smaga, *Narodziny i upadek imperium. The USSR 1917–1991*, Kraków 1992, p. 96-97.

²⁵ A. Bullock, *Hitler i Stalin. Żywoty równoległe*, Warszawa 2003, v.1, p. 519.

²⁶ Pakt Ligi Narodów z 28 czerwca 1919 r. (The Pact of the League of Nations of June 28, 1919), *Dziennik Ustaw z 1920 r. nr 35 poz. 200*.

pletely random people, blamed on the result of denunciation or unjustified suspicion. Not only did ordinary citizens feel unsafe, but also officials of the Party, security agencies and even the highest state authorities. The brutal interrogation system resulted in admissions of guilt by the vast majority of those arrested and forced to give evidence of hostile state activities of other people.

The USSR's joining the League of Nations did not improve the fate of the population, of that country or the peoples inhabiting it either. Besides, this period was of the highest intensity of the Stalinist terror. It also did not prevent neighboring countries (including Poland and Finland) against Soviet aggression.

2. THE CAUCASIAN REPUBLICS

What was the beginning of the Bolshevik rule in the former tsarist empire states that had their moment of freedom after the revolution and were seized by the Bolsheviks like? This fate was primarily involving the Caucasian republics. Many historians describing the occupation of Azerbaijan in April 1920, considers this moment to be one of the most tragic in the history of this country. Then the country was occupied by the troops of the 11th Army RKKA²⁷. Despite earlier Bolshevik declarations concerning compliance with basic political rights²⁸, mass terror began in Azerbaijan, which affected not only the most prominent figures from the political life of Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, but also ordinary citizens. One of the eye-witnesses described later the events that took place shortly after the overthrow of the government of the independent Azerbaijan as follows: *I am not able to describe all cases of mindless and purposeless cruelty, of drunken sailors, the Red Army and the Cheka; plunders, cruelty, abuse of fundamental human rights, violence against women, and similar countless acts of crime and rampant acts of feral louts, hidden horrors and torture chambers of the Cheka. On those terrible days, people felt deprived of basic guarantees, rights, justice*²⁹

Housing searches, unreasonable requisitions, arrests and executions carried out on people without a prior trial became everyday reality of the population of Azerbaijan. In practice, all the activities of the Bolshevik regime in the country at the beginning of the Soviet rule based on the bayonets of 11th Army³⁰. Even the Azerbaijani communists who played the role of *the 5th column* in the seizure and occupation of the country had no influence on its case decisions, even though the country was formally ruled by the Revolutionary Committee of Azerbaijan, headed by N. Narimanov, still in reality he was only a puppet in the Kremlin emissaries' hands, such as G. K. Ordzhonikidze, A. Mikoyan and M. Lewandowski. Only a limited number of Azerbaijani communists were appointed to higher government posts³¹.

²⁷ RKKA – The Workers' and Peasants' Red Army.

²⁸ Even the capitulation agreement of April 27, 1920, guaranteed the local population work beyond the highest state positions (T. Świętochowski, Azerbejdżan i Rosja. *Kolonializm, islam i narodowość w podzielonym kraju*, Warszawa 1998, s. 130).

²⁹ А. Балаев, *Мамед Эмин Расулзаде (1884-1955)*, Москва 2009, с. 207-208.

³⁰ The 11th Army contributed to the conquest and then pacification of the territory of the Caucasus by the Bolsheviks. It enjoyed bad reputation among the Caucasian population. Even one of the leading Soviet activists - Sergo Ordzhonikidze characterized it as *an assemblage of criminals and bandits*.

³¹ М. Э. Расулзаде, *Сиявуш нашего времени*, „Хазар” 1990, No. 1, с. 61.

After the seizure of the rest of the territory of another Caucasian republic – Armenia – in December 1920, the Bolshevik authorities, despite the promised amnesty for *the enemies of the people and nationalists*, drew from the representatives of the former government of the Democratic Republic of Armenia, often insidiously arrested not only well-known Armenian politicians and generals, but simple soldiers who fought for the freedom of this country as well. Just as in Azerbaijan mass looting and food requisition occurred.

Discontent of the masses grew day-to-day. Proverbial fuel to the fire was added by the provocative decree of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia from February 12, 1921, which stated that *the class enemy should be destroyed*. The last drop of bitterness were new acts of injustice, lawlessness, crimes and cruelty of the Bolsheviks, who arranged a real slaughter in prisons killing not only with weapons but also with bayonets and axes. Among the victims there were also more than 50 representatives of the Dashnak party³², including prominent Armenian commanders³³. On February 18, 1921, there was an uprising outbreak, which was brutally crushed by the Bolsheviks to April 2, 1921. It had to claim more than 20 thousand lives³⁴.

After the capture of Azerbaijan and Armenia, it was time for Georgia. In early May 1920 the Georgian Bolsheviks launched local unrests which, however, failed. Much more serious action was taken by the Red Army. From May 3 local border incidents escalated into an invasion of the 11th Army RKKA, which was moving into the territory of Georgia dangerously approaching the capital – Tbilisi. Nevertheless, this action is likely to have developed without the consent of Moscow and was a local initiative of the Executive Committee.

At the same time the Polish Army, along with allied forces of Ukrainian Peoples Republic, passed a successful anti-Bolshevik offensive towards Kiev. It probably prolonged the existence of the independent Georgian state. The Bolsheviks initiated peace talks with Georgian authorities also being in a difficult situation. As a result, on May 7, 1920, the agreement was signed. On its basis Soviet Russia primarily *recognized unconditionally the unqualified independence and sovereignty of the state of Georgia*. Moreover, it committed to *renouncing any interference in the internal affairs of Georgia*. Both contracting parties undertook to refrain from actions against each other. However, this treaty as well as many others executed by the Bolshevik leadership, was of no significance. Due to them, the Bolsheviks gained time to deal with the enemies in the other directions. Afterwards, in the favorable circumstances, the Soviets treated unceremoniously the accepted obligations³⁵.

³² Actually: The Armenian Revolutionary Federation - Armenian leftist political party founded in 1890, its representatives held most of the state offices in the Democratic Republic of Armenia. After the occupation of Armenia by the Bolsheviks some of its members continued to work in exile, although the others remained in the country and accepted the Bolshevik regime.

³³ С. Ованесян, Г. Карапетян, *Ованес Туманян и февральское восстание 1921 года*, „Голос Армении” of February 21, 2009.

³⁴ V. Kurkjian, *A History of Armenia*, New York 1958, p. 487.

³⁵ W. Materski, *Sowiecko-gruziński traktat pokojowy z maja 1920 r.*, w: *Kaukaz w stosunkach międzynarodowych. Przeszłość, teraźniejszość, przyszłość*, edited by P. Olszewski and K. Borkowski, Piotrków Trybunalski 2008, p. 176-181.

The Red Army invaded Georgia again in February 1921. That was an aggression against a sovereign nation in violation of the Soviet-Georgian Peace Treaty of May 7, 1920. Then in Soviet historiography it was presented and justified as a response to the provision of Georgia's support for anti-Soviet guerrillas in Dagestan, the repression of the Georgian Bolsheviks and the blockade of Soviet, at that time, Armenia. The attack was preceded by a rebellion of the Armenian population in the district of Borchalu and a number of acts of violence and border incidents near the town of Zakatala. On February 11 Bolshevik troops invaded the district of Borch. On the early days of aggression the Georgian government attempted to contact with Moscow in order to stop the war, but the Kremlin responded that *there is no war – these are the only local border incidents*³⁶. After more than a month of fighting, on March 18, survivors of the Georgian army capitulated to the Bolshevik leadership, and the Georgian government left Georgia on French ships and went into exile.

Despite the terror of the local Cheka, Menshevik leadership, in collaboration with other anti-Bolshevik organizations, managed to organize a secret Caucasian Independence Committee, which prepared the uprising³⁷. Although, according to the Georgian leadership in exile, it should be considered as *the movement of desperate people whose hopes for waiting for foreign help or any international diplomatic intervention were dashed by repressions of Soviet authorities*³⁸.

The uprising began on August 24, 1924. Yet, the overwhelming Bolshevik forces' superiority led to its quick defeat. The Bolsheviks ruthlessly disposed of insurgents and civilians, including the use of so-called living shields of women and children. Even a supporter of cooperation with Soviet Russia and the former UK Prime Minister David Lloyd-George after the suppression of the uprising said in a newspaper interview that *Georgia is red, not only in terms of the political system, but also as a result of the bloodshed caused by the Bolsheviks*³⁹.

According to the latest published data, only within the period from August 29 to September 5, 1924, there were 12 578 people⁴⁰ shot dead and more than 20 000 deported to Siberia⁴¹. The scale of the repression was so great that even awoke the Soviet Politburo's interest. The local party leader – Sergo Ordzhonikidze – was reprimanded that special permit from Moscow was needed to carry out mass executions. Nevertheless, mass executions continued for a long time. A year later, with the use of similar

³⁶ A. Andersen, G. Partskhaladze, *La guerre soviéto-géorgienne et la soviétisation de la Géorgie (février-mars 1921)*, "Revue historique des armées" 2009, No. 1, p. 67-76.

³⁷ *Шестая глава из „Чёрной Книги Коммунизма” от Передышкик „Великому Перелому” СССР, с 1923 по 1926 год*, [online] [accessed on July 2, 2013] Accessed on internet: <http://referendym.narod.ru/blackbook.htm>.

³⁸ Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe w Warszawie (CAW) (Central Military Archives in Warsaw), Oddział II Sztabu Generalnego/Głównego Wojska Polskiego (O II) (Division II of the General Staff of the Polish Army), Ref. I 303.4.547, Insurrectionary situation in Georgia. The study of Division II of 1924.

³⁹ W. Materski, *Gruzja*, Warszawa 2000, p. 130.

⁴⁰ *Шестая глава*....

⁴¹ D. M. Lang, *A Modern History of Georgia*, London 1962, p. 234-236.

methods, the Soviets launched pacification of Chechnya, where local people did not agree with the ruling of the Soviet regime⁴².

Still before the Soviets' seizure of the Caucasus, representatives of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan anti-Bolshevik government made efforts to get accepted to the League of Nations sending formal letters on that case to the Secretary General of the League in September and November 1920. These measures were to strengthen the international position of Caucasus countries, and above all, the formal recognition of their independence, particularly by powers being members of that organization. However, they failed, mainly because of their precarious situation. As far as Georgia was concerned, its candidacy rated positively in formal terms, though the threat of Bolshevization of the state and the risk of the League's interference in the case of its sovereignty breach by Russia⁴³ were decisive. Armenia and Georgia, however, were admitted to the League's technical works⁴⁴. At the end of January 1921, the Supreme Council of the Allies recognized de jure the independence of Georgia⁴⁵.

The history of Georgia's intervention on the forum of the League of Nations was presented among others on the pages of the issued in Paris exile Georgian magazine "La Géorgie". In July 1938, in the article *Le problème Géorgien et la situation internationale* the author emphasized that Georgia lodged a protest to the League of Nations as the first step on the international forum after the Red Army had invaded the country. The League, however, as it was stated by the author of the article, *adopted the indecisive position on the issue denying its own rules*. First of all, this organization did not condemn the violence and did not call for the restoration of law. Besides, *empty legal formulas* the League of Nations passed over the legal obligations contained in paragraph 17 in the Statue of the League of Nations. According to the author it was the first deviation from its principles.

In 1924, Professor Gilbert Murray, a British delegate, proposed a mediation process between Georgia and the Soviets. The League of Nations did not react to this proposal⁴⁶. Also, the International Union of Associations of the League of Nations on several occasions unsuccessfully raised the issue of Georgia in Geneva. Although it should be noted that in September 1924 the fifth session of the League of Nations a resolution supporting the creation of Georgian state and protesting against the Soviet occupation of Georgia was adopted. *However, as stated by the Polish ambassador in Paris, Alfred Chlapowski, this resolution may not have any practical significance. Although it gives Georgians moral satisfaction, it also demonstrates the powerlessness and lack of authority of the League of Nations against the Soviet government*⁴⁷.

In 1934, the Soviet Union was admitted to the League of Nations. *Therefore, as author of that article wrote, the League sanctioned Soviet invasion of Georgia. Moral principles which have guided the organization experience were completely reversed.*

⁴² Шестая глава....

⁴³ This argument was raised also in the case of the other two Caucasian republics.

⁴⁴ P. Olszewski, *Polityka państw Ententy wobec Zakaukazia w latach 1918-1921*, Piotrków Trybunalski 2001, p. 237-242.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 246.

⁴⁶ G. Gvazava, *Le problème Géorgien et la situation internationale*, [in:] „La Géorgie”, no.1 of July 15, 1938.

⁴⁷ W. Materski, *Gruzja...*, p. 132.

*Appointed as the guardian of the rights and freedom of nations the League of Nations becomes the guardian of the peoples of the Soviet prison*⁴⁸.

At the date of accepting the USSR into the League of Nations, i.e. on September 18, 1934, exiled representatives of the Caucasus, Turkestan and Ukraine handed the chairman of the 15th Assembly of the League of Nations a note of protest. They wrote in it about *a profound disappointment* that they felt as a result of the adoption of the Soviet state for this international organization without any conditions relating to improving the fate of the populations of their countries. Delegates of many countries responded to this protest, acknowledging its justness, that the adoption of the USSR to the League of Nations, even without imposing any conditions, inevitably had to lead to improving the fate of the populations.

Nearly a year later, the same representatives⁴⁹ sent another letter to the next Chairman of the League Assembly, Edward Benesh (the later President of Czechoslovakia), with information that in the past year in the USSR, no change had occurred; on the contrary, that year brought even intensification of the terror, especially after the attack on Kirov⁵⁰. As well as that, they referred to religious persecution, obligation to work, mass population displacements, collectivisation, numerous arrests and lack of personal freedom in this country.

It was emphasized that *since the adoption of the Soviet Union to the League of Nations, the latter shares the responsibility for the terrible fate that the nations under the Soviet yoke experience*. It was also absolutely incompatible with the Pact of the League that *a representative of a government that bases its power on violence against those nations, and which seeks to abolish world peace by promoting civil war and world revolution sits in the important institution*⁵¹.

The years of Great Terror did not omit the Caucasus, including Stalin's native country Georgia. At that time, only in that country about 30 thousand people were sentenced, at least 10 thousand of whom to death penalty. As in other republics, members of the party, persons exhibiting national values, and many others often random people became victims but a huge blood tribute was paid mostly by Georgian intelligence. According to the Soviet authorities in the Georgian society, there was *unnecessary and harmful overrepresentation* of this social stratum. Monuments of Georgian culture were destroyed barbarously, especially invaluable monuments of Georgian sacred art⁵².

⁴⁸ G. Gvazava, *Le problème Géorgien...*

⁴⁹ This letter was signed by: from Azerbaijan - the Chairman of the Delegation of Azerbaijan Mir Jakub, as a representative of the Northern Caucasus a member of the National Centre T. Szakman, from Georgia the Georgian Minister plenipotentiary in France A. Chenkeli, from Turkestan a delegate of the Turkestan National Committee M Chokay, from Ukraine a delegate of the Ukrainian National Government A. Shulgin.

⁵⁰ Inspired by the NKVD assault against Kirov's life, which Stalin regarded as his rival, became the pretext for the Great Terror beginning.

⁵¹ CAW, O II, Ref. I 303.4.5477, The letter of representatives of the peoples of the Caucasus, Turkestan and Ukraine to Edward Benesh, the XVI Chairman of the League of Nations Assembly on the persecution in the USSR of September 19, 1935.

⁵² W. Materski, *Georgia ...*, p. 160-167.

At the turn of the 1920s and 1930s in the Caucasus, as well as in other parts of the USSR, the Soviet authorities intensified the fight against religion. Those events were reflected also in the Polish press and Polish intelligence reports, closely observing the situation of nationalities in the Soviet Union. For instance, in 1930 the Polish press reported failures on Caucasus, where the *heathens' action*⁵³ aimed at the mass closing of mosques and existing at them schools encountered strong resistance from the local people. The central authorities in Moscow, fearing the outbreak of sectarian riots issued a directive to stop the fight against religion. Anti-religious propaganda carried on among highlanders caused quite the opposite effect: an increased sense of religiosity had to embrace even members of the Communist Party coming from the local population. Muslims' protest was published not only in the Polish press⁵⁴, but in many European magazines as well. It was also noticed by the Russian emigration press⁵⁵.

3. TURKESTAN

According to the prominent Turkestan national activist, Mustafa Chokayev, ethnographic Turkestan within the area of Russia spread out on 1 887 000 km, so it was five times greater than the territory of the Second Polish Republic. Its three quarters were covered by desert and steppe plains, and a quarter by mountain ranges⁵⁶.

According to the official statistics of 1914, the population of Turkestan was of 7.3 million, amongst whom Muslims constituted, depending on the region, from 91.4% to 98.3%. However, in light of the Soviet historians' study of the 1970s, Turkmenistan was inhabited by 9.5 million people, where the population of Turkestan was of 88.4%, Tajikistan of 6.9% and Russia of 3.7%⁵⁷.

The conquest of Turkestan by Russia began in 1834 and ended in 1875. As a result, it was annexed by Russia except Buharski and Chivayski's Khanates, which were diminished and became the vassal states of Russia⁵⁸.

The February Revolution in 1917 *arrived in Turkestan by a telegram* and was astonishment for people there. The existing political order disappeared. The newly appointed Governor General Alexander Kuropatkin on first impulse tried to suppress information about the revolution in Petrograd, but his efforts were unsuccessful and the

⁵³ It is the Association of Militant Godless (Союз воинствующих безбожников) - the organization founded in the USSR in 1925, originally as the Godless League cooperating with the State Political Directorate and the NKVD and executing tasks (often through violence) associated with atheisation of the society. It suspended its operations after the attack of the Third Reich to the Soviet Union. For more on this topic, among others: D. Peris, *Storming the heavens: the Soviet League of the Militant Godless*, New York 1998.

⁵⁴ *Among others: Górale kaukascy bronią wiary*, "Kurier Warszawski", No. 123 of May 7, 1930.

⁵⁵ CAW, O II, Ref. I 303.4.5477, The attitude of the Soviet government and the Russian emigration towards the problem of nationalities in Russia. The study by Division II of July 28, 1930.

⁵⁶ Archiwum Akt Nowych w Warszawie (AAN) (The Central Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw), Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych (MSZ) (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs), sign. 336, The political study about Turkestan from December 2, 1929, the Study of Division II on the basis of the study by Mustafa Chokayev.

⁵⁷ С. Исхаков, *Мустафа Чокаев о революции 1917 года в Центральной Азии*, „Acta Slavica Iaponica” 2001, v. 18, c. 205-206.

⁵⁸ AAN, MSZ, sign. 336, The political study about Turkestan from December 2, 1929, the Study of Division II on the basis of the study by Mustafa Chokayev.

information became known to the public. As early as on March 3 Russian railroad workers organized in Tashkent the Council of Workers' Deputies, and two days later, the soldiers of the Tashkent garrison - the Council of Soldiers' Deputies. The known dual power formulas appeared in Turkestan. On the early days of the revolution executive committees of provincial authorities⁵⁹ operated alongside councils of workers, peasants and soldiers⁶⁰. Shortly after, the councils also were set up in other towns. Revolutionary atmosphere spread firstly to the local Russian working class.

Whereas the bourgeois Russian Provisional Government did not intend to introduce any significant changes in Turkestan the Turkestan Committee opposed granting political autonomy to Turkestan believing that the status of the country should be modelled on the status of French and British colonies. The opponent of autonomy was also the First Turkestan Congress of Councils, which was dominated by votes on *the political immaturity of the local population*⁶¹.

At the same time, indigenous organizations aimed at political independence of their country began to emerge. Muslim clergy played a prominent role in that movement as well as the local bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia. In the second half of April 1917, the congress of Muslim organizations was held, which established the Turkestan Muslim Council supported by the local Muslim population cultivating their traditional values and social relations. Revolutionary slogans did not gain many supporters among the local population, but their number increased gradually and steadily⁶².

After the victory of the revolution in St. Petersburg Turkestan Bolsheviks began to prepare an uprising. In mid-November 1917, Tashkent was captured and they arrested members of the Turkestan Committee. They also called the delegate councils in other cities to follow their example. Back in November of 1917 in Tashkent there was held the third National Congress of Delegate Councils of Turkestan Workers 'and Soldiers', which constituted the Council of Peoples Commissars of Turkestan under the rule of Bolshevik Fyodor Kolesov's leadership. Representatives of the indigenous peoples were completely ignored.

The second center of power was the Turkestan Autonomous Government⁶³ formed in early December 1917 in Kokand in the national congress of the national organization of the Uzbek, Kazakh, Tajik and Kyrgyz, which also elected the legislative body: the Turkestan Autonomous Interim Council with a majority of the Muslim population as representatives. The government established contacts with the Ukrainian Central Council and operating in the region of Orenburg Ataman Alexander Dutov. He was favoured by the British, who even offered help in the form of a loan of 30 million rubles. The local Polish community supported him as well. The similar autonomous government was also formed at that time in Kazakhstan.

⁵⁹ The Turkestan Committee functioned within the area of Turkestan and was the agenda of the Provisional Government in Petrograd.

⁶⁰ K., Adeeb. *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia*, Berkeley 1998, p. 145-147.

⁶¹ Z. Łukawski, *Dzieje Azji Środkowej*, Kraków 1996, p. 309-310.

⁶² Ibid., p. 301.

⁶³ Initially a supporter of Pan-Turkism - Muhammedan Tynyshbayev headed it and then Mustafa Chokayev - a later known activist in exile, working with Polish military intelligence.

Both governments in alliance with the Orenburg, Siberian and Zhetysu Cossacks took up the fight with the local Soviet authorities. However, the Soviets quickly gained control, enforcing social transformations modelled on the politics of Petrograd in these areas. In late April and early May 1918, the Fifth Congress of Delegate Councils of Workers 'and Soldiers' of the state of Turkestan debated in Tashkent. Unlike previous conferences, a large group of delegates from the local indigenous population participated in it. On April 30, 1918, the Congress proclaimed the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Republic, in which for the first time representatives of indigenous peoples appeared. The next Congress of Councils, which took place in October of the same year, adopted a constitution of the new republic, and called the new government composed exclusively of members of the Bolshevik party. The Chairman of the new Council of Peoples Commissars of the Republic of Turkestan was Polish man Wladyslaw Figielski. A similar role in the establishment of the Republic of Kazakhstan played another Polish man Stanislaw Pestkowski. Up to 1920, within the area of the Central Asia existed Khanates as still independent state entities: Bucharski and Chivanski's ones⁶⁴. Hundreds of Turkestan political activists fearing of Bolshevik repression were forced to emigrate to neighboring countries: China, India and Afghanistan⁶⁵.

In February 1918, the Turkestan Council of Peoples Commissars issued a decree on the nationalization of the cotton industry. Soon after it was followed by the nationalization of the oil industry and food processing in the region. According to the Bolsheviks the companies became *workers and peasants' property*. These decrees also stated that in the case of the owners' resistance *drastic measures should be used, including shooting dead*. In December 1918, ignoring all norms of international law, the Bolshevik government also nationalized many foreign companies, such as Belgian *Tashkent Tram* or American *Singer Company*. During the nationalization the interests of the region's population and economic impact process were not completely taken into account

After nationalization the re-organization of nationalized enterprises was not accomplished. The vast majority of nationalized companies, especially cotton factories, remained inactive, due to the lack of raw materials, fuel, funding, staff and recipients. Employees of those companies massively left their work places. The property of the nationalized companies was stolen and damaged. After the rejection of the New Economic Policy in Turkestan by the Soviet authorities agriculture and industry was fully nationalized⁶⁶.

The population of Turkestan did not reconcile with the Soviet authority. As early as in January 1919 in Tashkent, a quickly suppressed few days' uprising broke out. Yet, Figielski and several other members of the Turkestan Soviet government died during it. At the same time, in many parts of the country, especially in the Fergana Valley, the Soviet power was combated by armed groups of the Basmachi operating under the banner of Pan-Turkism⁶⁷ and a holy war against atheists⁶⁸.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 310-315.

⁶⁵ B. Sadykova, *Mustafa Tchokay dans le mouvement prométhéen*, Paris 2007, p. 9.

⁶⁶ N. Ozerova, *The Soviet Policy of Economic Nationalization in Uzbekistan and its Consequences, 1917-1940*, "Central Eurasian Studies Review. Publication of the Central Eurasian Studies Society" 2004, v. 3, No. 2, p. 18-21.

⁶⁷ The doctrine proclaiming the need of Turkish peoples' political and cultural integration.

The Basmachi in Uzbek meant a robber-bandit. The name of Turkestan insurgents fighting against the Soviet authorities was due from the Soviets' calling them simply bands on the principle on which the belligerents often call the enemy troops – just bands. Another justification for the name was the fact that first leaders of the Turkestan insurgents fighting against the Soviet power were actually bandits, that is the Basmachi. They included, among others, Ergash or Mad-Emin, who were the leaders of rogue bands known even before the introducing the Soviet power. In the general and spontaneous uprising those bandits demonstrated personal energy and courage, and the crowd followed them willingly. Later, the name of the Basmachi was widely accepted for describing Turkestan insurgents as fighters for national liberation and lost its original pejorative meaning.

The Basmachi movement was the outbreak of the Muslim population from the Fergana territory against the overthrow of the Soviet army's the Turkestan provisional autonomous government. Soviet authorities met with widespread resistance of the population, according to Chokayev, primarily because of its anti-Muslim character. The insurgents gained the support of all social classes. In addition to the nationwide dissatisfaction, each of them had their own reasons⁶⁹. A considerable Muslim population's outcry was aroused by, among other things, granting civil rights to women, and especially the provision eliminating the custom of women covering faces in public⁷⁰.

Most Basmachi units were outnumbered until 1926, and their remains took refuge in inaccessible regions of the Pamir and the Karakum desert or in Afghanistan⁷¹. In the early 1930s, during the collectivisation carried out by the Soviet authorities in Turkestan, the Basmachi movement briefly revived⁷².

After suppressing the Basmachi movement the Soviets still did not believe Turkmen. Few of them and only of voluntary enlistment were accepted to the Red Army. They also had to meet certain requirements set by the authorities. For example, half of the volunteers of the 1907 enlistment were to consist of the Komsomols, one third of the so-called organized rural youth and the rest of the unorganized youth whose loyalty was vouched for by the local party and government bodies. In this way, three cavalry brigades were formed, each of which consisted of Turkmen, Uzbeks and Kyrgyz.

As regards the conscript contingent of recruits, Chokayev provided an example, based on notes from one of Tashkent newspapers of December 1928, as follows: *Preparations to the enlistment in autumn and winter of this year should include a contingent of people born in 1907. In total, preparation will include 6,000 people, including 2,000 from the local population and 4,000 Europeans*⁷³. Here it should be added that according to the census in 1926, Tashkent had a population of 322 thousand people, 170 thousand of whom were the Uzbeks and 105 thousand the Russians. In addition, outside the

⁶⁸ Z. Łukawski, op. cit., p. 314.

⁶⁹ AAN, MSZ, sign. 6708, M. Chokayev, *O ruchu basmackim w Turkiestanie*. The study translated by Division II

⁷⁰ Z. Łukawski, op. cit., p. 320

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 323.

⁷² M. Chokayev, *The Basmaji Movement in Turkestan*, [in:] "The Asiatic Review", no.24/1928, p. 286.

⁷³ In practice - most Russians.

cities the Russians constituted minor percentage⁷⁴. This demonstrates the lack of confidence that the Soviet authorities had in Turkmen population. However, as Czokayew noted, *Basmachi in the sense of national uprising will have a chance of success only if the personnel of the Red Army in Turkestan gets changed*, that is when the local indigenous population would dominate in it⁷⁵.

Initially the Soviet authorities retained the administrative division of Turkestan from the period of Tsarist Russia, although in 1924 they carried out radical changes. *Tribal republics*: Turkmen and Uzbek⁷⁶ ones were established on the rights of Soviet republics. Whereas the territory considered to be Turkestan was reduced by half, the population decreased by about 2 million. The severed territory was included directly in the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic⁷⁷. According to Czokayew by doing this the Bolsheviks thwarted attempts to unite the Uzbeks, Kyrgyz and Turkmen into one state, at the same time trying to provoke mutual distancing tribes of the only Turkic nation in Turkestan from each other. This division was to induce further discontent of the local population, and even Turkmen communists⁷⁸.

Territorial boundaries were adjusted slightly in 1936 and since then remained unchanged until the disintegration of the Soviet Union. It was an artificial division, because it was not preceded by the formation of national consolidation and did not fully reflect the actual ethnic composition of the region⁷⁹.

While in the initial period of their rule (1918-1928) the Soviet authorities considered the integration of Muslim clerics and most influential part of the liberal Muslim intellectuals to their political and administrative structures, so in the period of the so-called Great Leap this trend was reversed and the Muslims were subjected to terror, in respect of all faiths in the Soviet Union.

In Turkmenistan, the Soviets did not take into count the will of the vast majority of people living in the local Muslim populations area. They combated local traditions and religion. Any signs of rebellion or dissatisfaction often met with bloody repression.

4. IDEL-URAL

A country located on the Volga River at the foot of the Ural Mountains was recognised as Idel-Ural⁸⁰. For a long time it was inhabited by Turkic people. The area to the north and northeast of it was inhabited by Finno-Ugric tribes. The region was conquered by

⁷⁴ *Всесоюзная перепись населения 1926 года*. Москва.: Издание ЦСУ Союза ССР, 1928-29.т. 10-16. Таблица VI. *Население по полу, народности*. It is interesting to also indicate that in 1928, according to official Soviet data, 1625 Polishmen lived in Tashkent, too.

⁷⁵ AAN, MSZ, sign. 6708, M. Chokayev, *O ruchu basmackim w Turkiestanie*. The study translated by Division II.

⁷⁶ The Tajik Autonomous SSR was included in the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic and in October 1929 was changed into the union republic.

⁷⁷ AAN, MSZ, sign. 336, The political study about Turkestan from December 2, 1929, the Study of Division II on the basis of the study by Mustafa Czokayew.

⁷⁸ AAN, MSZ, sign. 336, Mustafa Chokayev, *O ruchu basmackim w Turkiestanie*.

⁷⁹ R. Abazov, *Political Islam in Central Asia: Leaving Political Scene or Gathering Momentum*, "International Journal of Central Asian Studies" 1998, v. 3, p. 6.

⁸⁰ Idel-Ural is also the name of the unrealized project of a joint state of Tatars and Bashkirs. This idea was also promoted by its supporters in the 1920s and 1930s in exile.

Russia in the sixteenth century. Turkish and Mongolian State agencies, such as the Kazan Khanate and Golden Horde existed there earlier. After the capture of Kazan by Moscow local people were persecuted not only economically, but also in cultural and religious spheres. These persecutions were, however, met with strong resistance and in spite of them Kazan became an important cultural centre not only of Idel-Ural, but of all Turks lands. Religious schools educating in religious and national spirit became the main source of national enlightenment in that area. Due to them even subsequent communist slogans were quite unknown to the local population.

The revolution of 1905 brought certain reliefs to the people of the Idel-Ural region. Their first own newspaper was created, and representatives of the local Turks population held their seats in the State Duma. Local culture began to develop more freely. Also a common front Turkic-Tatar came into existence. After the overthrow of the tsarist regime at the congress of Turkic nations they decided to organize themselves independently on the basis of national minorities. Idel-Ural started to arrange its culture and statehood. Soon, however, it became the battle area of the Red Army against Whites. As a result it was invaded by the Soviets, who tried unsuccessfully to energize local Muslims for the communist idea and wanted them to make the forefront of the revolution in the East.

In March 1918, the Bolshevik government established the Tatar-Bashkir Soviet Republic by incorporating it into the Russian Federative Soviet Republic. The northern part of the Idel-Ural region was included in that republic. Then it was divided into two republics: Tatar and Bashkir ones, excluding the following autonomous districts: Chuvash, Mari and Wotjak (Finnish tribes). A Volga Germans republic was established by the central Volga river, and in the southern part Kazakhstan. The population of those republics was deliberately mixed and the Russians were sent to industrial centers. The country in economic terms was completely subordinated to the interests of Moscow.

According to Temir, an emigration Idel-Ural activist, from 1921 to 1922 the Bolsheviks deliberately contributed to famine, which, according to European and American committees to help hunger strikers, would bring the death to 2 million local people. After a few years famine again reigned over the Idel-Ural for several years. As a consequence of the agrarian reform carried out by the Bolsheviks, immigrants from Russia were to seize 64% of arable land in the Volga districts.

In addition to the intense colonization action the Russian Bolsheviks began fighting with religion. Until 1931 they closed all religious schools. There were only two schools left in order to *let tourists and diplomats enjoy "liberalism" of Muscovites in relation to Islam*. Any Turkic books written before the revolution were considered *non-proletarian*. For *non-proletarian* was also considered the native language of the local population. By all means it began to be replaced with the language of *the proletarian revolution, that was Russian*.

Sultan-Ali, one of the first Tatar Communists and Stalin's deputy at the People's Commissariat of Nationalities, founded the organization Turan, which aimed at establishing the Soviet power in the lands inhabited by the Turkic and creating Turanian Republic of Eastern Nations. At the end of 1929, he was accused of preparing an uprising against the Soviets. In his illegal writings and proclamations he argued that the Communist Party's purpose was to restore *one and indivisible Russia*.

Purges in the local party structures began in November 1930. At that time old members of senior Tatars holding important positions in its apparatus: Muchtarov, Sabirov, Mansurov and Yambayev were removed from the structures. In the following year there were 860 Tatars removed, including 239 who were dismissed from their positions. In 1932, 60% of elementary schools Tatars teachers got the sack. Those purges were explained by the Soviet authorities as the charges of *nationalist deviation*. Many Tatars were exiled to Solovka.

Secretaries of the party, that is in practice at the forefront of the government in the *national republic*, were the Russians or Jews⁸¹ in order to strengthen the bond between the republic and Moscow. Tatars joined the party reluctantly⁸². In the Idel-Ural – by Temir – the Russians constituted 65-70% of party members. The structures were guided there by Jews. The Soviet authorities recognizing the difficulty of sovietization of that region sought to suppress the slightest manifestations of national consciousness⁸³.

In May 1930, the Exile Committee of Idel-Ural sent protests against religious persecution in the Soviet Union. These protests were distributed, among others, to the Pope, the King of Hejaz, Abdul Aziz⁸⁴ and King of Egypt Fuad I with requests to intervene. The protest was also sent to the President of Poland by the Muslim Committee in Warsaw. Besides, a proclamation of similar content in Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Urdu⁸⁵ was directed to all Islamic countries and peoples⁸⁶.

In a letter to the President of Poland emigrants of Idel-Ural and the Crimea thanked *the Polish nation in the person of the Highest Dignitary for protecting freedom of religion and worship* for Muslims in Poland. They drew attention to *a very deplorable situation in which our countrymen in the Soviet Russia are, being persecuted for their adherence to Islam*. Mass mosques closing was mentioned as well as thousands of arrested, deported and executed Muslim clerics. Finally the Muslim Committee *on behalf of the humankind asked the President to intervene in the Soviet government and the League of Nations to defend our oppressed nation*⁸⁷.

One of the most spectacular examples of religious persecutions in the Soviet Union was arresting by the Soviet authorities Chief Mufti Rzaedin ben Faredtina, who was

⁸¹ Temir reported that since 1925, the most important positions in the Tatarstan party apparatus Tatarstańskim had been occupied by the Jews: Hotayevich, Abramov and Lepa, and the Russians - Morozov and Razumov. However, in Bashkiria in 1927 the most important positions were held by two Jews: Yurevich and Bykin.

⁸² But even those Tatars who joined the party were not fully followers of Marxist-Leninist ideals. Tamir gave as an example the scrutiny results of one of Komsomol groups in Tatarstan. It turned out that 25% of its members -Tatars *definitely declared for Muslim religion*.

⁸³ CAW, O II, Ref. I 303.4.5737, U. F. Temir, Idel-Ural – the study in translation by Division II.

⁸⁴ The geographical region and the country located on the Arabian Peninsula. At the end of 1932, altogether with Nejd it changed the official name into the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

⁸⁵ The official language in Pakistan, as well as one of the official languages in India - used by the country's Muslim population.

⁸⁶ CAW, O II, sign. I 303.4.5499, The Muslim emigrants' protest against religious persecutions in the Soviet Union from May 20, 1930

⁸⁷ CAW, O II, sign. I 303.4.5499, The Muslim Committee in Warsaw letter to the President of Poland on religious persecutions in the Soviet Union from 1930 (a copy).

the head of the Muslim religion in this country. The clergyman, who was concurrently the first vice-chairman of the General Muslim Council in Mecca, was forbidden to communicate with this holiest for Muslims city. However, the immediate cause of the arrest was to be his refusal to sign a statement denying the persecutions by the Soviet government and declaring that the Muslim population in the USSR enjoys complete religious freedom.

Mufti was transported from Ufa to Moscow where the chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Council Mikhail Kalinin wanted to force him to submit that statement. The Chief Mufti refused and on the occasion was to declare that *he is 75 years old, and that he previously lived without lying, so that he cannot sign the statement which would mislead not only the Muslim world, but also opinions of other nations*⁸⁸.

For press coverage of religious persecutions in the Soviet Union at the beginning of May that year the four-day Muslim holiday *Kurban Bajram*⁸⁹ was also used, which lasted during the time of the pilgrims' stay in Mecca⁹⁰. After the solemn Muslim worship on the occasion of the feast on May 8 in Warsaw took place the assembly where Muslim emigrants read out a resolution in which it was noted that almost all 30 000 mosques were closed in the Soviet Empire⁹¹.

5. INGRIA AND KARELIA

Due to events of the October Revolution in Russia at the end of 1917⁹² Finland became actually independent. However, by the end of January of the following year the civil war broke out. The Army of the *white* Finns was supported by the Germans, but of *the reds* by Bolshevik Russia. The fighting ended in May in the victory of *the whites*.

In this war one can also find a Polish accent, because in the struggle near Vyborg *the whites* were supported by the Polish Legion in Finland consisting of Poles, former soldiers of the Russian army. The Legion consisted of 37 officers and 1,700 non-commissioned officers and soldiers. His commander was Captain Stanislaw Boguslawski⁹³.

On October 14, 1920, after months of difficult negotiations, Finland signed a treaty with Soviet Russia in Tartu. Initially, according to the Finns the border was to run from the Lake Ladoga through the Lake Onega to the White Sea, which would mean joining Eastern Karelia, Petsamo⁹⁴ and the Kola Peninsula to Finland. The Finns unsuccessfully counted on the support for their demands by western countries and Poland⁹⁵.

⁸⁸ *Aresztowanie głowy wyznania muzułmańskiego za odmowę podpisania fałszywej deklaracji*, "Ekspress Poranny", no. 128, May 10, 1930, *Walka z religią w Sowietach*, „Kurier Warszawski”, no. 123, May 7, 1930.

⁸⁹ Kurban Bairam (Id al-Adha – Feast of the Sacrifice) - the most important Muslim holiday commemorating the Abraham's sacrifice and his obedience to God.

⁹⁰ *W muzułmańskie święto Bajramu protest przeciw prześladowaniom mahometan w Rosji*, [in:] „Ekspress Poranny”, no. 125, May 7, 1930.

⁹¹ *Przeciwko prześladowaniom religijnym w Rosji sow. W dniu swego święta mahometanie apelują o pomoc do całego świata*, [in:] „Polska Zbrojna”, no.126, May 10, 1930.

⁹² The Independence Day in Finland is celebrated on December 6.

⁹³ *Kalendarz Podoficera na 1938 rok*, Warszawa 1936, p. 217.

⁹⁴ At the present time Pechenga - the White Sea port in Murmansk Oblast.

⁹⁵ O. Jussila, S. Hentilä, J. Nevakivi, *Historia polityczna Finlandii 1809–1999*, Kraków 200 p. 152-153.

Finland managed to get only Petsamo and thus an access to the Arctic Sea. Nevertheless they had to return earlier taken Karelian villages of Repola (Ребола) and Porajärvi (Порос-озерская)⁹⁶.

Beyond the borders of Finland, the territory of Soviet Russia included the regions of Ingria and Eastern Karelia inhabited by people of *Finnish origin*. Ingria (Swedish: *Ingermanland*, Finnish: *Inkeri*, Russian: Ингрия or Ингерманландия) is a historical region located between Estonia and Finland. Nowadays St. Petersburg is located on the territory of Ingria. The population of Ingria called Ingrans or Izhorians speaks Ingrian related to the Finnish language. Next to them, the new emigrant Finnish population called Ingrians lived there. Currently, most of Ingria is located in the western part of the Kaliningrad region and only a few hundred people speak Ingrian, defending themselves against Russification.

In 1917, the area was inhabited by 140.5 thousand Finns, Protestants, and 20 thousand Ingrians, Greek Orthodox, 500 Greek-Orthodox defined as Volten. During the Revolution in 1917, the local Finns began to rebuild their culture, but this ended in 1920, after the Bolshevik seizure of Ingria.

Despite the Peace Treaty concluded by the Soviets in Doparta which guaranteed Finnish population in Ingria equal rights, they were not complied. In 1928 the liquidation of private farms began and they were combined into collective farms. The first deportation of the population commenced near the border with Finland in the north of Ingria in the years 1929-1931. Then, approximately 18 000 Ingrians were resettled to the Kola Peninsula and the Central Asian republics. The following deportations, from other areas, were conducted in 1935-1936. The deported people's dwellings were taken over by the Russians and representatives of other nationalities living in the USSR. The repressions reached its climax in 1937, when Lutheran churches, Finnish schools, radio broadcasts and publishing companies were closed⁹⁷.

The Ethnic and religious persecution started. Since 1930 the Soviet authorities had begun mass persecution of the population mostly with the use of displacement, but also shooting. Only in 1935, a year after the Soviet Union's accession to the League of Nations, two thousand Ingrian families were resettled in an unknown direction, and one thousand to Turkestan over Outer Mongolia border⁹⁸.

When it comes to Karelia, the historical land extending between the Gulf of Finland and the White Sea was determined with this name. Currently, the vast majority of Karelia is a part of the Russian Federation. On the territory of Finland there is North Karelia and South Karelia. Karelia was historically inhabited by Finno-Ugric people called the Karelians. At present they are a small minority.

In Eastern Karelia frontier unrests did not end with the signing of the Treaty of Tartu. In October 1921, in Eastern Karelia anti-Soviet uprising broke out. The rebels

⁹⁶ *Мирный договор между Российской Социалистической Федеративной Советской Республикой и Финляндской Республикой, заключенный в г. Юрьеве. 14 октября 1920 г.*, в: *Документы внешней политики СССР*. Т. 3. Москва 1959, с. 265—280.

⁹⁷ O. Kurs, *Ingria: The Broken Landbridge between Estonia and Finland*, [in:] "GeoJournal", 1994, no. 1, p. 111.

⁹⁸ CAW, O II, sign. I 303.4.5737, A. Kotro, *Ingermanlandia – The study in the translation by Division II*.

asked Finland, Estonia and Poland for help⁹⁹. Finland was not involved officially. However, it authorized the solicitation of volunteers whose numbers of 500 moved to help the insurgents. Against the Karelian Liberation Army, numbering about 3,000 rebels, the Soviets sent about 13,000 soldiers. The superiority of the Soviet forces was significant and insurgents and Finnish volunteers were forced out on the territory of Finland in February 1922¹⁰⁰.

On February 22, 1922, the Academics Karelian Society (AKS - Akateeminen Karijala Seura) was founded in Finland. Academics who participated in the war of independence of Eastern Karelia contributed to its foundation. In the same year, the Society was approved by the Finnish Ministry of Home Affairs. Its members were not only students from Karelia, but also from all the provinces of Finland. It was the Finnish elite student association having a meaningful influence in the local academic world as well as in the political life of Finland.

AKS operated actively in many aspects of the Finnish political and social life. One of them was the care of emigrants of the Finn-Ugric nation in Finland. Among others in 1922, AKS provided 700 emigrants from occupied by the USSR areas with job. The activity of this type continued in later years. The great emphasis was placed on consolidating the emigration, organizing it in circles and clubs, and self-education. In 1931, a series of protests against the deportation of the population in Eastern Karelia and Ingria by the Soviet Union was organized and collecting material on the matter began¹⁰¹.

One of the initiatives of the Prometheus Club and Karelian Academic League was to release in Helsinki the book entitled *Itä-Karjalassa* (Eastern Karelia). The first issue, in Finnish, was destined for the Finnish population. It was met with great interest and the edition was sold out very quickly. Therefore the authors decided to publish it in English in order to inform international public opinion about the Karelian case.

In this book the Karelian case was treated as part of a wider political issue: the liberation of peoples oppressed by Russia. It revealed a mechanism of oppression and extermination used by the Russians in all conquered and occupied territories. As the author of the translation designed for intelligence agency stated: the authors' intention was to reveal the mechanism to Western public opinion, *showing on the vivid example all the injustices and atrocities of the consequences which is brought by the Russian slavery, that is the Prometheus goal of this work next to, of course, another no less important aim, to inform Europe about what the Eastern Karelia itself is*¹⁰².

In 1932 in Helsinki the monthly magazine Prometheus began to appear, initially as a political body of the independent Karelian and Ingrian organization, and later also of other representatives of the Promethean nations. Its editor was J. Vesa, one of the

⁹⁹ O. Jussila, S. Hentilä, J. Nevakivi, op. cit., p. 154.

¹⁰⁰ X. Сеппяля, *К вопросу о Восточной Карелии*, „Север” 1995, nr 2, с. 65-67.

¹⁰¹ CAW, I 303.4.5673 The letter of the Polish Legation in Helsinki to the Intelligence Agency of the Polish General Staff, Division II on ethnic societies and associations in Finland from April 15, 1937. The annex concerning AKS.

¹⁰² CAW, I 303.4.5673 The letter of the military attaché of the Republic of Poland in Helsinki by Colonel. Władysław Łoś to the Chief of the Intelligence Agency on the Promethean activities in Finland from January 26, 1936.

leaders of the Karelian movement. Some articles were reprints from the Paris *Prométhée* appeared and the other ones were articles of local activists¹⁰³.

On the first page of the first issue of "Prometheus" from 1938, one can find the article summarizing the previous five-year activity of the magazine. The author of the article emphasized that *both the Prometheus Club and this magazine were brought to life for special purposes, the realization of which in the near future is the hope of the founders and friends of the Club. Namely they expect that the oppressed minorities in Soviet Russia will soon be able to get the conditions that could allow them to fulfill their claims of deciding about their own destiny. Once it is reached, the Prometheus Club together with its military body the magazine "Prometheus" will consider their goal as achieved.*

In the subsequent part of the article one can read that it is the duty of the magazine to collect accurate information about the situation in the Soviet Union, and in particular the position of national minorities. The Soviet activity in the international arena over the past five years was underlined: approaching France, a nonaggression pact with Poland and joining the League of Nations were accentuated. Special hopes were pinned on the last one that national oppression would be mitigated and the nations inhabiting the Soviet Union would have rights resulting from the principles applied by the members of the League of Nations¹⁰⁴. However, pacts signed by Soviet Russia, from the point of view of the minority living in the country, were considered a negative phenomenon as due to the friendly nature of the pacts the member states did not interfere in the USSR ethnic policy.

Matters of Soviet border policy were presented more extensively. It was noted that one of the characteristics of Soviet domestic policy was to isolate from the external world that was reflected in the aggravation and impediment with crossing the border, which was closely guarded. *Any uncertain element* was resettled from the border areas deep into the Soviet Union. The remaining population was organized in the collective farms and their task was not only dealing with agriculture, but also informing and helping the border guard troops in catching fugitives, for which, moreover, they were awarded prizes. Legal border crossing became almost impossible. The border was guarded by selected troops of the State Political Directorate (GPU) enjoying special privileges and better equipment than soldiers of the Red Army¹⁰⁵.

The article *Mass deportations from northern Ingria* elaborated the course of the population of Ingria's mass deportations of in the spring of 1936. In order to carry them out the Soviet authorities were to impose a ban even on sowing. According to information obtained from the Ingria Committee from the only rural county of Lempaala from 27 April to 6 May 1936, 567 families, approximately 2,400 people, were displaced. Entire villages were resettled. These deportees were to be divided among the

¹⁰³ CAW, I 303.4.5673, Promethean Publishing. The status of 1938 [in:] „Prometheus”, (Finnish).

¹⁰⁴ In accordance with Article 23 of the Pact of the League of Nations its members: (...) a) will make every effort to secure and maintain fair and humane working conditions for men, women and children (...) on their own territories (...) b) undertake to ensure fair proceedings of indigenous peoples in the territories subjected to the government (...), (Pakt Ligi Narodów, Paryż, 28 czerwca 1919 r., Dz. U. z 1920 r. nr 35 poz. 200).

¹⁰⁵ *Bez pięcioletnich planów*, „Prometheus” 1938, No. 1, p. 1 (the translation from Finnish by Division II).

various collective farms near Cherepiviche in the districts of Babayev and Kaduisk. Previously, only those individuals or families who did not want to join the collectivization took part in the religious life, and in general could be classified as so-called counter-revolutionary element were deported. This time not only the collective farmers were taken, but even the local communists. The cars, which transported the exiles, placed subtitles: voluntary settlers.

The article quoted several statements of sworn testimonies. Here is one of them made in Vyborg on July 4, 1936, by an unknown fugitive¹⁰⁶, who managed to cross the border in mid-June of that year: *In spring [1936] Soviet authorities did not issue any regulations to the sowing campaign in the district of Lempaala, but did not prohibit making seed purchases. The collective farms made all seed purchases, just as it used to be done previously but without a plan. A conclusion can be drawn that a deportation of the population will take place soon. (...) The deportation began on April 27 and lasted until May 6. Three to four days before departure, people destined for deportation were summoned and a representative of the district committee from Toksov and a representative of Leningrad claimed that the population is to be resettled to Ukraine. In fact, they were transported not to the fertile land, but to Cherepiviche in the districts of Babayev and Kaduisk. People from the village of Kirjasalo were deported to the districts of Babayev. From the letters which from the beginning of June are coming from there we learnt that the land is marshy and rocky, that farming is carried out in a very primitive way, and agricultural and livestock production is not possible to be obtained at all there. Deportees were divided between the Russian collective farms. Soon after that it began to be said that the inhabitants of the villages Hipelinmäki, Heinola (...) will be also displaced in the near future. When I found out about it, I fled the country.*

Another fragment of testimonies mentioned the high mortality rate among people deported the previous year: *As far as I know, about 5 000 people deported in the spring of 1935 from Ingria to Asia/Turkestan almost completely died off. A part of the population of previously 10 000 Ingrians resettled to Asia/Siberia and the Kola Peninsula/Hibinogorsk¹⁰⁷.*

Finnish-Soviet relations were at a later period in their tragic epilogue during the Winter War and during the so called continuation war. Due to the invasion of Finland in 1939, the Soviet Union was expelled from the League of Nations.

CONCLUSIONS

The Soviet Union was frequently called *the prison of nations*. In fact, in any country in the world there was not such a great deal of the national minorities and countries, often with centuries-old traditions of statehood, like Georgia and Armenia, which were occupied by force by the USSR. The Soviet constitutions guaranteed pompously the fullness of cultural and religious freedoms, and even the possibility of withdrawing from the USSR. Nevertheless, practicably both Russians and non-Russian people, were deprived of basic civil liberties. The Soviet authorities performed mass deportations of entire nations into regions far from their family homes, often into areas with harsh climate without providing them with the conditions for survival. This resulted in high mortality

¹⁰⁶ The name was not disclosed because his family remained in Ingria.

¹⁰⁷ *Masowe deportacje ludności z północnej Indermanlandji*, [in:] „Prometheus”, 1936, No. 6, p. 49-53.

in this population. During the Great Terror there were also mass executions carried out against *the hostile and politically uncertain element*. The extremely politicized Soviet criminal code was a repressive measure and the political police were dealing with its implementation.

It should also be remembered that the Polish minority living in the Soviet Union suffered the same fate, even before the outbreak of World War II. This is primarily for two Polish autonomous districts, the so-called Marchlewszczyzna and Dzierzowszczyzna. Their population showed to be resistant to the communist ideology. The genocide against the Polish population was initiated by the Soviets before the bloodiest conflict in human history broke out. This fact is now completely unknown to an average Pole.

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SYTUACJA PRAWNA I FAKTYCZNE POŁOŻENIE NARODÓW NIEROSYJSKICH W ZSRS W LATACH 20. I 30. XX WIEKU. WYBRANE PRZYKŁADY

Streszczenie

Związek Sowiecki często był nazywany „więzieniem narodów”. W rzeczywistości w żadnym państwie na świecie nie znajdowało się tak dużo mniejszości narodowych i krajów, często z wielowiekowymi tradycjami własnej państwowości, jak chociażby Gruzja czy Armenia, które przemocą zostały zajęte przez ZSRS. Sowieckie konstytucje szumnie gwarantowały im pełnię swobód kulturalnych i religijnych, a nawet możliwość wystąpienia z ZSRS. W praktyce jednak ludność nierosyjska, podobnie jak i Rosjanie, pozbawiona była podstawowych swobód obywatelskich. Władze sowieckie, oprócz aresztowań i rozstrzeliwań, dokonywały również masowych przesiedleń całych narodów w odległe od ich domów rodzinnych strony, na tereny o często surowym klimacie, nie zapewniając im przy tym warunków umożliwiających przeżycie. Powodowało to dużą śmiertelność tej ludności.

Słowa kluczowe: ZSRR (1917-1941), mniejszości narodowe, polityka wyznaniowa, wysiedlanie, prawa człowieka, republiki kaukaskie, Turkiestan, Idel-Ural, Ingria, Karelia

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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