

"VICTIMS" AND "EXECUTIONERS" OF THE STALIN ERA REPRESSIONS IN THE MULTIDIRECTIONAL MEMORY OF POST-SOVIET ARMENIA

June 14, 1949 Armenian exiles in Rassipnaya, Siberia. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

In post-Soviet Armenia, issues of Soviet history began to be discussed relatively late, since the space of public memory had been filled after 1991 with discussions on the silenced Armenian Genocide. On the other hand, the problem of Karabakh incorporating into Azerbaijan was foremost in the mindset of both historians and laypeople among the various topics related to the Soviet past.

The presentation will focus on the problem of how the memory of trauma, survivors of genocide and repression interact. In some cases, they can develop in parallel, independently of each other. In others, the memory of repressions is formed according to the model of memory of the genocide, when the memory of repressions repeats some of the mechanisms developed in connection with the memory of the genocide, both at the individual and institutional levels (compare with the multidirectional memory according to M. Rothberg). And thirdly, the memory of repression can be contrasted with the memory of genocide.

While the memory of the genocide has become an important part of not only the politics of memory in post-Soviet Armenia, but also of real politics, the memory of the repressions has been rather part of the politics of oblivion, largely due to cautious relations with Russia, which since the mid-2000s began to revise its negative attitude towards the Soviet past. The policy of forgetting the Soviet past at the same time created fertile ground for less politicization of the collective memory of the repressions. This opened up more space for counter-memory, for expressing an ambiguous attitude towards the victims and executioners of Soviet repressions. It will be discussed from two perspectives - both the authorities (memory policy) and descendants of the victims. These two perspectives have been reflected differently on the memorial landscape. Local initiatives of memorializing the victims of the Soviet regime reveal a wide spectrum of interpretations of these repressions, distinct from the unambiguous message of the main memorial in Yerevan.

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