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Kazan Pedagogical Institute in the Days of Great Terror: Kh. Gimadi's letters to the Central
Committee of the CPSU (B) and Party Organization (1938)

Abstract

The article reveals the degree of influence of the Great Terror policy on the formation of behavioral practices in the scientific, pedagogical, and student environment of the Kazan State Pedagogical Institute (KSPI). The author analyzes letters addressed to the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks and party organizations of the KSPI. The letters, dated April 1938, were written by Khairi Gimadi, one of the leading historians of the TASSR, who stood at the origins of the Soviet historiography of the national republic. The article is to show the source studies significance of epistolary heritage in study of the Soviet humanities development in the context of ideological campaigns. Besides principles of historicism, objectivity, and integrated approach, the study uses hermeneutic method to interpret the texts content, taking into account the author's age, marital and social status, his attitude to power, and also state's ideological pressure on society. Having survived the days of repression, Kh. Gimadi became a candidate of historical sciences, senior researcher at the Academy of Sciences of the USSR with a degree in history of Tatarstan. He was engaged in research activities until his death in 1961. After his death, his wife carefully collected notes that he had torn, grouped them according to their content, and filed into two separate notebooks. One of these contains Kh. Gimadi's letters of application. They reflect a form of corporate ethics developed during the Great Terror and relationship between teachers and students. The study shows politically unstable living conditions of the humanitarian intelligentsia, enduring fear for the fate of loved ones. In order to survive, Soviet people often had to overstep moral boundaries and comply with the system. This inevitably led to the destruction of traditional foundations of the society and the breakdown of social ties. This led to the false notion that the only source of justice was the party. This is the reason why H. Gimadi's letters of application were written. The significance of these historical documents lies in the fact that, in addition to highlighting moral and political atmosphere in the days of mass repression, they make it possible to understand the reason behind conciliatory behavior and even complicity in mass arrests. The presented study may be of interest to specialists studying the development of Soviet historical science in the national republics and everyday life in the era of Stalinism.

Keywords

Soviet historians, repressions of the 1930s, Tatar ASSR, intelligentsia, epistolary heritage, historical source.

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