

The Forgotten History

By Marika Abazadne

Some of the children deported to Gulags with their families were given less than an hour to collect their belongings and leave their homes. They were moved to uninhabited regions in Russia's far north, such as the Urals, Northern Siberia or the open steppe of Kazakhstan. During the journey into exile thousands of children died of cold and starvation.

Repression

Raisa Abramia-Mikadze was a sculptor from Georgia. She was married to Archil Mikadze, a Georgian Soviet Party Statesman. In 1937 Archil Mikadze was accused of “betraying his own state”, he was repressed and then sentenced to be shot. In the same year, Raisa Abramia Mikadze also was arrested for the reason of being married to “betrayer of his own state”. She was placed in special camp for repressed women-the camp of *Akmolinsk*. She managed to escape only after 8 years.



Photo 1: Raisa Abramia Mikadze
Source: Sovlab - Soviet Past Research
Laboratory

Just like Raisa, many Georgian women experienced the cruelty of Soviet Regime. The Soviet Past Research Laboratory managed to implement the project “Lost history: the memory of repressed women”. The project included publishing a book and hosting an exhibition. The book contains the notes Raisa took while being repressed and her memories and reflections from the later years of her life.

The Memory of Repressed Women

Reading through the memories of Raisa Abramia made me look at the stories of her and the repressed women from a different perspective. I would like to stress how she explains the emotions of repressed women as the feeling of being only “half human”. Raisa recalls howling as the only way of expressing her feelings inside her. She describes the repressed women as part of a common tragedy and herself as a person-ghost, who recalls her story as if it was some unknown character from some book. While reading her memories I found it hard to escape the heavy aura, which was

seemingly following the lives of the repressed women. There are so many things she and the other “wives” like her have gone through. Crying, sobbing and screaming, seemingly were the only things left to be done by the repressed women.

Raisa also explains that silence was one of the strongest weapons of expressing emotions. She admired the gentle and feminine women, who were surprisingly brave and humiliated their perpetrators with their silence and firm willpower. The cruelty of their perpetrators made them even stronger and steadier.

Fragment from the Notes of Raisa Abramia Mikadze from the Year 1937, Stories Worth to be Told

“It has been long time I wanted to tell my story to my children and close ones. Maybe somehow this story will be useful for them. But why do I find it so hard to tell? I have absolutely no ambition of presenting myself as a writer, thus this probably should be making my objective to share the story much simpler.

When very seldomly I tell my story, every time the feelings appear and these feelings lead me to the thoughts that all these stories did not happen in my life, seems like I am telling of some unknown, half forgotten human, the memories appearing slowly from the mist” and eventually, everything looked like a horror dream.

November 20th, 1937, early morning. I could hear the creaking of the cell door. The guard opened this door and pushed me in ...”¹

The daughter of Raisa Abramia Mikadze, Gina Mikadze-Kalatozishvili recalls the absence of her mother in her memory.

“I remember some men at my house. My father was hugging me, he was wearing a white shirt. When mom was being taken to exile, there were wooden beds, where all the women were lying like fish. Horrible living conditions, screaming, crying ...

Mom ripped off a piece of her own chemise and with a pencil, she wrote that she was taken to exile there, she also wrote down the address of Tbilisi and that she was asking whoever would find it, to send it. Then she put this piece of cloth in a matchbox and left it to somebody on the station. We received the letter.

¹ Khaliani, Tatia: Oppressed women, published on 8 March 2013, <http://www.liberali.ge/ge/liberali/articles/114227/>

I remember how we opened the map and looked for that place where she was. I remember how I was taken to Siberia to my mother, we had 3 hours to see her. But this strange woman was disturbing, I did not know what she wanted from me.

I remember when we were coming back, they did not show us mom. They all were far, in a distant separated place, but I put my hand through the fence, and I remember how these women rushed at my hand, they caressed my hand and cried...”

In 2008, Heinrich Böll Foundation published the book “Algerian prisoners portraits from the history of Stalinism” which consists of the memories of the children of those repressed during the years of 1936-38 in the camp of Akmolinsk, only for the reason of being married to “traitors” of the own land.

At some points of their lives all of them did hear the cracking sound of the cage door opened by the soviet soldier and since then eventually, everything looked like a horror dream.

Sources:

Khaliani, Tatia: Oppressed women, published on 8 March 2013,
<http://www.liberali.ge/ge/liberali/articles/114227/>

Sovlab – Soviet Past Research Laboratory
<http://sovlab.ge/en>