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Orphanages in Bashkiria during the Great Patriotic War: Materials from the National Archive of the Republic of Bashkortostan

Abstract

The article draws on the materials of the National Archive of the Republic of Bashkortostan to discuss problems which had to face the orphanages financed from state budget in Bashkiria (one of the regions of the RSFSR) during the Great Patriotic War. To this day, the issue remains insufficiently studied, on national, as well as on regional scale. The documents preserved in the archive allow us to investigate the activities of the orphanages during the said period. As shown, 23 orphanages (including 4 Spanish ones) were evacuated from the Western regions of the country to Bashkiria in 1941–42. Some of them merged with local institutions. Most detailed

information is given on the orphanages evacuated from Moscow. However, the article focuses on local institutions. It notes that from early 1941 to 1945, the number of orphanages increased by 4,7 times, number of pupils increased by 4,1 times . 90 orphanages were opened in the republic in 1943–1944. From early 1941 to November 1944, more than 24,000 children were placed in orphanages of the republic. Some children were adopted, taken under guardianship and patronage, employed by enterprises and institutions. Funds to support the increasing number of orphanages (including livestock, land, premises, equipment, food, etc.) were allocated from republican and district (city) budgets. The article shows the difficulties encountered in provision of material needs, organization of subsidiary farms, solving problems with the premises, arrangements for feeding. Pupils mainly worked on the plots themselves. Sometimes they were helped by kolkhozes and sovkhoses, in return the children participated in collective farm work. Various workshops were organized for labor training and self-maintaining, clubs were formed. The children organized amateur performances, the earnings was transferred to the fund of the Red Army. Malnutrition, lack of clothing and shoes, furniture and equipment affected the health of children and various diseases were spreading. The authors conclude that, in general, despite many difficulties, orphanages played an important role in saving the children's lives during the war.

Keywords

Historical sources, archival sources, orphanages, pupils, evacuation, war, archive, Bashkir ASSR.

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