

# The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Terror

The Repression of Ethnic Minorities in Stalin's USSR, 1937-1953

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I give permission to Lauinger Library to make this thesis available to the public.

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## Introduction

### The Soviet Passport – A Brief Note on Ethnicity in Stalin’s USSR

Nothing illustrates the everyday role of ethnicity in the Soviet Union better than the Soviet passport. Beginning in 1930, with the passage of the Soviet Citizenship Law, every person permanently living on the territory of the USSR was automatically deemed a Soviet citizen, provided they did not already have citizenship elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> Each citizen, regardless of ethnicity or location within Soviet borders, was issued an internal USSR passport. This passport documented and confirmed each individual’s citizenship. See **Figure 1** below for an example of a standard passport.

**Figure 1.** A Soviet Passport.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Sobranie Zakonov SSSR, 1930 34/367.

<sup>2</sup> Image duplicated from Wikimedia Commons. Creative Commons license: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1941\\_Soviet\\_occupational\\_internal-passport\\_issued\\_in\\_Latvia\\_shortly\\_before\\_the\\_German\\_invasion.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1941_Soviet_occupational_internal-passport_issued_in_Latvia_shortly_before_the_German_invasion.jpg)

The first page of the passport lists the (1) full name, (2) date and place of birth (Soviet republic or region), and (3) nationality. Notice how place of birth and nationality are distinctly different categories, this is key. In the USSR the word *Natsionalnost'*, or Nationality, specifically referred to a person's ethnicity. Where you were born in the USSR did not matter so much as to what nationality you belonged to. This idea of an individual's nationality was an extremely important part of Soviet culture. The USSR considered itself a Union of these nationalities, a multiethnic proletarian state, and so the organization of its government was organized to reflect this; the Soviet representative legislative body, the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union was split into two chambers, the upper chamber was the Soviet of the Nationalities, which represented the many nationalities of the Soviet Union, and the lower chamber, the Soviet of the Union, which was simply based on numerical representation of the population.<sup>3</sup>

Each nationality was to eventually be assigned their own region in the USSR, their own Soviet socialist republic. In the early decades of the USSR, however, only those nationalities who made up the majority of the population, such as ethnic Russians, Ukrainians, Georgians, and others, had official Soviet Socialist Republics (SSRs). Others would be added as time went on, but most of the smaller national minorities within the USSR's borders, particularly those who had originally emigrated from other countries, and those, such as the Jews, who were diaspora nations, spread across a number of territories in the USSR, did not receive their own territorial regions. Regardless of whether your nationality was assigned a territory, it was listed on your passport.

<sup>3</sup> F.L. Kalinychev and V. I. Vasil'ev. *The Soviet Parliament; a Reference Book*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1967.  
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Initially, the Soviet Union's policy to its nationalities was one of intentional tolerance and equality and strove to create a system where each nationality could freely practice and develop its own culture and language within the guidelines and structure of an atheist, socialist culture. This progressive policy was called *Korenizatsiia* (or indigenization) and was established under Lenin's command in the 1920s. According to Terry Martin, in his ground-breaking book on Soviet nationalities policy, *Affirmative Action Empire*, *Korenizatsiia* was formed to push back on the Great Russian Chauvinism espoused by the Tsarist government, which forced Russian language and culture on the peoples within its conquered territory and persecuted those using their native tongues.<sup>4</sup> Vehemently against the Tsarist imperialism, the early Soviet Union sought to remedy the terror inflicted upon non-Russian people. It became, as Martin describes it in the title of his monograph, an affirmative action empire. Under *Korenizatsiia*, every nationality could have schools of its own, taught in their native language, as well as other cultural institutes. The promotion of minority languages was specifically given momentum under the policy. These kind of things were all funded by the state.

Somehow, only a decade after the first steps of this policy were being implemented, things changed drastically. Russian was once again, an enforced, primary language that was to be taught in every school, people were being purged, and even executed on accusations of "local nationalism" for activities they were once encouraged to partake in by the Soviet state, and entire populations of ethnic Germans, Poles, Koreans, Ukrainians, Chinese, Chechens, Ingush, Crimean Tatars etc., were packed onto trains and trucks, and deported *en masse* and scattered throughout the inner, central Asian and Siberian territories. Members of the Jewish nationality, scattered

<sup>4</sup> Terry Martin (Terry Dean). *The Affirmative Action Empire : Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* Ithaca, New York ;: Cornell University Press, 2001. 155

throughout several Soviet cities were systematically purged, many even executed on bogus charges. These repressions are the phenomenon of what I call Soviet Ethnic Terror.

This stark contrast begs the question: how could a state, which championed anti-imperialism, anti-Russian chauvinism and repression – a state founded on principles of representational ethnic diversity, plurality, and equality, commit such ethnically directed, mass acts of political terror and repression against its own citizens? What happened in that short period of thirteen years between the death of Vladimir Illich Lenin in 1924 and the officially written decree declaring that the entire population of ethnic Koreans living in the Soviet Far Eastern Krai, was to be deported to the Uzbek and Kyrgyz SSRs? This was the question which motivated the research and analysis that form this thesis.

Existing literature on the phenomenon of Soviet repressions that targeted specific ethnic and national groups is quite scattered. Firstly, there is a lack of literature that exists on the history of individual cases of ethnically or nationally targeted terror in Stalin's USSR – as of today, there are still a few ethnic deportations and other ethnically directed repressions in the period of Stalin's rule which have not been researched or analyzed thoroughly at the case study level.<sup>5</sup> There is a small group of works that approaches these cases comparatively, looking at this larger phenomenon of terror and repression against ethnic minorities that so intrigues me, but even then, their comparative approaches to Soviet terror against nationalities are limited to the physical deportations, leaving out cases of repression, such as the anti-cosmopolitan campaign

<sup>5</sup> Here are some of the few, detailed explorations of specific repressions: David Brandenberger "Stalin's Last Crime? Recent Scholarship on Postwar Soviet Antisemitism and the Doctors' Plot." *Kritika: Explorations in Russian & Eurasian History* 6, no. 1 (February 2005): 187–204; Bugai, N. F., and A. M. Gonov. "The Forced Evacuation of the Chechens and the Ingush." *Russian Studies in History* 41, no. 2 (2002): 43–61.; Chang, Jon K. *Burnt by the Sun: The Koreans of the Russian Far East*. Perspectives on the Global Past. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016.; Gelb, Michael. "An Early Soviet Ethnic Deportation: The Far-Eastern Koreans." *The Russian Review* 54, no. 3 (1995): 389–412; etc.



against the Jews, that were equally cruel, but did not necessarily end in a physical, full scale ethnic cleansing in the form of deportation.<sup>6</sup>

In my review of the literature on both the deportations and other clear instances of Stalinist repression and terror that didn't actually involve 'ethnic cleansing' or a physical population removal, I saw similar analyses of factors that motivated this repression, and therefore a need to bring them together to analyze a bigger, umbrella phenomenon of Stalinist repression against ethnic minorities in the USSR, it became clear to me that similar factors ultimate execution of terror against these groups, can be seen across all cases of terror against targeted ethnic and national groups in the 20th century USSR, including the deportations, and the Jewish repression. As is pointed out by one scholar of the Stalinist terror against the Jews, David Brandenberger, there is a gap in the literature on the larger phenomenon of ethnic terror, between the studies of ethnic cleansing and deportations in the USSR, and the case of anti-cosmopolitanism terror that needs to be filled to show a bigger picture. A comprehensive comparison to get at the heart of what factors drove the phenomenon of Soviet repression against ethnic minorities has not been done.

For this reason there is not a common term used to describe this greater, more general phenomenon of terror against nationalities and ethnicities. As my thesis will seek to bring these studies together in a comparative analysis, I will be using the term *Soviet Ethnic Terror* as the blanket term for the repressions I am discussing. Wishing to expand on the most notable analysis of the Soviet ethnic deportations, Terry Martin's "Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing," I have

<sup>6</sup> See Terry Martin. "The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing." *The Journal of Modern History* 70, no. 4 (1998): 813–61. In David Brandenberger "Stalin's Last Crime? Recent Scholarship on Postwar Soviet Antisemitism and the Doctors' Plot." *Kritika: Explorations in Russian & Eurasian History* 6, no. 1 (February 2005): 187–204 a recommendation is given that more study should be done to put the case of terror against Jews in the USSR alongside the deportations of other nationalities.

expanded Martin's term to also apply to cases of terror that didn't necessarily result in physical population deportation.<sup>7</sup>

In regards to the motivating question I stated above: How did progressive Soviet state devolved to purging and killing millions of its own people explicitly on the grounds of their ethnicity, my thesis will take an origins approach, looking specifically at the ideologies, or patterns, new and old, of bureaucratic thinking and decision-making that permeated the USSR's bureaucratic culture and leadership and ultimately led to the violent and repressive acts of Soviet Ethnic Terror. I believe this type of 'origins' analysis is important in the study of a repression. It requires an attempt to both dig into the on-the-ground specifics of each case, and an attempt to look through the eyes of the perpetrators to understand what types of thinking, generalizing, and fearmongering led to the othering and targeting of certain groups. This sort of analysis makes for a history that alert us today to warning signs that may also lead to oppression in our own countries.

My first chapter identifies a specifically Soviet iteration of xenophobia, namely the fear of extra-Soviet community with connections that reach outside the realm of power held by the leaders of the USSR, as one ideological factor behind Soviet Ethnic Terror. This was the fear of "capitalist encirclement" which Stalin repeatedly referred to in his speeches to the Soviet congresses and in newspaper articles run by the State media. In this chapter, I discuss the way this ideology permeated Soviet institutional and bureaucratic thinking through the analysis of actual policies and state propaganda each of the three case studies I have researched.

My second chapter highlights the role of existing racial and ethnic prejudices which existed in the USSR against certain national minorities. This chapter explores how Great Russian

<sup>7</sup> Terry Martin. "The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing." *The Journal of Modern History* 70, no. 4 (1998): 813–61.

Chauvinism old racial prejudices that were prominent among the general public and those in power under the tsarist regime prior to the 1917 revolution, persisted and continued through into the Soviet regime. This chapter seeks to illustrate how these old prejudices and racist opinions were embraced in policy making and even used by those in power to effectively convince the lawmakers and the public of certain threats which entire ethnicities could pose to the security and safety of the USSR. This argument that ethnically based prejudice existed institutionally in the Soviet Union is not often raised by scholars exploring the inspirations behind Soviet Ethnic Terror, and so this contribution is especially important to the field.<sup>8</sup>

My third and final chapter explores the Stalinist ideology of kinship loyalty among ethnic minority communities, and the Soviet practice of collective punishment which was expanded to apply to entire nationalities under Stalin. This ideology was a key part of Stalinist culture in the USSR that saw the structure of family and blood relation as suspect because it bred a type of inner and mutual loyalty that could challenge an individual's devotion to the Soviet socialist cause. Earlier in his regime, this kind of thinking led to children being punished for their father's crime of privately owning land during the period of collectivization. Since ethnic populations were traditionally seen essentially as large kinship groups, this concept was quickly and easily adapted apply to entire ethnic minority groups. In this chapter, I argue that this was an ideology which fed, supported, and justified the other two ideologies I discuss of Soviet xenophobia and racism, and boosts our understanding of the Soviets' choices to punish ethnic groups collectively.

<sup>8</sup> Aside from the work of J. Otto Pohl, and Jon Chang, the concept that racial prejudices drove the repressions is mostly out of focus in the field of Soviet nationalities policy.; Jon K. Chang, *Burnt by the Sun: The Koreans of the Russian Far East*. Perspectives on the Global Past. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016.; J. Otto Pohl. *Ethnic Cleansing in the USSR, 1937-1949*. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1999.

While these three factors are by no means definitive reasons for the terror faced by many nationalities, or the only possible factors, they are an attempt to understand the logic of the Stalinist culture and the Soviet system. This thesis is not the answer to my motivating question, but rather my contribution to the discussion of it.

In order to understand the Ethnic terror as a whole, I chose to study and compare three different instances of repression that occurred under Stalin's command in this period. In this thesis I look at the 1937-1938 repression and deportation of the Soviet Koreans of the Far Eastern Krai, the violent conflict with and deportation of the Chechen and Ingush peoples of the northern Caucasus in 1944, and the repression and purging of Jews in the post-war period. Despite the different contexts and natures of these terrors, each was an instance in which Soviet authorities othered and repressed distinct, historically stigmatized groups of Soviet citizens who lived within Soviet borders.

While there were many more instances of such Ethnic Terror aside from these selected three, such as that of the Volga Germans, Poles, Ukrainians, Crimean Tatars, Greeks, Iranians and others, I chose to study these three because in many ways they are representative of the different kinds of groups facing the terror, and of the different types of repression they faced. My discussion of the Soviet Koreans holds analysis that can apply to those cases of repression against nationalities living in the so called Soviet border regions, which were, during war times, strategically at risk areas. My discussion of the Jewish repression and the Chechen-Ingush deportation help to characterize the repression of groups that have religious communities, and often adhere to certain religious beliefs. The Chechen-Ingush case also gives context to the other repressions of Muslim-majority nationalities who were once colonized by the Tsarist empire, and received a label of backward by the Soviets. Similarly, the Jewish repression highlights a more

unique case that highlights a more secretive, and institutional type of repression faced by a diaspora people.

I will now provide a brief introduction to each of these episodes of Ethnic Terror to lay the context for my main discussion:

The first of all the full-scale deportations the Soviets conducted was of the Soviet Koreans in August, 1937. In stated defense of border security at the far eastern frontier, Soviet citizens of Korean ethnicity were packed into buses and train cars and shipped away from their homes on the borderlands to the depths of the steppe in the Kyrgyz and Uzbek SSRs, today, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. It is estimated that about 171,000 Koreans, forming about 37,000 families were deported in this manner, and over 40,000 died either in transport, or from disease and exposure upon arrival in the barren steppe.<sup>9</sup> As in the repressions that followed, the deportation was preceded by internal reports and party issued newspaper articles expressing paranoia over the state of the USSR's security from espionage and internal actors set on compromising the Soviet agenda. In addition to this deportation, over two thousand five hundred Soviet Korean elites were arrested and repressed, many of whom were executed.<sup>10</sup>

Seven years later, in February 1944, the Soviet authorities conducted another full-scale deportation, this time of the Chechen and Ingush peoples of the northern Caucasus - two traditionally Muslim nomadic mountain peoples. Peoples who were constantly at war with the Tsarist army in the old regime which colonized them in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they did not take kindly to the intrusion of the Soviets either, when 'Soviet' farming methods, factories, and other modernizations were forced upon their otherwise peaceful lives. On paper, their crime was

<sup>9</sup> Alexander Kim. "The Repression of Soviet Koreans during the 1930s." *The Historian* 74, no. 2 (2012): 282, 284.

<sup>10</sup> Chang, John K. *Burnt by the Sun: The Koreans of the Russian Far East*. Perspectives on the Global Past. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016. 159.

collaboration with Nazi forces during the German Invasion, and severe and violent resistance to the Soviet way of life. For this, the whole population was officially accused and punished. Over 496,000 individuals were removed from their native lands.<sup>11</sup> During WWII, Nazi Germany did reach the North Caucasus, but Soviet troops (with the help of some local Chechens and Ingush) stopped the German forces at Grozny, the capital of the Chechen-Ingush SSR. The Germans never occupied the region. Soviet security discovered a few cases of individuals who had cooperated with the Germans, but in reality, there were few who did.<sup>12</sup> Regardless, the population was punished on their account. Out of all the repressions and deportations, the Chechen-Ingush was the most bloody and violent. Reports say that hundreds of innocent citizens of the region were burned in a barn on the claim that they were “untransportable,” people who resisted in any way were brutally shot, and bodies were found strewn throughout the villages and the roads after the deportation vehicles departed. Libraries full of Chechen language books, some of which were centuries old, were burned, and food supplies and water sources were poisoned to ensure no one left behind could survive.<sup>13</sup> It was a brutal incident. In addition to the deportation This sentence followed a series of paranoid public and internal government reports of extremist terror and rebellion against the Soviet forces sent to corral the groups into the new Soviet way of life.<sup>14</sup>

It is important to note, that it was the Soviets who practically combined these two peoples into one labeled ethnicity. Though related linguistically and neighboring geographically, the Chechen and the Ingush were historically separate nations. In 1934, they were joined together

<sup>11</sup> Jeffery Burds. “The Soviet War against ‘Fifth Columnists: The Case of Chechnya, 1942—4.” *Journal of Contemporary History* 42, no. 2 (2007): 304.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 303.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 305.

<sup>14</sup> Bugai, N.F., ed. “Documents on the Chechen--Ingush Deportation of 1944.” Translated by M.E. Sharp. *Russian Studies in History* 41, no. 2 (Fall 2002): 64.

under the Chechen-Ingush ASSR, and they were living under this territory when the deportation occurred. Following the deportation, the Chechen-Ingush ASSR was eliminated and the land was given to the neighboring Daghestan ASSR.<sup>15</sup>

Following WWII, and the Holocaust, a severely anti-Semitic campaign arose in all the major Soviet cities. Once a valued people by the Soviets (several founding members of the Communist Party were Jewish, as was Marx himself), Jews – under the label of ‘cosmopolitans’ and ‘rootless’ people, not under the label of Jews, as anti-Semitism was outwardly banned in the USSR, were purged left and right from the Soviet Jewish cultural scene, and were constantly accused of being spies for the west. Besides being thrashed in the media, Jews were systematically removed from positions of power, many of them being sent to GULAGs in the north, and a large, yet unknown number were murdered. In this thesis, I will pay special attention to the case of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, whose fate, like several other official Jewish organizations in the USSR, shows how similar the case of repression against the Jews was to the repressions faced by the deported ‘punished peoples.’

The fate of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee is an interesting one. At two in the afternoon on September 20th, 1943, Professor Solomon Mikhoels and Lieutenant Colonel Itzik Feffer, Delegates of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee sat down for a luncheon at the Hotel Gotham in New York City, along with their newly acquainted American colleagues to discuss acquiring support for the Soviet War effort against Nazi Germany from fellow Jewish organizations. Stalin himself founded the committee in 1941, for the very purpose of gaining western support for war effort knowing the strength of the Jewish community in the USA. The americans were members of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), a

<sup>15</sup> Nekrich, A. M. (Aleksandr Moiseevich). *The punished peoples : the deportation and fate of Soviet minorities at the end of the Second World War* 1st ed. New York: Norton, 1978. 60.

philanthropic organization keen on providing aid for their Jewish brethren around the world, especially in regions heavily hit by the horrors of war.<sup>16</sup>

Fast forward five years after this visit, the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee had been disbanded, and all connections with the Jewish organizations in the United States and elsewhere had ceased and ties had been cut. That same year, everyone (every Jew) with a connection to that committee was put on trial. Many were purged, and 13 individuals, the members and leaders of that committee, were executed.<sup>17</sup> Jews in all positions of power, were expelled from their places, and many, like Mikhoels, Feffer, and others belonging to the JAC were put on trial and executed on similar accounts of treason.

It is important to know, that in the USSR, the Jews were officially considered to be an ethnic group and nothing else, as religion was banned in the USSR. The Jews were a diasporic nationality, not having a home region within the USSR, but also stateless, not having a homeland outside the Soviet Union either (until 1948 at least). I included the Jewish case in this thesis, alongside two cases of ethnic deportation because I recognized many of the same tactics used against the Jews that were used against the others. I recognized that Stalin's Ethnic Terror was a phenomenon that went beyond ethnic cleansing, or population transfer for economic or other purposes. I discovered that Ethnic terror was something larger than that, borne out of ideological rather than physical factors, and I wanted to emphasize this point.

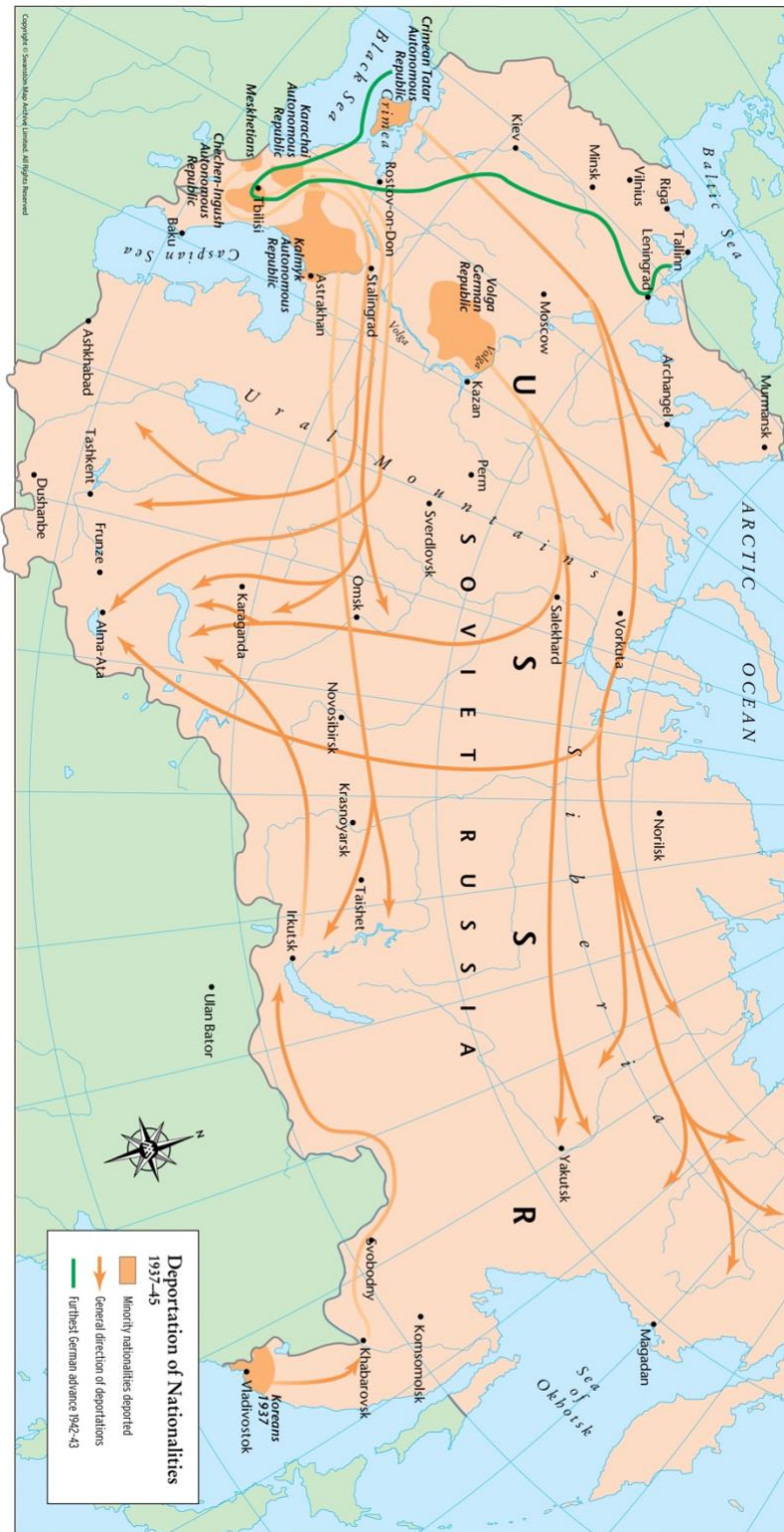
<sup>16</sup> JDC Archives, Records of the New York Office of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1933 - 1944, File #1056: USSR: General, 1942-1945, Memorandum from J.C. Hyman, 09/21/1943.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 491-492.



In my analysis of these cases of terror, I used a combination of clippings from State Media publications, Soviet Government documents, a majority of which were ranked top secret (*Sovershenno Sekretno*), and many of which are no longer available - I gained access to these through the wonderful help of Jon Chang and Jeffery Burds who have studied Stalinist Ethnic terror for years. I also made an effort to include personal accounts and oral histories from those who witnessed or heard about the repressions. These sources are valuable, as they often shine light on aspects of history that cannot be found in an archive of official letters, and top secret decrees.

Figure 2: A map of the Ethnic Deportations<sup>18</sup>



<sup>18</sup> Deportation of Nationalities 1937-45, Author Unknown. Rights to image purchased from The Map Archive: <https://www.themaparchive.com/deportation-of-nationalities-193745.html>

## Chapter 1: Soviet Xenophobia: The Fear of Extra-Soviet Community

They have forgotten that the Soviet Union finds itself encircled by capitalist states... Capitalist encirclement - it means that there is one country, the Soviet Union, which has established at home a Socialist order, and that there are many countries, bourgeois countries, which continue to carry on the capitalist form of life, which encircle the Soviet Union, waiting for the opportunity to attack it, to crush it, or, in any case-to undermine its might and to weaken it.

J. V. Stalin, 3, March, 1937<sup>19</sup>

During the Great Purge of the 1930s, the phrase ‘enemy of the people’ was thrown around often in the political rhetoric that led to the countless arrests of communist party members and government officials on counts of treason against the USSR. Stalin initially used the term to describe individuals who were seen as bourgeois, class-based enemies and reactionaries to the Marxist/Leninist revolutionary ideology, but it evolved to apply to any individual or group that, according to Stalin in 1937 “attempts [to undermine] the unity of the socialist state.<sup>20</sup>” Through the late 1930s, this concept expanded to include external enemies as well. As Stalin’s remarks to his party comrades suggest, the fear of “capitalist encirclement” was something that deserved attention in the discussion surrounding enemies of the state. In his foundational article “Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing,” Terry Martin describes this kind of discussion of the extra-Soviet world as Soviet xenophobia, a distinctly Soviet fear of the other that came directly out of Marxist/Leninist thought. It was a “purely ideological hatred and suspicion of foreign capitalist governments,” and different than traditional Russian Xenophobia,

<sup>19</sup> Stalin, Joseph. Defects in Party Work and Measures for Liquidating Trotskyite and Other Double-Dealers ; Report and Speech in Reply to Debate at the Plenum of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U., March 3-5, 1937. Moscow: Co-operative Publ. Soc. of Foreign Workers in the U.S.S.R., 1937. 21.

<sup>20</sup> Quote from a toast given by Stalin at an exclusive luncheon celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution - from a page in the diary of Georgii Dimitrov dated November 7, 1937. As quoted in Jeffery Burds. “The Soviet War against ‘Fifth Columnists’: The Case of Chechnya, 1942—4.” *Journal of Contemporary History* 42, no. 2 (2007): 270.

which embodied negative attitudes toward people who are not ethnically Russian.<sup>21</sup> Soviet policy and official rhetoric under Stalin expanded the concept of the ‘enemy of the people’ to create a link between perceived domestic and foreign threats, identifying an ‘other’ within the USSR’s borders that became seen as a threat to the Stalinist dream of a completely controlled socialist utopia.

As the idea of a simultaneously internal and ‘foreign’ enemy developed, the once purely ideological concept of Soviet Xenophobia ended up, in practice, targeting specific national and ethnic groups that were each comprised of a community reaching outside the realm of complete communist control to one degree or another. This internal Soviet xenophobia specifically stigmatized groups that posed perceived security threats in the eyes of the Soviet State and Communist Party - groups living in the so called ‘border regions’<sup>22</sup> with close cross-border ties to enemy states, as well as those with strong religious and cultural ties that reached across a diaspora extending beyond the borders of the USSR. These perceived threats made it possible for entire populations to be held suspect and responsible for the breach of Soviet security. In the cases of the Korean deportation, the Chechen-Ingush deportation and the anti-cosmopolitan campaign - which are exemplary of these categories of groups who were stigmatized, propaganda in the press and political rhetoric that circulated within the decision-making bodies developed and rationalized this idea of a responsible fear of entire minority populations as ‘foreigners within’.

<sup>21</sup> Terry Martin. “The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing.” *The Journal of Modern History* 70, no. 4 (1998): 829

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 829

## **“Spies” in the Eastern Borderland - Perceived Security Threat in the Far Eastern Borderland**

The repression of Soviet Koreans deserves to be discussed first in my treatment of this phenomenon of Soviet Ethnic Terror precisely because it was the first of the full-scale deportations. The early timing of the Korean deportation in the context of the development of Soviet xenophobia is important because 1928, the year when discussion of the deportation first came to the table, was a year of radicalization of class categories in the initial phase of Stalinism, which opened the door to a “socialist offensive” against other perceived enemies in the borderlands. Lewis Siegelbaum, in his chapter in *Beyond Totalitarianism*, describes how, during the late 1920s and early 30s, distinctions between classes (which already had legal status and gave some people privilege over others) shifted to distinctions between those characterized as model Soviet citizens, and those “characterized as counter-revolutionaries, wreckers, Trotskyites, traitors, spies, vermin, and, more generically, ‘enemies of the people.’ ‘Enemy of the people’ essentially replaced ‘class enemy’ in official parlance.”<sup>23</sup> This shift in rhetoric began to reveal “anti-Soviet elements” among certain nationalities, which led to Soviet authorities grouping entire nationalities as “anti-Soviet”.<sup>24</sup> For the Soviet Koreans, the anti-Soviet element was tied to their proximity to the border with Japanese controlled Korea and Manchukuo (imperial Japanese controlled Manchuria), and their connections with others of East Asian identity.

The Koreans in the far eastern territories of the USSR were a migrant population and a diasporic nationality. They had come into the Russian far East on their own volition, unlike most of Tsarist Russia’s Asian population which had been colonized as Russia expanded its territory.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Shiela Fitzpatrick and Michael Geyer. *Beyond Totalitarianism : Stalinism and Nazism Compared* New York, N.Y: Cambridge University Press, 2009. 251

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 252

<sup>25</sup> Jon K. Chang, *Burnt by the Sun: The Koreans of the Russian Far East*. Perspectives on the Global Past. Honolulu:

Many of them migrated from the Hamgyong region in Korea starting in the late 19th century as a result of poor economic and agricultural conditions, as well as political changes and the expansion of Japan.<sup>26</sup> By the time of the revolution, the Korean community had established itself within the Russian territory both agriculturally and politically - truck farming and other advanced techniques brought from their homeland led the economy in the region and a large portion of the Korean population welcomed and supported the Bolshevik revolution.<sup>27</sup> When it comes to showing loyalty to the USSR and becoming a Sovietized people, the Koreans performed very well. During *Korenizatsia*, the community received numerous scholarships and grants on the basis of being a minority nationality largely comprised of peasants, and they quickly succeeded in becoming well educated. Many individuals found state jobs and promising careers within the Soviet bureaucracy.<sup>28</sup> Despite all of this, in the eyes of the Soviets, the Koreans had a titular homeland outside the USSR, one that was right across the border and under Japanese occupation and as a result, the entire population became seen as alien and suspect of espionage. While most of the population enthusiastically participated in the implementation of collectivization, there were a few select Koreans who resisted collectivization by simply leaving the USSR and crossing the border into China, and the ease by which they did this strengthened suspicion and distrust among the Soviet authorities.<sup>29</sup> The geographical situation in the Russian Far East at this time can be seen in the map in **Figure 2** below. Vladivostok and the Korean villages communities surrounding the city were located between Japanese controlled Manchuria (Manchukuo) and the Japanese sea.

University of Hawai'i Press, 2016. 16

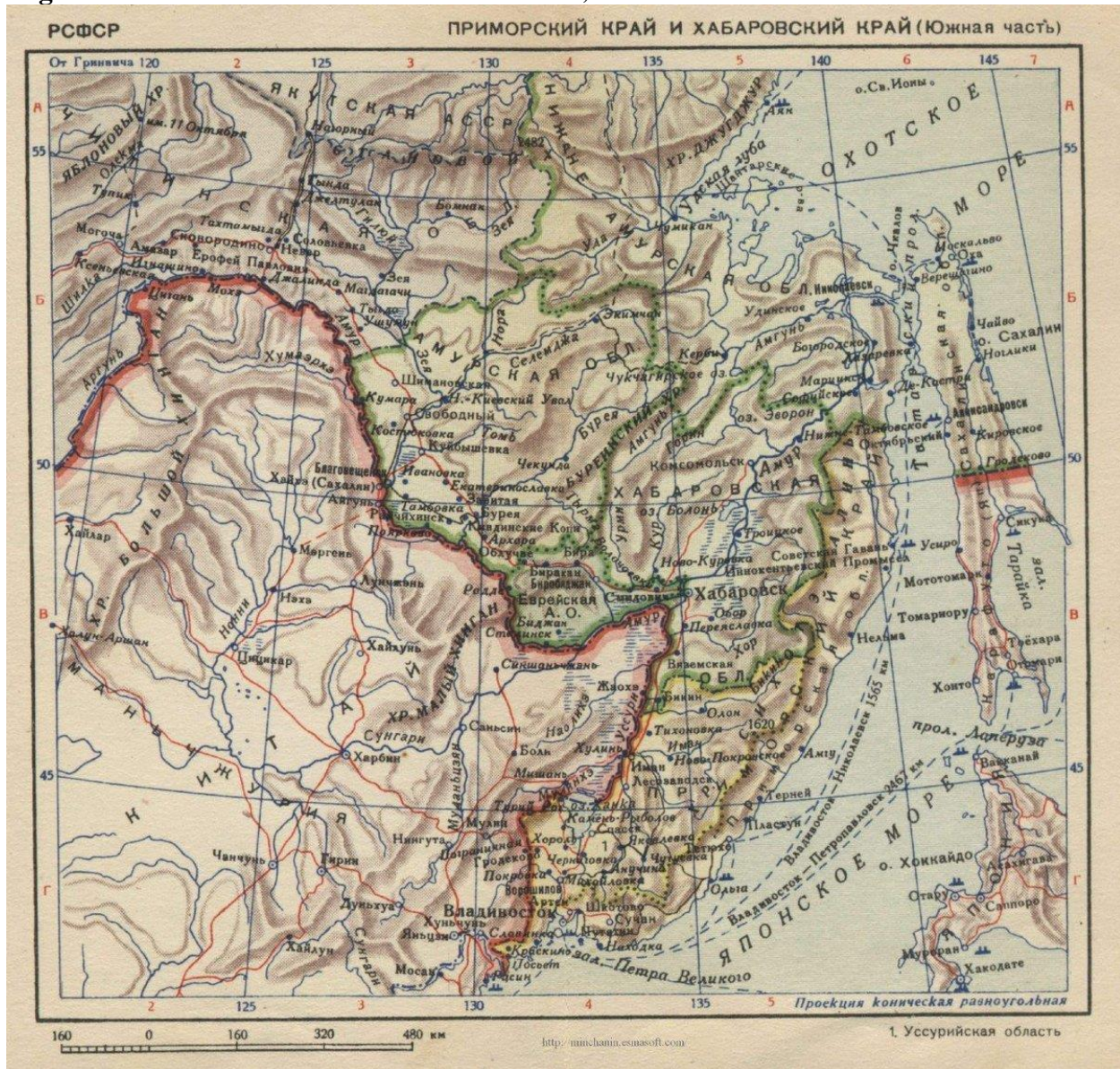
<sup>26</sup> Jon K. Chang, *Burnt by the Sun: The Koreans of the Russian Far East*. Perspectives on the Global Past. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016. 12-13

<sup>27</sup> Alexander Kim. "The Repression of Soviet Koreans during the 1930s." *The Historian* 74, no. 2 (2012):268-269

<sup>28</sup> Chang, *Burnt by the Sun: The Koreans of the Russian Far East*. 94

<sup>29</sup> Alexander Kim. "The Repression of Soviet Koreans during the 1930s." 273

Figure 3. Primorskii Krai and Khabarovskii Krai, 1938-1939<sup>30</sup>



\*Note: The red sections of the map show Imperial Japanese controlled territory – Mainland Japan to the east and Manchukuo, Japanese controlled Manchuria to the west. The yellow section is the Primorskii Krai, where Vladivostok is located. Prior to 1938, all of these yellow and green highlighted areas were part of the Far Eastern Krai. At the time of the Korean Deportation, the Far Eastern Krai remained intact.

30 “Pochemu Primorskii Krai, a Ne Vladivostokskaiia Oblast?” Yandex Zen | Platforma dlia avtorov, izdatelya I brendov, September 6, 2018. <https://zen.yandex.ru/media/id/5adec2cda815f15c977ed46d/pochemu-primorskii-krai-a-ne-vladivostokskaiia-oblast-5b90f0c9b4dba900ac7c1112>.

Eventually, this distrust took the form of perceived security threats. In 1928, S.A. Bergavinov, the CP chairman of the *Dalkrai*, the Far Eastern Regional Executive Committee, issued a “white paper” report called the “Doklad,”<sup>31</sup> in order to “instruct Soviet leadership on how to solve the so called ‘yellow question’ in terms of border security.”<sup>32</sup> Written that year by a Russian explorer of the Far East named Vladimir K. Arsenev, it is not clear why the report was initially created, but Bergavinov had it distributed to all members and candidates of the *Dalkrai*, about 40 copies in total.<sup>33</sup> The paper focused on race and portrayed a visible prejudice against East Asians, often depicting them as inferior to ethnic Russians, an unusual thing to see among official Soviet reports in this period when *Korenizatsia* and multiculturalism was still a flourishing Soviet ideal, but its ultimate conclusion was the pertinence of the issue of national security in the border region. A section of this paper reads as follows:

[The Koreans] are anthropologically, ethnographically, psychologically, and in their own worldviews closer to the Japanese than us. That the Koreans will soon turn into Soviet citizens will never occur...The principle means of conflict against this consists of immediately and thoroughly removing and settling the Chinese and Koreans outside of the borders with China and Korea and expanding the colonization [of the Russian Far East] from Western USSR and Western Siberia, independent of nationality, but not Chinese and Koreans. The latter should be sent to the deep interior of our country to the west or north of the Amur. In our age the economic defense of the country is so much more important than the armed protection.<sup>34</sup>

This report was given real weight among the *Dalkrai* members, and in November 1928, “The Question of the Resettlement of the Korean Population” was brought up for a vote. It was upon this resolution, at which two Korean *Dalkrai* members were present, that the first ideas and preliminary plans regarding a resettlement project (not an outright deportation as Arsenev

<sup>31</sup> Doklad just means report/presentation in Russian.

<sup>32</sup> Chang, *Burnt by the Sun: The Koreans of the Russian Far East*. 102

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 104

<sup>34</sup> V.K. Arsenev, “Doklad”, as quoted in Chang, *Burnt by the Sun: The Koreans of the Russian Far East*. 104.



suggested) were discussed.<sup>35</sup> This project took a seat on the backburner for about two years, until, on January 8, 1934, upon whose command is unknown, Arsenev's "Doklad" was once again distributed to the *Dalkrai*. Bergavinov was no longer with the *Dalkrai* at this point, and it is even possible that the order to have the "Doklad" revived came from Stalin himself.<sup>36</sup> In the time in between, a lot had changed; Hitler had taken power in Germany, Japan had established its imperial states in Korea and Manchukuo, and Stalin's rhetoric of socialism in one country had become more prevalent. Local governments in the Far Eastern Krai had come under the suspicion of Moscow as early as 1924, when an in depth survey was done of the Union of Koreans community organizational groups, but it became much more serious at the turn of the 30s, when N. Rykov, a member of the regional government was shot as an "enemy of the people" after signing a document titled "The Charter of the Union of Koreans Living in the USSR."<sup>37</sup> Stalin clearly wanted a change in leadership in the east and a deportation would fulfill that goal. With a new threat of a large Korean population in Japanese Manchukuo, which bordered the Soviet territory, the suggestions of Arsenev's "Doklad" and the militarization of the region seemed more reasonable to Soviet authorities in 1934.

This rhetoric did not exist behind closed doors. On September 4, 1937, a news story conspicuously headlined "RELATIVES" bold and in quotes, ran in *Izvestiia*, a Moscow based newspaper of record, and the mouthpiece of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union, the legislative body of the Soviet state government. The story recounts the narrative of a Korean immigrant who crossed the border from Japanese controlled Korea to the far eastern Soviet region of Khabarovsk only to later be uncovered as a spy, "thrown over into our [Soviet]

<sup>35</sup> Chang, *Burnt by the Sun: The Koreans of the Russian Far East*. 106

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> U-hyo Yi, Ying-ung Kim, and International Confederation of Korean Associations. *Belaia kniga o deportatsii koreiskogo naseleniia Rossii v 30-40-kh godakh*. Moskva: Interpraks, 1992. 37

territory by the Japanese.” Seeking refuge in the home of the chairman of a collective farm, the immigrant guest explained that he had ‘relatives’ who live nearby, that he was fleeing poverty at home in Korea. In confirming this man’s words with the border guard, the chairman discovered that this guest was in fact a Japanese spy. The article claims “The true face of the Korean was discovered, he was a spy...” Several other narratives follow, telling of a group or individual seeking to join their purported “relatives” across the Soviet border, all found to be spies for the Japanese. A particularly striking account informs of the arrest of a spy posing as an ordinary man found praying to his ancestors in a cemetery. The end of the article even explicitly warns that “the Japanese carefully study the border population, and discovering that a few of the residents of Manchuria have relatives on our side, they recruit them as spies and send them to the USSR.”<sup>38</sup>

Articles like this one, a mix of stories and authoritative warnings of Japanese espionage and infiltration within the Korean population of the far eastern territory, were rampant in the Soviet press throughout 1937 and 1938, particularly in the party and state controlled newspapers *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*. In these two years, which marked the planning and execution of the deportation, the press was filled with spy-mania. <sup>39</sup> The newspapers tell a narrative that Japanese infiltration throughout the entire Korean community in the region existed to the extent that no ordinary family or collective farm worker could be trusted, that anyone and everyone in the Soviet Korean community could be (or be hiding) a Japanese spy set on compromising the security of the USSR. This kind of narrative was consumed on the daily by any common person and power-wielding bureaucrat alike.

<sup>38</sup> “Rodstvenniki,” *Izvestiia* (Moscow), 4 September, 1937.

<sup>39</sup> *Izvestiia* (Moscow), and *Pravda* (Moscow). In one daily issue of *Pravda* in July 1937, there were four separate articles related to the threat of Japanese espionage in the east (*Pravda* 9 July, 1937).

Government officials and policy makers were convinced of the gravity of this security threat as well, and they acted upon it. What they had been fed in Arsenev's report, as well as what they consumed in the news, convinced the voting members that an indiscriminate deportation of the entire Korean population was necessary. On the 21st of August 1937, the Council of People's Commissars and the Central Committee of the Communist party co-signed a top-secret document titled "On the Eviction of the Korean Population from the Border Regions of the Far Eastern Territory" that officially ordered and authorized "the removal of the entire Korean population from the border regions to the Uzbek and Khazak SSRs." The decree claims this decision was made "in order to prevent the penetration of Japanese Espionage into the far-eastern territory." In addition to commencing the deportation, the document also gives the order to "increase the number of border troops by three thousand men to seal the border protection in the areas from which the Koreans are resettled." <sup>40</sup>

In the Korean case, the official rationale for deportation labeled the entire Korean population a security threat. The decree, signed by Molotov and Stalin in August 1937 read that the deportation was to be executed "in order to prevent the penetration of Japanese Espionage into the far-eastern territory."<sup>41</sup> While other factors were at play, as will be discussed in later chapters, this was the principal reason the Soviet authorities chose to record as their justified motive in official documentation. It remains the narrative to this day. What this tells us about the Soviet administration under Stalin at that time, is that concerns over state security, whatever the motivation for those concerns was, trumped *Korenizatsia* policies and earlier Soviet policies

<sup>40</sup> This document was signed off by V. Molotov, the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, and I. Stalin, then the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. The document explicitly orders the NKVD and the Far Eastern Regional Communist-Bolshevik Party to carry out the deportation by January 1, 1938. U-hyo Yi. Ying-ung Kim, and International Confederation of Korean Associations. *Belaia kniga o deportatsii koreiskogo naseleniia Rossii v 30-40-kh godakh*. Moskva: Interpraks, 1992. 64.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

aimed at giving non-Russian nationalities autonomy. The case of the Korean deportation was the first full-scale, forced relocation of a population in the USSR, and a defacto model for future repressions that authorities had already been considering. This dominant label of “security threat” established a precedent that would continue to justify the repression of other minority groups in this era of ethnic terror.

### **Nazis and A Pan-Islamist Threat: Soviet Suspicion of “Fifth Column” Activity among the Chechen and Ingush People.**

The Northern Caucasus was another one of the Soviet Union’s sensitive borderlands. Russian imperial colonialism in the region, which continued from the 17th through the 19th century, was constantly met with strong resistance, often led by Islamic groups which dominated the cultural and societal structure of the region.<sup>42</sup> Cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic ties made north Caucasian populations, such as the neighboring Chechens and Ingush, more loyal to the region which formerly belonged to the Ottoman Empire, than to the Russians, who threatened their very way of life. In the Chechen-Ingush mountain region, a *ghazavat*, or holy religious war, was led against Tsarist troops in guerilla style warfare by the famed Imam Shamil in the late 19th century.<sup>43</sup> In the early years of the Soviet Union, imposed Soviet atheism, which in many cases was violently imposed, was met with extremely strong cultural resistance from the Muslim communities. Atheist and anti-religious textbooks were outright rejected even by Muslim children in schools.<sup>44</sup> Additionally, collectivization, which did not sit well with a traditionally

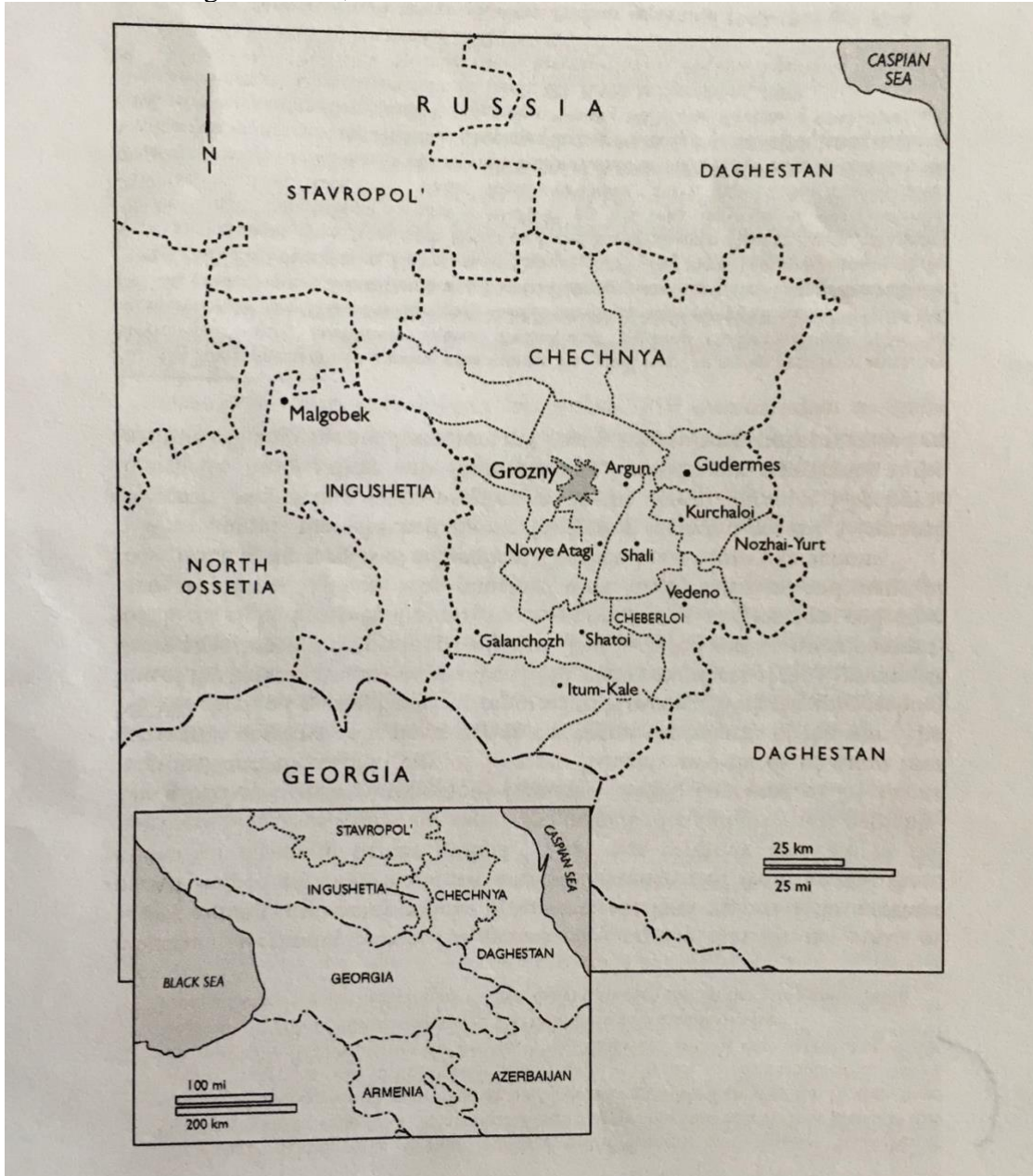
<sup>42</sup> David Motadel. “Islam and Germany’s War in the Soviet Borderlands, 1941–5.” *Journal of Contemporary History* 48, no. 4 (October 1, 2013) 785

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 785

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 787 This cultural clash and resistance will be discussed in more detail in chapters three and four, dealing with the Ethno-religious stigmatization of the Caucasus Muslims (chapter two) as well as the Soviets’ perceived notion that an Islamic State was at odds with Soviet ideology (chapter three).

nomadic mountain population, was met with resistance and non-compliance.<sup>45</sup> In response to this constant resistance, and religiously driven furor, both the Russians, and then the Soviets, portrayed this region as a hotbed of Islamic terrorism and “banditry.”

**Figure 2:** Chechen-Ingush ASSR, and the North Caucasus.<sup>46</sup>



<sup>45</sup> David Motadel. “Islam and Germany’s War in the Soviet Borderlands, 1941–5.”, 787

<sup>46</sup> Image reproduced from Jeffery Burds. “The Soviet War against ‘Fifth Columnists: The Case of Chechnya, 1942–4.” *Journal of Contemporary History* 42, no. 2 (2007)., 293

By the late 1930s, while the threat of Japanese infiltration in the far east shook the Soviet population, Nazi Germany was also gaining ground on the western front. Throughout the 30s, Soviet intelligence was tracing a number of Japanese-German interwar espionage rings, many of whom began to recruit the support of subversive anti-Soviet groups within the USSR. One particular group, known as the Promethean League, was a liberationist movement that unified radical individuals within non-Russian populations under Soviet control and was co-founded by Muslim radical Crimean Tatar, named Mohammed Ayaz Ishaki, who worked closely with Germans and even received funding from the Abwehr.<sup>47</sup> At this time Soviet intelligence also knew that neither Ishaki nor others associated with the group had any ties with the Caucasus rebels.<sup>48</sup> In 1940, Soviet intelligence heard whispers of a Japanese plan to specifically “recruit various Islamic ‘bandit’ groups in Central Asia, Chechnya, and the Caucasus to strike at the soviet rear” while Japan and Germany fought on the east and west.<sup>49</sup> This intelligence became fodder for NKVD suspicion of international cooperation of internal and external enemies. Internal government logic recognized the appeal of the north Caucasus’ rich natural resources to an expanding Nazi Germany, and understood that it would soon be a targeted region in the looming war. The Soviets wanted to protect their oil – losing this to Nazi Germany would be extremely detrimental.<sup>50</sup> Realizing this threat, and understanding their weak hold on the population in Chechnya and Ingushetia, the Soviet authorities became convinced of fifth

<sup>47</sup> Jeffery Burds. “The Soviet War against ‘Fifth Columnists: The Case of Chechnya, 1942—4.” *Journal of Contemporary History* 42, no. 2 (2007): 279. Abwehr was the military intelligence service in Nazi Germany.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 280

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 282 The Cities of Malgobek, and Grozny, the respective capitals of Ingushetia and Chechen territories were key places for the transport of over 50% of the Soviet Union’s oil.

columnist activities in the Caucasus, connecting the internal threat of rebellions with foreign espionage and influence.

Soviet intelligence went to extents to find and condemn Chechen and Ingush guerilla resistance leaders for collaborating with foreign powers. They were convinced of a capitalist/non-Soviet encirclement already, as they were in the 30s during the repression of the Koreans, and the resistance to Soviet ways of life in the region in combination to the importance of the region's oil supply only made this quest to uproot internal enemies even more urgent. What they actually found were only few isolated cases of small political movements led by a few individuals of Chechen descent who had travelled and lived as émigrés in Germany in the 1930s or were part of militant Islamic circles that allied themselves with the German Intelligence that approached them.<sup>51</sup> Soviet intelligence intensely probed these cases. A majority of the Soviet intelligence communication and record-keeping on north Caucasian rebels and Nazi collaborators focused largely on the same five individuals: Hassan Israelov, Maibrek Sheripov, Osman Saidurov, Rasul Skhabov, and Sarali Makhmudov.<sup>52</sup> The names of these same five men and a few others circulated the Soviet intelligence community; their communities and organizations were rapidly dismantled by the NKVD, often through trickery that led the resistance groups to turn on themselves.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>51</sup> A. M. (Aleksandr Moiseevich) Nekrich. *The punished peoples : the deportation and fate of Soviet minorities at the end of the Second World War* 1st ed. New York: Norton, 1978. 38

<sup>52</sup> Jeffery Burds. "The Soviet War against 'Fifth Columnists: The Case of Chechnya, 1942—4.'" *Journal of Contemporary History* 42, no. 2 (2007): 279. Abwehr was the military intelligence service in Nazi Germany. 295-300. Soviet security forces had files on each of these men, a majority of these files are now in hard-to-attain FSB archives – some of these are described by Burds, but these men were also the focus in the GUBB (Anti-Banditry Division of the NKVD) documents found at GARF, f. R-9478, op. 1 d. 55, II, 1-6, and GARF, f. R-9487, op. 1 d.73, II. 111-17.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 292-302.; The NKVD officials took advantage of Chechen/Ingush cultural traditions such as mandatory blood revenge, to pin the guerilla group members against each other. In Sheripov's case, they planted rumors that he was a spy for the NKVD – this rumor spread and Sheripov own men convicted and killed him for treason against his own people.

In reality, those who were proven to have been in contact with the Nazis proved to be relatively unsuccessful in getting the mountain peoples in their Caucasian homeland to fight for their cause, their ideas of collaboration with Germany being too radical.<sup>54</sup> Additionally, even the strongest Caucasian resistance organizations and guerilla forces broke their ties with the Nazis prior to the German invasion because the Nazis refused to fully recognize their autonomy and independence.<sup>55</sup>

Soviet intelligence also focused in on the religious sects and activity of the Chechen and Ingush. For a long time, they characterized the Chechens and Ingush as a special case of a “bandit nation” where religious customs and allegiances increased the likelihood of collaboration with foreign enemies. The Soviet authorities were actively looking at Chechen and Ingush religious and spiritual communities for any possible foreign or pan-Islamic influence that would orient them against the Soviets and compromise the security of the USSR. Evidence of this can be found in a general handbook of the NKVD’s Directorate against Banditry (also known by the acronym GUBB) which was used to train NKVD officers working in the Caucasus and Central Asia – the borderland regions with Islamic majority.<sup>56</sup> It is important to note here that GUBB was founded in late 1940 upon Stalin’s initiative as an inter-agency secret police unit to combat the threat of foreign support for local resistance movements.<sup>57</sup> A section of this handbook, titled “The Connection of Bandits with the Nationalist Underground and the Muslim Spirituality” states “The clergy have always played a reactionary role, always a faithful pillar of despotism,

<sup>54</sup> A. M. (Aleksandr Moiseevich) Nekrich. *The punished peoples : the deportation and fate of Soviet minorities at the end of the Second World War* 1st ed. New York: Norton, 1978., 38

<sup>55</sup> Jeffery Burds. “The Soviet War against `Fifth Columnists: The Case of Chechnya, 1942—4.” 299-300; Burds describes how Hassan Israelov broke with the Germans when he refused to give them any control over his revolutionary movement.

<sup>56</sup> P.Kh. Arzumanov, *LEKTSIIA ob organizatsii agenturno operativnoi raboty organov NKVD po bor'be s basmachesko-povstanicheskimi elementami i formirovaniiami na territorii tadzhikskoi SSR.*, GARF, R-9478 Op. 1 d. 147, 85; GUBB was founded by Stalin in late 1940.

<sup>57</sup> Jeffery Burds. “The Soviet War against `Fifth Columnists: The Case of Chechnya, 1942—4.” 289.



and this is exceptionally true of the Muslim clergy, who enjoy exceptional influence among the local population. Experience of the Struggle against Banditry has revealed that gang (bandit group) formation and activity is usually supported and led by nationalists and spiritualists.”<sup>58</sup> The authors of this textbook even suggest possible links between religious authorities and foreign states citing examples of mullahs from the Tajik republic who were communicating and facilitating uprisings with other Islamic Turkic groups in the USSR and with individuals in Western Europe.<sup>59</sup>

In the north Caucasus specifically, Soviet intelligence tracked down a number of Mullahs and Imams whom they suspected of leading religious uprisings and violent activities against Soviet officers in the region, and during the deportation process, the influential religious leaders were “priority items” to be mobilized before the rest of the population.<sup>60</sup>

The official decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, signed March 7, 1944, explaining the deportation of the entire Chechen-Ingush people read that the primary accusation was collaboration with the Nazis. It read in full as follows:

Due to the fact that during the Patriotic War, especially during the actions of Nazi forces in the Caucasus, many Chechens and Ingush changed their homeland, went over to the side of the fascist invaders, joined the ranks of saboteurs and scouts thrown by the Germans to the rear of the Red Army, created at the direction of the Germans, armed gangs to fight against the Soviet power, and also considering that many Chechens and Ingush for several years participated in armed demonstrations against the Soviet power and for a long time, being not engaged in honest work, commit gang raids on collective farms of neighboring regions, rob and kill Soviet people

- The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR DECIDES:

<sup>58</sup> P.Kh. Arzumanov, *LEKTSIIA ob organizatsii agenturno operativnoi raboty organov NKVD po bor'be s basmachesko-povstanicheskimi elementami i formirovaniiami na territorii tadzhikskoi SSR.*, GARF, R-9478 Op.1, d. 147, 85

<sup>59</sup> P.Kh. Arzumanov, *LEKTSIIA ob organizatsii agenturno operativnoi raboty organov NKVD po bor'be s basmachesko-povstanicheskimi elementami i formirovaniiami na territorii tadzhikskoi SSR.*, GARF, R-9478, Op.1, d. 147, 86

<sup>60</sup> N. F Bugai, and A. M Gonov. “The Forced Evacuation of the Chechens and the Ingush.” *Russian Studies in History* 41, no. 2 (October 1, 2002): 54

All Chechens and Ingush living in the territory of the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, as well as in the regions adjacent to it, should be relocated to other regions of the USSR, and the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic should be eliminated...<sup>61</sup>

While it appears that the accusations of treason and rebelliousness of the Chechens and Ingush posed were not made out of full cloth, the degree to which the Soviet authorities fanatically pursued these investigations, wrote about them, and publicized them, and altogether convinced themselves of the allegations against these nationalities, proved to be enough to justify the expulsion and murder of thousands in 1944.

### **Stalin's "Bourgeois Zionist Conspiracy": The Repression of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee**

The case of the repression of Jews (as a nationality) in the USSR and specifically the Soviet xenophobia that they faced is different from the other cases in that they had no home territory. They were a diaspora nationality, and so the 'security threat' which they posed to the Soviet authorities was not the result of their existence across a physical borderland per se, but rather across an ideological one. Many Jews had been instrumental in the rise of socialist power in the USSR including Leon Trotsky, who before he was anathemized by Stalin, was a key figure in the revolution. Support for and quick adoption of Bolshevik and early Soviet policies among many Jews made them a sort of model minority within the early USSR. Stalin, in one of his early speeches on the national and colonial question, praised the Jewish people for willingly

<sup>61</sup>Ukaz PVS SSSR «O likvidatsii Checheno-Ingushskoi ASSR i ob administrativnom ustroistve ee territorii» 07.03.1944 Bez publikatsii 116/102. Svodnye dokumenty o deportatsiakh kalmykov, narodov Severnogo Kavkaza, Kryma i Zakavkaz'ia v tselom (noiabr' 1943 — dekabr' 1944).

assimilating so quickly into the USSR, saying “the Jewish nation is coming to an end, the Jews are being assimilated and this is a progressive development...”<sup>62</sup>

After the second world war, as Stalin’s rhetoric increasingly began to focus on the fear of the ‘foreigner within,’ this began to change. As soon as Red army troops returned to the USSR, the Soviet authorities began an anti-western propaganda campaign, often promoting Russian national symbols and images instead.<sup>63</sup> This trend was on the rise since the Great Terror, but greatly heightened during the war. With the onset of the cold war in the years following the war, an anti-western campaign was on the rise as well. The Jewish community became a suspect group, adding to the list of the other aforementioned suspect ethnic minorities, because of the existence of a worldwide Jewish diaspora that was of prominence in the capitalist west. An article in *Pravda*, on January 28, 1949 called out several theater critics for being “anti-patriotic” and “rootless cosmopolitans,” who “fiercely pounced upon politically purposeful plays” and criticized plot lines that deal with “the Soviet Man as a hero.” The article also mentions the praise of western works by some of these critics.<sup>64</sup> All of the individuals named in this article happened to be Jewish, and though that fact is never pointed out in the article, the implication was obvious. Some of these individuals named were also members of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee.

The Jewish Anti-Fascist committee was comprised of the Soviet Union’s most prominent and renowned Jewish artists, playwrights, theater critics, and other cultural figures, was extremely successful in rallying allied support from the west in the second world war, and

<sup>62</sup> Joseph Stalin. *Marxism and the National-Colonial Question; a Collection of Articles and Speeches*. San Francisco: Proletarian Publishers, 1975. 35

<sup>63</sup> Azadovskii, Konstantin and Egorov, Boris, “From Anti-Westernism to Anti-Semitism.” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 4:1, (Winter 2002): 66

<sup>64</sup> “Ob Odnou Antipatrioticheskii Gruppy Teatralnykh Kritikov”, *Pravda* (Moscow), January 28, 1949

became a visible target for Stalin's Soviet xenophobic suspicion and subsequent repression of the Jews. The JAC's establishment and mission came directly from an order of Stalin himself in 1942, along with the establishment of four other anti-fascist committees for women, youth, scientists and Slavs, all tasked with rallying the support of allied countries in the fight against Hitler's Germany.<sup>65</sup>

The JAC was one of the most successful committees in this mission. A June, 1946 memorandum to the foreign policy director of the Central Committee of the Communist Party on the activities of the JAC from the JAC leadership mentions a variety of positive interactions of the committee with Jews from the United States and Europe; multiple visits of western European Jewish Antifascist committees to the USSR, and the visit of Ben Zion Goldberg (Waife), a prominent Jewish-American journalist who was active in the leadership of a number of American Jewish orgs such as the Soviet-American Friendship Society, the Committee of Jewish Scientists, Writers, and Artists of the United States (Albert Einstein was the president of this Committee), and Ambidjan, the All-American Society for Aid to Birobidzhan.<sup>66</sup> The memorandum highlights that Goldberg was a well-received guest of the Soviet Union, and that he had written many favorable articles in the western press about the USSR and its war effort.<sup>67</sup> Overall the document paints a picture of the success of the JAC's activities. The memorandum also mentions that over the course of the JAC's existence, a single delegation was sent abroad, to the United States, England, Canada, and Mexico in 1943.<sup>68</sup> During this trip, they held rallies in

<sup>65</sup> Naumov, V. P., and Joshua Rubenstein., ed. *Stalin's Secret Pogrom: The Postwar Inquisition of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee*. Annals of Communism. Translated by Laura, Esther Wolfson New Haven: Yale University Press in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2001. 7

<sup>66</sup> Mikhoels, S., and Fefer, I. "Memorandum Concerning The Jewish Antifascist Committee." Jewish Antifascist Committee in the USSR, June 21, 1946. Revelations from the Russian Archives. Library of Congress. Birobidzhan was a Soviet Jewish Autonomous Region in Siberia. A large Jewish population lived there, though more Jews lived in cities. Many American Jewish orgs wanted to give aid to the Jewish populations in this region.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

support of the war effort in the east, and met with American Jewish organizations whom were interested in providing aid to Soviet Jewry during wartime.<sup>69</sup> This trip seemed quite successful, but would prove to be extremely consequential later on.

Following the war, as the anti-western campaign became more intense, and Jews from all fields of work were being targeted in the papers, the wartime activities of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee were revisited and its members became suspect. From 1948 to 1952, most members of the committee were arrested on counts of disseminating pro-American sentiments, or accepting relief packages from American Jewish organizations.<sup>70</sup> In 1952, a show trial was organized by the Soviet government for all the JAC members who had been arrested on counts of treason, prior to which, the suspects were brutally interrogated and tortured until they confessed to the charges of espionage on behalf of the American government and treason against the Soviet Union.<sup>71</sup> Itzik Feffer and those who worked with him in the committee (he was one of the delegates of the committee travelling to the US in 1943) were asked pointed questions about their involvement with American Jewish organizations, particularly the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), which, in the trial was addressed as the “Joint,” a “bourgeois Zionist organization”.<sup>72</sup> The confessions Fefer made about the JAC’s communication with the JDC do not match up with the JDC’s records of communication, which show a lack of response from requests to provide aid post-war, and only a few exchanges of greetings by telegram. Records also include a letter from the Soviet Consulate in New York saying that the Soviet Government agreed to take aid from the Joint in 1943, and that everything had to be done

<sup>69</sup> In the U.S. the delegation’s primary contact was the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. JDC Archives, Records of the New York Office of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1942-1945. Letter from James N. Rosenberg to Mr. Otto N. Schiff 10/1/1943; Luncheon today with Baerwald, Michoels, Feffer and JNR 9/13/1943

<sup>70</sup> Rubenstein, Joshua, Vladimir Naumov, and Joshua Rubenstein. *Stalin’s Secret Pogrom: The Postwar Inquisition of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee*. London: Yale University Press 2001. 40-42

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 50

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 83-87

officially through the Soviet Government.<sup>73</sup> It becomes clear that the testimonies of the trial were manipulated to tell the narrative of an Jewish spy conspiracy about which Stalin had become so convinced. The trial ended with the death sentences of Fefer and twelve other members of the JAC.<sup>74</sup> They were executed by firing squad on August 12, 1952.<sup>75</sup>

A few years prior to their arrests, on January 12, 1948, Solomon Mikhoels, the Chairman of the JAC and the other delegate of the committee who went on the seven month tour in Europe and America, was murdered in Minsk by the NKVD on direct orders from Stalin. The murder was covered up and staged as a traffic accident.<sup>76</sup> Mikhoels had been an outspoken critic of the unfair treatment of Jews that had arisen in the years since the war, and Stalin had taken notice of this. Too famous to be arrested with the others, Stalin had him silently killed ahead of time. But by the time of the show trial, Mikhoels' public image would also be destroyed, as is evident in a 1953 *Pravda* article connecting him to the Doctor's Plot - a scandal surrounding the supposed attempt at poisoning Soviet officials that was blamed on several Jewish doctors which was the peak of official anti-Jewish sentiment in the USSR. Interestingly enough, the article insinuates that his participation had to do with that 1943 trip to America, in which he met with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee:

Relying upon a group of corrupt Jewish bourgeois nationalists, the professional spies and terrorists of "Joint," through assignments from and under the direction of American intelligence, extended their subversive activity even into the territory of the Soviet Union. As the prisoner Vovsi revealed under investigation, he received directives "about the extermination of leadership cadres of the USSR," from the USA. These instructions were handed to him, in the name of the spying-terrorist "Joint" organization, through Dr. Shimeliovich and the well-known Jewish bourgeois nationalist Mikhoels.

<sup>73</sup> Rubenstein, Joshua, Vladimir Naumov, and Joshua Rubenstein. *Stalin's Secret Pogrom: The Postwar Inquisition of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee* 87-88; JDC Archives, Records of the New York Office of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1942-1945. Telegrams 1/6/1945; Letter from Consul General Eugene Kisslev 11/26/1943

<sup>74</sup> Rubenstein, Joshua, Vladimir Naumov, and Joshua Rubenstein. *Stalin's Secret Pogrom: The Postwar Inquisition of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee*. 491.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 495.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

Unmasking the gang of poisoner-doctors struck a blow against the international Jewish Zionist organization. Now all can see what sort of philanthropists and “friends of peace” hid beneath the sign-board of “Joint.”<sup>77</sup>

The rhetoric which started in the newspapers labeling the Jews as “anti-patriotic” and “cosmopolitan” conspirators with the west was boosted by show trials against Jews. This in turn justified the spread of a specifically Soviet anti-semitism as anti-westernism that led to the execution of the JAC members and the almost blood libel-like scapegoating of the Doctor’s Plot.

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The ideological language painting entire nationalities as security threats was a feature of a three of these cases of Soviet ethnic terror. Shown across the board in these examples of ethnic terror, this scapegoating of entire ethnic groups is based on perceived threats that Stalin and his regime felt as a result of their inability to control a population whose diaspora reached beyond Soviet and communist borders. Perceived threats of security permeated Stalinist culture from the 1930s through Stalin’s death in 1953 and became a factor in the massive and irrational repression of minority ethnic groups in the Soviet Union.

<sup>77</sup> *Vicious Spies and Killers under the Mask of Academic Physicians. Pravda* (Moscow), 13 January, 1953, p.1

## Chapter 2: The Persistence of Prejudice in the Proletarian Regime

It is no coincidence that the ethnic groups which Stalin saw as security threats and internal enemies were all groups that historically faced discrimination and stigmatization under the Imperial Tsarist regime. In 1920, the revolution-minded Soviet leaders promised the end of ancient prejudices and declared the oppression of these groups a “despicable betrayal of socialism” and yet in a little more than a decade they rounded up and deported entire populations by force.<sup>78</sup> These stigmas could not and did not disappear from society overnight. Ethnic stigmatization remained in its more traditional raw forms - xenophobia, anti-Islam, Anti-Semitism, and notions of backwardness, fostering a distrust of these communities that led to their profiling and being seen as disloyal and threats to the internal security of the USSR, which ultimately led to their deportations and executions. Soviet xenophobia, fear of capitalist encirclement, and accusations of disloyalty against entire nationalities may have been “purely” ideological on the surface, but in practice served to ratify older national and ethnically driven prejudice and were often driven by prejudice themselves. Raw and explicit racism was left unchecked and sometimes even encouraged by the upper Soviet authorities who found it convenient to scapegoat those who were already ‘othered’ and distrusted for being different from the Russian majority. Although never outwardly or directly justified by explicit racism such as Nazi Germany did, Soviet policies towards stigmatized national minorities was, in many cases, outright racist and chauvinistic.

This chapter serves to show that the seemingly sudden shift to ethnic terror under Stalin was not so sudden, nor was it really a shift. Rather, it was a culmination of the socialist-

<sup>78</sup> Vladimir Il'ich Lenin. *Lenin's Collected Works*. 2nd English Edition. Vol. 31. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965. 151



revolutionary thoughts which the USSR was founded on - albeit thoughts that were tainted by existing stigmas against groups which traditional Russian society had deemed outsiders and backwards.

The following text from Lenin's 1920 Draft Theses on National and Colonial Questions, written for the second Congress of the Communist International illustrates this well.

The age-old oppression of colonial and weak nationalities by the imperialist powers has not only filled the working masses of the oppressed countries with animosity towards the oppressor nations, but has also aroused distrust in these nations in general, even in their proletariat...On the other hand, the more backward the country, the stronger is the hold of small-scale agricultural production, patriarchalism and isolation, which inevitably lend particular strength and tenacity to the deepest of petty-bourgeois prejudices, i.e., to national egoism and national narrow-mindedness.<sup>79</sup>

Lenin justified a distrust of the previously stigmatized nations (in this case, ethnic/national groups colonized and oppressed by the Russian Empire), putting the blame on capitalism and the imperialist regime. At the same time, he perpetuated the colonialist stigma that these nations were 'backward' and in need of saving, arguing that crucial parts of their existence - traditional agriculture, religion, and national consciousness, are contrary to victory over capitalism. Lenin also argues here that the old prejudices will simply pass away after the socialist transformation of society. It is an argument of Soviet socialist supersessionism, which much like imperialism, sees another group's difference as suspect and wrong.

Though it is not so thoroughly discussed by scholars like Terry Martin, and Sheila Fitzpatrick in their major works on the Soviet Union and ethnic minorities, racism and xenophobia was a major and compelling aspect of Soviet nationalities policy, often disguised and

<sup>79</sup> Vladimir Il'ich Lenin. *Lenin's Collected Works*. 2nd English Edition. Vol. 31. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965. 151

justified by reasons of national security or military defense.<sup>80</sup> In all three of the cases I discuss in this thesis, there is evidence of racist and xenophobic discourse at the decision-making levels of Soviet power, and there is a direct correlation between that sentiment and the physical repression of these ethnic groups.

### **The Yellow Peril: Traditional Anti-Korean Xenophobia in the New Soviet Regime**

In 1928, popular Russian explorer, historian, and politician, Vladimir K. Arsenev was commissioned by upper level authorities to write a historical and analytical report to the Far Eastern Region Committee of the Communist Leadership of the All Soviet Communist Party on the state of the Far Eastern region of Soviet territory. In a very Russian-centric manner, Arsenev began his report with a brief history of the region. He argued that prior to Russian discovery, the Far East, what the Imperial Russians called the *Primorye* region, was a blank slate - that it was the Russian explorers who first discovered and conquered the land and established the first cities (Vladivostok being the most prominent).<sup>81</sup> This was in contrast to what a broader, more global history tells us; The land of the *Primorye* was under the jurisdiction of the Qing dynasty prior to Russian annexation in 1860 and it was not at all empty but inhabited by Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and native populations, that had permanently settled and established small villages where they conducted small scale trade.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>80</sup>See Terry Martin, "The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing." *The Journal of Modern History* 70, no 4 (1998): 813–61. Martin downplays the role of ethnic stigmatization in the deportations, saying that it existed but was not a driving factor.

<sup>81</sup> Vladimir K. Arsenev. "Doklad B. K. Arseneva. Dalnevostochnomu kraevomu komitetu Vsesouzhnoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii." In *Zheltaia opasnost*, edited by Boris Diachenko. Vladivostok: Voron, 1996 [orig. Written 1928]. 96

<sup>82</sup> David Eugene Habecker. "Ruling the East: Russian Urban Administration and the Chinese, Koreans, and Japanese in Vladivostok, 1884–1922." Order No. 3112608, University of Maryland, College Park, 2003. 63, 80, 181.

The Koreans and Chinese especially, established villages all across what became the Russian Primorye Oblast, having immigrated there in response to political and economic push factors in their home countries starting before the turn of the 19th century. This trend occurred long before the Tsarist government began implementing policies to develop the region as an integral part of the Russian Empire.<sup>83</sup> Many of these immigrants left their homelands for the Russian east illegally, knowing they would be executed if they returned; prior to 1884 there was a ban on Korean emigration to Russia and post 1905 (Japanese annexation of Korea), a large number of Korean immigrants came to Russia for political reasons.<sup>84</sup> Nonetheless, Arsenev emphasized in his report that the Japanese, Chinese, and Korean immigrants living in the Far East were not permanent settlers and were therefore always more loyal subjects of their homelands than of the Russian Empire in which they lived.<sup>85</sup>

Bringing the matter closer to 1928, the report argued that Russian actions were the cause for a shift in more recent geopolitics – saying that it was Russia’s imperial expansion towards the east that caused Japan to “quickly emerge from its centuries-old isolationism” and take on their own imperialist foreign policy.<sup>86</sup> According to Arsenev, in another section of the report, the aim of this Japanese imperialist foreign policy was, and always had been, to unite all of Asia under its control and an implicit part of that was to “unite Korea [under Japanese control] and then Koreanize the eastern part of Manchuria and the Ussuri [Russian/Soviet] territory.”<sup>87</sup> Behind his historical logic was the quite popular fear of a Japanese led, but united, pan-Asian imperial threat

<sup>83</sup> These development policies included land grants for Tsarist citizens (ethnic Russians) to settle and develop the region. <sup>83</sup> David Eugene Habecker. "Ruling the East: Russian Urban Administration and the Chinese, Koreans, and Japanese in Vladivostok, 1884–1922." Order No. 3112608, University of Maryland, College Park, 2003.

<sup>84</sup> David Eugene Habecker. "Ruling the East." 181,175-176.

<sup>85</sup> Vladimir K. Arsenev. "Doklad B. K. Arseneva. Dalnevostochnomu kraevomu komitetu Vsesouznnoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii." In *Zheltaia opasnost*, edited by Boris Diachenko. Vladivostok: Voron, 1996 [orig. Written 1928].101.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 98-99

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*,113

to Russia called the *Zheltaia Opasnost*, or *Yellow Peril*. This narrative was sowed into the minds of Russian citizens long before the October revolution by Russian explorers, historians, and theorists like Arsenev himself.

Arsenev's report to the Soviet authorities took his historical narrative, with all its implicit racist paranoias, and made it relevant to 1928 Soviet security problems. Immediately, his emphasis on the impermanence and disloyalty of the Koreans and Chinese immigrants became the grounds on which he questioned the loyalty of the Koreans as a nation and as a race in the USSR of the 1920s and 30s. In the following passage of the report, describing the security situation in 1928, the traditional prejudices embedded in Arsenev's historical narrative were clearly carried over, complete with objectively racist "Yellow Peril"- type language.

They [the Koreans] are *anthropologically, ethnographically, psychologically* and by their own world views, stand and remain closer to the Japanese than to us. Believing that the Koreans soon turn into Soviet citizens will never occur, we should never wait for them to change their convictions, character and world view. With our close relations with the residents of Manchuria and Korea, the fulfilment of danger comes closer and closer to being realized with Koreans and Chinese in our borders.<sup>88</sup>

Through the remainder of the report, Arsenev argued for the reasonability of Koreans being pawns and spies for the Japanese – often citing their inherent nature as East Asian people as a reason for distrust. In one paragraph he paints all Asian people as a threat saying, "Our colonization is a type of weak wedge on the edge of the primordial land of the yellow peoples. On our borders looms over /threatens us one-third of the world's population totaling 600 million of the yellow races."<sup>89</sup> His comments here reflected the Russian population's increasing fear of the "Yellow Peril," which, as Japan grew stronger following the first world war, morphed into

<sup>88</sup> Vladimir K. Arsenev. "Doklad B. K. Arseneva. Dalnevostochnomu kraevomu komitetu Vsesouznnoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii." In *Zheltaia opasnost*, edited by Boris Diachenko. Vladivostok: Voron, 1996 [orig. Written 1928]. 115 (Emphasis my own)

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*,101

the “Yellow Juggernaut” – the fear of a Japanese-controlled pan-Asian military encroachment into Russia and Europe.

In addition to this ‘security threat,’ Arsenev includes more traditional anti-immigrant rhetoric in his report, sowing economic fears into the minds of the Soviet leaders, saying that the Chinese and Koreans are taking jobs from the Russians living there.<sup>90</sup> The inclusion of this sentiment in an official document mostly focused on the Eastern Region’s security is particularly unsettling and shows at the very least, a toleration of that kind of prejudice among Soviet authorities.

Near the end of the report, there is a list of conclusions and recommendations to government officials. One of these was the recommendation of a full deportation of the Koreans from the borderlands to central Asia:

The principal means of conflict against this consists of immediately and thoroughly removing and settling the Chinese and Koreans outside of the borders with China and Korea and expanding the colonization [of the RFE] from Western USSR and Western Siberia, independent of nationality but not Chinese and Koreans. The latter should be sent out to the deep interior of our country to the West or north of the Amur.<sup>91</sup>

This report was commissioned for the Far Eastern Regional Executive Committee by its CP chairman, S.A. Bergavinov in 1928, two years before Arsenev’s death.<sup>92</sup> It was persuasive and effective, or at the very least, gave others in power with the same beliefs enough confidence to act. Its presentation was followed by a decree by the Soviet Council of People’s Commissars to resettle the Korean population of Vladivostok away from the border district to the Khabarovsk district later that year.<sup>93</sup> As mentioned in previous discussion of this document, five years later,

<sup>90</sup> Vladimir K. Arsenev. “Doklad B. K. Arseneva. Dalnevostochnomu kraevomu komitetu Vsesouznnoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii.” In *Zheltaiia opasnost*, edited by Boris Diachenko. Vladivostok: Voron, 1996 [orig. Written 1928]. 102

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 115

<sup>92</sup> John Chang, *Burnt by the Sun: The Koreans of the Russian Far East*. 106

<sup>93</sup> *GARF. F. P-3316. Op. 16a. D. 384. L. 1–2*. It is also interesting to note that the resettlement of Korean, Chinese and Japanese communities in Vladivostok were resettled and ostracized from the rest of the Russian population

in 1934, the report resurfaced and was distributed to the members of the Far Eastern Executive Committee again, possibly under Stalin's orders - at this point Arsenev was dead and Bergavinov was no longer on the committee. It was at this point, when the authorities began to discuss the prospects of a fully-fledged deportation of the Korean population as Arsenev had recommended.<sup>94</sup>

The state-run media also took part in racially profiling and ostracizing the Soviet Korean community as well. In addition to the spy-mania, and yellow peril language that plagued the newspapers in 1937, state media racially profiled Koreans living in the far eastern region of the USSR. One *Pravda* article on July 9, 1937, states that "it is widely known that Japanese officers of espionage have been settled internationally under the guise of laundrymen, barbers, house servants, maids, butlers, and dockworkers... And it is well known that the Japanese attempted to transfer officers posing as Koreans and Chinese to the USSR for the purpose of espionage."<sup>95</sup> It was also 'widely known' that the occupations listed were the most common occupations of ethnic Koreans, Chinese, and Japanese in the Soviet far east.<sup>96</sup> State media also espoused borderline racist arguments advising the Soviet people that no Korean, Chinese, Japanese, or other east Asian living in the Soviet Union could be trusted because of certain "known" techniques the Japanese used to infiltrate every level of Soviet Korean and Chinese society. In 1937, L.M. Zakovskii, the chief of the Leningrad NKVD at the time, publicly published a brochure titled "About some methods and techniques of foreign intelligence agencies and their Trotsky-Bukharin agents" that detailed numerous ways the Japanese infiltrated Soviet Korean

numerous times under the Tsarist authorities in the city prior to the revolution. See Habecker. "Ruling the East: Russian Urban Administration and the Chinese, Koreans, and Japanese in Vladivostok, 1884–1922." Order No. 3112608, University of Maryland, College Park, 2003.

<sup>94</sup> John Chang, *Burnt by the Sun: The Koreans of the Russian Far East*. 106

<sup>95</sup> "Podryvnaia rabota iaponskoi razvedki," *Pravda*, July 9, 1937, 5.

<sup>96</sup> John Chang, *Burnt by the Sun: The Koreans of the Russian Far East*. 150

communities. In one instance, Zakovskii explains how the Japanese “easily recruited” Koreans to pose as political refugees from Japanese controlled Korea, fleeing from Japanese rule – this covered a large portion of the Korean population. In another instance, he notes that the Japanese also planted Koreans spies under the disguise of poorer “traders, and jugglers, and so on, on the road to Petersburg and Moscow.”<sup>97</sup>

The terror against Soviet Koreans that was informed by this rhetoric was not limited to the 1937 deportation, it also informed the systematic purging of the successful and loyal Soviet bureaucrats and military leaders of Korean descent (and their families), whom the Soviets used to penetrate Japanese and Chinese security, and then disposed of once they were no longer useful. This is a narrative that is missing in most present histories of the Soviet Security operations in the Soviet far east.

**Figure 3:** Three OGPU/NKVD Officers. March 15, 1932. Blagoveshchensk, USSR.<sup>98</sup>



<sup>97</sup> Leonid Zakovskii, *O nekotorykh metodakh i priemakh inostrannykh razvedyvatel'nykh organov i ikh trotskisto-bukharinskoi agentuty*, Moscow-Leningrad: Partizdat TsK VKP (b), 1937 (available at: <http://vault.exmachina.ru/spy/3/>, accessed 12 April 2020).

<sup>98</sup> Photo courtesy of Jon Chang, PhD. Used with permission given to author. Note the collars with pins; those were only given to upper ranking NKVD/OGPU officers.

One such institution in which the Soviets trained Korean and Chinese citizens to be spies against the Japanese was the Chinese-Lenin School in Vladivostok. The school, functioning from autumn 1924 through the Spring of 1938, principally functioned to increase commitment and loyalty to the communist party among the population in the far eastern region, secretly recruited and trained people of East Asian heritage to infiltrate Japanese intelligence as double agents.<sup>99</sup> Its story is a much lesser known, often missing piece of what the Soviets and the present day Russian Federation call *Operation Maki-Mirage*, the Soviet espionage operation into China, Korea, and Manchukuo.<sup>100</sup> According to Dmitrii Ancha, a Russian historian active in the 1990s, who was able to access the Soviet Archives in Vladivostok before they were confiscated by the FSB and made unavailable to researchers, this school, led by Soviet officials of Korean and Chinese nationality, fed three Soviet security agencies, both regional and USSR-wide, (RO OKDVA, INO NKVD, and KRO) that sent intelligence and counter-intelligence agents into the Far East to discover Japanese insurgents and double agents in Soviet territory.<sup>101</sup> The school trained and sent around 400 agents who were Soviet citizens of Chinese and Korean descent, many of whom were seasoned Red Army veterans, born and raised in the USSR- they made up a significant portion of operation Maki-Mirage.<sup>102</sup> The jobs given these men and women were particularly dangerous, but they took their missions seriously and most proved to be very loyal officers, using their talents, heritage, and linguistic skills for the Soviet cause. Even so, some of

<sup>99</sup>John K. Chang “East Asians in Soviet Intelligence and the Continuities between Soviet and Russian Intelligence Practices” *The Intelligencer, Journal of U.S. Intelligence Studies*. 25 No. 1 (Spring/Summer 2019): 27

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> D.A. Ancha, Miz' n.g. Kitaïskaïa Diaspora vo Vladivostoke: Straniŝy Istorii. Izdanie vtoroe dopolnennoe. Vladivostok: Dal'nauka, 2015. 287

<sup>102</sup> D.A. Ancha, Miz' n.g. Kitaïskaïa Diaspora vo Vladivostoke: Straniŝy Istorii. Izdanie vtoroe dopolnennoe. Vladivostok: Dal'nauka, 2015.; It is important to note here, that today, the successes of operation Maki-Mirage are attributed to the ethnic Russian officials who participated, and those from the CLS, many of whom were purged, are left out of the narrative. John K. Chang “East Asians in Soviet Intelligence and the Continuities between Soviet and Russian Intelligence Practices” *The Intelligencer, Journal of U.S. Intelligence Studies*. 25 No. 1 (Spring/Summer 2019): 29



the most respected and accomplished spies that came out of this school were not spared by the central government's paranoia about Koreans being internal enemies, and were purged, deported, or even executed, along with their families in the purges of the NKVD that accompanied the 1937-8 deportation; in 1938, the school was closed down and according to Ancha, his research in the archives revealed that at least 180 of the 400 intelligence students of the CLS were purged on the basis of belonging to a "suspect nationality".<sup>103</sup>

Aside from these purges of the most loyal and dedicated of Soviet Koreans, the terror included numerous show trials conducted by the NKVD in the far eastern Krai of thousands of innocent recent immigrants who had fled Korea in the 1930s. In an interview from 2014, with scholar Jon Chang, Vassilievna Ti tells the story of her father, Khai Ir Ti, a Korean emigrant who was recruited by the NKVD as a translator and witnessed several show trials accusing Soviet Koreans living in the far eastern region of being Japanese spies through the 1930s. Khai Ir fled Korea with his family in 1933 by foot after fighting for years as a partisan against the Japanese imperialists. They arrived and settled in Chernogorsk, in Soviet Siberia. An intelligent man, Khai quickly learned Russian and in 1935 he was recruited by the local NKVD to be a translator. Vassilievna recalls her father telling her mother, and later, stepmother about the show trials he witnessed and was forced to translate:

"They called out all the Koreans in the town [Chernogorsk] and accused them of being Japanese spies. The Koreans knew Russian poorly, some had just arrived and my father was translating the trials for them. Many of them had never even seen a Japanese person before! But what could they do?...[During the trials] they would have them write their names and surnames. They would then pronounce sentences that these men were convicted of espionage for the Japanese and that was it, they allowed them no words in defense. They were sent to camps in Siberia. Sentences of 10 years, though that often meant the rest of their lives in reality. Thousands were sent away this way."<sup>104</sup>

<sup>103</sup>D.A. Ancha, *Miz' n.g. Kitaïskaïa Diaspora vo Vladivostoke: Stranitsy Istorii. Izdanie vtoroe dopolnennoe.* Vladivostok: Dal'nauka, 2015. 252.; Dmitrii Ancha, email to Jon Chang, February 20, 2018. Email forwarded to author with permission to use on 11 February, 2020.

<sup>104</sup> Anna Vassilievna Ti, DOB 1931, Interview by John Chang, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, June 2014.

Ti recalls that her father used to say that there was no lawfulness in these processes. He often feared for his own life. While he was never arrested or accused himself, his wife and two sons were deported in 1937 without any notice being given to him.<sup>105</sup> Show trials such as these were done completely without due process, and they point to show that many of the “convictions” of Koreans as Japanese spies referred to in *Pravda*, or in the government documents justifying the 1937 deportation were false, and that a majority of the time, these trials and roundups were completely ethnically based.

### **A “Nation of Bandits and Traitors”: Soviet Orientalism and Anti-Islamism in the North Caucasus**

Prior to the 1917 revolution, Russian nationals looked upon the north Caucasus region as a “backwards place full of “backwards” and rebellious people. The Tsarist conquest of the region in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was seen by most Russians as the “pacification of these wild mountain peoples,” and the Chechen Resistance movement of the 1830s and 40s against Imperial conquest, led by the famed Imam Shamil left an impression that the Chechens and Ingush were violent and wild peoples who resisted development and civilization. <sup>106</sup> After the Bolshevik revolution and the civil war, the new socialist government argued that they were reversing this narrative and praising those nations and regional powers that rose up against the “imperialist tsarist yoke.”<sup>107</sup> In regard to this, Lenin himself said that Soviet Russia needed to ally themselves with and

<sup>105</sup> Anna Vassilievna Ti, DOB 1931, Interview by John Chang, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, June 2014.

<sup>106</sup> See Jeronim Perović. "Conquest and Resistance." In *From Conquest to Deportation: The North Caucasus under Russian Rule*, by Perovic, Jeronim.. Oxford University Press, 2018. Oxford Scholarship Online, 2019

<sup>107</sup> Jeronim Perović. "Conquest and Resistance." In *From Conquest to Deportation: The North Caucasus under Russian Rule*, by Perovic, Jeronim.. Oxford University Press, 2018. Oxford Scholarship Online, 2019. 3

support the “national and colonial liberation movements” in the colonies and territories of the former Russian empire.<sup>108</sup>

When it came to the implementation of Soviet policies, such as collectivization and industrialization, these attitudes changed. In that same speech, Lenin also argues that in the former colonially oppressed regions are presently “backwards states and nations in which feudal or patriarchal-peasant relations predominate.” He adds in this same thesis that in these countries, there is a “need to combat pan-Islamism and similar trends, which strive to combine the liberation movement against European imperialism with an attempt to strengthen the positions of the khans, landowners, and Mullahs [Imams], etc.”<sup>109</sup> The Russian mentality that these people were ‘backwards’ and rebellious, and less capable than the Soviets of the Russian majority, persisted through the revolution and laid the foundation for Soviet policy towards the region.

In her book exploring a full history of Russia’s orientalism and racism against the native people of the Caucasus and Central Asia, *Crucifying the Orient*, Kalpana Sahni describes how, at the Twelfth Party Congress of the Russian Communist Party in 1923, the Russian majority, those leading the Congress, decided to grant regional autonomy to some groups and nationalities, such as the Russians and Ukrainians and Georgians, (what they called the more advanced nationalities), but to split territories belonging to the “more backwards” nationalities in the Caucasus between republics that were more controlled by Russians already.<sup>110</sup> At this meeting of the congress, a delegate from the Muslim regions, Sultan-Galiev spoke up and questioned unfairness towards the nationalities in the Muslim regions, stating “one cannot state that this or

<sup>108</sup> Vladimir Il’ich Lenin. *Lenin's Collected Works*. 2nd English Edition. Vol. 31. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965. 151

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Kalpana Sahni. *Crucifying the Orient: Russian Orientalism and the Colonization of Caucasus and Central Asia*. Bangkok, Thailand: White Orchid Press, 1997, 120.

that nationality has developed sufficiently to be granted autonomy, whereas the other one has not. This to me is a totally illogical argument.”<sup>111</sup> Soon after he made this comment, Galiev was arrested. This proves how policy on the USSR’s nationalities was based on prejudiced partialism and Russian chauvinism from the very start.

The region occupied by the Chechen and Ingush people went through several official territorial stages between 1932 and 1936, starting with the broad Mountain Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic which contained the territories of more than six nationalities each with their own languages and cultural customs, and ending with the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic which grouped together the Chechen and Ingush peoples, both of the Vainakh linguistic group. Still, this autonomous region was carved out in such a way that about 50 percent of the inhabitants were ethnic Chechens, about seven and a half percent were ethnic Ingush, and almost 35 percent ethnic Russian.<sup>112</sup>

Though these two nationalities were finally given a semi-greater degree of autonomy, the central authorities from Moscow enforced stringent and demanding collectivization policies, which required a change from these mountain peoples’ traditional agricultural practices, and significantly undermined their way of life. Generally, for the first decade or so, most of the population remained in the rural mountain regions, and did not produce a large working class as the Soviets had intended. The authorities added pressure, and as a result there were a number of small uprisings in the villages against Soviet central authorities and police.<sup>113</sup> As a result of this resistance, Soviet authorities reported instances of Islamic, religiously led terrorism, banditism,

<sup>111</sup> Kalpana Sahni. *Crucifying the Orient: Russian Orientalism and the Colonization of Caucasus and Central Asia*. 121.

<sup>112</sup> A. M. (Aleksandr Moiseevich) Nekrich. *The punished peoples : the deportation and fate of Soviet minorities at the end of the Second World War* 1st ed. New York: Norton, 1978. 42-43

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

adventurist insurgency, and attachment to backwardness – this once again became a characterization of the Chechen and Ingush people as it had been under the Russian imperialists.<sup>114</sup> The Soviets responded to the resistance with greater violence, conducting military operations against the peasants, complete with artillery and air support in March 1930.<sup>115</sup> In 1932, NKVD reports made claims of an “armed uprising,” which according to unofficial accounts from locals and witnesses, was a conflated account.<sup>116</sup> Other unofficial accounts recall that resistance and protest against collectivization by villagers was met with severe punishment and execution in a number of cases.<sup>117</sup> Eventually, the upset villagers would be addressed as “Bandits” by the Soviet authorities, and this conflict in the Caucasus would be known as the “Struggle against Banditry.” In addition to his fears of rebel groups joining forces with foreign powers, Stalin launched GUBB, the NKVD’s Directorate for the Struggle Against Banditry, in 1940.

GUBB was established specifically for the purposes of rooting out and fighting foreign support of domestic terrorist/insurgent groups in the southern, mostly Islamic republics. Due to the surrounding security issues of the time, it particularly focused on the North Caucasus, on the Chechen and Ingush nationalities. GUBB became a large division within the NKVD training schools, and there are a number of documents from these institutions that reveal the theory taught to future officers, which would inform their action in the field of duty. According to some of these GUBB educational documents, the label of ‘bandit’, which normally described individuals

<sup>114</sup> N.F. Bugai, ed. “Documents on the Chechen--Ingush Deportation of 1944.” Translated by M.E. Sharp. *Russian Studies in History* 41, no. 2 (Fall 2002): 62, 65

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> A. M. (Aleksandr Moiseevich) Nekrich. *The punished peoples : the deportation and fate of Soviet minorities at the end of the Second World War* 1st ed. New York: Norton, 1978. 46. Aleksandr Nekrich was a Soviet historian who interviewed and heard stories from witnesses of these events in the 1970s in order to hear accounts that were not the official Soviet accounts.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.; In one case he describes a group of villagers protesting the unfair agricultural requirements, several of whom were former Red partisans that fought in the civil war against the Whites – a number of them were shot.

who acted in violent rebellion against Soviet authorities, could also apply to an entire nation. It described a ‘bandit nation’ as one with “borderland elements, close kinship or ethnic ties to foreign based emigration,” “strong religious traditions”, “sustained by a ‘heroic’ historical movement of insurrectionary elements”, and “[operating] on hostile terrain that facilitates concealment.”<sup>118</sup> These classifications closely describe the cultural and geographical attributes of the majority Muslim nationalities of the southern USSR which were deported in the 30s and 40s - the Chechens and Ingush included. Since the goal of GUBB was to eliminate and liquidate this “Banditry”, the language used in this textbook seems to justify the liquidation of the classified “bandit nations” such as the Chechens and Ingush. With rhetoric like this, the Soviet administration espoused that terror and uprising and security threats were tied to the inherent identity and community connections of the populations they had labeled as ‘bandits.’

This profiling of nationalities as “Bandit Nations” led to calls of violence against the Chechens and Ingush. According to a memorandum on operations during the deportation, NKVD officials ordered Soviet forces to “liquidate any Chechen terrorists.”<sup>119</sup> Orders from Beria, head of the NKVD, laid out instructions that any Chechen or Ingush who could be considered “untransportable” be liquidated on the spot.<sup>120</sup> In the small mountain villa of Kaibakh, 700 people were locked in a stable and burned to death by the NKVD soldiers.<sup>121</sup> The Chechen-Ingush deportation proved to be the most deadly of all the ethnic deportations in the USSR – it is estimated that about 25 percent of the population died either directly at the hands of

<sup>118</sup> P. Kh. Arzumanov, “Lektsiia: Ob Organizatsii Agenturno operativnoi raboty organov NKVD po borbe s basmachesko-povstancheskim elementom i formirovaniyamim na territorii tadjikskoi SSR.” GARF, f. R-9478, op. 1, d. 147, II. 1-6

<sup>119</sup> N.F. Bugai, ed. “Documents on the Chechen--Ingush Deportation of 1944.” Translated by M.E. Sharp. *Russian Studies in History* 41, no. 2 (Fall 2002): 65

<sup>120</sup> Jeffrey Burds. “The Soviet War against ‘Fifth Columnists’: The Case of Chechnya, 1942—4.” *Journal of Contemporary History* 42, no. 2 (2007): 305

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 305

the Soviet forces, or from disease or exposure on the long train rides to Central Asia and Siberia.<sup>122</sup>

In another move aimed at the elimination of the Chechen and Ingush people, the Chechen-Ingush ASSR was absorbed into the Daghestani ASSR, the native-given names of all the regions and villages were changed to Russian names, and the region was repopulated with ethnic Russians, Ukrainians, Avars, and Ossetians so that a future restoration of the Chechen Ingush ASSR would be impossible, and so that the land would be developed and cultivated as the Soviets had originally intended.<sup>123</sup>

### **The Politburo's Pogrom: Anti-Semitism in the Soviet Agenda**

When discussing ethnic stigmatization, xenophobia, and prejudice in general, Anti-Semitism is always a special case. For millennia, Jews have been a people without a titular homeland. They have been accused of assimilating too much into other cultures, losing their identity, or of hiding a mysterious identity, or of being isolated in their own communities away from the rest of society. They are called both rootless, and at the same time, part of a secret, internationalist order. They have been accused of being too religious, too involved, and too powerful. For the millennia that the Jewish diaspora has been scattered across the nations, they have faced persecution for all of these things, and as I will explain in this section, this continued in the USSR under Stalin.

<sup>122</sup> Campana Aurelie. "The Massive Deportation of the Chechen People: How and Why Chechens Were Deported," November 5, 2007. <https://www.sciencespo.fr/mass-violence-war-massacre-resistance/en/document/massive-deportation-chechen-people-how-and-why-chechens-were-deported.html>.

<sup>123</sup> A. M. (Aleksandr Moiseevich) Nekrich. *The punished peoples : the deportation and fate of Soviet minorities at the end of the Second World War* 1st ed. New York: Norton, 1978. 60.

Traditional anti-Semitism in late imperial Russia was often of a Christian, religious nature. Driven by far-right Orthodox Christian groups such as the Black Hundreds, entire towns and villages wiped out their Jewish communities in orgies of violence, known as pogroms, on the grounds of centuries old myths of a Jewish 'Blood Libel' – a religious ritual killing of Christian children on the eve of Passover. If any child went missing, or if someone was murdered, the blame often went to the Jewish family down the street; there was a paranoia around this phenomenon of hate, Jews were seen as a mysterious community and were often a perceived threat.

But there was also a more intellectual, and institutionalized type of Anti-semitism circulating among those in power in the Tsarist times, one that led to on the ground discriminatory policies against Jews of the Russian Empire. In the late Russian Empire, Jews were not considered citizens, only ethnic Russians were. They were also restricted in their movement, and were confined to live in a region known as the Pale of Settlement. There were quotas for Jews in Universities, in certain professions, etc.<sup>124</sup> These kind of policies were put in place by a Russian government that grew more hostile to Jews as the threat of the socialist revolution approached. Pyotr Stolypin, the Prime Minister of Russia under Tsar Nicholas II, who became famous for his efforts at progressive reforms that might have stopped a revolution, had his own Anti-semitic philosophy that was consistent with the many anti-Jewish policies in his time. Stolypin wrote:

It is important to understand, that racial characteristics have so drastically set the Jewish people apart from the rest of humanity as to make them totally different creatures who cannot enter into our concept of human nature...Only by disseminating in the popular consciousness the concept that the creature of the Jewish race is not the same as other people, but an imitation of a human, with whom there can be no dealings, only that can

<sup>124</sup> Arkadii Vaksberg. *Stalin Against the Jews* 1st ed. New York: Knopf, 1994. 8



gradually heal the national organism and weaken the Jewish nation so it will no longer be able to do harm or will completely die out.<sup>125</sup>

This vicious paragraph by Stolypin shows a dehumanizing, ‘Othering’ and distrust of the Jewish people, not so different from the distrust and paranoia espoused by the pogromists.

Arkady Vaksberg, author of *Stalin Against the Jews*, draws a parallel between this quote from Stolypin, and an article on the Soviet “national question” written by Joseph Stalin himself. The Stalin quote, from one of his earliest publications titled “Marxism and the National Question” reads: “Jews do not form a single nation...They do not belong among the real, active, moving nations that demand attention...[they are] something mystical, intangible, and otherworldly” and “Jews have no stable stratum connected to the soil that naturally unites a nation.”<sup>126</sup> Vaksberg points out the parallel Othering that both leaders espouse. I find this parallel to be brilliant and very revealing to the fact that Stalin’s Anti-semitism, and by virtue, Soviet Anti-semitism, is a continuation of the spirit of pre-revolutionary Anti-semitism. Essentially, a continuity between the two texts is the concept of the Jews being ‘rootless’, i.e., without land or nation, and without connection to the rest of humanity. This idea of a “rootless cosmopolitan” is what drove Stalin’s Anti-semitic campaign through the post-war period until his death in 1953.

In a meeting with Soviet scholars and intelligentsia in August 1946, Stalin used the term “rootless cosmopolitan” to describe several Jewish authors, artists, and critics, and scientists who were writing positive reviews of art, literature, and science from the west, and using western ideas. He describes this as a “dangerous tendency under the pernicious influence from the west.”<sup>127</sup> In 1948 and 1949, the term “rootless cosmopolitan” was all over newspaper headlines

<sup>125</sup> Quoted in Arkadii Vaksberg. *Stalin Against the Jews* 1st ed. New York: Knopf, 1994 6

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>127</sup> Discussion in a Meeting with Creative Intellectuals. *I.V. Stalin, 'Sochineniya', Vol. 16, 1946-1952, Izdatelstvo 'Picatel', Moscow, 1997, pp. 49-53.* <https://www.revolutionarydemocracy.org/rdv9n1/stalintel.htm>

constantly. More and more often, these described Jewish individuals specifically.<sup>128</sup> Several universities also began to oust Jewish faculty on these accusations.<sup>129</sup>

On the ground, these accusations also resulted in the purging of numerous Jewish Party members, and the execution of others. One specific bout of purging specifically Jewish “suspects” was the show trial and execution of the thirteen members of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (JAC), mentioned previously in the first chapter. A closer look at the names of those Stalin put in charge of the trial, as well as at the transcripts of the trial reveals that Stalin strategically placed known Anti-Semites in charge of the trial. The first direct supervisor placed over the JAC case was Viktor Komarov, the then deputy of the special cases unit of the secret police (MGB).<sup>130</sup> A letter Komarov later wrote to Stalin from Lefortovo prison in 1953 exposes what kind of an investigator he was, and what went on during the time of the JAC trial. The letter read:

Members of the investigative unit know well enough how much I hate our enemies. I had no pity for them and, so to speak, squeezed the spirit out of them and made them reveal their enemy contacts and deeds...I especially hated and was pitiless towards Jewish Nationalists, whom I saw as the most dangerous and evil enemies. Because of my hatred for them I was considered an anti-Semite not only by the defendants but by former employees of the MGB who were of Jewish nationality.<sup>131</sup>

This kind of treatment was confirmed by testimonies of the victims who survived.<sup>132</sup>

It is also important to note the role of Stalin’s own personal Anti-semitism in the repression of Jews in the USSR. After all, Stalin himself led the campaigns against fifth-column activity in the USSR. He gave speeches about the “dangerous internationalist rhetoric” espoused

<sup>128</sup> Konstantin Azadovskii and Boris Egorov “From Anti-Westernism to Anti-Semitism” *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 4:1, Winter 2002, pp. 66-80

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. In April 1948, the Philology Faculty at Leningrad State put out a statement condemning certain “cosmopolitan” ideas.

<sup>130</sup> Rubenstein, Joshua, Vladimir Naumov, and Joshua Rubenstein. *Stalin’s Secret Pogrom: The Postwar Inquisition of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee*, 2001 xii

<sup>131</sup> Ibid. xiii

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

by the Jewish writers, artists, and playwrights whom he called “cosmopolitans” and he was the one who decided to appoint known Anti-Semites to direct the purges and show trials against the members of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. Even in Stalin’s own personal life, there is evidence of his anti-Semitic attitude, and its effect on his decision making. Stalin’s daughter, Svetlana Allilueva, had started dating a Jewish movie star named Aleksei Kapler in 1942. When her father heard about the relationship, he became furious, saying “Your Kapler is a British spy! He’s under arrest.” She recalls returning from school that same day, finding her father tearing their love letters and photographs and muttering, “she couldn’t even find herself a Russian!” Reflecting on the incident, Svetlana writes “Apparently the fact that Kapler was a Jew was what bothered him most of all.”<sup>133</sup>

Svetlana further gives claim to the fact that her father’s anti-Semitic attitudes influenced repressive policies when she describes the plight of many of her Jewish friends and acquaintances in the post-war period.

In the years after the war, anti-Semitism became the militant official ideology, although this was concealed in every way possible...For the Jews a percentage quota [for universities] was, in essence, reinstated. It was the resuscitation of the State chauvinism of Czarist Russia...With the expulsion of Trotsky and the extermination during the years of ‘purges’ of old Party members, many of whom were Jews, anti-Semitism was reborn on new grounds, and first of all, in the Party itself. To this my father not only gave his support; he even propagated a good deal of it himself.<sup>134</sup>

In another account, she recalls an instance when she witnessed her father authorize and cover up the intentional murder of Solomon Mikhoels, a famed theater director and the head of the Jewish Anti-Fascist committee, whom he accused of organizing a ‘Zionist’ plot to overthrow

<sup>133</sup> Allilueva, Svetlana, and Priscilla Johnson McMillan. *Twenty Letters to a Friend* 1st ed. New York: Harper and Row, 1967, 180.

<sup>134</sup> Allilueva, Svetlana. *Only one year*. London: Hutchinson, 1969. 148.

the Soviet Union along with the American Jewish community. Two days after that, she learned of the arrest of her own two aunts, who were married to Jewish men.<sup>135</sup>

Stalin himself played a role in having the members of the JAC condemned and executed. For the most part, he was the one who crafted the interrogation questions that would be used to gather evidence and condemning statements for the trial that would go before the USSR Supreme court. He crafted the questions carefully, knowing that the interrogation methods the MGB used in Lubyanka prison would extract the answers he wanted. One of the condemning questions asked in the trial against Itzik Fefer read “When you started working on the JAC in 1941-1942 together with Epshteyn and Mikhoels, you say that not only were there goals in the organization, set by the state, having to do with anti-fascist propoaganda, but there was also an opportunity to disseminate ideas about certain peculiarities of the Jewish nationality. So you had nationalistic sentiments even earlier, did you not?” To this a defeated Fefer replied, “I have already said that I had nationalistic sentiments.”<sup>136</sup>

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This chapter took what the first chapter presented one step further toward understanding how the repressions happened. The episodes of ethnic hatred that prevailed through the socialist revolution add another layer to our understanding of why these stigmatized minorities specifically, were chosen as targets of state terror. They show that security concerns were not the full picture, that there was an emotionally driven element to the severe cruelty dealt these innocent peoples. They also expose the internal workings, and even the basic ideologies of the Soviet Union as flawed. The inequalities and prejudices of the Tsarist regime were not actively

<sup>135</sup> Allilueva, Svetlana. *Only one year*. London: Hutchinson, 1969, 150.

<sup>136</sup> Rubenstein, Joshua, Vladimir Naumov, and Joshua Rubenstein. *Stalin's Secret Pogrom: The Postwar Inquisition of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee*, 2001, 238.

eliminated by those in power in the new regime, and as a result, the USSR became an extremely violent, mass killing machine where members of numerous groups of people lived their lives in fear. These ethnic deportations did not, and could not have happened without ethnic discrimination.

### Chapter 3: Enemy Nations Punished: Collective Punishment and the Fear of Kinship

#### Loyalty

“The idea was instilled into the Russians’ mind that the very fact of belonging to a particular nationality was the fault of this or that person. Later on, this resulted in extending the blame to entire nationalities...”<sup>137</sup>

- Roy Medvedev, Russian Politician and Historian

The repressions of ethnic minorities in the Soviet Union, particularly the forced deportations of entire peoples are some of the clearest examples of officially orchestrated collective punishment in the twentieth century. Official documentation of the deportations of Germans, Chechens/Ingush, Poles, Koreans, etc., does not shy away from language that clearly puts blame and suspicion and punishment on an entire race. This assignment of blame on a whole nation was a deliberate move repeated across numerous cases of ethnic repression and terror within the Soviet borders.

Recent scholarship on Stalin’s purges of the 30s and 40s specifically focuses on the phenomenon of collective punishment and the Soviet tendency to hold entire kinship groups and familial units responsible for the crimes of one of their members.<sup>138</sup> In his article *Stalin and the Politics of Kinship: Practices of Collective Punishment, 1920-1940s*, Soviet historian Golfo Alexopoulos suggests that this Soviet practice was a continuity from the Tsarist and Mongol empires and that Stalin’s crimes targeted against ethnic groups were a subcategory of this phenomenon.<sup>139</sup> Alexopoulos argues that this developed to become part of Stalinist culture in the

<sup>137</sup> Roy Medvedev, ‘Stalin and Kaganovich,’ *Moscow News*, 52, 1988, p. 15.

<sup>138</sup> See Cynthia Hooper, “Terror of Intimacy: Family Politics in the 1930s Soviet Union,” in, Christina Kiaer and Eric Naiman, eds., “Everyday Life in Early Soviet Russia: Taking the Revolution Inside” (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 61-91; Robert W. Thurston, “The Soviet Family during the Great Terror, 1935-1941,” *Soviet Studies* 43 (Fall 1991): 553-74; Golfo Alexopoulos, “Stalin and the Politics of Kinship: Practices of Collective Punishment, 1920s-1940s.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50, no. 1 (2008): 91-117.

<sup>139</sup> Golfo Alexopoulos, “Stalin and the Politics of Kinship: Practices of Collective Punishment, 1920s-1940s.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50, no. 1 (2008): 93

USSR as well, that an intrinsic part of Stalinist culture was the idea that groups of people who live together, whether that be families, communal homes, or entire ethnic groups, have significant influence on each other, and that influence breeds a high form of loyalty, which also create networks of mutual protection. Stalin's ultimate fear was that these familial or ethnic loyalties would override loyalties to the State.<sup>140</sup>

The kind of rationale Stalin and his followers espoused in State media, official memorandums, and even training booklets for their security forces follows this logic that members of these ethnic minority groups have a dangerous and subversive internal loyalty. This theory of kinship loyalty goes hand in hand with my argument in Chapter One that Stalin was weary of inter-community loyalty that could put the security of the State at risk. This idea also goes hand in hand with my second argument concerning racist and prejudicial views held by those in power. After all, when someone has prejudice against an ethnic group, they often dehumanize that entire group and develop a wariness of internal conspiracy.

The concept of kinship loyalty In this final chapter, I will seek to prove that this Stalinist ideology of kinship loyalty adds depth to our understanding of why this phenomenon of Ethnic Terror occurred, without downplaying any of the other factors I have discussed thus far.

### **The Threat of A Pan-Asian Connection and Local Nationalism in the Far East**

On the 21st of August 1937, the Council of People's Commissars and the Central Committee of the Communist party co-signed a top-secret document titled "On the Eviction of the Korean Population from the Border Regions of the Far Eastern Territory" that officially ordered and authorized "the removal of the entire Korean population from the border regions to

<sup>140</sup> Golfo Alexopoulos, "Stalin and the Politics of Kinship: Practices of Collective Punishment, 1920s-1940s." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50, no. 1 (2008): 108

the Uzbek and Khazak SSRs.”<sup>141</sup> The document claims this decision was made “in order to prevent the penetration of Japanese Espionage into the far-eastern territory.” If there is logic in that justification - removing an entire people in order to prevent espionage - then it tells us that the Soviets were convinced that the entire Korean population in the Far Eastern Krai could not be trusted to live in the border region adjacent to Japan and its allies – no man, woman, or child.

This idea that the entire ethnic Korean population would automatically hold loyalty to their own ethnic group across the border, or even to other Asian communities over loyalty to the Soviet government could likely stem from a “yellow peril” racist mindset that Arsenev espouses in his *Doklad* when he says “the Koreans *anthropologically, ethnographically, psychologically* and by their own world views, stand and remain closer to the Japanese than to us.”<sup>142</sup> Or, it could stem from the fact that the Soviets were convinced of the idea of kinship politics and loyalty, espoused by Stalin in years prior in relation to Kulaks (private land owning peasants) and class enemies. In fact, Arsenev’s overtly racist comment follows the logic of kinship loyalty.

Arsenev’s comment insinuates that because the Koreans are closer to the Japanese in appearance and cultural history they must be more loyal to the Japanese than to the Soviets.

This Soviet illusion of the Koreans’ stronger sense of loyalty to other Koreans and Asians was also supported by the actions of some Koreans themselves, who during the implementation of forced collectivization, which resulted in the purging of those accused as Kulaks, fled in large

<sup>141</sup> This document was signed off by V. Molotov, the Chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars of the USSR, and I. Stalin, then the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. The document explicitly orders the NKVD and the Far Eastern Regional Communist-Bolshevik Party to carry out the deportation by January 1, 1938. U-hyo Yi. Ying-ung Kim, and International Confederation of Korean Associations. *Belaia kniga o deportatsii koreiskogo naseleniia Rossii v 30-40-kh godakh*. Moskva: Interpraks, 1992. 64.

<sup>142</sup> Vladimir K. Arsenev. “Doklad B. K. Arseneva. Dalnevostochnomu kraevomu komitetu Vsesouznoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii.” In *Zheltaia opasnost*, edited by Boris Diachenko. Vladivostok: Voron, 1996 [orig. Written 1928]. 115



numbers for China. According to the Russian state historical archives in Vladivostok, 60 percent of the Soviet Koreans population of Schkotovskii and Suchanskii districts left for China.<sup>143</sup>

Further evidence that the Soviets suspected this ethnic community loyalty (and therefore disloyalty to the USSR) can be found in numerous allegations of national sentiment rising within the Korean community. With the turn away from *Korenizatsiia*, and the turn toward a “Russians first among equals” policy in the mid-1930s, there were numerous accusations of “local nationalism” against members of the Korean section of the Communist Party, Korean school teachers, authors, artists, and others.<sup>144</sup> Korean language institutions and schools were replaced with Russian ones. Soon, even writing letters in Korean was considered “fifth-columnist” activity – to the Soviets, it was proof of loyalty to the Korean nationality and its community rather than to the USSR.<sup>145</sup>

By 1937, even commissioned groups of Soviet Koreans and Chinese who were serving in Soviet intelligence agencies as spies for the Soviets in Japan and China, were disbanded, released from their duties, and told to join their wives and children who had already been deported to Central Asia. Ven Sian, a Chinese man serving in the Soviet GRU (military intelligence) was involved in such a purge. In 1937, he was sent on border patrol mission at the Chinese and Manchurian borders, where he was dealing with matters of the flux in immigration into the Soviet Far East. According to an interview with his daughter in law, Diliara, he returned home after about a month, after his mission had ended, but his family, his wife and son (both of whom were Korean) were nowhere to be found. He was allowed leave to go look for them in Central

<sup>143</sup> As quoted in Kim, Alexander. “The Repression of Soviet Koreans during the 1930s.” *The Historian* 74, no. 2 (2012): 273

<sup>144</sup> John K. Chang. *Burnt by the Sun: The Koreans of the Russian Far East*. Perspectives on the Global Past. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2016. 119

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

Asia, but when he returned, he was dismissed from the GRU on the grounds that he belonged to a “suspicious or unreliable” nationality. According to the interview, in 1937, a ban was placed on people of Chinese and Korean nationality in the GRU, NKVD and all other security agencies.<sup>146</sup> This corresponded with the 1937 closing of the Chinese-Lenin school, which I mentioned in chapter two, that secretly trained Chinese and Korean agents to act as the USSR’s most prominent spies in the Far Eastern Krai and across enemy lines in Manchukuo and China. The Soviet distrust of Chinese and Korean as kinship groups was at such a high degree that they dismantled large, loyal, and important sections of their own security agencies in the Far East.

These accusations made for a very unstable, and even paradoxical nationalities policy toward the Soviet Koreans. In the first decade or so of *Korenizatsiia*, Korean national newspapers and literature were praised by the Soviet authorities, and there was an effort to latinize the Korean language, an effort supported by many Soviet Koreans who wanted to remove bourgeois elements from their language. *Korenizatsiia* was an official policy from Moscow, made to strengthen national communities in the USSR.<sup>147</sup> In the name of security, however, things quickly turned around and the activities which the Koreans were once praised for doing, would now get them accused of treason or espionage.

An article in *Krasnoe Znamia*, dated January 19<sup>th</sup>, 1931 titled “The Question of Local Nationalism” demonstrates this change in Soviet policy. The article accused a Chinese and a Korean school of “compromising the Soviet nationalities’ line.” “The national interests of the

<sup>146</sup> Interview with Diliara Khabirovna Abuziarova and Jon K. Chang. Bukhara, Uzbekistan March 2, 2019. Bukhara, Uzbekistan

<sup>147</sup> Chang, John K. *Burnt by the Sun: The Koreans of the Russian Far East*. Perspectives on the Global Past. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2016. 114.

nationality are placed higher than the class interests,” it read.<sup>148</sup> The article also raised suspicion that the Kuomintang, the Chinese nationalist party, was responsible for the spike in nationalism within the Chinese community.

In essence, the “local nationalism” was a threat to the Soviets because it was a symptom of kinship loyalty that could unite an entire community, which could then rise up against the Soviets, or worse, join forces with their foreign nationalist relations across the border. It was this same fear of a united community that led the Soviets to commit a population-wide repression.

The method by which the Koreans were deported is also of note in relation to kinship politics. In a top secret memo from Ezhov to Stalin and Molotov, the accounts of how many Koreans had already been deported were recorded in numbers of family units.<sup>149</sup> Another memo, addressed to Ezhov from that assistant head of the NKVD in 1937 remarked that since so many Koreans had already been deported, it was crucial not to leave any families or single family members behind – it was fully necessary to deport the entire population. The memo stated: “To leave these few thousand Koreans in the Far Eastern Krai, when the majority have been deported, would be dangerous, since the family ties of all Koreans are very strong.”<sup>150</sup>

<sup>148</sup> “Voprosy mestnogo natsionalizma,” *Krasnoe Znamia*, January 19, 1931, no. 15 (3182).

<sup>149</sup> U-hyo Yi, Ying-ung Kim, and International Confederation of Korean Associations. *Belaia kniga o deportatsii koreiskogo naseleniia Rossii v 30-40-kh godakh*. Moskva: Interpraks, 1992. 114.

<sup>150</sup> As quoted in Terry Martin (Terry Dean). *The Affirmative Action Empire : Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* Ithaca, New York :: Cornell University Press, 2001. 334.

## Communal Clans and Blood-Revenge: Soviet Fears of Kinship Loyalty Among the Chechens and Ingush

For twenty years now, the Soviet authorities have been fighting my people, aiming to destroy them group by group; first the kulaks, then the mullahs and the “bandits”, then the bourgeois-nationalists. I am sure now that the real object of this war is the annihilation of our nation as a whole.

*1940 Letter to the District Party Office, Hassan Israilov - Leader of the Chechen-Ingush guerilla rebellion against the Soviets in 1940.*<sup>151</sup>

One of the reasons the Soviets targeted and repressed the entire Chechen and Ingush populations so harshly was the very fact that these were clan-based peoples. The Chechens and Ingush had clan based systems of kinship called *teipa*, and practiced common land ownership with a developed distribution system in each clan. The members of each *teip* were actually related by blood and were often formed of several nuclear families linked by one patrilinear lineage. They lived together, grew food together, and fought together.<sup>152</sup>

When the Soviets introduced forced collectivization methods, the Chechens refused and revolted – this would disrupt their centuries old traditions of reliably growing food for their own clans.<sup>153</sup> In turn, this displeased the Soviets because the Chechens were proving to show more loyalty to their own clans than to the collective needs of the people of the Soviet Union. In return, the Soviets applied more and more pressure, which again received more resistance and violence from the Chechens. The conflict was escalating.

When it came to the violent resistance against the Soviets, it is important to understand that the *taipa* held centuries-old patriarchal traditions of blood vengeance. This played a large

<sup>151</sup> Kalpana Sahni, *Crucifying the Orient: Russian Orientalism and the Colonization of Caucasus and Central Asia*. Bangkok, Thailand: White Orchid Press, 1997. 182

<sup>152</sup> A. M. (Aleksandr Moiseevich) Nekrich. *The punished peoples : the deportation and fate of Soviet minorities at the end of the Second World War* 1st ed. New York: Norton, 1978. 43

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

role in protests against the repression – when a family member, or clan member was killed or injured by an NKVD officer, the Chechen was required to avenge their blood. Many of the ‘bandit’ terrorist groups which the Soviets sought to liquidate, were acting on their honor in respect for their kin.<sup>154</sup> With a blood-for-blood system of fighting, there was no peaceful end in sight – the conflict would only get worse. Each man an NKVD soldier killed would bring two more fighters forward and so every male of the Chechen race was a potential enemy in the eyes of the Soviets. Additionally, the clan structure provided protection and support from all members of the society. When bands of Chechen or Ingush Guerilla fighters entered a village, most of the locals, the women and children included, would provide them with concealment and aid.<sup>155</sup> Therefore, as far as the NKVD were concerned, there could be no safety or security in the presence of anyone of the Chechen-Ingush nationality during the conflict. With the added threat of mobilization from foreign powers, a massive scale deportation was their answer.

**Figure 6:** Members of a Chechen *Teip* posing for a picture in the early 1940s<sup>156</sup>



<sup>154</sup> A. M. (Aleksandr Moiseevich) Nekrich, *The punished peoples : the deportation and fate of Soviet minorities at the end of the Second World War* 1st ed. New York: Norton, 1978. 51

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 51

<sup>156</sup> Image duplicated from <https://www.globaldomainsnews.com/what-uprisings-occurred-in-chechnya-in-the-great-patriotic>.

As the USSR was an atheist state, Soviet authorities were naturally suspicious of religion. When dealing with a religiously based culture, they were even more suspicious. NKVD Anti-banditry division (GUBB) training handbooks warned that officers should pay special attention to Muslim clergy, or Mullahs, as they were called in the Caucasus, because they held extraordinary power within their communities. The textbook reads “the Muslim clergy enjoy exceptional influence among the local population” and “all bandit formations and activities, as a rule are supported by non-government leaders, such as nationalists and clergy.”<sup>157</sup> Essentially they were the symbolic heads of the symbolic Chechen-Ingush ‘family’. The Mullahs were known to have significantly slowed down the *kholkhozniki*, or, collective farm movement by ordering their people to resist the Soviet methods. In 1937, one Mullah, Khasbek Ozdemirov, in a settlement named Valerik, forced the local *kholkhozniki* to swear on the Koran to “sabotage *kholkhoz* production by every means possible.”<sup>158</sup> Keep in mind that those who submitted to work on the *kholkhozniki* included Chechens and Ingush CP members and communists. As a religious people, their allegiance was to their God and to their religious leaders, who represented and spoke the word of God to them. This was a type of authority which the Soviets could not match. To the Soviets, this was even more proof of a nationality-wide loyalty that was much stronger than any loyalty to or incentive of the USSR. Sabotage and destruction conducted under the authority of a religious leader was so much of a trend that in 1941, the Communist Party ordered all the internal security organizations in the Checheno-Ingush ASSR to make it their number one priority to curb “kulak-mullah elements and shore up the power structure.”<sup>159</sup>

<sup>157</sup> GARF R-9478 Op.1 d.147, 85.

<sup>158</sup> A. M. (Aleksandr Moiseevich) Nekrich, *The punished peoples : the deportation and fate of Soviet minorities at the end of the Second World War* 1st ed. New York: Norton, 1978. 52

<sup>159</sup> Meyers, Jeffrey R. (Jeffrey Randall). *The Criminal-Terror Nexus in Chechnya : a Historical, Social, and Religious Analysis* Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2017. 54

The ethnic terror against Chechens and Ingush did not end with the main deportations; later that same year, in August, 1944, another decree was made which expelled all documented Chechens and Ingush from the City of Moscow, and the surrounding Moscow region and that a note be placed in all of their passports forbidding them entry into “sensitive cities.”<sup>160</sup> To the Soviet authorities, these people were not only a security threat in their own region where they had fought for separatism as cohesive clans; but each individual was a threat to USSR state security because their ethnicity signified that they belonged to the same ‘family unit’ as those few who were accused of collaborating with Axis powers. The Soviets saw that familial relation as a risk they didn’t want to take.

### **A Double-Sided Conspiracy: The Fear of Both Jewish Nationalism and Internationalism**

The repression of the Jews in Stalin’s USSR did not take the form of a mass deportation like many of the other nationalities did, and so they were not so outwardly “collectively punished.” However, they did face a variety of ethnically based repression and persecution that stemmed from the same Soviet concern over kinship loyalty over State loyalty. In the case of repression against the Jews, the Soviets saw threats and conspiracy both at a local nationalist level, and at a much larger, international level. The former was found within the more cultural and religious part of Soviet Jewish society earlier on, during, and coming out of the period of *Korenizatsiia*, and the latter within the realm of the worldwide Jewish diaspora, an accusation that blew out of proportions in the post-war period.

<sup>160</sup> Dokument № 3.187 Sluzhebnyaya zapiska zamestitelya narkoma vnutrennikh del V.V. Chernysheva i nachal'nika Otdela spetsposeleniy NKVD M.V. Kuznetsova narkomu vnutrennikh del L.P. Berii o karachayevtsakh, kalmykakh, chechentsakh i ingushakh, prozhivayushchikh v Moskve i Moskovskoi oblasti. 16.08.1944. Svodnye dokumenty o deportatsiakh kalmykov, narodov Severnogo Kavkaza, Kryma i Zakavkaz'ia v tselom (Noyabr 1943 — Dekabr' 1944).

While the Jews never received their own titular homeland in the USSR – the truth was that they were offered one, but most Jews lived in cities and *shtetls* and did not want to re-settle in the Siberian Birobidzhan province – they were still an official Soviet Nationality and reaped the benefits and consequences of the *korenizatsiia* initiative to develop a strong Soviet Jewish culture and identity. In Minsk, which contained one of the largest Jewish populations in the USSR prior to WWII, *korenizatsiia* promoters pushed for the development of the Yiddish language.<sup>161</sup> Yiddish was the language spoken within most Russian Jewish communities, a German dialect with influence of Hebrew and Russian. Soviet nationalities policy, with *korenizatsiia* in mind established Jewish Yiddish schools, Jewish sports clubs, agriculture schools, and other educational facilities, in which Yiddish was to be the formal language. The development of a Yiddish newspaper, called *Eynikat* proved to be a true joy and success for the Soviet Jewish community. It flourished with art reviews, was a space in which the problems of fascism and anti-Semitism of 1930s Germany could be freely discussed, and was one of the few places in post WWII USSR, the Jewish aspect of the holocaust could be discussed.<sup>162</sup> Funding from the state also allowed Jewish scholarship to thrive, and to be written in Yiddish, which was never allowed in the Russian Empire.

While there was a certain freedom for Jews under *korenizatsiia*, there were also limitations. The Jewish community under the Tsarist empire, was mostly religious, and it mostly still was in the pre-war USSR. Under the Soviets, however, Jewish life was expected to be completely atheist. Jews were framed by the Soviet constitution, as a nationality, an ethnicity,

<sup>161</sup> Elissa Bemporad, *Becoming Soviet Jews : the Bolshevik experiment in Minsk* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013. 92

<sup>162</sup> Joshua Rubenstein, Vladimir Naumov, and Joshua Rubenstein. *Stalin's Secret Pogrom: The Postwar Inquisition of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee*. London: Yale University Press 2001. 22



and the *korenizatsiia* policies followed that, pushing for the creation of a new “Soviet Jew” – a Jew without the religious element. The outward practice of religion was forbidden, and the synagogues were gutted of their holy objects and gold, and turned into public spaces.<sup>163</sup> By 1937, once Stalin had already deported entire nationalities for their ‘disloyal’ behaviors, the purging of the Jewish/Yiddish cultural sphere that *korenizatsiia* policies had helped to establish. Jewish playwrights at the Yiddish theater were accused and arrested for showing content that was too ‘Jewish nationalist’ in nature, or for excluding Russian classic plays from the repertoire.<sup>164</sup> The popularity of the Jewish artists and stars, the Jewish cultural leadership, was met with suspicion by the Soviet authorities and was seen as nationalism, a budding form of kinship loyalty, pushing the boundary of loyalty to the USSR.

A particular anecdote in one of her memoirs, *Twenty Letters to a Friend*, Svetlana Allilueva highlights a quote from her father that signifies his strong belief in the subversive danger of ‘Jewish nationalism’ and the idea that this subversiveness could easily spread across the entire community as a result of their kinship. She recalls a wave of arrests of Jews that was under way at the end of 1948, which had even Molotov’s wife, who was Jewish, arrested. Her father told her, referring to her first husband, Morozov who was Jewish, “that first husband of yours was thrown away by the Zionists!” And when she replied in protest, saying the younger generation could care less about Zionism, he responded with “No! you don’t understand, the entire older generation is contaminated with Zionism, and now they’re teaching the young [Jews] too!”<sup>165</sup> Stalin’s belief in family conspiracy among the Jews, that they were passing nationalistic

<sup>163</sup> Elissa Bemporad, *Becoming Soviet Jews : the Bolshevik experiment in Minsk* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013. 126

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Allilueva, Svetlana, and Priscilla Johnson McMillan. *Twenty Letters to a Friend* 1st ed. New York: Harper and Row, 1967. 196

ideas from one generation to the next is a plausible answer to why Stalin began purging every Jew in his field of vision in the late 40s and early 50s - especially since he linked this internal nationalism with an external one to Jews abroad, specifically in the capitalist west.

WWII, as the drafts of a Cold War were coming in, the accusation of “Jewish Nationalism” in literature and art became conflated with accusations of pro-westernism, and pro-capitalism. The ‘anti-cosmopolitan campaign’, which heavily focused on the Jewish connections to the west, the celebration of western literature over Russian literature and other “anti-patriotic” activity, spread like wildfire across Soviet society. In the big cities, universities were firing and publicly defaming Jewish scholars as “anti-cosmopolitans” for bringing western-based research into their studies and papers, and articles about the “moral deficiency” and “unhealthy influences” of “cosmopolitans” were all over *Pravda*, and *Izvestiia*.<sup>166</sup> Alexander Borgashovskii, who was a victim of this campaign, later wrote in his memoir that everyone knew the connection between the word “cosmopolitan” and Jewishness, they were one and the same. He said, “the epithet 'rootless cosmopolitan' was sufficiently transparent that it eliminated any doubt about the [background of] the addressee.”<sup>167</sup> Out of the Jewish groups notably affected by this movement, was the Jewish Anti-Fascist committee, upon which the Stalin regime doled out great blasphemy, violence and horror.

The accusations made in the show trial of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee reveal the level to which Stalin’s loyal men Kaminsky and Ryumin, who were in charge of the case at the time, were convinced of Jewish loyalty to other Jews and to Jews abroad. A document from the trial describing the crimes of the defendant Boris Abramovich Shmelovich, who was a member

<sup>166</sup> Azadovskii, Konstantin and Egorov, Boris, “From Anti-Westernism to Anti-Semitism.” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 4:1, (Winter 2002): 66-80. Web Reader.

<sup>167</sup> Aleksandr Borshchagovskii, *Zapiski balovnya sudby* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1991), p. 4.

of the JAC, lists that Shimelovich was a “Jewish nationalist” who “Having become the leader of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, SHIMELIOVICH, together with his like-minded people - LOZOVSKY, FEFER, MIKHOELSOM, EPSTEIN and other nationalists, carried out active subversive work against the party and the Soviet state until the day of arrest.”<sup>168</sup> Note that all of the Jewish JAC members listed here are labeled as “his likeminded people.”

The list of crimes continues, accusing him of more nationalist and Jewish-internationalist crimes: “[Shimelovich] actively sought the formation of a Jewish republic in Crimea”, “insisted on decisive actions that would provide the committee with prestige among the Jews of the USSR and abroad”, and “showed considerable interest in Jewish nationalist organizations in the USA.” The report also pieces together the ‘local nationalism’ conspiracy with the foreign contact, insinuating some sort of international Jewish conspiracy. It reads: “SHIMELIOVICH consistently fought for nationalist work among Jews in the USSR. He believed that it was necessary to begin establishing relations with foreign Jews. SHIMELIOVICH first volunteered for this purpose to write a letter to Jewish doctors in the United States, which was done.”<sup>169</sup>

The ridiculousness of some of these claims that the JAC members were committing treason, points only more to the fact of how convinced and paranoid those in charge of the case were of a Jewish group conspiracy against the USSR. For instance, Shimelovich’s communication with Jewish doctors (the document shows that Shimelovich was the chief physician of a Moscow hospital) is claimed as “nationalist work among Jews.” Similarly, in another report that preceded this one, a note from the minister of State Security S.D Ignatiev on the need to continue on with the case against the JAC members, read, “Spy information was sent

<sup>168</sup> Arkhiv Aleksandra N. Iakovleva, Delo Evreiskogo Antifashistskogo Komiteta, Dokument №8 Spravka v TSK VKP(b) o podsledstvennom Shimelioviche B.A. 30.09.1951.

<sup>169</sup> Arkhiv Aleksandra N. Iakovleva, Delo Evreiskogo Antifashistskogo Komiteta, Dokument №8 Spravka v TSK VKP(b) o podsledstvennom Shimelioviche B.A. 30.09.1951.

to America under the guise of brochures, articles and essays about the life and work of Jews in various sectors of the national economy of the USSR, and these articles and essays not only were nationalistic in nature, but also contained information about the Soviet Union that interested American intelligence.”<sup>170</sup> To think that articles about the life and work of Jews in the USSR, sent to a curious American Jewish community is “spy information” takes seriously distorted thinking and a belief in a kinship conspiracy across the Jewish diaspora.

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It becomes clear that Soviet officials had a flair for seeing any community activity within the people of the same nationality as treason or nationalism, both of which were severe crimes under Stalin’s rule. Whether that ideology was derivative of Russian culture before socialism, or something that working and living in a Stalinist culture instilled in them, it led to the persecution of millions. It was also a trend that appears in all three cases, for authorities to link suspect actions which implied internal loyalty with ideas of foreign espionage, and it is my belief that this connection was Stalin’s logic that labeled entire ethnicities traitors. This ideology helped contribute to the phenomenon of Stalinist Ethnic Terror.

<sup>170</sup> Arkhiv Aleksandr Iakovleva, Delo Evreiskogo Antifashistskogo Komiteta  
Dokument №7: *Zapiska ministra gosudarstvennoĭ bezopasnosti S.D. Ignat'eva1 o neobkhodimosti vozobnovit' sledstvie po delu EAK 24.08.1951*

## Conclusion

In writing this thesis, I sought to look at the Ethnic Terror through the eyes of Stalin and his Soviet bureaucracy. Resisting the popular notions that Stalin's actions of mass repression actions were mad, clinically paranoid, or irrational, I became curious as to what strains of logic he followed, what institutionalized thinking patterns he may have fallen into. But the deeper question of this thesis was how a state supposedly founded on principles of diversity, plurality, and equality among the nations and classes could commit such egregious ethnically directed acts of repression against its own citizens.

I approached this project, attempting to understand what happened in each of these three case studies of Stalinist repression not only from the view of the state, from the official history, but also from the voices of witnesses, survivors, and their descendants. This helps to show the human side of what really happened, and the extent to which policies really played out on the ground. Hearing accounts from family members and descendants of those who received the terror, particularly the account of Anna Vassilievna Ti, about the work of her father in the show trials against Korean immigrants really revealed the indifference the Soviet authorities had towards the humanity of the ethnic minorities they so 'feared.' Without sources such as these, it is easy to pass over the role that human prejudice and hatred played in the repressions.

In revealing an un-whitewashed version of the official history of the Soviet Union and their nationalities policies, it becomes clear that racial and national prejudices were not actively wiped out, and so they remained, and became institutionally embedded in the State's existence and policy. This history shows how commitment to certain ideals, whether that be to Marxism/Leninism, or to a constitution, can become distorted if not carefully watched and checked. It also reveals that left unchecked, overconcern over state security, and restless paranoia

over the influence of outside forces, or foreign governments, can lead to the gross violation of human rights, often of those who are loyal citizens. My thesis reveals that this type of fear can easily become ethnic and even racial profiling, and can lead to disastrous repression of minorities living within the borders of a larger, multinational state.

In conducting the research for this thesis, I came to realize that much of this also true at home, in the United States. There are many lessons to be learned from the history of others, as well as from our own history. As we face a time in which national tensions are growing, in our country and in others, and when our leaders espouse increased border security policies as a necessity, we should keep in mind what happened in the USSR, a state that founded itself on the ‘international dictatorship of the proletariat’ whose initial claims were to equality, anti-bigotry, and diversity.

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