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Kostanay, 110000, Republic of Kazakhstan*E-mail: mansur_2411@mail.ru**DEPORTATION POLICY IN NORTHERN KAZAKHSTAN AND THE FORMATION
OF THE GERMAN DIASPORA (IN THE CONTEXT OF KOSTANAY, AKMOLA, AND
NORTH KAZAKHSTAN REGIONS)****Abstract**

The history of forced migration occupies an important place in the study of Soviet nationalities policy and interethnic relations. One of the most significant examples of this policy was the mass deportation of ethnic groups during the Stalinist period. Among them, Soviet Germans experienced one of the largest forced resettlements in the USSR. After the outbreak of the Second World War in 1941, the Soviet government accused ethnic Germans of possible disloyalty, abolished the Volga German Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, and initiated the deportation of hundreds of thousands of Germans to Kazakhstan, Siberia, and other remote regions. Northern Kazakhstan became one of the main destinations for deported Germans because of its agricultural potential and labor demands. The Kostanay, Akmola, and North Kazakhstan regions received large numbers of deportees who were settled mainly in rural areas and involved in agricultural and industrial production. The aim of the study is to identify and analyze the specific features of the forced deportation of Soviet Germans to Northern Kazakhstan during the period of Stalinist national policy, determine the scale and main directions of their resettlement to the Kostanay, Akmola, and North Kazakhstan regions, and examine the social, economic, demographic, and historical consequences of the deportation for the region and the formation of Kazakhstan's multi-ethnic society. The study of German deportation to Northern Kazakhstan is important for understanding Soviet ethnic policy, demographic changes, and the long-term consequences of forced migration. It also helps explain the formation of Kazakhstan's multicultural society and preserves the historical memory of deported peoples.

Key words: Deportation policy, forced migration, German diaspora, Northern Kazakhstan, Soviet national policy, multiethnic society.

Introduction.

The deportation policy of the Soviet Union in the 1930s–1950s remains one of the most tragic and controversial aspects of Soviet history. Among the ethnic groups subjected to forced displacement, Soviet Germans experienced particularly severe repression. Following the outbreak of World War II, they were accused of potential collaboration with Nazi Germany and deported to Siberia, Central Asia, and Kazakhstan. Northern Kazakhstan became one of the principal destinations for the settlement of deported Germans due to its vast agricultural resources and strategic economic importance [1].

The issue of the deportation and adaptation of Soviet Germans has attracted considerable scholarly attention since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Significant contributions to the study of Soviet deportation policies were made by N. F. Bugai and A. M. Polyani, who examined the political, demographic, and geographical dimensions of forced migration. Kazakhstani scholars, including M. K. Kozybaev, K. N. Nurpeisov, and A. Abylkhozhin, investigated the socio-economic consequences of deportations and their impact on Kazakhstan's demographic development. Research conducted by E. A. Dietz, H. Rempel, and other representatives of the German diaspora has focused on issues of cultural adaptation, identity preservation, and the historical memory of deported Germans. Joint Kazakh-German publications based on archival materials have further expanded knowledge of the deportation process and the everyday lives of special settlers [2].

Despite the substantial historiography, several aspects remain insufficiently explored. Existing studies primarily focus on the general history of Soviet deportations or on Kazakhstan as a whole. At the same time, the regional experience of the northern territories—Kostanay, Akmola, and North Kazakhstan regions—has received less attention. In particular, the mechanisms of settlement, the

socio-economic adaptation of deported Germans, and their contribution to the development of these regions require further analysis based on archival sources and regional materials.

The growing interest in the history of forced migrations, historical memory, and interethnic relations in contemporary Kazakhstan determines the relevance of this study. The experience of deported Germans constitutes an important component of the country's multicultural heritage and provides valuable insight into the consequences of Soviet nationality policies. Examining the formation of German communities in Northern Kazakhstan contributes to a better understanding of ethnic integration, cultural preservation, and the development of Kazakhstan's multiethnic society.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the deportation of ethnic Germans to Northern Kazakhstan during the 1940s and early 1950s, examine the conditions of their settlement and socio-economic adaptation, and assess their contribution to the development of the Kostanay, Akmola, and North Kazakhstan regions [3].

Materials and methods of research

This study is based on a multidisciplinary historical approach that combines archival research, document analysis, oral history, and comparative methodology. The research seeks to reconstruct the deportation and settlement processes of ethnic Germans in the regions of Kostanay, Akmola, and North Kazakhstan, analyzing both state policy mechanisms and the lived experiences of deported individuals.

1. Research Design and Approach. The research adopts a qualitative and analytical framework rooted in historical sociology. It focuses on identifying the political, social, and economic dimensions of Soviet deportation policy between 1930 and 1950, with an emphasis on its regional implementation. The study examines official government decrees, archival documents, and personal testimonies to reveal the relationship between state control and local realities. This integrated approach allows for a holistic understanding of both the macro-level (state policy, demographic shifts) and micro-level (individual adaptation, community formation) aspects of deportation.

2. Sources and Data Collection. The primary materials for the study were obtained from several key archives and official collections, including:

- The Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Almaty) – for NKVD and Council of People's Commissars decrees, settlement maps, and reports on the labor utilization of deportees;
- Regional archives of Kostanay, Akmola, and North Kazakhstan – containing statistical data, lists of deported families, and correspondence between local authorities and Moscow;
- Memoirs and oral testimonies – collected from descendants of deported German families through interviews and published memoirs. These materials were crucial for capturing subjective experiences of resettlement, adaptation, and identity preservation;
- Published academic works and monographs – including studies by N. Bugai, A. Polyan, M. Kozybaev, and others, which provide interpretive frameworks for understanding Soviet national and deportation policies [4].

The archival materials were systematically analyzed to identify patterns of population displacement, living conditions, and administrative control mechanisms. Statistical data were cross-checked with census materials from 1939, 1959, and 1970 to assess demographic changes in the study regions [5].

3. Analytical Methods. The research employs several analytical methods:

- Historical-comparative analysis – to compare deportation processes in different regions of Northern Kazakhstan and identify common structural features;
- Content analysis – applied to archival records, official decrees, and newspaper publications to extract key ideological and administrative narratives used by Soviet authorities;
- Oral history method – to supplement official narratives with personal accounts, thereby revealing the human dimension of deportation and adaptation;
- Sociocultural analysis – to examine the transformation of German identity under conditions of forced relocation, focusing on language use, education, and community organization [6].

These methods together provide a balanced and comprehensive understanding of how state policies translated into the everyday lives of deported Germans in Kazakhstan. This methodological combination ensures a nuanced and multidimensional exploration of how deportation shaped both the structure of Northern Kazakhstan's population and the formation of the German diaspora. By grounding the study in both empirical data and human narratives, it contributes to the historiography of forced migration, Soviet ethnic policy, and the resilience of displaced communities [7].

Results and their discussion

The deportation of ethnic Germans to Northern Kazakhstan between the 1930s and 1950s was not only a demographic event but a profound socio-political process that reshaped the cultural, economic, and ethnic landscape of the region. In the context of the Kostanay, Akmola, and North Kazakhstan regions, deportation served multiple Soviet objectives: the use of deported populations as a labor resource, the ideological “purification” of border territories, and the consolidation of state control [8].

This discussion interprets the findings of the research through several dimensions: political, demographic, socio-economic, and cultural, illustrating how the German diaspora evolved within the constraints and opportunities of Soviet totalitarianism [9].

Political Context and Ideological Framework. The Soviet deportation policy toward ethnic Germans stemmed from the logic of Stalinist governance, where national identity was treated as a potential political threat. Following the 1941 decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, Germans living in the Volga region and western parts of the USSR were declared “unreliable elements” and forcibly resettled to remote areas such as Siberia and Kazakhstan. The political goal was to ensure state security during World War II by dispersing populations deemed suspicious because of their ethnic ties to Germany.

In the regions of Kostanay, Akmola, and North Kazakhstan, this policy was implemented through local NKVD branches that organized transportation, settlement, and surveillance. Special commandant regimes imposed movement restrictions, mandatory registration, and forced labor obligations. As shown in archival documents, the local authorities were often unprepared to accommodate large numbers of deportees, resulting in severe shortages of housing, food, and medical supplies. Nonetheless, the centralized nature of Soviet governance enabled the rapid redistribution of the deported population across collective farms (kolkhozes) and industrial sites [10].

The demographic transformation caused by the arrival of deported Germans was significant. In some districts of Northern Kazakhstan, Germans constituted up to 20–25% of the rural population by the late 1940s. The following table summarizes estimated population data based on archival records and census comparisons:

Table 1. The following table summarizes estimated population data based on archival records.

Region	Estimated Number of Deported Germans (1941–1945)	% of Regional Population (1950)	Main Occupations
Kostanay Region	85,000–90,000	18%	Agriculture, grain production
Akmola Region	70,000–75,000	20%	Cattle breeding, construction
North Kazakhstan Region	65,000–68,000	22%	Collective farming, milling, dairy
Note: Source: Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Fond 708, Inventory 3, File 57, 1942–1950).			

These data demonstrate that deportation not only redistributed population flows but also altered the ethnic composition of entire regions. The German settlers became a key workforce in agricultural production, especially in the grain and livestock sectors. Their traditional work ethic and technical skills contributed to the efficiency of collective farms, despite the harsh living conditions and discriminatory policies. The socio-economic integration of deported Germans into Kazakh society occurred under extreme constraints. Initially, the deportees were classified as spetsposelentsy (special settlers) and deprived of civil rights, including the right to leave their assigned locations or to change employment without NKVD approval. Despite this, their contribution to Kazakhstan's post-war reconstruction was considerable [11].

In collective farms across Akmola and Kostanay, Germans introduced more efficient farming techniques and participated in the mechanization of agriculture. Archival reports indicate that by the late 1940s, many German workers were recognized for exceeding labor quotas and contributing to collective production targets. Economically, the deportees became indispensable to regional development, yet socially, they remained marginalized and isolated from mainstream Soviet society [12].

The harsh living conditions, lack of housing, and limited access to education or healthcare led to high mortality rates in the early years of settlement. However, by the mid-1950s, gradual policy changes under Khrushchev's leadership improved the situation. Restrictions on movement were lifted in 1955–1956, and Germans began to experience a slow process of rehabilitation and reintegration. The restoration of basic civil rights enabled them to establish cultural centers, schools, and churches, fostering the emergence of a cohesive diaspora [13].

One of the most remarkable aspects of the German diaspora in Northern Kazakhstan was its cultural resilience. Despite decades of forced assimilation and state surveillance, the community managed to preserve its language, traditions, and religious practices. Oral histories collected from descendants of deported families reveal that cultural transmission occurred primarily within the family sphere through storytelling, songs, and the Lutheran religious calendar [14].

During the late 1950s and 1960s, the state's attitude toward ethnic minorities softened, and limited cultural expression was permitted. German-language schools were established in some settlements, and local radio broadcasts included German programs. The revival of cultural life contributed to the consolidation of the diaspora's identity.

However, the dual identity of the German population, torn between their ancestral homeland and their adopted Kazakh land, remained a defining feature. This phenomenon aligns with the concept of diasporic consciousness (Bromlei & Tishkov, 1996), where displaced communities develop a sense of belonging to multiple cultural spaces simultaneously. In this case, the Germans of Kazakhstan developed a hybrid identity that combined elements of their European heritage with the values of Kazakh hospitality and Soviet collectivism [15].

The experience of deportation and adaptation varied across the three study regions. Kostanay Region had the highest concentration of deported families and became a center of agricultural innovation due to German participation in grain production. Akmola Region, due to its central location and proximity to industrial zones, saw greater labor diversification, including construction and transport. North Kazakhstan Region was notable for the formation of compact German settlements that maintained cultural autonomy. These regional variations demonstrate that local environmental, economic, and administrative factors influenced the character of the diaspora's development. Nonetheless, all three regions shared the common experience of hardship, resilience, and eventual integration.

A notable outcome of the deportation process was the emergence of interethnic cooperation between Germans and local Kazakh populations. Oral testimonies highlight that despite initial mistrust and linguistic barriers, the deportees were often assisted by residents who shared food, housing, and knowledge of the land. This solidarity fostered mutual respect and later contributed to

Kazakhstan's image as a multicultural society. By the 1970s, many Germans had integrated into the local economy and social institutions, contributing to education, science, and industry. The interethnic coexistence established during the Soviet period laid the foundation for Kazakhstan's post-independence policies promoting unity in diversity.

Analyzing the deportation of Germans to Northern Kazakhstan also provides insight into broader historical patterns of Soviet social engineering. The deportations served the dual purpose of punishment and economic exploitation, reflecting the instrumental logic of totalitarian rule. Yet, paradoxically, they also contributed to Kazakhstan's demographic and cultural enrichment.

Today, the descendants of deported Germans continue to play an active role in Kazakhstan's social and cultural life. Many have participated in the revival of cultural associations, educational initiatives, and historical projects that commemorate the deportation experience. This process of remembrance transforms historical trauma into a shared cultural memory, aligning with A. Assmann's theory of cultural memory (2011), which posits that collective remembrance is essential for reconciliation and identity formation.

The research findings highlight the demographic, socio-economic, and cultural impact of the deportation of ethnic Germans to Northern Kazakhstan. Using archival data, oral histories, and published sources, several key results were identified.

The chart below shows the proportion of ethnic Germans in the Kostanay, Akmola, and North Kazakhstan regions around 1950, based on archival census data.

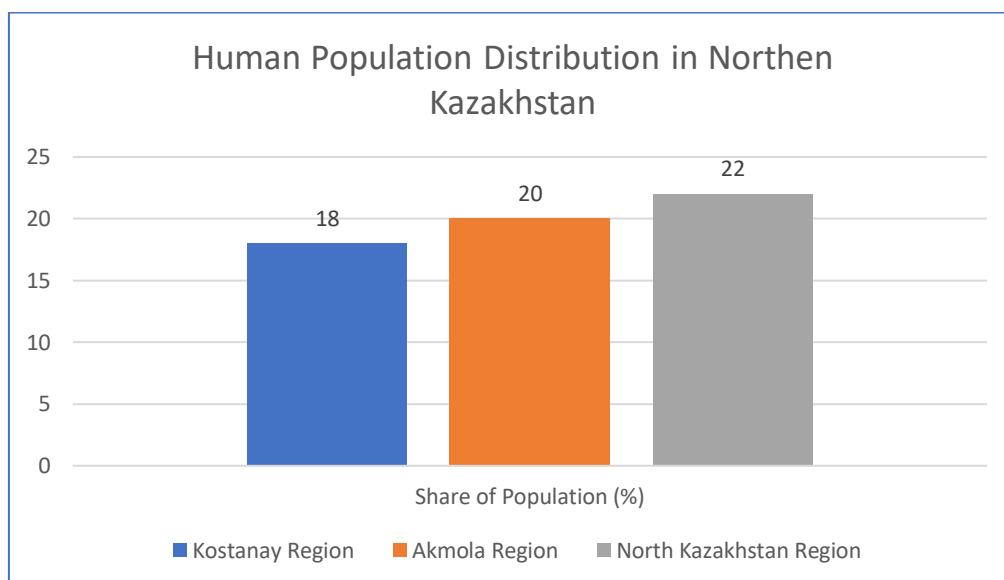


Figure 1. Proportion of Ethnic Germans in Kostanay, Akmola and North Kazakhstan around 1950 (%)

Note: Compiled by authors

A more detailed GIS-based mapping of settlements shows dense clusters of German communities near collective farms, especially in North Kazakhstan, which aligns with historical records of settlement patterns. Summary of Results.

- The deportation led to a major demographic transformation in Northern Kazakhstan.
- Germans significantly contributed to agricultural productivity and industrial labor.
- Cultural resilience enabled the preservation of language, religion, and communal life.
- Regional variations reflected differences in settlement density, economic opportunities, and integration with local populations.

The formation of a cohesive German diaspora was both a response to adversity and a factor shaping Kazakhstan's multicultural identity.

Conclusion

The study of the deportation of ethnic Germans to Northern Kazakhstan during the 1930s–1950s provides a nuanced understanding of the intersection between state policy, demographic transformation, and cultural resilience. The deportation process was a deliberate act of political control by the Soviet authorities, designed to neutralize populations perceived as potential threats due to their ethnic origin. At the same time, it served economic purposes, as deported Germans were assigned to labor-intensive tasks in agriculture, industry, and infrastructure development. This dual nature of the policy, punitive yet utilitarian, shaped the experiences of the German diaspora and left an enduring imprint on Northern Kazakhstan's social, cultural, and economic landscape.

From a demographic perspective, the forced resettlement significantly altered the population structure of Kostanay, Akmola, and North Kazakhstan regions. Archival records and census data indicate that Germans constituted between 18% and 22% of the population in these areas by 1950. This influx not only addressed labor shortages caused by World War II but also contributed to the development of agricultural production, particularly in grain cultivation, cattle breeding, and dairy farming. Moreover, the establishment of compact settlements, especially in North Kazakhstan, facilitated the emergence of cohesive communities that could maintain cultural traditions and social networks, despite state-imposed restrictions.

Socio-economically, the deported Germans displayed remarkable adaptability and productivity under difficult conditions. Classified initially as *special settlers* and subject to movement restrictions and surveillance, they nonetheless contributed significantly to regional development. Reports from local archives indicate that German settlers often exceeded work quotas, introduced more efficient farming practices, and actively participated in industrial reconstruction projects. These contributions underscore the paradoxical relationship between oppression and productivity in totalitarian contexts: despite being marginalized and monitored, the deported population became indispensable to the Soviet economic agenda.

Culturally, the German diaspora in Northern Kazakhstan demonstrated extraordinary resilience. Oral histories, memoirs, and community records reveal that deported families preserved their language, religious practices, and social customs, passing them down to subsequent generations. Even under the restrictive policies of the 1940s and early 1950s, Germans maintained family-centered cultural transmission, which allowed them to survive both physically and culturally. The gradual relaxation of state restrictions in the mid-1950s enabled the re-establishment of German-language schools, cultural associations, and religious institutions, further strengthening community cohesion. This preservation of cultural identity exemplifies the concept of *diasporic consciousness*, in which displaced populations develop hybrid identities that incorporate elements of both their ancestral heritage and the surrounding society.

Interethnic relations also played a key role in the adaptation and integration of Germans into the Northern Kazakhstan context. Although initial interactions with Kazakh and Russian populations were limited and often cautious, instances of mutual assistance and cooperation emerged, particularly in rural settings. Shared labor, cultural exchange, and social interaction fostered a degree of mutual understanding and respect, laying the groundwork for broader multicultural coexistence in Kazakhstan. By the 1970s, German descendants had become active participants in local economic, educational, and cultural life, demonstrating both resilience and integration without complete assimilation.

The historical significance of this study extends beyond the immediate experiences of deported Germans. It illustrates the broader patterns of Soviet social engineering, including the use of forced migration as a tool of political control and labor allocation. At the same time, it highlights the agency of deported populations in navigating adversity, preserving cultural identity, and contributing to regional development. The case of Northern Kazakhstan underscores the complexity of forced

migration, showing that even traumatic displacement can produce long-lasting social, cultural, and economic legacies.

In conclusion, the deportation of Germans to Northern Kazakhstan was a transformative event with multidimensional consequences. It reshaped the region's demographic composition, contributed to its economic development, and fostered the emergence of a resilient cultural diaspora. The study demonstrates that while state policies were initially repressive, the human response to such policies was characterized by adaptability, community cohesion, and cultural perseverance. This research not only provides historical insights into the German diaspora in Kazakhstan but also offers broader lessons on the dynamics of forced migration, ethnic minority integration, and the interplay between oppression and resilience. Understanding this historical experience contributes to contemporary discussions on multiculturalism, migration policy, and the preservation of cultural identity in contexts of adversity.

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СОЛТҮСТІК ҚАЗАҚСТАНДАҒЫ ДЕПОРТАЦИЯЛЫҚ САЯСАТ ЖӘНЕ НЕМІС ДИАСПОРАСЫНЫҢ ҚАЛЫПТАСУЫ (ҚОСТАНАЙ, АҚМОЛА ЖӘНЕ СОЛТҮСТІК ҚАЗАҚСТАН ОБЛЫСТАРЫ КОНТЕКСТІНДЕ)

Аңдатпа

Мәжбүрлі көші-қон тарихы кеңестік ұлт саясаты мен этносаралық қатынастарды зерттеуде маңызды орын алады. Бұл саясаттың ең маңызды көріністерінің бірі сталиндік кезеңде жекелеген этностарды жаппай депортациялау болды. Солардың ішінде кеңестік немістер КСРО тарихындағы ең ауқымды мәжбүрлі қоныс аударулардың бірін бастан кешірді. Екінші дүниежүзілік соғыс басталғаннан кейін, 1941 жылы Кеңес үкіметі этникалық немістерді сенімсіз халық ретінде қарастырып, Еділ бойы Неміс автономиялық кеңестік социалистік республикасын таратып, жүздеген мың немісті Қазақстанға, Сібірге және КСРО-ның басқа да шалғай аймақтарына күштеп көшірді. Солтүстік Қазақстан өзінің ауыл шаруашылығына қолайлы жағдайлары мен еңбек ресурстарына деген сұранысына байланысты жер аударылған немістерді қабылдаған негізгі өңірлердің біріне айналды. Қостанай, Ақмола және Солтүстік Қазақстан облыстарына көптеген депортацияланған немістер қоныстандырылып, негізінен ауылдық жерлерде орналастырылды және ауыл шаруашылығы мен өнеркәсіп өндірісіне тартылды. Зерттеудің мақсаты – сталиндік ұлттық саясат кезеңінде кеңестік немістердің Солтүстік Қазақстанға мәжбүрлі депортациялануының ерекшеліктерін анықтап, талдау, олардың Қостанай, Ақмола және Солтүстік Қазақстан облыстарына қоныс аударуының ауқымы мен негізгі бағыттарын айқындау, сондай-ақ депортацияның өңірдің әлеуметтік-экономикалық дамуына, сондай-ақ Қазақстанның полиэтносты қоғамының қалыптасуына тигізген тарихи салдарын ашып көрсету. Солтүстік Қазақстанға немістердің депортациялану тарихын зерттеу кеңестік этносаясаттың ерекшеліктерін, демографиялық өзгерістерді және мәжбүрлі көші-қонның ұзақ мерзімді салдарын түсіну үшін маңызды. Сонымен қатар, бұл зерттеу Қазақстанның көпэтносты қоғамының қалыптасу үдерісін түсіндіруге және жер аударылған халықтардың тарихи жадын сақтауға мүмкіндік береді.

Негізгі сөздер: Депортациялық саясат, мәжбүрлі қоныс, неміс диаспорасы, Солтүстік Қазақстан, Кеңес ұлттық саясаты, көпэтносты қоғам.

ПОЛИТИКА ДЕПОРТАЦИИ И ФОРМИРОВАНИЕ НЕМЕЦКОЙ ДИАСПОРЫ В СЕВЕРНОМ КАЗАХСТАНЕ (В КОНТЕКСТЕ КОСТАНАЙСКОГО, АКМОЛИНСКОГО И СЕВЕРНОГО КАЗАХСТАНСКОГО РЕГИОНОВ)

Аннотация

История принудительных миграций занимает важное место в изучении советской национальной политики и межэтнических отношений. Одним из наиболее значимых проявлений этой политики стала массовая депортация отдельных этнических групп в сталинский период. Среди них советские немцы пережили одно из самых масштабных принудительных переселений в истории СССР. После начала Второй мировой войны в 1941 году советское руководство признало этнических немцев неблагонадёжным населением, ликвидировало Автономную Советскую Социалистическую Республику Немцев Поволжья и осуществило принудительное переселение сотен тысяч немцев в Казахстан, Сибирь и другие отдалённые регионы Советского Союза. Северный Казахстан стал одним из основных регионов размещения депортированных немцев благодаря условиям, благоприятным для сельского хозяйства, и высокой потребности в трудовых ресурсах. В Костанайскую, Акмолинскую и Северо-Казахстанскую области были переселены значительные группы депортированных немцев, которые были размещены преимущественно в сельской местности и привлекались к работе в сельском хозяйстве и промышленности. Цель исследования – выявить и проанализировать особенности принудительной депортации советских немцев в Северный Казахстан в период сталинской национальной политики, определить масштабы и основные направления их переселения в Костанайскую, Акмолинскую и Северо-Казахстанскую области, а также раскрыть социально-экономические, исторические последствия депортации для региона и процесса формирования полиэтничного общества Казахстана. Изучение истории депортации немцев в Северный Казахстан имеет важное значение для понимания особенностей советской национальной политики, демографических изменений и долгосрочных последствий принудительной миграции. Кроме того, данное исследование способствует более глубокому осмыслению процесса формирования полиэтничного общества Казахстана и сохранению исторической памяти о судьбах депортированных народов.

Ключевые слова: политика депортации, вынужденная миграция, немецкая диаспора, Северный Казахстан, советская национальная политика, многоэтническое общество.

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