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Lyudmila N. Lobchenko

Murmansk Arctic State University, Murmansk, Russian Federation

The European North: The History of Class Struggle with the Kulaks and of the Special (Forced Labour) Settlements in the Kola Land, 1930 – 1940s

Abstract

The article draws on documents from the State Archive of the Murmansk Region and the Archive of the Internal Affairs Directorate for the Murmansk Region to study the resettlement of the kulak families from various Soviet regions to the Kola Land, as well as their living conditions and social and legal status in 1930s-1940s. The article studies special (i.e. forced labor) settlements of the kulak families dispossessed and deported to the northern regions of the USSR by bodies of the OGPU and NKVD during the collectivization. The article focuses on quantitative data on the resettlement process: it determines the number of families resettled to

the Kola North; provides statistics on distribution of the special settlers by district and also information on their housing and work. The material highlights the way the kulak resettlement in the northern areas of the USSR was planned (which was poorly: some areas were completely unprepared to receive special settlers). The procedure for settlers' accommodation is described in detail. Upon their arrival in the settlement areas, all people able to work were immediately sent to construction sites of the mining and chemical combine, the Nivastroi settlement, and the Niva hydroelectric power station. From March 1930 to December 1931 alone, 19,760 special settlers were transported, 15,196 of them were set working on construction sites. By late 1933 seven special settlements had been established in the Imandra Lake basin and around Khibinogorsk, 90% of them populated by "former kulaks." Harsh social conditions and legal restrictions facing the special settlers are described. The contribution of special settlers to the development of the Kola region is shown. The special settlers laid a foundation for the industries on the Kola peninsula; they built the first villages and gave rise to new towns by building roads and railways. The repressive policy of the dekulakization of peasant households and special resettlement is characterized as "the most dramatic chapter of the national history."

Keywords

Archive, source, system of special settlements, Kola North, special settlers, deportation, repressive policies.

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About author

Lobchenko Lyudmila Nikolaevna, PhD in History, associate professor, Murmansk Arctic State University, assistant professor, Murmansk, Russian Federation, +7-952-290-19-85, l.lobchenko@mail.ru

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