

BEYOND ACCUSATION: WOMEN'S REPRESSIONS IN SOVIET ARMENIA DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

AIDA PAPIKYAN



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The academic literature about Soviet repressions mainly addresses men as a target of repressions. Recently, women subjected to Soviet repressions have also received some attention, especially among Western scholars. These studies predominantly cover the living conditions of women in labor camps or stories of their discrimination resulting from the arrest of their husbands and fathers. The topic of political violence against women during WWII has not been sufficiently studied yet. Taking this gap into account, the article aims to reveal the patterns and features of women's repressions in Soviet Armenia during the wartime.

The first part of the article presents the statistics of political repressions against women in Soviet Armenia during the war. The social composition of the victims of terror will shed some light on the logic of violence against women. The Armenian electronic database of the repressed has been used for this purpose,¹ created by the joint effort of "Hazarashen" Armenian Center for Ethnological Studies and the National Archives of Armenia. The dataset was compiled from the archival repository of terminated cases of the victims of Soviet repressions. The Armenian database is quite informative as it has 29 data entry fields and enables its users to obtain more comprehensive information about the repressed through quantitative analysis.

There is only little qualitative and quantitative research on the repressions in individual republics of the USSR during the wartime. However, studies on two separate regions of Russia are available, Dyachkov's² and Nechaev's³ research on repressions during WWII in Tambov and Molotov (currently Perm) regions respectively. These studies have been used for comparative purposes.

The second part of the article describes the mechanisms of purges and the relevance of women's accusations to the investigation, revealed through the analysis of archival documents. Since the cases/files of the repressed cannot be considered a reliable source of historical fact, and it is impossible to reconstruct the circumstances of the violence through those,⁴ the research was complimented by the Harvard Project on the Soviet Social system, one of the initial sources reflecting the Soviet everyday life and the opin-

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- 1 Database of the victims of repressions in Soviet Armenia (1920-1953), www.armeniatotalitaris.ru/, 10.08.2020: Currently only the data on deported citizens in 1949 is available online, as the work on other datasets is still in progress.
 - 2 Vladimir Dyachkov, "Repressions between 1941 and 1945: Study Methodology and Factor of Military Socio-demographic development of Tambov region," *Humanities. History and Politology* 94(47), no. 258 (2011): 258-267, <http://ineternum.ru/wp-content/uploads/10.pdf>.
 - 3 Mikhail Nechaev, "Political Repressions in Perm (Molotov region) on the Eve and during the Great Patriotic War (1939-1945)," *Vestnik Chelyabinskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta* (2014): 77-90.
 - 4 The NKVD and the prosecutor's office, having unlimited power to conduct the investigation, often falsified cases. This is evidenced by the decree "About Arrests, Prosecutorial Control, and Investigation" of the People's Committee and All-Union Bolshevik Communist Party of Central Committee of the USSR on November 17 1938, in which NKVD and the USSR prosecution were accused of the mass terror in 1937-1938. Cited by: Margarita Varfolomeeva, "Peculiarities of the Soviet Authorities' Repressive Policy in the late 1930s," *Scientific Statements of Belgorod State University*, no. 1 (2008), www.core.ac.uk/download/pdf/151214014.pdf.

ions about the system from the former citizens of the Soviet Union. Commissioned by the USA in the 1950s, the project is a package of in-depth interviews with Soviet citizens that fled to Germany during the war.⁵

Many researchers, including Wheatcroft⁶, Ilic⁷, and Lyagushkina⁸, have analyzed the Russian SSR data on Stalin-era repressions. Wheatcroft's statistics on the structure of the Gulag population are one of the most systematic recent studies about the volume of Soviet-era repressions. However, although the statistics include the war period, the gender ratio is not presented there. The political prisoners and criminals are not distinguished as well, which creates some difficulties in studying the statistics of political inmates. The works of Lyagushkina and Ilic, in turn, reveal the social structure of the repressed in the Gorky (currently Nizhny Novgorod) region and Leningrad (present-day Leningrad region and the city of St. Petersburg) during the Great Terror.⁹ In these two studies, the gender ratio of the repressed is presented. However, unlike the repressions of wartime, the Great Terror had a different logic. In that period, the purges largely targeted men in their 40s: the high-ranking members of the Communist Party in the first phase, as well as anti-Soviet elements, including members of former political parties and opposition groups, former kulaks, extremists, national minorities, and the participants of the civil war in the second one.¹⁰ Men's repressions significantly outnumbered the women's purges in that period. Likewise, the repressed women were of considerable age in pre-war times, recorded as former or active religious personnel in Leningrad (nuns, church elders, or psalm readers), and the working class in Gorky. The studies of Ilic¹¹ and Mason¹² also largely contributed to the qualitative research of women's repressions in the early Soviet period.

A number of researchers, such as Borodkin, Gregory, and Khlevnyuk,¹³ Applebaum,¹⁴ Cheremukhin, together with Golosov, Guriev, and Tsyvinski¹⁵ discussed repressions as an economic tool for USSR modernization, arguing that forced labor institutions were considered economic structures in the Soviet Union, which aimed at applying the work of

5 The Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System Online, www.library.harvard.edu/collections/hpsss/index.html, 05.08.2020.

6 Stephen Wheatcroft, "The scale and nature of German and Soviet repression and mass killings, 1930-1945," *Europe-Asia Studies* 48, no. 8 (1996): 1319-1353.

7 Melanie Ilic, "The Great Terror in Leningrad: A Quantitative Analysis," *Europe-Asia Studies* 52, no.8 (2000): 1515-1534.

8 Lyudmila Lyagushkina, "Social Portrait of the Great Terror Victims (1937-1938): Analysis of Database Created on the material of Nizhny Novgorod Regional "Memorial Books", 30-42, www.kleiO.asu.ru/2012/1/hcsj-12012_30-43.pdf.

9 Mass repressions between 1937 and 1938 unleashed in the Soviet Union, during which 680 thousand men were shot and 1.3 million were arrested. See: Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: Stalin's Purge of the Thirties* (New York, 1968) and Victor Zemskov, "On the Scale of Political Repressions in the USSR," *Politpros* 66, no. 1 (2012), www.politpros.com/journal/read/?ID=783.

10 Cited by: Melanie Ilic, "The Great Terror in Leningrad: A Quantitative Analysis," 1532.

11 Melanie Ilic, "Women's Experiences of 1937: Everyday Legacies of the Purges and the Great Terror in the Soviet Union," In: *Women's Experiences of Repression in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*. Routledge Studies in the History of Russia and Eastern Europe (London: Routledge, 2017), 13-53.

12 Emma Mason, "Women in the Gulag in the 1930s," in the *Women in the Stalin Era*, ed. Melanie Ilic (Studies in Russian and East European History and Society, Palgrave, 2001), 131-150.

13 *GULAG. Economy of Forced Labor*, ed. Leonid Borodkin, Paul Gregory, Oleg Khlevnyuk, (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2008), 82.

14 Anne Applebaum, *GULAG: A History* (Doubleday, 2003).

15 Anton Cheremukhin et al., "Was Stalin necessary for Russia's economic development?" *NBER Working Papers 19425*, National Bureau of Economic Research Inc. (2013).

convicts rationally. The studies of researchers of politics and everyday life of the USSR, such as Kotkin,¹⁶ Fitzpatrick,¹⁷ Davies¹⁸, and Johnston,¹⁹ were useful for the analysis as well.

Both during the Great Terror and at wartime, the NKVD²⁰ targeted the wives of the repressed, who were considered a potential threat by the Soviet authorities at least because they could be dissatisfied with the government. When in the 1970s the writer Felix Chuev met with Molotov and asked about the purpose of the repressions of women and children, the latter mentioned that they had to be isolated so as not to become disseminators of various complaints.²¹ Besides, nationalities of “enemy states” were persecuted. In one of the archival cases where a woman was accused of espionage, the head of the Yerevan Police Department also reported that they had been ordered by NKVD to isolate immigrants from Germany.²² This way, in addition to neutralizing the possible threat of espionage, the NKVD isolated people attributed as a possible supporter of the German forces. Accordingly, a number of researchers believe that the political goals of terror outweighed the economic ones, emphasizing the fact that a large number of young men were executed during the Great Terror.²³

On the other hand, while the researchers argue that the use of women labor was not part of the five-year plan,²⁴ the economic factor should be considered jointly with political reasons in women’s repressions. Given the significant reduction in the number of men in the workforce, as well as for the purposes of food provision to the Red Army, female workforce could be considered useful. According to Applebaum, the camp leadership was not interested in taking women under its responsibility due to their physical weakness compared to men. However, in February 1941, the Gulag²⁵ administration sent an order to all regional heads of the NKVD to take women etaps,²⁶ sending them to industries where female labor might be applied (sewing, textiles, wood processing, the manufacturing of footwear and other goods²⁷). Thus, in women’s case, the combination of economic and political goals of terror must be taken into account during the war years.

16 Stephen Kotkin, *Stalin, Waiting for Hitler, 1929-1941*, V. 2 (New York: Penguin Press, 2017).

17 Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism. Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times. Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

18 Sarah Davies, *Popular Opinion in Stalin’s Russia: Terror, Propaganda and Dissent, 1934-1941* (Cambridge, 1997).

19 Timothy Johnston, *Being Soviet. Identity, Rumor, and Everyday Life under Stalin 1939-1953* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

20 People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD in Russian).

21 Artyom Krechetnikov, “How the Wives and Children of “Traitors to the Motherland” were Imprisoned in the USSR,” *BBC Russkaya Sluzhba*, July 5, 2017, www.bbc.com/russian/features-40471460.

22 NAA, F. 1191, O. 4, D. 607.

23 See: GULAG. Economy of Forced Labor, 82 or Cheremukhin et al., “Was Stalin necessary for Russia’s economic development?,” 32.

24 Mason, “Women in the Gulag in the 1930s,” 133.

25 Abbreviated in Russian “Glavnoe upravlenie lagerey”. The GULAG was the administrative body that governed the concentration camps. It operated from 1929 to 1960. See: GULAG. Economy of Forced Labor.

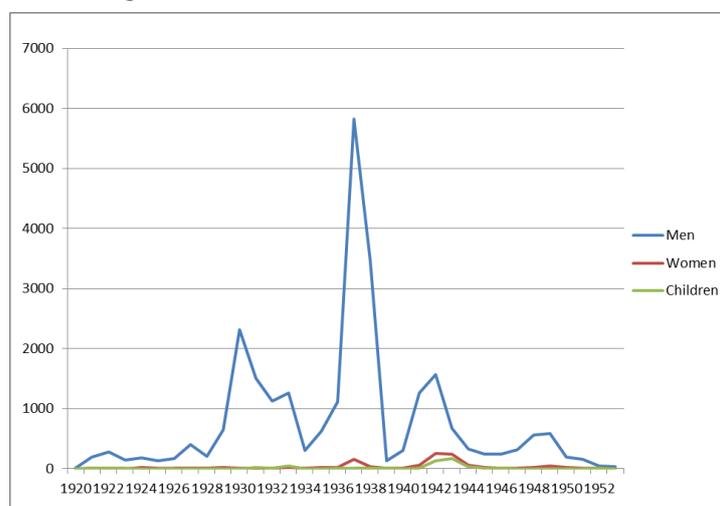
26 A group of inmates going to exile, accompanied by a guard.

27 Applebaum, *GULAG: A History*, 297.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S REPRESSIONS IN WWII

The dynamics of arrests in the Armenian SSR between 1920 and 1953 may provide some insight into the features of women's purges during the Second World War. The data in the chart below (Fig. 1) have been extracted according to the days of arrests and the days of the orders of arrests.²⁸ Not all the data on the repressed are available in the archival documents; hence, the picture presented in the graph is very approximate. Especially, this refers to women and children as there is often no record of their arrests in the database as well as to the cases of the 1930s because they sometimes contain little information about the fate of repressed. For instance, the repressed under the category of "family traitors to the Motherland" or *chsir*²⁹ has not often been arrested before the exile, and there is no data about their arrests. This information gap has been restored based on the year of trials or release, considering that the quantity of *chsir*s is significant among the total number of repressed.

Graph 1. The dynamics of repressions in the Soviet Armenia during Stalin's period, by gender and age



Source: Database of the victims of Soviet repressions in Armenia (1920-1953)

The graph shows that between the years 1920 and 1953, the victims of terror were overwhelmingly male in Armenia, as it was the case in other Soviet republics.³⁰ Men's repressions soared in the 1930s then hit a peak at 1937-1938, during the Great Terror,

28 Counting the date of repression by arrest is the most expedient and accurate option. Determining the year of repression by trial has some limitations as not all detainees have been convicted at all or in the same year as the arrest.

29 Russian abbreviation- Члены семьи изменников Родины.

30 The diagram also presents the repressed children who were exiled together with their families as "family members of the traitors to the Motherland". Children are included in the graph as the number of deportees in this category during World War II is quite significant, and not including them would affect the dynamics of the bar graph.

followed by another increase in 1941-1942, making up 2320, 9283, and 2832 respectively. The dynamics of women's arrests partially reflect the picture of that of men. In particular, two peaks can be observed in the case of women, again during the Great Purges (185) and the first years of WWII (498).³¹ However, the graph also shows that men were predominantly targeted during the years of the Great Terror, whereas women's repressions were at their height during the wartime. Six hundred forty-nine (**649**) women fell victim to terror from 1941 to 1945. They constituted 51% of the total number of repressed females (approximately **1270**) throughout the Soviet period. The comparative analysis of women's repressions in Armenia and Russia's Tambov and Molotov regions again suggests that women's purges in Armenia during the war were higher by their scale (Table 1).

Table 1. The numbers of repressed women in 1941-1945, Armenia and Russia's Tambov and Molotov regions

Region	The number of population	The total number of repressed (abs.)	The number of repressed women (abs.)	The number of repressed women (pers.)
Armenian SSR	1.282.338	5026	649	12.90%
Tambov region	1.765.923	2000-3000	≈306	12.30%
Molotov region	2.087.900	5067	≈625	12.30%

Sources: 1939 All-Union census. The national composition of population by the republics of the USSR³²

1939 census of the Tambov region and data on the repressed³³

Census of the Molotov region, according to M. Nechayev³⁴

Database of the victims of Soviet repressions in Armenia (1920-1953)

The database of the repressed in the Perm (Molotov) region³⁵

Thus, according to the table based on the dataset of the repressed in Tambov region compiled by Dyachkov,³⁶ between 1935 and 1941 (the period was chosen by the Dyachkov) 261 women fell victim to repressions in Tambov, while the number of repressed women was 101 throughout 1941 and 1945. Nevertheless, the ratio of women increased significantly over men during the war years (12.3% and 87.7% respectively) com-

31 During the war years, as opposed to men, whose number was higher in 1941-1942, women were repressed more in 1942-1943.

32 All-Union Census 1939. National Composition of the Population in the Republics of the USSR. RGAERF, F. 1562, O. 336, Ed. khr. 966-1001 (Razrabotchnaya tablitsa F. 15A. National Composition of the USSR Population by Republics, Oblasts, Rayons), Cited by: www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng_nac_39.php?reg=6&fbclid=IwAR3I-anW0TD7t0xFvtz86ZGIlXho6BsmIAeM1-rxqnBFWCc8epnnISROs.

33 Information on the Population of Cities and Districts of Tambov Region according to 1939 Census, CDNITO, F. 1045, O. 1, D. 2040, L. 16.

34 Nechaev, "Political Repressions in Perm (Molotov region) on the Eve and during the Great Patriotic War (1939-1945)," 78.

35 Victims of Political Terror. Territory of Permskiy kray between 1918 and 1980, www.permgasp.ru/repress/.

36 Dyachkov's study of the Tambov region was chosen for making a comparison as it is the only available study describing the gender ratio during the war years.

pared to the pre-war period (5.5% and 94.4%), reaching from 4-7% to 12%.³⁷ This means that although the number of the repressed women during the pre-war years in Tambov region exceeded the number of women purged during the war, the ratio of women to men has changed drastically due to the reduction in the number of repressed men. Finally, as the table suggests, regardless of the number of population and the number of repressed, the proportion of women convicted in the three regions is surprisingly quite identical.

The report "On the Works in Gulag during the War Years (1941-1944)," which has been presented to the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs Beria by the chief of the Gulag Nasedkin, confirms the change in the sex ratio in the Gulag.³⁸ According to the report, the number of women has increased both in administrative-economic positions, reaching 31% (conditioned with the fact that about 200 thousand main cadres were drafted into the Red Army) and among the prisoners. Male prisoners constituted 93% in 1941. Their numbers decreased to 74%, whereas the proportion of female prisoners in the Gulag increased to **26%**. Nasedkin cited the fact of prisoners' early release as a reason for the change in the ratio of inmates. However, other reasons also contributed to the decline in the number of men in the Gulag. Some of the male prisoners, whose crime was not considered serious, were drafted into the army. Also, the death toll in Gulag soared during the war.³⁹ Denisova elaborated on the conditions in the Gulag during the wartime and the data presented by Nasedkin: "Women suffered massively during WWII when the proportion of women in the GULAG rose from 7% in 1941 to 26% by 1944."⁴⁰ Of course, this number does not reflect much of the real picture of the deprivation of women and men, given the fact that more women were sent to camps where the regime was relatively mild.⁴¹

The statistics overall indicate that, although the number of repressed women did not exceed that of men, their proportion in the total number increased drastically compared to the previous years because of the conscription of men into the Red Army. Hence, the demand for women in camp work increased due to the lack of men. Slave labor, largely applied for modernization purposes in the USSR, required at least no less workforce than before. Therefore, conscripted men who played leading roles in the war front and economy, including the Gulag economy, were to be replaced by women.

The Armenian data show that during the war, women were mainly charged with the following accusations: "the family members of the traitors to the motherland" or "*ch-sir*" (**604** people), "hiding/not denouncing deserters/bandits" (**25** people), "carrying on anti-Soviet or pro-fascist propaganda", "spreading or circulating rumors" (**95** people together), "spying" (**12** people), "member of an illegal youth organization" (**24** people), "fraud and composing bogus documents for deserters" (**19** people), and "escape from

37 Dyachkov, "Repressions between 1941 and 1945: Study Methodology and Factor of Military Socio-demographic development of Tambov region," 265-267.

38 Alexander Yakovlev's Fond, Report of the Chief of the GULAG Nasedkin to People's Commissar of Internal Affairs Beria "On the Works in Gulag during the War Years (1941-1944)," www.alexanderyakovlev.org/fond/issues-doc/1009222.

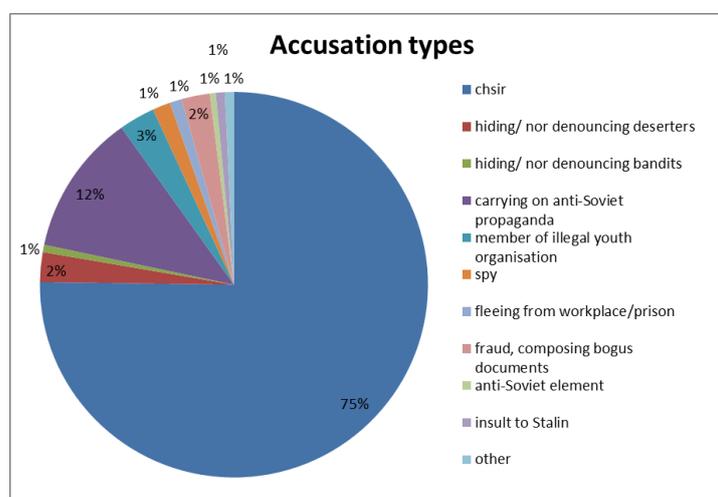
39 Mikhail Nakonechnyi, "Dead Souls': Mortality, Disability, and Early Release on Medical Grounds from GULAG, 1930-1955," *Webinar Series: Political Police and the Soviet System*, 16.04.2020.

40 Lyubov Denisova, *Rural Women in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Russia*, *Routledge Contemporary Russia and Eastern Europe Series* (Taylor & Francis, 2010), 124.

41 Applebaum, *GULAG: A History*, 297.

the workplace or the place of imprisonment” (8 people). There was not much diversity in women’s accusations compared to those of men, indicating that the choice of women’s accusations was far more limited due to their political passiveness.

Graph 2. The types of charges against women repressed from 1941 to 1945 in the Armenian SSR



Source: Database of the victims of Soviet repressions in Armenia (1920-1953)

The study of the age profile also supports the hypothesis of a demand for women labor in the camps. Table 2 suggests 595 women out of 803 were of working age, with 21-40 year-olds predominating in this age group. Only those who were exiled as *chsir* deviated from the main logic, as that group consisted of a large number of children and the elderly. In this case, it should be taken into account that the *chsir*s were exiled, while the others were mainly sent to labor camps or imprisoned (see Annex 1. The accusation type by nationality and residence).

Table 2. The age composition of women repressed between 1941 and 1945, according to accusation types

* The year 1945 was the baseline for counting the age

Accusation type	1-15 year-olds	16-60 year-olds	61-93 year-olds	Missing data
<i>Chsir</i>	154	398	49	3
Hiding/ not denouncing deserters	–	20	–	–
Hiding/ not denouncing bandits	–	5	–	–
Anti-soviet agitation	–	94	1	–
A member of illegal youth organization	–	24	–	–
Spy	–	11	1	–
Escape from workplace or prison	–	8	–	–
Fraud, composing bogus documents	–	19	–	–
Anti-soviet element	–	4	–	–
An insult to Stalin	–	6	–	–
Other	–	6	–	–
Overall	154	595	51	3

Source: Database of the victims of Soviet repressions in Armenia (1920-1953)

Table in *Annex 1. The accusation type by nationality and residence* depicts the national profile of women repressed in Armenia by the accusation type and the place of residence. Although Armenians were the absolute majority in Armenia, only 0.04% of the Armenian women were purged. From the so-called Titular nations⁴² of the USSR, Azerbaijani, Russian, and Ukrainian women repressed in the Armenian SSR outnumbered the Armenian women. On the other hand, they were far behind the repressed foreign women, namely Italian (14%), Turkish (5.5%), German (2.30%), and Jewish (1.36%). The targeting of foreigners was conditioned with the persecution of the representatives of “enemy nations” in the USSR during the wartime. The same logic of targeting the nationalities was applied in the Tambov region: Russian women among the repressed made up 11.9% out of the total number, and non-Russians - 14.3%.⁴³ In contrast, this logic did not work in men’s case. Repressed Armenian men were twice as many as foreigners in Soviet Armenia. In the Molotov⁴⁴ and Tambov⁴⁵ regions, the Russians outweighed foreigners two and ten times respectively. The reason for this gender discrepancy was probably that men, regardless of ethnicity, were always in the spotlight of NKVD as politically active ones, while women were not targeted because they were politically inactive, or were mostly targeted as potential “fifth columnists.”⁴⁶ The Russian women, repatriated from Germany, the Ukrainians evacuated from occupied territories, the Germans “unwilling to travel to Germany,” the Polish “fled from former Poland and not willing to accept the Soviet citizenship,” as well as the Jews arrived from Germany were targeted in Armenia and accused of carrying on anti-Soviet propaganda or espionage, according to the Armenian database of the repressed.

Mostly Armenians and Azerbaijanis living in rural areas were convicted as *chshir*. The accusation of fraud and composing bogus documents, as well as the involvement in anti-Soviet organizations predominantly referred to the Armenian and Russian women. The proportion of women convicted of other charges was small, but it consisted exclusively of foreign women.

It is also possible to observe certain patterns through data on the sentencing body, sentence duration and place of the repressed women (Annex 2. The state body responsible for conducting trials and the duration of the sentence of repressed women, by the type of accusation). The main decision-making body was the Special Assembly of USSR NKVD,⁴⁷ which sentenced 334 women to 1-5 years of exile or jail and 6-10 years of imprisonment in forced labor camps. The other main decision-making body was the Military Tribunal, which sentenced 89 women on various charges to 1-10 years of imprisonment.

42 Dominant ethnic group(s) in the state, which often assert dominance in political and cultural matters.

43 Dyachkov, “Repressions between 1941 and 1945: Study Methodology and Factor of Military Socio-demographic development of Tambov region,” 265, table 3.

44 Nechaev, “Political Repressions in Perm (Molotov region) on the Eve and during the Great Patriotic War (1939-1945),” 87, tables 4, 5.

45 Dyachkov, *Ibid.*

46 A group of agents who attempt to undermine a nation/state from within. By the eve of WWII, Soviet authorities targeted people/ethnic groups living in strategic borderland zones or having any reference with “enemy states.”

47 *Osoboe Soveshanie pri NKVD SSSR*, an administrative body subordinated to the USSR NKVD, which existed throughout 1934 and 1953. It had the right to exile people considered dangerous for the society. During World War II, the Special Assembly also had the right to impose appropriate sanctions on counter-revolutionary crimes, especially dangerous crimes against the USSR, for up to five years. See: Lubyanka, *Organi VCHK-OGPU-NKVD-NKGB-MGB-MVD-KGB. 1917-1991: Directory/ compiled: Aleksey Kokurin, Nikita Petrov. Also, Dmitry Liskov, Forbidden Truth about “Stalin Repressions”. “Children of Arbat” lie!* (Moscow: Yauza, 2012).

Thus, the quantitative analysis of the database allows stating that, unlike in Tambov region, where women were mainly targeted during the Great Terror, in the Armenian SSR more than half of the total number of repressed women was repressed during the war years. However, the number of women in labor camps increased significantly in the whole USSR during the war due to economic reasons. The domination of women of working age among the repressed also supports this view. In addition, the NKVD particularly targeted foreign women in most accusations. An exception is the Armenian and Azerbaijani women accused as *chisir*, who fell victim to repressions without having a direct "crime."

FAMILY MEMBERS OF THE TRAITORS TO THE MOTHERLAND (CHSIRS)

On June 29, 1942 Stalin signed a decree of the State Defense Committee N 1926ts⁴⁸ “On the family members of the traitors to the Motherland.”According to this decree “adult family members of people (military and civilian) convicted by the judicial authorities or by the Special Assembly of the USSR NKVD to capital punishment under Art. 58-1a of the RSFSR Criminal Code and the corresponding articles of the Criminal Code of other union republics for espionage in favor of Germany and other countries at war with the USSR, for going over to the side of the enemy, betrayal or assistance to the German occupiers, in service in the punitive or administrative bodies of the German occupiers on the territory they have seized, and for an attempt to betray the Motherland and treasonable intentions - are subject to arrest and exile in remote areas of the USSR for five years.”⁴⁹

Approximately 396 families or 887 people were purged as *chsir* in Soviet Armenia during the war.⁵⁰ Women were the majority among them, 469 people, while adults and children of both sexes constituted 418. The *chsir* category applied to all family members of the repressed. It could be the parents, usually the mother, the wife, or the children of the "traitor," depending on the size of a shared household. As opposed to repressions of *chsirs* in 1937, when children under the age of 3 were sent to orphanages at their place of residence, and 5 year-olds were sent to special orphanages far from big cities, minor family members were also subjected to exile in wartime, in accordance with the amendments made to the statement of the decision on the *chirs* "On the procedure for deporting family members to the far northern regions of the USSR"made by USSR NKVD in 1942.⁵¹ According to a testimony of a woman who had been exiled as *chsir* and was the story-teller in the article of the editor-in-chief of "Geghama Ashkharh" magazine Khlighatyan, her children had been sent to an orphanage right in the place of exile.⁵²

The arrests of *chsirs* began in the same year of signing the decree in 1942 and continued until the end of the war in 1945. The *chsirs'* cases have a similar structure and content. The trial of the execution of the head of the family is attached to the first pages of the case as the basis for compiling the case on his family members. There are several interrogations in the case, one of which is the interrogation of the exiled, and the others

48 Top secret.

49 “On the Family Members of the Traitors to the Motherland,” *Kommersant Vlast*, June 25, 2007, 52, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/776765>.

50 The number of *chsirs* is approximate as the verdict and the accusation were not applied to the minors in the database, therefore, there is some difficulty to count their number by filtering the accusation.

51 Anna Margolis, “State Children in Moscow,” Introductory article of “*This is right here*” website, <https://topos.memO.ru/category/155>, 22.08.2020.

52 Khosrov Khlighatyan, Motherhood in Captivity, www.epfarmeria.am/sites/default/files/Document/Khosrov_Khlighatyan_Motherhood_in_Captivity_June_14.pdf, 24.06.2020.

are of fellow villagers or fellow citizens. These interrogations contain standard questions about where the head of the family served, whether any other members of the family served in the army, or were repressed. On the other hand, in spite of the order of the secret decree to initiate arrests, only 35 people were arrested in Armenia. Two hundred seventeen (217) women out of 603 (women and girls counted together) were released under subscription before the exile, and the arrest records of 386 females were missing.⁵³ According to Khlgatyan, the exiled woman featured in his article was not arrested either: she was not even interrogated but was simply warned about the impending exile.⁵⁴ The fact of not being arrested suggests that the interrogations attached to the case have not actually been conducted. They were probably used to record the data collected about the family in the case. In particular, it is clear from the correspondence of NKVD institutions that the cases of *chsirs* were instructed to be composed within five days.⁵⁵ The accusation of *chsirs* was made by the Special Assembly of the USSR NKVD without a lawsuit. It should be noted that the Special Assembly was authorized to make a number of deportation decisions as well. NKVD delegated its authority to the Special Assembly in cases when the repressions were massive, the decree was administrative, and there was no need and time for an individual trial for the accused.⁵⁶

Archival materials and personal stories suggest that the way to exile was the most traumatic for this category of repressed. Infants were at greater risk in this regard, as their mortality rate was extremely high on the road due to famine and unfavorable weather conditions. Archives and oral records show that the police officers threw the dead children out of the train cabin or out of the boat.⁵⁷ Although according to the protocol of the documents, the deportees had the right to take an unlimited amount of food and up to 500 kg of items,⁵⁸ due to social insecurity or the unexpectedness of the deportation,⁵⁹ many often did not take almost anything with them. In some cases, in the absence of the head of the household and household items, women in exile were also at high risk of death.⁶⁰

According to Mason, special camps for women of the traitors to the Motherland were first established in 1937-1938 and became a mass phenomenon already in 1940.⁶¹ During the war, *chsirs* were exiled from Soviet Armenia to four main directions: the northern and southern regions of the Kazakh SSR, Novosibirsk, and the northern regions of the RSFSR, without specifying the place. It is known that there were four "women's"

53 The latter are mainly other family members, specifically minors, who lack data, taking into account that no verdict has been applied to them. They were simply considered to be under the care of the woman whose name appears in the case.

54 Khosrov Khlgatyan, Telephone interview by Aida Papikyan, August, 2020.

55 NAA, F. 1191, O. 17, D. 121.

56 Lubyanka, Organi VCHK-OGPU-NKVD-NKGB-MGB-MVD-KGB. 1917-1991: Directory/ compiled: Aleksey Kokurin, Nikita Petrov.

57 NAA, F. 1191, O. 12, D. 683, 685.

58 NAA, F. 1191, O. 17, D.126.

59 NAA, F. 1191, O. 12, D. 683, 685.

60 *Ibid.* The case depicts the harsh conditions of women thrown in exile. Both of them passed away, and the children drifted apart.

61 Mason, "Women in the Gulag in the 1930s," 134.

camps within the USSR gulag system.⁶² The largest was the Akmolinskiy camp in the Karlag⁶³ situated in the northern part of Kazakhstan, later renowned as ALJIR.⁶⁴ Although the information about the camp is not mentioned in the *chsirs'* documents, and the Armenian women deported during the war are not seen on the lists of the ALJIR museum, women deported to the northern regions of Kazakhstan were likely to be placed in ALJIR with their families.

Unlike the punishment for the *chsir* category, which was planned in advance, was carried out without the existence of a direct offense of the convict, and without a trial, in case of other charges, women were held accountable for “their crime.” The cases composed for the other charges (except for women arrested for composing bogus documents for the deserters, where the charges were more or less factual), stand out from the rest with a greater arbitrariness of applying the accusation. In those cases, the manipulations of the investigators, the attempts to cling to the women’s past, and the denunciations are seen more obviously.

62 Zubayda Suraganova, “ALZHIR as a Phenomenon of “Female” Lack of Freedom in Understanding of the Kazakh Population,” *North-Eastern Journal of Humanities*, no. 1(22) (2018): 65.

63 Abbreviated in Russian- forced labor camp in Karaganda.

64 Abbreviated in Russian- ALJIR (Akmolinsky lager zhyon izmennikov Rodini).

WOMEN, MAKING ANTI-SOVIET OR PRO-FASCIST AGITATION AND SPREADING FALSE NEWS

Domestic and foreign policy processes and military operations during the war often became the subject of everyday conversation of citizens. Readings of newspapers and the discussions of radio news were organized in the workplace, and NKVD often provoked political conversations through its agents. By doing so, the government made the citizens participants of terror, inciting them to participate in the process of finding "enemies of the people."⁶⁵ Between 1941 and 1945, when the official information networks collapsed, the oral news became even more important as a way to fill the information gap. The state of war intensified the crisis of trust in the official media, already observed in 1939.⁶⁶ In the given conditions, the alternative news became more widespread, the spread of which the government tried to control. The suspects were repressed for 2-5 years by the Military Tribunal, according to the order of the Presidency of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR "On being held accountable for spreading false news, alarming the population during the war" issued on the 6th of July, 1941 (unless the nature of the crime stipulated a more severe punishment).⁶⁷

The most common way to accuse a woman of "anti-Soviet propaganda" was to reveal her family ties. Thus, during the wartime, women whose husbands and fathers kept a "kulak" household in the pre-Soviet times or had been purged earlier, and even women who had themselves been repressed in the past came under political scrutiny. For example, the interrogation records and indictment conclusion of five women accused of organizing anti-Soviet meetings and inciting harsh remarks against the "Father of the Peoples," particularly emphasized their origin and the fact that their husbands were repressed.⁶⁸ Furthermore, jewelry, gemstones, furniture, and other items confiscated during the search of the house of one of these women once considered a "kulak," confirm that arrests in such families might have often been an excuse to seize their property. These cases were built on the principle that deprivation of former property and loss of family members, or their repression provoked hostility in women towards the Soviet power. Arrested because of "hostility," the women "adverted" their or their husbands' arrests and the deprivation of property for being "enemies of the people." One of the arrested women mentioned during the interrogation that after the arrest of her husband, she had lost her apartment and wandered with children for a long time. Finally,

65 Michael Polano, *The Great Terror: Violence, Ideology, and the Building of Stalin's Soviet Empire* (Wayne State University Theses, 2017): 73-76.

66 Jonston, *Being Soviet. Identity, Rumor, and Everyday Life under Stalin 1939-1953*, 78.

67 "On Responsibility of Spreading False Rumors in Wartime...", *Historical Memorials*, www.istmat.info/node/24359.

68 NAA, F. 1191, O. 4, D. 415.

in 1940 she had got a room in the barracks.⁶⁹ The Soviet authorities had only one solution to get rid of the attributed dissatisfaction to the relatives of the repressed, women in particular; the possible harmful activities of these women might only be stopped through their isolation.

The investigation of those women who were convicted of carrying on agitation and spreading rumors was extremely inconsistent. Investigators simultaneously led the interrogations in several directions. Witnesses and the accused revealed the various "offenses" of the detainee, which should have served as the basis for bringing charges. An exemplary case is the case of a woman named Serpun (the Russified version of Srбуhi) living in Kropotkin city, Krasnodarskiy Kray, conducted by NKVD. She was sentenced to three years of exile in Krasnoyarskiy Kray for "carrying on anti-Soviet propaganda among the servicemen and inciting them to betray the homeland" in 1944.⁷⁰ The fact of being born in Turkey and a trip to a territory occupied by the German Army to visit her family members who served in the Red Army motivated her targeting. The interrogator revealed that her husband had been taken prisoner by the Germans, and she visited him several times and that she also got vodka for the soldiers visiting her house, and had an affair with Dro.⁷¹ The investigator also tried to find out a few details about Serpun: her biography in Turkey, the existence of possible relatives abroad, the reason for her visit to see her daughter serving in the Red Army, etc. The letter from the NKVD of the Rostov region to the USSR NKVD reveals that the police officers had been in close contact with the accused. Through them, Srбуhi had obtained a train pass to visit her daughter in the occupied territories. That exact factor probably served as a reason for her arrest. Sometimes investigators did not even ask questions about the agitation during the interrogation, but such an accusation was made through the investigation. For example, this happened to a woman named Elena Maslakova, who was born in Brest-Litovsk.⁷² She moved to Russia with her parents after the city's capture by Germans, and later to her husband's place of service-Leninakan⁷³. Despite being accused of carrying on anti-Soviet propaganda among the soldiers' wives, during interrogations, the investigator targeted the fact that Elena's parents had kept a "kulak" household in Poland, as well as her connections with Polish officers and her feelings about living in Poland.

In some cases, if NKVD failed to prove the initial charge, it was changed during the investigation. Those women were eventually convicted of anti-Soviet propaganda as investigators managed to make such an accusation based on everyday conversations of witnesses. Thus, Kuznetsova Zinaida, who was evacuated from Kyiv and arrested in Yerevan with the charge of espionage, and introduced herself as Kochergina Alexandra, managed to confuse the investigator by giving contradictory biographical information during every interrogation. Eventually, failing to find out her identity, the initial accusation was changed to "fascist propaganda" during the investigation.⁷⁴ Another woman, Harutyu-

69 NAA, F. 1191, O. 4, D. 648.

70 NAA, F. 1191, O. 16, D. 91, 92.

71 Drastamat Kanayan (1884-1956), an Armenian military commander and politician. He served as Defense Minister of Armenia in 1920. He led the 812th Armenian Battalion, also known as the Armenian legion, which was a military unit in the German Army during WWII.

72 NAA, F. 1191, O. 16, D. 1682.

73 The second largest city in the Armenian SSR, situated in the northern part of the republic.

74 NAA, F. 1191, O. 2, D. 887, 888.

nyan-Kolinichenko Seda, an accountant in a bakery born in Leninakan, was initially accused of making counter-revolutionary remarks about Stalin as well as chauvinistic remarks about Russians and Jews. Despite the given accusation, the investigator tried to find out details about where Seda had got the pork fat, butter, and other scarce foods for the wartime. However, regardless of the issues raised in the interrogations, Seda's accusation was later changed to "spreading panic," and she was sentenced to imprisonment for two years.⁷⁵

The denunciation of agents or citizens serving as a testimony for witnesses often played a decisive role in the conviction of people. The agents were skillfully hidden by NKVD. They did not usually appear during the trials,⁷⁶ and their interrogations and provided information were attached to the case in a separate folder. The circumstances for denunciations were different. According to the studied archival materials, the reason might be the suspicion, the prejudices of some citizens towards the "enemies of the peoples" created by the government, the envy, the desire to own somebody's property,⁷⁷ or revenge,⁷⁸ and even the incidents when a woman refused to provide help or donations for the army.⁷⁹ For instance, the case of Nina Ponamaryova is one of the unique cases where the mechanisms of repression, the influence of public perceptions, and of interpersonal relations on unleashing terror are clearly visible.⁸⁰ She was born in Akhalkalaki, Georgia, and lived in Yerevan. In 1937, during the Great Terror, immediately after the arrest of her husband, the director of ArmenTorg,⁸¹ Nina was arrested as well. After she was released, her neighbors used this circumstance, discriminating against her in different situations. From Nina's letters and interrogation records, where she kept insisting on her slanderous neighbors, we learn that while receiving kerosene, the neighbors threw her containers out of the queue, noting that the enemy's family deserves nothing. Various household situations were added to it. For example, when Nina refused to sell her textile to a neighbor (reasoning that it was intended for her children who did not have clothes to wear) when there were disputes over the placement of garbage in the hallway, and when Nina's guests accidentally knocked on her neighbor's window at midnight, all these incidents later increased the desire of the neighbors to take revenge, which led them to denunciation. After Nina was exiled, her neighbors continued to persecute her children, trying to kick them out of the room, and her as well, after she returned from exile. Although the interrogation records mainly revealed these interpersonal relations, Nina was accused of "organizing a party at her home the day after the invasion of Nazi Germany to celebrate the upcoming collapse of the Soviet power" and was exiled for five years in 1942.

In the wartime, overall 95 women were sentenced to 2-10 years of imprisonment in Armenia for anti-Soviet propaganda, spreading false news, and making provocative remarks, as well as for being anti-Soviet elements. However, the features of the cases show that the number of people arrested on the above-mentioned charges did not re-

75 NAA, F. 1191, O. 10, D. 1258, 1259.

76 NAA, F. 1191, O. 3, D.1573, 1574.

77 NAA, F. 1191, O. 4, D. 648.

78 NAA, F. 1191, O. 2, D.1061, 1062.

79 NAA, F. 1191, O. 2, D.1459, O. 13, D.1868.

80 NAA, F. 1191, O. 4, D. 648.

81 Association of Trade Enterprises in the Armenian SSR.

flect the prevalence of the phenomenon, but often provided an opportunity to unleash arrests. In everyday conversations, women's unintentional expressions often became a catalyst for denunciation or were interpreted as an attempt to spread rumors, and more often those accused of propaganda were unrelated to it. This thesis is reinforced by the proportion of general statistics of propaganda accusations. During the pre-war years, only 21 women were repressed for propaganda and spreading the news. One hundred twenty-six (126) women in total were accused of propaganda between 1920 and 1953. These statistics again suggest that more women were arrested in the name of propaganda during the war. Though it is possible that the state of war also objectively provided an excuse for the spread of various rumors, assumptions, false or inaccurate news due to the lack of accurate information, the war situation in turn directly contributed to the arrest of more women because it was easy to falsify a charge with the help of witnesses.

One of the cases is based on an idea of some women to post the documents on their husbands' arrests and their confiscated property on windows as soon as the Germans arrived, so they could see that the Armenians were an "offended nation" and would save them.⁸² Such archival materials cannot be used to establish the fact that a certain percentage of the population had "sympathy" for the enemy. However, if we assume that NKVD regularly collected information about citizens' moods, this information could be later used as a basis to create accusations out of the main discussions among the population. On the other hand, the testimonies from other sources pertaining to the equivocal perception of the "enemy," can prove the existence of a certain discourse of "sympathy." The latter has been recorded in the oral histories collected in Armenia, in the Harvard Project, and other related studies.⁸³

82 NAA, F. 1191, O. 4, D. 415.

83 Aida Papikyan, *WWII Beyond the Narrative of Glorification*, 2020, 6, www.epfarmenia.am/sites/default/files/Document/Aida_Papikyan_June_14.pdf.

THE MEMBERS OF ILLEGAL YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

Apart from those arrested for propaganda, in almost all cases the charges were group charges, i.e. women were usually arrested together with men. This is also the case with women who were considered "members of a fascist organization." They are not the main actors in the case; they were arrested for attending meetings or assisting in the activities of the organization. The detainees were young, sometimes minors. The cases for the members of the organization were composed on the principle of a snowball. NKVD launched other cases based on the testimony of the arrested for being members of an "anti-Soviet organization, "indicting other young people. The young girls accused in the case were connected with their accusations only because of being classmates of the arrested young men, and in some cases, their loved ones.

WOMEN, HIDING / NOT DENOUNCING DESERTERS / BANDITS

Twenty-five (25) women were arrested for hiding or not denouncing deserters, i.e. their husbands, brothers, sons, or relatives during the wartime. Being related to the military service, the verdict against the women in these cases was made by the Military Tribunal of the 45th Army of the Transcaucasian Front (Voennyi Tribunal 45 Armii ZakFronta) or by the Military Tribunal of the NKVD Armed forces of the Armenian SSR (Voennyi Tribunal voysk NKVD Arm. SSR). They were sentenced to 3-10 years of imprisonment in labor camps. Secondly, there were women with a different accusation, who were considered bandits' wives. However, the review of the cases makes clear that they were mainly the ones who hid the same deserters, especially taking into account that their verdict was made by the same Military Tribunal. The fact of stealing animals was added to those cases, considering it as banditism.

In the cases of women who did not denounce their relatives, evidence of patriarchal discourse and neighborly mutual help might be traced. The records of interrogations point out to the passive role of women (young women in this case) in decision-making processes. Women often emphasized that as soon as they saw their husbands they went to inform their husbands' parents and brothers about that.⁸⁴ As soon as the latter arrived, the family discussed the details about the deserter's further hiding without the woman's presence.⁸⁵ Women were targeted in deserters' cases because they were the ones who fed the deserters and provided them with hygiene items. Speaking about the role of women in providing aid in repressed families, Shagoyan also highlights that it was usually women and children who passed the aid.⁸⁶ If several deserters were hiding together, evidence of the mutual assistance of their families, i.e. neighbors, can also be found in the studied cases. The women shared household activities to ensure the livelihood of their husbands/ sons. One washed their clothes, the other provided with the soap,⁸⁷ the third baked the bread, and somebody provided flour to another family.⁸⁸ In case the men were hiding in one of the deserters' house, women of the rest took food for their husbands or washed the clothes. According to Shagoyan, the role and importance of neighborly relations grew in such conditions for neighbors who shared the same fortune; the neighbors took the responsibilities that the relatives performed in non-crisis situations.⁸⁹

84 Some of the cases reveal that the couple formed nuclear, rather than extended families.

85 NAA, F. 1191, O. 7, D. 2237.

86 Gayane Shagoyan, "Totalitarian Everyday Life (Changes of Social Relations in the Period of Stalin Modernization)," in *Stalin Repressions in Armenia. History, Memory and Everyday Life*, (Yerevan: 2015), 192.

87 NAA, F. 1191, O. 2, D. 1152.

88 NAA, F. 1191, O.7, D. 198.

89 Shagoyan, "Totalitarian Everyday Life (Changes of Social Relations in the Period of Stalin Modernization)," 185.

Thus, taking into account the Armenian peculiarity of more women being repressed during the war, compared to the number of repressed women during the Great Terror, we can conclude that in Soviet Armenia, unlike other Soviet republics, women were less directly targeted during the Great Terror. However, according to studied cases, during the war, women whose relatives fell victim to repressions during the Great Terror, were targeted among others. These women were probably purged during wartime presumably because in those years, taking into account the demand for labor, the declining number was supplemented at the expense of women who had avoided repression previously. The study of investigations suggests that their husbands' "crime" was used as an excuse for repression. On the other hand, repressions became massive due to widespread suspicion and targeting foreigners. In this case, the women whose biographies included any suspicious circumstances, such as being evacuated from the occupied territories, became victims of repressions.

REASONS FOR RELEASES

Table 3. The women's sentences and releases throughout 1941 and 1945, by accusation type

Accusation type	The number of sentenced	The number of released	Received conditional charge
<i>chsirs</i>	314	290	–
Hiding/ not denouncing deserters	4	8	8
Hiding/ not denouncing bandits	5	–	–
Anti-soviet agitation	78	12	5
A member of illegal youth organization	20	4	–
spy	5	7	–
Escape from workplace or prison	7	1	–
Fraud, composing bogus documents	13	2	4
Anti-soviet element	4	–	–
An insult to Stalin	5	1	–
Other	4	2	
Overall	459	327	17

Source: Database of the victims of Soviet repressions in Armenia (1920-1953)

Compared with men, women were released more often from punishment. In the case of each accusation, various obstacles played a role. *Chsirs* recorded the highest percentage of releases. Three hundred fourteen (314) out of 604 females were exiled, and 290 were released immediately (have no conviction, have a decision on release) or were granted early release (have both a verdict and release decisions, which are consecutive time period). Hence, almost half of them were released. The decisions on *chsirs'* release were made by the NKVD of the Armenian SSR/ USSR or the Special Assembly of the USSR NKVD. The latter made a decision on release if the decision on exile had already been made. These families were released from exile if the relatives of the family had members serving in the Red Army and if their dependency was proven. It is worth mentioning that in almost all studied cases they had soldiers. However, the NKVD often tried to prove through additional interrogations or references that none of the family was under the dependency of an army serviceman. In the case of women, a respectable age sometimes released the whole family or individuals from exile. Third, if the detainee managed to escape from exile, the Special Assembly often revoked the decision after finding the fugitive. And finally, the families, whose head of the family had been sentenced to imprisonment instead of execution, were sometimes released from exile.

The release or conditional charge of women hiding deserters was also common. In this case, the decision was made by the Military Tribunal. Nine out of 25 women were

convicted, and eight were released. Several circumstances contributed to their release. It was common for women to be released based on their physiological, social characteristics or age; i.e. older women were released due to their respectable age,⁹⁰ and younger women were released if they had infants. However, even such circumstances were not presented alone in the decision of release. They were usually guided by the circumstances recorded by the interrogations of NKVD, such as "low level of consciousness," "threat of domestic violence," "unfavorable situation for denunciation," etc.

The cases of real or threat to physical violence against women initiated by their husbands (sometimes by brothers-in-law) are also present in some cases. During the interrogations, the women reported that they had not informed the authorities about their husbands' desertion and their location under the threat of being killed by their husbands or their family members. While Fitzpatrick, a researcher of the everyday life of Soviet Russia, highlights that domestic violence against women was quite common in Soviet times,⁹¹ the cases of the repressed cannot be a basis for proving that reality, even though some of the women were released due to the existence of such a threat.⁹² These details recorded in the cases make it possible to consider that the "fact" was used for the release of women who were threatened by their husbands or who presented the situation that way.

Another common circumstance was the "inconvenient conditions" to inform the authorities about the desertions. In two of the studied cases, it is mentioned that the women intended to hand over their relatives to NKVD, but they did not manage to accomplish their intention due to the fear of leaving the house in the dark.⁹³

Unique cases of real denunciations had been recorded in the archival documents, due to which some of the women were relieved of responsibility. Two women were accused of hiding the same person in one of the cases, one of whom was released because the hideout of the deserters was revealed on the instructions of the latter's young daughter. The NKVD of Karabakhtar region⁹⁴ informed the central department of the NKVD of Armenian SSR about that through a separate document.⁹⁵ And finally, if sometimes the brother and wife of the deserter both figured in the case, only the brother was charged.

The status of a subordinate woman in the patriarchal system, the fact of raising infants as proof of labor incapacity has in some cases allowed women to escape repressions. This suggests that a woman was not considered a subject; she was not only subordinate to the family to make a decision, but the authorities also took into account her subordinate status. She was not considered the main perpetrator of the crime and responsible for that.

90 NAA, F. 1191, O. 7, D. 217 and O. 16, D. 540.

91 Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism. Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times. Soviet Russia in the 1930s*, 49.

92 NAA, F. 1191, O. 7, D. 2237 and D. 1152.

93 NAA, F. 1191, O. 7, D. 1945 and O. 7, D. 263.

94 Administrative region in the Armenian SSR that existed between 1937 and 1951. It was situated between the Martuni and Mikoyan (Eghegnadzor) regions. See: Tadevos Hakobyan et al., *Dictionary of Toponyms of Armenia and Neighboring Regions* (Yerevan: Publishing House of Yerevan University), 1986-2001. NAA, F. 1191, O. 7, D. 263.

95 These categories are *chsirs* and the women hiding deserters. Two hundred ten (210) released out of the 290 were Armenians, and 73 were Azerbaijanis among *chsirs*, and in the second case, 3 released out of the 8 were Armenians, and 5 were Azerbaijanis. Besides, the women who make anti-Soviet propaganda, from whom 42 out of 95 were Armenians, the predominant among the released were also Armenian women.

When looking at releases of women by their nationality, it should be emphasized that the releases prevail in the accusations of Armenian and Azerbaijani women. In other accusations, of which foreign women were charged, releases were rare, except for those convicted for espionage.

The deprivation of repressed women did not stop after their release. Even after that, state and social discrimination against them continued. They were subjected to social discrimination⁹⁶ and deprived of state privileges and property (apartment, party affiliation, etc.) as family members of the "enemies of the people." Nina Ponamaryova, mentioned above, stated in her letter that after returning from exile she was not allowed settling in the city; she was forced to move to the Aparan region.⁹⁷ Persecution and exclusion also affected her children. Ilic, referring to Frierson and Vilensky's "Children of the Gulag" differentiates two types of victims: "direct" victims of terror, who were repressed, and "indirect" ones, usually members of the violated family, who were not repressed, but suffered the consequences.⁹⁸ However, this study shows that indirect victims could also be targeted and later become direct victims of terror. They were often excluded from society, and at the same time later became victims of repression. Exactly because of these circumstances, many of the women applied for rehabilitation after their release, asking in their letters to remove "that shameful stigma" from them.⁹⁹

In sum, the rate of women's release was high during the war: the release rate was 10% higher in Tambov region than in previous years,¹⁰⁰ whereas in the Armenian SSR it was much higher- 40%. It is possible to conclude that during the war women were more frequently released than men because of (a) their political passiveness, (b) their reproductive function or inability to work, and (c) older age. Besides, according to ethnicity, the decision of Armenian and Azerbaijani women's release was made more often compared with other nationalities.

96 The article outlines the daily life of repressed and non-repressed children under the category of "enemy of the people," in which social discrimination was also present. See: Valentina Korenyuk and Andrey Suslov, "Military Everyday Life of Children of Repressed Parents during the Great Patriotic War (Based on materials from the Molotov region)," *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, no. 6(44) (2016): 44-52.

97 NAA, F. 1191, O.4, D. 648:

98 Cited by: Ilic, "Women's Experiences of 1937: Everyday Legacies of the Purges and the Great Terror in the Soviet Union," 13-43.

99 NAA, F. 1191, O.11, D. 1259, 1260 and O. 12, D. 1871, 1872, 1873:

100 Dyachkov, "Repressions between 1941 and 1945: Study Methodology and Factor of Military Socio-demographic development of Tambov region," 263.

CONCLUSION

Women's repressions pursued both economic and political goals during World War II. On the one hand, the significant reduction in the male labor force, on the other hand, the widespread suspicion of its own citizens, and especially foreigners, led to the second major wave of repressions towards women.

The study carried out in the framework of this article allows highlighting some patterns of purges on the entire territory of the USSR and a few features of the repressions in the Armenian SSR. The dynamics of women's repressions have increased compared to previous years in all observed regions between 1941 and 1945. However, as opposed to other regions, the number of purged women in Soviet Armenia was greater than that of the 1930s.

Along with a relatively higher rate of women's repressions in Soviet Armenia during the war, the rate of their release was much higher than the one in Tambov region. Also, unlike men, women were released more often. This circumstance could be conditioned both by physical features, such as old age, the existence of an infant and by some cultural features (the patriarchal approach of not considering a woman as a subject) and serving the state in good faith (in case of having a family member who received a medal in war).

The research also reveals the role of ethnicity/nationality in the repressions of the wartime. If the locals dominated among the repressed men during the war, it was the opposite in the case of women. Foreign women suffered disproportionately in relation to their weighing in the population. The number of Armenian and Azerbaijani women among the repressed was high at the expense of *chsirs* and women hiding/ not denouncing deserters/ bandits. Foreign women were mainly arrested in connection with other charges. Nationality also played a role in the release. More acquittals were granted to *chsirs* and those who hid/ not denounced the deserters, i.e. again to Armenian and Azerbaijani women, and among foreigners to those who were accused of espionage. Foreign women were alien twofold in Soviet Armenia (both politically and nationally), which made them more vulnerable.

What refers to women's accusations, the *chsirs'* cases stand out from the others, according to the nature of the investigation and conviction. In order to exile these women and children, NKVD contented with the circumstance of their family man's "betrayal of the homeland." In other allegations, which mainly targeted the wives of formerly repressed or victims of displacement due to the occupation of territories in the state of war, NKVD officers sought to attribute any direct crime to them. In that sense, the state of war paved the way for violence against "unreliable elements" in the 1940s. Especially the number of women arrested on charges of espionage, spreading false rumors, and pro-fascist propaganda soared compared to the pre-war years, and targeting *chsirs* and women hiding/ not denouncing deserters was possible only in wartime.

ANNEX

Annex 1. The accusation type by nationality and residence

Accusation type	Armenian			Azerbaijani			Russian			Kurd, Ezidi			German			Jew			Ukrainian			Pole			Italian	Os	Greek	Latvian	Turk		
	Residency in a village Arm. SSR	Residency in a city Arm. SSR	from abroad	Residency in a village Arm. SSR	Residency in a city Arm. SSR	from abroad	Residency in a village Arm. SSR	Residency in a city Arm. SSR	from abroad	Residency in a village Arm. SSR	Residency in a city Arm. SSR	from abroad	Residency in a village Arm. SSR	Residency in a city Arm. SSR	from abroad	Residency in a village Arm. SSR	Residency in a city Arm. SSR	from abroad	Residency in a village Arm. SSR	Residency in a city Arm. SSR	from abroad	Residency in a village Arm. SSR	Residency in a city Arm. SSR	from abroad	Residency in a city Arm. SSR	data missing	from abroad	from abroad			
chsr	365	56	-	168	1	-	5	6	-	3	-	5	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
hiding/ not denouncing deserters	10	3	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
hiding/ not denouncing bandits	1	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
anti-Soviet propaganda	14	28	-	3	-	-	7	25	-	-	-	3	2	1	1	3	-	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
member of illegal youth organisation	3	16	-	-	-	-	-	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
spy	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		
fleeing from workplace/ prison	1	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-		
fraud, composing bogus documents	2	7	2	-	-	-	-	4	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-		
anti-Soviet element	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-		
an insult to Stalin	2	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
other	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-		
overall	517	-	-	183	-	-	66	-	-	4	10	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7		
nationality by census (abs.)	1061997	130896	51464	20481	433	512	5496	240	4181	23	18	7	263	4181	23	18	7	263	4181	23	18	7	263	4181	23	18	7	263	4181	23	18
% of repressed women in population	0.04%	0.13%	0.12%	0.01%	2.30%	1.36%	0.12%	1.25%	0.04%	1.25%	0.04%	0.12%	1.25%	0.04%	1.25%	0.04%	0.12%	1.25%	0.04%	1.25%	0.04%	0.12%	1.25%	0.04%	0.30%	0.04%	4%	5.50%	5.50%		

Sources: 1939 All-Union census. The national composition of population by the republics of the USSR

Database of the victims of Soviet repressions in Armenia (1920-1953)

Annex 2. The state body responsible for conducting trials and the duration of the sentence of repressed women, by the type of accusation

Accusation type	State body responsible for conducting trials										data missing				
	Special Assembly of USSR NKVD/MGB (exile)				(Visiting session) Military Tribunal of the Arm. SSR / USSR NKVD / 45 Army of the Transcaucasian front				Special Assembly of USSR NKVD (imprisonment)			Judicial Collegium for Criminal Cases of the Supreme Court of Arm. SSR	Narsud of the Kirivakan region	Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of Arm. SSR	
number of charged	Khazakstan (5 years)	Novosibirsk (5 years)	5 years of exile (place not specified)	3-5 years of exile	1-5 years in labor camps	6-10 years in labor camps	3-10 years of imprisonment	2-7 years of imprisonment	1-5 years in labor camps	6-10 years in labor camps	1-5 years in labor camps	6-10 years in labor camps	-	-	-
chsr	17	3	294												
hiding/ not denouncing deserters		1			3										
hiding/ not denouncing bandits						5									
anti-Soviet propaganda				2	14	34	2	2	6	1	5	13		1	
member of illegal youth organisation				1	2	3			1	3	6	4			
spy			1			2			1	1					
fleeing from workplace/ prison					4	2	1								
fraud, composing bogus documents					6	4	1	1							1
anti-Soviet element						3	1								
an insult to Stalin					1				1			2			1
other				1							1	1		1	
overall			319		89				15	32			1		1

Source: Database of the victims of Soviet repressions in Armenia (1920-1953)

