

THE GULAG CAMP “ALZHIR”: MEMORIALIZATION PRACTICES

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Abstract

On the territory of Gulag forced labor camps there was a female camp in the village of Akmola region (Kazakhstan) – ALZHIR (1937-1953). This camp was created to imprison women that were wives, daughters, mothers and sisters of political prisoners of the Soviet Union. Arrested based only on kinship these women were condemned for approximately 8 years. Nowadays there is a museum and memorial complex "ALZHIR", which was opened to commemorate the story of the female camp and its women. The main significance of this thesis is that for the first time it analyzes the history of the camp and its museum. By doing so, this research investigates how these women have been remembered, and what silenced or un-silenced strategies have occurred since the camp was closed till nowadays. The main result of this research shows that frames of commemorative practices of the museum have been based on political power relations that have controlled the interpretation of the history of the camp "ALZHIR".

Declaration of original research and the word count

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

I further declare that the following word count for this thesis are accurate:

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Signed Satymbekova Raikhan

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This thesis is dedicated to the women of "ALZHIR".

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Introduction

On a sunny afternoon in the village of Malinovka, I met a woman who was my father's old colleague. She seemed very busy serving customers in her food store. She started telling her story of living in the village. This is what I remember the most from her words: "In my childhood, I used to swim in the lake with my friends. When diving, we often found bones at the bottom of the lake. Villagers told that those were bones of women that were in the female camp that was in our village. Once, one of my friends found a human skull..." This story astounded me so much that I wanted to learn more about this female camp and its prisoners. I wanted to study how these women were remembered. This is how I started my research.

During the Stalinist regime, in the first part of the 20th century, the NKVD (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs) sentenced political oppositionists that were regarded as a threat by the Soviet state. The oppositionists were called "betrayers of the motherland" and "enemies of the people". Forced labor camps that were constructed on the whole territory of the Soviet Union composed the Gulag archipelago. The wives, daughters and sisters of political oppositionists were also considered as "enemies" for having kinship with them. On the territory of the former Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic there was a forced female labor camp which was called 26th labor village (1938-1953), but female prisoners called it "ALZHIR" (Akmolinskii Lager Zhen Izmennikov Rodiny) – Akmola Camp for the Wives of Traitors of the Motherland. It was different from the rest of the camps because it imprisoned only women. Women were sent there from different parts of the Soviet Union with different nationalities and backgrounds.

Today, on the same ground where this camp was situated there is a museum and memorial complex of the "victims of political repression and totalitarianism 'ALZHIR'". Even though the museum represents important information about the biographies of

imprisoned women that mostly consist of basic data on names, dates of birth, nationalities, and places of birth, there is not enough attention to the silenced and un-silenced personal narratives of the victims and survivors, and the ways of their remembrance.

Therefore, this research is aimed at constructing gendered memories of female victims of “ALZHIR” by analyzing the reasons and means of changed narratives in memorialization of the camp controlled by the power relations of different actors. It intends to address the main research question: How has the political shift in post-Soviet Kazakhstan modified a space to un-silence the narratives of women’s political persecution during the era of Stalinist governance? It also looks at who was involved in the process of memorialization, and what kinds of strategies are there to deal with the “dangerous memories” of the camp.

To position these questions in the theoretical framework, I refer to the studies of Shcherbakova (2015) and Kurvet-Käosaar (2013) on the gendered narratives and silenced sexual violence of the Gulag camps women, and to the research of Musagaliyeva (2016) on the memorialization frames of the “ALZHIR” camp and its survivors. My research, however, focuses around the strategies of the memorialization processes of different actors.

Chapter Outline

To address the main argument and the central questions of the research the thesis is divided into chapters consisting of the theoretical basis and analytical research that explains the reasons of changing memories of “ALZHIR”. Chapter 1 reviews the literature that maps the historiography of the research that was previously done on the camp. It is divided into several sections that represent a chronological history of the research on the un/silenced memories of Gulag camps and “ALZHIR” in particular.

Chapter 2 presents the oral history methodology that is taken as a basis of analytical research. The chapter explains the importance and relevance of oral history in examining the

memories of the camp that are based on oral testimonies and memoirs. Chapter 3 outlines the history of the camp in order to describe the background of the analytical research that follows in the next chapter. Chapter 4 and 5 are the main analytical chapters that examine memorialization processes of the female camp “ALZHIR”, and value them according to memorialization sites and strategies that are used by different actors as survivors, Ivan Ivanovich Sharf and the state. Moreover, they present the reasons of positioning the memorialization of the camp “ALZHIR” under the national history framework. Chapter 6 summarizes the research and presents the results derived from the analytical chapters 4 and 5. It also demonstrates further implications that can be suggested for future research of this untapped area of investigation.

Chapter 1

Women in the Gulag camps

To analyze the processes of un/silencing of the women's memories of the female camp "ALZHIR", it is crucial to map the historiography of research of the camp. Before starting the analysis of research of "ALZHIR" it is important to consider the fact that "ALZHIR" was the part of large Gulag system (Musagaliyeva, 2016a). That leads us to the analysis of women in Gulag. Considering broad historical researches that have been conducted in this field, I categorize this chapter into several sections in chronological order.

The first section "Before the collapse" describes the first studies on women in Gulag camps. It includes the first mentions of women's image in Gulag camps during the Soviet regime, which were mainly described by Solzhenitsyn. In the second section, "During/After the collapse", I investigate the institutional activities of "Memorial", the non-governmental organization ("From the history of 'Memorial,'" 2017) in preserving the memoirs of the Gulag women during and after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Individual studies of women in the Gulag are analyzed in the third section, "New era of research outside Russia", where I analyze the first foreign scholarly efforts in addressing the critical investigation of silencing practices in female memoirs. The next section, "ALZHIR", demonstrates the historiography of "ALZHIR" from the earliest studies and the analyses of un/silenced narratives that have been studied lately. I will finish arguing that this research is pioneering, as it connects women's memories and memorialization practices in a field where this is not the practice.

Before the collapse

Before the collapse of the Soviet Union due to political restrictions and censorship a very limited number of scholars, namely Albrecht (1939); Kravchenko (1946); Buber-

Neumann (1949); Solzhenitsyn (1973) and Avtorkhanov (1976)¹ only by leaving the territory of the Soviet Union managed to conduct research on the history of Gulag camps and the lives of prisoners. According to Shcherbakova (2015) their analyses focused only on the description of the Gulag system and the conditions of prisoners, based on the testimonies of the survivors. Although their contribution into the process of construction of memory of Gulag and its victims were of great importance, the issue of women in the Gulag camps was still silenced under the large picture of the Gulag prisoners, as those were the stories of men.

Gulag Archipelago

Solzhenitsyn's research *Gulag Archipelago* (1973) – became fundamental in constructing the image of women in Gulag camps and making their fates widely known. Apart from analyzing the history of Gulag camps, the legal and political system of the government, and the narratives of prisoners and survivors, Solzhenitsyn was the first to write a chapter as part of *Gulag Archipelago* about women in Gulag camps called “Women in Camp” (*Zhenshina v lagere*). It describes the atrocious conditions in which women from different Gulag camps were forced to live.² Based on his personal experience, and the experiences of survived women he interviewed, he opened up a space to the scandalous realities of women in camps who were raped, harassed, gave birth to children, and then were deprived of them: “In the camp bath the naked women were examined like merchandise” (Solzhenitsyn 1973, p.229); “After the end of the breast-feeding period the mothers are no longer allowed to visit their babies...” (p.242).

However, I argue that Solzhenitsyn's analysis of women in the Gulag camps was based on a conservative, instrumentalized approach. First, he claimed that in the sense of survival, women faced less difficulties than men, because they could use their bodies to

¹ See Shcherbakova. (2015). *Gulag Memory Map: Problems and Gaps*. Soclabo.org. Retrieved 24 January 2017, from <http://www.soclabo.org/index.php/laboratorium/article/view/512/1310> who mapped a historiography of Gulag memory.

² In many instances Solzhenitsyn did not indicate the identities of women.

survive. According to his description, women were able to find solutions through having “deals” with the camp officers and inmates, who provided them with privileges, such as food and protection in exchange for forced sexual intercourse: “And with that ‘sexual hatred’ with which certain of the last-leggers looked on those women in camp who had not descended to pickings from the slops, it was natural to reason that it was easier for women in camp, since they could get along on a lesser ration, and had a way to avoid starvation and remain alive” (p.230). Second, women that were ChS (ChS or ChSIR – Chlen Semiy Ismennika Rodiny) family members of traitors of the motherland were not separately analyzed by Solzhenitsyn, although he frequently mentioned them: “Zoya Yakusheva was imprisoned as a ChS – Family Member – because of her husband, and here’s how it went with her. After three years, her husband was liberated as an important specialist, but he did not make his wife’s release an obligatory condition of his own. And she had to drag out her *eight* full years because of him” (p.238).

Therefore, according to Solzhenitsyn: a) Gulag camps did not target women separately from men, so female victims and their interviews were reviewed as part of a large Gulag picture; b) women had more opportunities to survive, regardless of being violated. Moreover, the lack of separate analysis on the “Wives of Traitors of the Motherland” (not to mention “ALZHIR” camp) to a greater extent cemented the image of Gulag women as marginalized and an understudied research question in the history of the Gulag. Thus, despite a broad contribution on the memorialization of the stories of prisoners of Gulag camps, Solzhenitsyn instrumentalized and tabooed the image of women in Gulag camps, and marginalized their presence in its history.

During/After the collapse

Memorial

Only after the Soviet collapse did the history of women in Gulag camps begin to be considered as a separate field for a new research inside the former Soviet Union. Apparently, not only many sources as archival documents have become available for broader academic audience, but also many survivors started to “speak” about personal experiences, and share personal journals, diaries and memoirs: “These journals were not intended for publication, but sometimes they turned into a coherent life story. In fear of repression, some women wrote their memoirs under pen names. After the end of the Soviet regime, the publication and public discussion of previously unknown documents about political repression prompted people to tell their stories” (Shapovalov, 2003, p. 1). This sudden mass influx of materials was supported in virtue of the active work of the historical organization, “Memorial”. In 1987, just before the Soviet collapse, for the first time after more than two decades of censorship prohibition “Memorial” started collecting archival materials and all evidences of the era of terror that “took the lives of millions of citizens and crippled the fate of tens of millions of others” (“From the history of ‘Memorial,’” 2017).

Brief history of ‘Memorial’

At the beginning of perestroika, unofficial civil activities as starting NGOs were no longer considered illegal, so many youth clubs, organizations, and educational communities began to appear without any fear of being prosecuted (“From the history of ‘Memorial,’” 2017). “Democratic perestroika” was opened as a section of one of these historical-educational clubs, which was driven by the idea of the XXII Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) to erect a monument in Moscow to honor the victims of Stalinist repressions.³ Then, this idea turned into a project of a memorial complex that

³ A monument/memorial for the victims of political repressions of Gulag – Solovetsky stone was established in Lyubanka Square in 1990. A stone was brought from Solovetsky island where prisoners were arrested in Solovetsky forced labor camp. (“Solovetsky Stone On Lubyanka Square In Moscow Received The Status Of Sights. Соловецкий Камень На Лубянской Площади Москвы Получил Статус Достопримечательности - ИА REGNUM”).

included museums, archives, and libraries preserving the memories and evidences of Stalinist repressions. This project separated from the “Democratic perestroika”, and called itself “Memorial”, and started from the simple action of informing society by collecting signatures from the people to create a memorial complex in Moscow (“From the history of ‘Memorial,’” 2017).

Although the “Memorial” started its activities from Moscow, other cities supported this idea and various memorial activities spread all over the whole territory of the Soviet region (“From the history of ‘Memorial,’” 2017). Even though, after collecting the required number of signatures, and receiving support from the government on the idea of erecting a monument, the “Memorial” group posed a question on the reliability of the government as far as facing the past actions is concerned. With a cast of mistrust, the “Memorial” considered the idea of documenting the past and perpetuating the memories of the victims of repressions to be not the government’s, but their own responsibility. Moving beyond the single idea of erecting the monument, the “Memorial” raised the significance of not only constructing monuments, but also preserving the memories. Thus, volunteers from different regions began to collect data on repression through conducting oral history surveys and gathering questionnaires from the families and relatives of survivors (“From the history of ‘Memorial,’” 2017). Also, one of the objectives of the “Memorial” became the identification of places of mass executions and camp cemeteries by interviewing local population and expeditions. Overall, the citizens of the collapsed Soviet Union wanted the state to admit its historical responsibility before its citizens. Thus, operating as independent non-governmental organization, its agents tried to un-silence the memories of victims of the Gulag all over the state.

However, this organization has been continuously targeted by governmental control for its active attempts to un-silence the memories of Gulag. For example, in 2016 after the

“Memorial” published the list of the NKVD officers, which became available to the public, Russian’s memory politics was attacked more than ever: “Memorial has now been declared a “foreign agent” by the Russian state – a label that almost always results in suspending of operations. But even if it were able to continue its fight, it would not be enough. To make a real dent in this ever-thickening wall of silence will take participation from the entire society” (Tabarovsky, 2016). Even though, the “Memorial” published the whole list of perpetrators of the killings in the Gulag camps, many researchers claim that Russia “never decisively dealt with the issue of guilt and innocence” (Tabarovksy, 2016). Thus, the attempts of organization in making state admit its historical crime were limited to the disclosure of memoirs of victims, the list of their perpetrators, and the establishment of museums and archival centers throughout not only the Russian Federation, but also in Ukraine, Belgium, Germany, France, Italy and the Czech Republic (“From the history of ‘Memorial,’” 2017).

Through the process of documentation of the Gulag’s historical memory, this archival organization have been playing an important role in gathering all types of materials and making such an enormous quantity of data available to the public for the first time.

“Memorial” published fundamental directories of the system of forced labor camps (1998), of the NKVD perpetrators between 1934-1941 (1999), presented a list of 1 million 340 thousand names of victims of political repressions of the Gulag in the CD format (2004), published the list of security agents between 1941-1954 (2010) etc. (“From the history of ‘Memorial,’” 2017). Among these materials the largest amount of archival materials on women in the Gulag camps particularly started to be collected after the collapse, where many women brought their personal written materials to “Memorial”: “Many, who for some reason did not want to write about their experiences, readily spoke with Memorial interviewers” (Shapovalov, 2003, p. 2). Moreover, “Memorial” has established cooperation with the museum and memorial complex “ALZHIR”, which became indispensable in the processes of

collective data gathering on women that were in “ALZHIR”. As a result of cooperation, they created a book with the names of female prisoners of “ALZHIR”.

Although a large amount of materials as women’s memoirs and letters were uncovered by the “Memorial”, they were not critically analyzed. So, their task was documentation of their memoirs in the form of collecting and listing the main information about their names and dates of birth in a memory book called “Female Victims of “ALZHIR” (2001). Thus, by immediately opening the access and un-silencing the materials about certain women in the Gulag that have been concealed for decades, “Memorial” as a group disregarded the fact that the materials themselves need to be carefully analyzed on the issues of un/silencing.

New era of research outside Russia

Although after the Soviet system collapsed, many sources have become available for broader academic audience, women’s narratives still require to be investigated by academic scholars. Only within the last decade have international historians such as Shapovalov (2003), Gheith and Jolluck (2010) started to investigate women’s narratives in the Gulag camps. They collected different women’s narratives either by interviewing them or their children. Women’s narratives are presented along with the official documents, so they are remembered as survivors of the Gulag. However, many sources were still unavailable, and potential reasons for this might be that women were not targeted specifically by researchers: “Rather, women were *among* the enemies of the state, common criminals, and class enemies” (Shapovalov, 2003, p. 7).

One of the prominent researchers to analyze women’s narratives in the Gulag was Shcherbakova, who analyzed women’s lives in the Gulag camps and their memoirs. On the one hand, she has described the evolution of publications about Gulag camps and personal

stories of its inmates starting from 1920 till post-Soviet period (Shcherbakova, 2015).

Shcherbakova explained that after Stalin's death, the memoirs of those who were repressed became available to a certain extent, but the publications were still under control:

Memoirs about the Gulag published in the Soviet Union during the period of thaw can be literally counted on the fingers, and they are imbued with the spirit of "restoring Leninist norms." Which meant the memoirs published under strict control contained information that the authorities wanted the people to know, rather the narratives of survivors. After the removal of Khrushchev in 1964, there was no hope for publication; Memories were written "on the table," mainly based on relatives and children's stories. They wrote to tell about what had to be experienced (Shcherbakova, 2015).

Thus, her contribution became fundamental, as she was one of the firsts to address the reasons of un/silencing practices in the memoirs of women in the Gulag camps.

On the other hand, her focus on analyzing personal the narratives of Gulag prisoners and their families is a basis for my research methodology: "Documents depicting personal experiences of Gulag prisoners (diaries, correspondence, and memoirs) played an important role in disseminating information about the Soviet labor camps from the very beginning of their existence" (Shcherbakova, 2015). Therefore, in my research I also refer mostly to the memoirs and letters of survivors of the camp "ALZHIR". As a historian of women's narratives in the Gulag, she importantly highlights that memoirs that endured are often homogenized in terms of gender, and do not describe women separately from men.

According to her analysis of many memoirs of Gulag inmates, most often those memoirs were created by the intelligentsia, and surprisingly among them there are more memoirs written by women than by men. She claimed that the former female prisoners constantly communicated with each other after their release creating an iconic narrative, in this way they could preserve their memories about the camp experiences. Moreover, being able to analyze a great number of letters and documents, Shcherbakova admits that doing research on this field is a process that requires thorough analysis which has not been done on a comprehensive level: "There is still a serious lack of in-depth analysis of the existing personal documents of

that period, of what and how people remembered” (2015). Thus, she problematized that the memories of Gulag camp experiences and canonization processes are marginalized, intending that certain strategies were used in memorialization processes.

Another author that analyzed women’s narratives during the Soviet repressions was Kurvet-Käosaar (2006). She focused specifically on women’s deportation narratives in the Baltic region under the Gulag regime. Her analysis diverges from Shcherbakova’s analysis, because in the course of analysis of their narratives, she focused especially on the concept of traumatic experiences, unlike Shcherbakova on the documentation. Her research is important to consider in the analysis of women’s memories of Gulag camp experiences, as she addressed the issue of tabooed topics such as sexual violence that women in the Gulag regime were subjected to: “Sexual violence against women as a repressive measure or as part of war activities has been viewed as serving the purposes of ethnic cleansing” (Kurvet-Käosaar, 2006).

All the researchers mentioned above have studied female memories of Gulag camps in general, without focusing on a particular camp, and not “ALZHIR”, which is specific because it was a unique camp in the Gulag system that imprisoned only women. Therefore, the main challenge in mapping the literature review on the research of “ALZHIR” camp is the gap between memorialization of women in the Gulag and women in “ALZHIR”.

However, I do not claim that the camp was not mentioned in any sources. Many memoirs of women that were in different Gulag camps indicated the name of “ALZHIR” camp. This can be explained by the circulation of prisoners from one camp to another, specifically those who were convicted under Article 58 as political criminals (Dulatbekov, 2012, p.475). Thus, there is a separate research that has been done on women in the Gulag and on women in “ALZHIR” camp, where the latter is more specific and detailed as it investigates one particular camp only. Therefore my research is focusing on agents and frames of

memorialization of a space to overcome the problems of lack of documentation and canonized narrative frames.

Research on “ALZHIR” in Kazakhstan

Most of the study of the camp “ALZHIR” is based on the joint study of KarLag (Karagandy Lager) camp, for the reason that “ALZHIR” was part of KarLag – the largest Gulag camp on the territory of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic (Dulatbekov, 2012). Therefore, the analysis of the research of “ALZHIR” started from the research of KarLag. One of the first articles on the study of KarLag was published in 1989 in the newspaper “Kazakhstanskaya Pravda” (Kazakhstan’s truth), where the researcher Dick (1989) wrote about the history of the camp based on the conversations with survivors. The same year a member of the historical-educational society, Kuznetsova (1989) published several articles about political repressions named “Memory Memorial” in the newspaper “Industrialnaya Karaganda” (Industrial Karagandy). Although these articles contained general information about the camps, the memories and personal letters/memoirs of its inmates they based on were significant in opening the space for other survivors. They began sending their memoirs to newspaper publications, and many of them mentioned the experience in “ALZHIR”: memoirs of Ginsburg, Olitskaya, Surovtsevaya, Adamova, Volovich, Voitolovskaya, Stepanova-Kluchnikova (Musagaliyeva, 2016a). However, “ALZHIR” was still analyzed as part of KarLag system, and women’s narratives were not considered to be studied separately.

After 1991, conducting the research on political repressions became relatively accessible, for the reason of Kazakhstan’s independence from the Soviet Union. In 1994, Tasybekov was one of the first scholars to collect the memoirs of women of “ALZHIR” separately from KarLag in the book “Zhan dauysy. ALZHIR archipelago” (1994). The book included memoirs of different women that were imprisoned there. They spoke and wrote about their husbands’ arrests, their own imprisonments, the fates of their children that were

taken to orphanages, and their mental conditions. It was described in the framework of suffering and grief – continuous feelings which these women were living with. It also covered the information about the male workers of that camp. Thus, this book became important in founding the first collection of memoirs and data on prisoners and commanders of “ALZHIR” – the data that was missing in official documents. However, this research was limited to the collection of materials of “ALZHIR” without the analyzing the frames of the narratives of women. Similarly, Sakharov public organization or center (1990) created online databases of memoirs of Gulag inmates in 1994 which also contained many memoirs and personal diaries of women that were in “ALZHIR”.

The above-mentioned documentation processes were accelerated by the mid-90s, and after 1997 when the President of Kazakhstan Nazarbayev declared 31st of May to be the Day of Remembrance of Victims of Political Repression in Kazakhstan. This event stimulated a deeper interest in the area of political repressions. For example, a scholar Kukushkina (2002) used “ALZHIR” as the subject of her research, focusing on the system of this particular labor camp and the conditions of imprisoned women. However, the lack of analysis of frames of the narratives of women was still absent in the research of “ALZHIR” camp, on the grounds that the common research of “ALZHIR” was often presented in the form of collections of memoirs and data. For instance, in 2002 as a result of collaboration by “Memorial” and the association of the victims of political repressions of Kazakhstan, a book entitled “Uznitsy ALZHIRa” (Victims of “ALZHIR”) with the list of victims of “ALZHIR” was published. According to Kazakh historian Musagaliyeva (2016a) giving statistics the number of victims of “ALZHIR” reached 18 000, but at the time of publication of the list (2002) only 8000 names had been found by Sakharov center and the museum “ALZHIR”. This highlights the importance of continuous research on this topic with the special investigation of the contents of materials presented in the archives. Also, some of the first foreigners that conducted

research on “ALZHIR” were Hedeler and Stark (2008) from Bonn University, who mainly studied KarLag camp system and the memoirs of its prisoners which also covered the memoirs of inmates of the camp “ALZHIR”, but women’s narratives were missing.

All abovementioned researches either demonstrate the collections of materials of KarLag camp that in some way mentioned the memoirs of inmates of “ALZHIR” or create separate collections of memoirs of “ALZHIR” inmates. Even though these materials were the first collections of memoirs to be published, they have not addressed the analyses of the materials themselves. However, in 2016 a historian, Musagaliyeva, presented the analysis of the narratives of “ALZHIR” camp, which is analyzed in the next section. Moreover, she investigated the scholarly works that have been written on “ALZHIR” camp, and mapped a brief historiography of “ALZHIR” that I have referred to several times in the aforementioned review. However, in my analysis I analyze the frames and strategies of memorialization of “ALZHIR”.

Revisionist story

According to Musagaliyeva (2016a), the State archives of Astana (About the Archives, 2017), opened in 1995 by the order of the Akmola Regional Administration, preserves the archival documents of the deputy of the head of “ALZHIR” camp (1941-1943) Yuzipenko, who was also the head of Akmola department of KarLag camp (1940-1941). In the archival documents Yuzipenko’s name is indicated as “the deputy of the head of “ALZHIR” camp or N26 point between 1934 and 1948”. Archival materials also contain Yuzipenko’s memoirs, his letter from/to women that were in “ALZHIR”, and reports to parties, prosecution offices, and the Soviet organs. To understand what the cause of the large amount of memoirs written by the commander of “ALZHIR” was, Musagaliyeva contrasted the statements of Yuzipenko vs. survivors, to analyze the silenced narratives.

The fact of the matter is that many memoirs in “Kazakhstnaskaya Pravda” (2017) described terrifying conditions that women in “ALZHIR” were forced to live in. However, Yuzipenko’s name was often seen as criticizing and attacking those statements, claiming they were false. In his memoirs, now kept in special archives, Yuzipenko described the women’s conditions in the camp as pleasant, saying they worked for 8 hours and were able to see their children. By criticizing Solzhenitsyn, he said that those camps were never connected with repressions, and even called the KarLag camp a resort in comparison with other camps. Also, in his attempts to justify himself, he claimed that he continued communicating with female inmates after the camp was closed, but did not show the letters, saying that they were given to KarLag camp museum (Musagaliyeva, 2016a). In Tasybekov’s (1994) book, there were words of survivor Tinalina, saying: “Those days he looked at us as prisoners, but now when our names are exonerated, we will not forgive him. If we forgive him, then we forget our past. During WWII he was awarded different medals, but we were behind the bars. And now he tries to justify himself!” (Musagaliyeva, 2016a) Thus, he has been constantly critiqued for his attempts in justifying his name, by survivors whose memories were contrasted by the memories of the commander of the camp. This forms a dichotomy of true or false framework.

Musagaliyeva also analyzed the memoirs of women of “ALZHIR” and discovered that in 1989 Yuzipenko was also present at the first meeting of survivors organized by Sharf.⁴ Many survivors were disturbed by his presence. Those women rebutted Yuzipenko’s claims of communication with them, and debated that he wrote the letters: “However, his archival documents are still in the Astana archival center, and demand further investigation” (Musagaliyeva, 2016a). Thus, Musagaliyeva was the first one to position the question of dichotomy of official and survivor’s narratives, and established a solid basis for further research on other narratives that have not been yet investigated.

⁴ See Chapter 4, Section 4.1 Chronology of Memorialization.

This literature review revealed several gaps in uncovering, describing and analyzing memories of women in Gulag camps. Although Solzhenitsyn described Gulag women's images and their camp lives, he instrumentalized and marginalized them, without considering their roles in Gulag history separately from men. "Memorial" presented women's narratives by uncovering their memoirs and letters. On the other hand, the organization has not analyzed these materials in detail on practices of un/silencing, and true and false paradigms in their memoirs. Hence, "Memorial" opened the access to the women's narratives, but left their analyses to individual researchers, whose studies were reviewed in the section of "New Era of Research outside Russia". Individual scholars as Shcherbakova and Kurvet-Käosaar were significant in establishing the primary analyses of memoirs of women in the Gulag, and addressed the issues such as women's images in the memorization of Gulag and the silenced and un-silenced practices in their commemoration.

However, what has been missing in this large picture of researches on women in the Gulag is the research on women in "ALZHIR" and the chronological history of the camp itself. In the analysis of scholarly studies that were conducted on women in "ALZHIR" many analyzed it as part of KarLag camp system. Although, Musagaliyeva (2016a) has initiated an interesting analysis of different layers of memories of official and survivor's narratives, the critical analysis of the materials in questioning different strategies of memorialization still demands an expansion. Despite the fact that the list of names and the collections of memoirs of inmates of "ALZHIR" is increasing every year, the female narratives of prisoners and survivors still have not been analyzed enough: "The closing of the Gulag happened only 50 years ago. However, the authorities of modern Kazakhstan not only did not open the way for de-Stalinization, but the study of the history of Stalinist repression remained to be the fate of only enthusiasts" (Assautai, 2010).

Thus, my aim in this research is to fill the gaps that occurred in analyzing the women's narratives in memorialization practices of the "ALZHIR" camp. Therefore, tracing the oral history methodology used in studying the Gulag memories, in the next chapter I will indicate the relevance of this particular approach in studying the women's memories of the Gulag.

Chapter 2 Methodology

This chapter analyzes the oral history methodology that is used as a basis of my research. I explain the relevance of this methodology by analyzing its implementation in the research of memorialization of other Gulag camps. I also share my experience and limits in conducting a research on particular topic.

Often, the general research on the Gulag camps is based on sources as official archival documents, memoirs, objects and spaces such as buildings, although many scholars use the first two as primary materials. Official documents are the main materials that show the official structure of the system and the regulations of different regions that followed the commands from Moscow. Even if these official documents are evaluated by historians as the source to dismantle how each Gulag camp interpreted and followed the commands from above, they cannot uncover narratives of inmates. Hence, prisoners' memoirs as diaries, personal journals, notes and letters evidence subjective experiences of different Gulag camps, and demonstrate how stories were constructed: "Things from above always look quite different than things from official documents. The subjective experience of memoirs is also critical to getting some sense of how Gulag prisoners lived in (and in the case of memoirists, survived) the camps" (Barnes, 2011, p.4). This way we see that despite the same narratives, the archival materials can convey different frameworks. For example, previously we have seen two conflicting narratives of survivors and the commander that were both private materials, but were different in their frameworks. Although it should not affect the significance of materials for researchers, some still question the reliability of memoirs due to their time difference from official archival documents. The main question that some scholars (Barnes, 2011; Figes, 2007; McGowan, 2009) have is whether memoirs can be used as the same valid historical source as official administrative documents. For instance, McGowan (2009) argues that the memory is something not fixed and "corrodes our trust in what we

know and how we know it” (2009). Whereas, Figes (2007) underlines the difference between “true memories and received or imagined ones” (p.633-634). On the one hand, this problem is quite common among historians, as memoirs not always were written at the same time with the historical events they are connected to. Therefore, there is a doubt on the factual truth that is problematic in using the oral history.

On the other hand, as Barnes (2011) argued: “No memoir is a priori unusable” (p.4), so that apart from personal reflections of authors of the memoirs that have been influenced by the political, religious or social concerns of that times, there is always a “testimony” present in each memoir that preserves past narratives and memories. Bearing in mind the voices of its authors, multiple sources can be used by applying critical analysis of their narratives. For example, primary sources of Gulag history like Solzhenitsyn’s (1973) research was guided not only by oral testimonies and official archival documents but also used memoirs and diaries. Getty (1985) criticized the “narrow” focus only on the testimonies, saying that the original memoirs of prisoners describe what the life in camps was like, basically naming the main reason why they are used (p.211). Analyzing both letters and documents in oral history’s methodology, Geith and Jolluck (2011) also claim that both types of sources are important to “(re)construct a fuller picture of the workings and effects of the Gulag” (p.8). Though, they have provided interesting argument in support of claims of Khubova, Ivankiev, and Sharova (1992) that documents are weighed as reliable sources, rather than memoirs: “It is sometimes said, that is almost true, that ‘for us [Russians] the documents are subjective, and the only thing which might be objective are the memories” (Geith and Jolluck, 2011, p.8). Therefore, in conducting my research on “ALZHIR” camp, I mostly refer to memoirs and letters of survivors as authentic documents. However, I also analyze the installations, memorials, and monument as another source to uncover women’s narratives. Indeed, buildings and archival objects also play important role in oral history, as they are visual

memories of the Gulag. Nowadays the small number of memorial complexes and museums on the territory of post-Soviet space, as well as buildings that memorialize Gulag history either have been under state attacks of closing down (Perm-36, Museum of history of political repressions in Almaty), or not being studied enough as a source in oral history (Etkind, 2004; Rudolph, 2011; Young, 2015). For example, Rudolph (2011) argues that often archival objects in museums are studied as three-dimensional parts of official documents, and it is common that those objects are analyzed according to their styles, but their historical and biographic features are omitted or put aside. However, I argue that each archival object, either memorial complex or a piece of fabric, conveys significant historical narratives.

Reliability of the memory

As Portelli (1992) explains, the accuracy of the memory in the stories of prisoners depends on their narrators' interests and concerns. Each interview that has ever been conducted with survivors is itself a construction. Narratives that have been told by the Gulag survivors or that will be told by their descendants are based on each individuals' identity, so there is no "right" or "wrong", "true" or "false" story, but different realities, layers of narratives. While analyzing specific stories of Gulag prisoners, many historians contrast different narratives as official documents, memoirs and someone's accounts of that person. For example, when Shapovalov (2003) writes about twenty women that were prisoners in different Gulag camps, she presents their biographies, their memoirs, official documents and others' accounts of those women. Each story has different subject, but there is often the comparison between official and personal narratives. Personal narratives are not always affected by single internal account, but can also be inflicted by collective incorporated memory. Due to the strong feeling of collective society in the Soviet Union (after 1988), most of the stories were intertwined, so that the researcher of a particular memoir would face the

challenge of using many stories within the one. Adler (2002) that has done a number of interviews with survived Gulag women refers to the incorporated memory as to be “diligently and critically” examined in each personal story. Moreover, she has made an important point about one of the main issues that oral history deals with – the issue of time. Unlike official documents, many memoirs were published several decades after (during the Khrushchev Thaw) the majority of Gulag camps were closed. While the general picture of the whole event was still in the minds of many survivors, problems in memorialization started to appear. As a result, many memoirs and stories were mediated by the self-constructed stories: “Furthermore, events are not always recalled as they really happened, but rather as individuals and the groups wished them to be. Memory is sometimes not far from mythology” (Adler, 2002, p.41). Therefore, in my interviews, I handled this problem by simply analyzing several potential frames that the narratives could have had.

Silencing/un-silencing

According to many scholars, the issue of silence is common among the victims of tragic historical events. Therefore, the silence can also be considered as a way of giving testimony. This paradox of silence (Culbertson, 1995) demonstrates the ongoing internal torment of survivors of bearing those memories, and at the same time, the desire/need to tell. Consequently, silence is also another approach to reading and interpreting the narratives, referring to their original reasons as for example “the long habit of silence that developed around the Gulag” (Geith and Jolluck, 2011, p.11). Indeed, according to Altinay & Petö (2016) in many examples where women become victims of sexual political violence, their memories and narratives very often create the silence: “...women’s experiences of torture and imprisonment are marginalized in the memory narratives produced by human rights and leftist activists; and women’s ultimate articulation of such experiences is constituted by major

silences, including those regarding sexual political violence” (Altinay & Petö, 2016, p.14).

This is important to consider in my research because all the memoirs of survivors of “ALZHIR” omit the topic of sexual violence that was apparently present in the camp due to the domination of male commanders. Although some researchers consider the silence to be a barrier in memorialization of past tragedies, they reflect different ways of breaking the it. For example, Tabarovsky (2016) thinks that establishing address plagues as a “private remembrance” can be one of the ways of breaking silence, and opening up historical, social and political discussion. This is relevant to my research because it shows how the state intervenes into the process of remembrance, and silences the “private remembrance” of certain actors.

Apart from silencing, there are also certain explanations of un-silencing that the survivors use in their shared memoirs and stories. Adler (2002) has raised an important question about the motivations of survivors to tell their stories. Although many aspects were covered by scholars, the main reasons of sharing personal stories can be stated as: the first reason is the feeling of guilt and responsibility to retell the stories for all those who did not come back from the camps. Even during the times of incarceration a phrase “May he be damned who, after regaining freedom, remains silent” (2002, p. 39) was common among prisoners. The second reason is the attempt to establish warning or caution in the society, to avoid the reappearance of such event ever in the history of humanity: “to serve as a warning so that such catastrophic evil can never manifest itself again” (Adler 2002, p. 39). In analyzing the frames of memorialization I will observe how different actors explain their reasons of the commemoration of the camp history.

Shapovalov (2003) claims that many educated women used to write after, and even during their imprisonments to remember and express their griefs through on paper. Although, each convict was forced to sign “disclose document” (podpiska o nerazglashenii) before the

liberation of having no right to disclose the places of camps, otherwise be imprisoned. After the Soviet collapse in 1991, however, survivors started to disclose their camp experiences. According to Geith and Jolluck (2011) oral history gives an access to investigate not only memoirs mainly written by the educated intelligentsia, but also the narratives of peasants and workers that were often uneducated. Among the memoirs of the intelligentsia, Shcherbakova (2015), one of the main researchers on the issue of women in Gulag, sees women's narratives to be the most frequent in the list of all narratives. The main reason for that became the prevailing number of women among the survivors and witnesses that were able to share their stories. However, in my research, the silence is also regarded as an empowering strategy that can be differently interpreted in memorialization strategies.

The importance of oral history

Due to propaganda of the Soviet ideologies, all the documents were affected by the context. Conducting research in the framework of official archival materials of state authorities and the NKVD would limit research, as these documents hide what has been unsaid due to fear and danger of remembering (Geith and Jolluck, 2011). Therefore, methodology of oral history gives a chance to analyze what has not been said in official discourse, but has been written, told, preserved and changed in memories of survivors. As Adler (2002) has mentioned: "All of the survivors encountered during this present research felt that the camp experience had a tangible effect on their subsequent lives, yet when asked about post-camp events, they invariably bring the discussion back into the camp setting" (p.38), oral history makes it possible to examine the lives of survivors after Gulag incarceration, and position them in the system, because in many cases Gulag survivors shared their experiences only within the framework of Gulag camps. Although, oral history of Gulag camps mainly explores personal narratives, it does more than listing each memoir. It helps us

to situate individual stories and analyze them within the confines of the Soviet political system: “Rather, we will be employing an oral history methodology not to look *at* individuals, but to look *through* them to the political system” (p.38). Therefore, my research observes narratives of different actors in order to understand how the state affects the memorialization frames of the history of “ALZHIR” camp.

Interviewing process

To conduct a research on “ALZHIR” I have visited the museum and memorial complex “ALZHIR” which is situated in the village Malinovka. The village is located 20 km from the capital city Astana (Kazakhstan). Before visiting the museum, I have sent a letter to the official electronic address of the museum that I found on their official website. In the letter, I explained the purpose of my research as part of my thesis project and mentioned the name of the university I study at and thesis supervisor’s academic profile. By positioning myself as a researcher from the leading university under the supervision of qualified professor I tried to assert my interest on the professional academic level. I asked about any possibilities to conduct the interviews with some of the workers of the museum, and get an access to the contacts of families of survivors. In a week I received a response from Anar – a woman that works in the museum as an English tour guide, who kindly invited me to the museum, and asked to call them before visiting.

In April 2017 I have spent two weeks doing a research in the museum and conducting several interviews in Malinovka. The first day I came to the museum, I took many pictures of the museum site, and installations outside and inside the museum. At the moment I entered the museum, Anar greeted us and immediately started describing the history of the museum. I quickly pulled out a telephone from my pocket and started recording everything. She answered the questions I asked which were similar to the questions I prepared to ask. It was

an informal conversation rather than an official interview. She showed me the main stands with the letters and memoirs of survivors. By the end of the interview she felt less constrained: when I asked about her experience in working in the museum, she shed a few tears and expressed the struggle of retelling the stories of women that had traumatic experiences. The interview lasted for half an hour, and by the end of our “conversation” she asked about my experience of living in Budapest, and our conversation became casual. I also expressed my concerns about the lack of materials and collections of letters online. In a minute she brought a book with the collection of memoirs and letters of survivors called “ALJIR” (2014) from the library collection of the museum and gave it to me as a gift. I was surprised by the eagerness of Anar in helping me to answer questions about the experiences of women in “ALZHIR”, and sharing information about the important scholarly researches that have been conducted on this topic.

After five minutes she introduced me to Raissa Zhaksybayeva, the head of the exposition and exhibition department of the museum, who has been working in the museum since its opening, and for almost twenty years has studied the stories of women of “ALZHIR”. Although our conversation was quick, I managed to ask her important questions regarding the silenced aspects as sexual violence in the history of the camp. She briefly explained that only one memoir described sexual violence in the camp indirectly, but did not reflect much on it. The feeling of being hurried was present in her speech, so she left very fast as she did not have more time to talk to me. Anar left with her, but came back with a small book in her hands, and explained: “Raissa Zhaksybayeva gave it to you as a gift. This book contains the memoir that she talked about during your interview”. It was a book with the collections of memoirs of survivors, where sexual violence is mentioned indirectly: in a frame of a girl who never met her father, and apparently was born as a result of rape (Pankratova, 2003, p.69). Although, I was glad to receive such gifts, I was surprised of such

acts of museum workers whom I expected to be the agents of the bureaucratic system, common to post-Soviet society.

I also interviewed a son of one of the survivors of “ALZHIR” that lived in the village Malinovka, whom I found by soliciting the help of my family. By using the networks that I had, I became more trustworthy rather than an unknown scholar. However, his name is not used in this research, as he preferred to remain anonymous. This story, as well as other interviews, are used as additional insight stories to analyze the memorialization processes. Also, the main limit in conducting this research became the absence of contacts of survivors that was I expected the museum workers to share with me. Therefore, I had to refer to my own network abilities by asking the help of my family in finding the descendant of former prisoner of “ALZHIR” camp.

This chapter has analyzed the relevance of oral history as a methodology in the research of memoirs and letters of former prisoners of “ALZHIR” camp. As a result, I identified that the silencing and un-silencing used in survived women’s narratives can be explained by different strategies. For example, the traumatic experiences of sexual violence of women in the Gulag camps were often silenced. The survivors use that silence as empowering strategy in their narratives, and the researcher’s aim is to interpret it considering different layers of memories. Therefore, the boundless approach of the oral history is challenging and advantageous at the same time, because it allows investigating a particular narrative from a multilayered perspective of different frames. Now, as I have observed the theoretical and methodological frameworks to this research, I turn to the analysis of the “ALZHIR” camp’s history in the next chapter considering multilayered narratives in survivor’s memoirs.

Chapter 3

The history of the camp “ALZHIR”

As it has been demonstrated in the literature review, most of what we know about the female camp "ALZHIR" and its commemoration are based on the general information that is presented in newspaper articles and small sections of books on KarLag or briefly on Gulag forced labor camps that were written during the last twenty years. However, much of understanding of the history of this forced labor women's camp derives from mediated memoirs and personal archival documents of inmates that were confined there. The main concern about the history of "ALZHIR" remains the dispersion of various materials without a clear chronological analysis and explanation of what exactly had happened, why this camp was special and how the frames of memorization has changed. Therefore, the purpose of the following chapter is to construct a primary, coherent chronological history of the camp, and “put” it into the map. By doing so, I ground a basis for the next chapters' analyses on how the camp has been remembered. As it has not been previously done in academic research purposes, this research as a form of feminist activism is the first attempt to uncover and make this female camp visible.

I describe the history of the camp, its opening motivations, processes of arresting, living conditions, and internal relations between prisoners and commanders. I refer to multiple sources as archival documents, personal letters of survivors, their memoirs that were provided by the museum workers during my research trip to the “ALZHIR” museum, keeping in mind that these sources might have been mediated by different actors.⁵ I also refer a lot to Pankratova (2003), as it is a book with the collection of memoirs and letters of female survivors of “ALZHIR”.

After the October Revolution many forced labor camps began to appear on the territory of the Soviet Union (Jakobson, 1993). The first idea about maintaining the camp and

⁵ See Chapter 2 Methodology.

its administration at the expense of prisoners' labor was mentioned in 1918 from the Act of All-Russian Central Executive Committee (VTsIK/ВЦИК) on "The Forced labor camps". On the official discourse forced labor camps were meant to imprison only political prisoners, but on practice these camps did not sort political from criminal prisoners, placing them under the same category. These camps were based on two main principles: self-repayment and rectification based on re-education (Pankratova, 2003, p.3). In 1929 the system of forced labor camps was developed by Stalin, and the camp system began to be expanded. In April 25, 1930 the Camp Administration was created (ULAG – Upravlenie Lagerei), which was later called the Main Camp Administration (GULAG – Glavnoe Upravlenie Lagerei) that governed newly opened camps. There is an interpretation that the creation of such camps was driven by political motivation for creating a space for concentration and separation undesirable elements from society (Makeyeva, 2014). However, there is also a suggestion that these camps were preferable in comparison with prisons due to economic paybacks: constructing and maintaining the camp site, fenced-off with barbed wire was much cheaper than constructing prisons (Pankratova, 2003, p.3).

The Kazakhstani forced labor camp KazITLAG (Kazakhstanskiy Ispravitelno Trudovoi Lager) was formed in accordance with the resolution of the Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom – Sovetskiy Narodnyi Komitet) on May 13, 1930. The state-owned farm (sovkhoz) “Gigant” created by that time had the goal of developing cattle breeding and agriculture on the vast territory of Central Kazakhstan’s steppes. To create the large manufacturing base for developing coal and metallurgical industry (which Central Kazakhstan is famous for), the first department of KazITLAG was reorganized into the Karaganda Labor Camp of ULAG or KarLag (Karagandinskiy Lager) on the basis of “Gigant”. On the territory of the camp there were several Kazakh villages with a population

of 21 979 people, who later were evicted from their lands.⁶ These empty lands were immediately populated by newly deported prisoners (Pankratova, 2003, p.4). The administrative center for KarLag became the small village Dolinka that is 50 km from Karagandy, with seven industrial sectors each containing several camps. Later these sectors expanded for 200 camp sites and points.

Akmolinsk, the special department of the NKVD KarLag was created next to Zhalanash lake in the 26th village of labor settlements according to the order from the USSR NKVD No.00758 on December 3rd (1937), and the NKVD KarLag No.43 on December 16th (1937) (Dulatbekov, 2012, p.475). The construction of barracks expanded only in 1936, and in 1937 the 26th point started to be prepared for arriving prisoners arrested on the article “ChSIR” – family members of Traitors of the Motherland (ChSIR – Chlen Sem'i Izmennika Rodiny) (Pankratova, 2003, p.5, 17). The official names of the camp were “26th village” (later called “26th point”), “Akmolinsk special department of Karaganda forced labor camp”, and from 1939 when the camp became the part of KarLag system (previously it was under the USSR NKVD) it was called “17th Akmolinsk department of KarLag” or forced labor camp “R-17”. In memoirs survivors often referred to the camp as “ALZHIR”, although it was never mentioned in official documents: the name was given by the female prisoners themselves (Akmolinsk Camp for the Wives of Traitors of the Motherland, translated from Russian abbreviations Akmolinskii Lager Zhen Izmennikov Rodiny) (Pankratova, 2003). Thus, by numbering the camp's name, the authorities labelled its inmates and deprived them of any humane significance. However, I argue that female prisoners that named the camp informally, used it as a tool of empowerment by asserting their importance and presence in life.⁷

⁶ No data was found on the places where they were sent to.

⁷ See Pitman's (1999) article on "The Politics of Naming and The Development of Morality." *Women & Therapy* 22.2: 21-38.

The arresting process

Earlier, in 1937 the operative order of the NKVD No. 00486 "On the repression of wives and the placement of children of convicted "traitors of the Motherland" was signed by Nikolai Yezhov. It was believed that the family members could not have been unaware of the criminal activities of the head of the family, and must be punished for not reporting to the state. Each family member was recorded in the system by the NKVD, and "wives" were not only spouses, but also mothers, sisters and daughters. According to the regulations elderly, pregnant and sick women were inviolable and released from the arrests (Shmarayeva 2016). However, based on memoirs of survivors Ancis (p.6), Maltseva (p.10) and Vasenev (p.46) these regulations were violated, as many pregnant women and women with infants were sentenced (Pankratova, 2003). Thus, the wives were arrested right after their husbands, sent to "ALZHIR" without any trials, and were only notified of the decision of the Special Meeting of the NKVD about the recommended dates of imprisonment from 5 to 8 years (Pankratova, 2003, p.10). It is also important to mention that wives often were not kept in one camp for long, similarly to their arrests their deportations to different camps were not explained or expected. According to memoirs of survivor Maltseva (Pankratova, 2003, p.10) it was a particular way of controlling by the NKVD to make inmates feel vulnerable and uncertain.

In January 6th, 1938 the first group of women with children from 1 to 3 years was brought to the camp. During January and February prisoners began to arrive continuously from different republics of the Soviet Union – Russian, Byelorussian, Georgian, Armenian, Uzbek and Kirghiz Soviet Socialist Republics (Shmarayeva, 2016). According to the archival documents of KarLag in 1938 "ALZHIR" had 8000 female prisoners, and until 1953 in general the number of women that were in the camp reached approximately 18 000 (Table 1, Figure 1), and with separated 25 342 children. Most of the prisoners were wives or relatives

of famous state, political and social figures. Among them were: a sister of murdered Marshal Tukhachevskiy – Elizaveta Arvatova-Tukhachevskaya (1906–1997), a wife of poet Bagritsky – Lidiya Bagritskaya (1895–1969), actress Kira Andronikashvili (1908–1960) – a wife of writer Pilnyak, a writer Galina Serebryakova (1905–1980), an actress Tatyana Okunevskaya (1914–2002), famous singer Lidiya Ruslanova (1900–1973), a wife of political and state figure – Zhurgenova Damesh (1905–unknown).

Camp life

The main source that I used in analyzing the camp life and its commanders is based on the memoirs and letters of its inmates from the collection of memoirs (Pankratova, 2003). It means that the information that is used here is subjective, and is limited on what these victims remembered. As memoirs describe, family members of the “traitors of the Motherland” were considered as “extremely dangerous”, so the detention conditions were severe. They were not allowed to send, receive letters from anyone, or even read and write anything, their names were checked twice a day, and even during their free times they were guarded (Pankratova, 2003, p.19). Upon reaching the age of 3 children were separated from their mothers and sent to orphanages in Dolinka and Osakarovka villages, where they were starving and raised in horrible conditions. Many of them did not survive, and even their mothers could not hear anything about their children either before or after their deaths.

Many women in their memoirs remembered the labor conditions in the camp. In the first years of the camp the women worked to heat the barracks where they lived, so every morning they worked by the lake to harvest the reeds that they used as the only source for heating. Instead of mattresses, they slept on straws in barracks where the temperature did not exceed 6-7 C. Moreover, they were forced to work in any weather, and climate in this region of Kazakh land is sharply continental: -40C in winter and +40C in summer. However, some

of them (Ancis, Violina, Maltseva) mentioned how they always tried to work hard. From springtime the camp began to produce: women had to design and construct workshops for the garment factory, and new barracks for other arriving prisoners. Engineers, architects, and draftswomen worked based on their professions. As Ancis noted in her memoirs (Pankratova, 2003, p.6), for women with background in humanities and art, working in severe camp conditions was harder. Nevertheless, they tried to improve camp agriculture: condemned scientists, agronomists and biologists grew new seeds, and harvested cucumbers, tomatoes, cabbages, and onions on the steppe ground (Shmarayeva, 2016). They also sowed grains, and later constructed the mill and bakery in the camp department. Survivor Violina highlighted in her interview in the film “Longer than life” (Violina, 2013) that they cultivated watermelons, melons, apples, pears, cherries and different types of berries on the land where there was nothing when they arrived. However, all the products from the garment factory, raised vegetables and fruits were exported from the camp, and were not given to prisoners. In 1941 when WWII began, women from garment factories sew uniforms for state soldiers and officers. Women that did not work in agriculture, worked in cowsheds and chicken coops. They bred cattle, horses, geese and other poultry (Shmarayeva, 2016). Thus, the camp turned into a versatile farm with a large agricultural production, workshops, a garment factory which was functioning on the free labor of women.

Also, many women in their memoirs mentioned the attitudes of camp commanders towards them. The commanders of the camp changed only three times: the first commander was Alexandr Bredikhin, and on January 1st, 1939 the commander became Sergey Barinov. Then, for a while the “ALZHIR” was governed by Yuzipenko Mikhail, but after the beginning of WWII he became the second-in-command of Sergey Barinov who again was assigned to be the commander of the camp. Women that were in the camp wrote about Barinov in their memoirs and interviews as a supportive and kind person who was able to talk

to them as with human beings. They gave him a name “Valeryan Valeryanovich” which stemmed from the name of medicine used to treat anxiety and nervousness called in Russian “Valeryanka” (Valerian). Such name was given to him for his abilities to console and talk to those who were accused of being “extremely dangerous” or “state enemies” who never believed that they were the traitors or wives of traitors. However, there might be some reasons behind such “positive” remembrance of the commander. Considering that commanders were men, and the overall context of Gulag camps, it is hardly believable that these women were treated in a nice way. Although, many memoirs refer to Barinov as a good person, it might also be the reason of “self-censorship” (Altinay&Pető, 2016, p.83) that led these women silence sexual abuse, which was regarded to be private matter according to the Soviet social norms. Unlike Barinov, his deputy Yuzipenko was described by women as cruel towards the prisoners, and after the camp was closed tried to justify his own name, by falsifying the good conditions in which women were kept in the camp.⁸

After the war began, “ALZHIR” was no longer female camp; many women and men were convoyed to the camp condemned for counter-revolutionary activities: among them non-political female prisoners with domestic crimes “bytovichki” were sent to the camp. After they arrived, there was a clear division between political and non-political prisoners. For example, Vasenev’s memoirs depicted a day from the prisoners’ camp life, showing that “even thieves and murderers considered these women unworthy of humaneness” (Pankratova, 2003, p.51). The division between these two groups was based on their backgrounds, as political prisoners were often from educated intelligentsia. Interestingly, Raissa Zhaksybayeva (the head of excursion and exhibition department of the museum and memorial complex “ALZHIR”), told me during our interview that throughout the whole history of the camp there were no attempts of escape or conflict, and “ALZHIR” was

⁸ See Chapter 1 Women in the Gulag camps, Revisionist story.

considered to be the safest among other Gulag camps. However, from Vasenev's (p.50) story, there was a conflict that collapsed into a murder by Marya who was sentenced for domestic crime, and killed a political female prisoner with an axe, and felt no remorse: "Although I am behind the bars, I am a human. Soviet human! But who are they? They are wives of enemies of the people. Of my people. Hence, wives of my enemies. Is it clear? Once I am free, I will be a human again. What about them? They will be "wives" till the end of their lives" (p.50). From murderer's words we see that the presence of conflict between two categories of prisoners based on referring to "wives" as non-humans stemmed from the Soviet attempts making the people believe in the rightness of accusation of "enemies of the nation". However, neither the museum nor the memoirs tell about the internal conflicts, which silences a large part of significant information.

By 1943 in "ALZHIR" according to museum's archival materials there were 2108 women and 1233 men, a third of them non-political prisoners. Until the war ended none of the family members of "traitors of the Motherland" were exempted, although their terms ended. Due to long-term plans issued by the state, the work needed to be done, so women were not exempted. Those who were released were forced to work as civilians in the garment factories that were next to the camp, and live in the former camp barracks that was previously fenced-off with barbed wire.

The camp was officially closed on June 1953 after the death of Stalin. According to memoirs of Ancis and Kozhakhmetova (Pankratova, 2003), women were given a piece of paper with their names and mark with number 38, which meant the prohibition on visiting or living in 38 large cities of the state, including the capital cities. In many cases, women were not even given their passports, as the sign of lost identities. Sovkhoz Akmola was created on the place of the camp, and in 1976 the village was renamed as Malinovka (Malina is raspberry in Russian) due to many raspberries in the village that were cultivated by women of

the “ALZHIR” camp. As former prisoners were deprived of many rights to work and live in other cities, some of them settled in the village, and lived in the barracks. All the trees, fruits and vegetables in the village nowadays exist due to the hard work done by these women.

This chapter has introduced the chronological history of the camp “ALZHIR” as it was written in memoirs, letters and given in the archival documents of the museum. This special Gulag camp that imprisoned only women from a certain class has been differently remembered according to different actors. To analyze the strategies of remembrance of different actors, the next chapter investigates the memorialization sites and strategies that have occurred since the camp was closed.

Chapter 4

Memorialization processes

The purpose of this chapter is to explore various commemorative sites and strategies that were created and controlled by different actors in the process of memorialization of the stories of women of “ALZHIR”. To do so, in the first section of this chapter I analyze the history of the museum, in order to explore the processes of memorialization. In the next section, I move to the investigation of the memorialization of gendered strategies of different actors as *domestication*, *appropriation*, and *instrumentalization* that are used in processes of memorialization of “ALZHIR” camp mentioned below. The last two sections of this chapter describe how these strategies apply to particular commemorative sites as *collections* and *historical reconstruction*.

Section 4.1

Chronology of memorialization

In this section I identified four memorialization processes in the camp in chronological order:⁹

- Deconstruction (1970s);
- Individual intervention (1989);
- The first museum (1997);
- The state intervention (2007);

In the analysis of these processes, I refer to the term “dangerous memories”. According to Pharaon et al. (2015), these are the memories that reflect the past struggles by going beyond one’s perspective: “...they illuminate a past reality of struggle and suffering, a larger truth is not limited to the ‘winner’s’ point of view.” (p.62). For example, space which used to be the house of Uruguayan dictator Maximo Santos is now used as the museum of the memory of struggle for democracy, rather than the museum of his life (Pharaon et al., 2015). By doing

⁹ See Appendix 4 Chronology of Memorialization.

so, the museum “Centro Cultural y Museo de la Memoria” (MEMO) enables its visitors to recall the dangerous past to direct the present problems:

Memory is a new weapon to promote consciousness of a dangerous past, to build intersectional identity and a world based on the value of solidarity so that visitors might be better equipped to address the emergent needs of the present (Pharaon et al., 2015, p.71).

I argue that in the memorialization of “ALZHIR” the museum that was similarly established on the same ground of the former camp applies this method of positioning visitors in the “dangerous” space by inflicting the feelings of fear, loss, struggle, and grief through exhibits. Indeed, many examples of installations, original documents, pictures, and personal objects of prisoners presented in the museum, and further discussed in this chapter let its viewers evidence the fears of its owners, and raise awareness about horrifying memories that the Soviet state tried to erase. The main difference between the MEMO and “ALZHIR” is that the latter followed a curve of memorialization as a result of changing political context. Thus, such “dangerous” memories allow the community to explore and analyze social struggles in the “safe containers”.

Deconstruction

After the camp was closed (1953) former prisoners and local villagers kept living in the former camp barracks, because they had no other places to go. As the son of woman that survived from “ALZHIR” told me during interview:

I remember the barracks, horses... The village was made of barracks, they were everywhere. We lived in the same barracks where my mother and other prisoners lived during imprisonment. There was no heating, no coal, it was extremely cold. We lived there for more than 20 years. During that time: I finished high school, went to military service in 1964, came back in 1967, got married twice. During the first marriage, we lived all together in one room. We slept on the floor. On the entrance, there was a cold corridor, a kitchen, and a bedroom. Can you imagine? My mother, father, and me with my young wife. It was hard to sleep, let alone living. Then according to Khrushchev’s Virgin Lands, campaign reconstruction of the whole village began (the 1970s).

We were given apartments as those who lived in the village for a long time
(translated from Russian, personal interview, April 2017).

The village Akmol where the camp was situated was deconstructed in the 1970s, so all barracks were destroyed. The main actor behind this story was Sharf Ivan Ivanovich, the executive director of poultry factory and general director of OJSC “Akmola Fenix”, who participated in the process of changing the village. As he shared in his memoirs in the published collection of memoirs of former prisoners of “ALZHIR”:

We tried to eradicate the previous name of the village (Akmola) and changed it to Malinovka, as well as other things from the past. We destroyed the barracks, and on that places built house blocks of 90 apartments (Pankratova, 2003, p.77).¹⁰

Thus, the signs of the camp in form of the barracks and the previous name of the village were demolished by the local authorities with the purpose of erasing the visual representation of the horrific past events. Such attempt to erase the past tragic events and reduce their reminders was explained by Foote (1990) by the term “effacement”. Often the memories of the tragic events are kept in tension in the society, and by erasing their physical remnants the society responds against the past acts of violence. This act is described by Foote (1990) as a certain type of ritual of cleansing the site, as it was done with many Nazi buildings in Berlin (p.385). However, I argue that even though the local authorities managed to raze all the barracks, it hardly meant that the locals or the survivors would easily erase the “dangerous” memories of camp life, because “a sense of stigma” might be fixed to that space (Foote, 1990, p.390). Thus, people remembered the past without the buildings standing in their village.

Individual intervention. The first monument and the meeting

¹⁰ See Chapter 5 Two actors and construction of the national history frame.

The collection of memoirs of survivors of the camp (Pankratova, 2003) describes the first commemorative practices of “ALZHIR” – establishing the first monument and the first meeting of survivors in 1989. October 17th in Malinovka was the day when the burial places of former inmates were identified by the initiative of Sharf Ivan Ivanovich. Interestingly, this un-silencing act was done by the same person – Sharf Ivan Ivanovich, who tried to previously silence the memories of the camp by destroying the barracks. Apparently, the motives of the latter were different from the former. His name was mentioned in the book about the “Victims of ALZHIR” published with the support of International Society “Memorial”, calling him one of the first initiators of commemorative practices of victims of political repressions in the Soviet Union. I suppose his volunteering attempts can be explained by his memoirs (Pankratova, 2003, p.78) where he expressed that he wanted these women who suffered from “Stalinist repressions” to be remembered, and on the opening ceremony of the monument he used “never-again” call, which was later used by President Nazarbayev:¹¹ “This tragedy must never happen again” (Musagaliyeva, 2016b).¹² Moreover, I assume that Sharf’s personal story of the death of parents in Gulag¹³ affected his perception of this tragedy, so changing political climate made it possible to intervene in the memorialization process.

The next day, October 18th 20 survivors of the camp “ALZHIR” that were invited by Sharf from different parts of the Soviet Union came to the central square of Malinovka to meet each other for the first time since the end of their imprisonment, and participate in the opening ceremony of the monument. Sharf suggested installing the monument exactly in the center of the village Malinovka on the open-air museum the “Alley of tears” surrounded by poplars, as these trees were planted by female inmates during incarceration in “ALZHIR”. The monument represents a split red star, girded with barbed wire (Figure 2). According to its

¹¹ See Section 4.1 Chronology of memorialization: State intervention. Opening of the museum and the memorial complex.

¹² See Chapter 5 Two actors and construction of the national history frame.

¹³ See Chapter 5 Two actors and construction of the national history frame.

architect Yurashevich, it symbolizes the torn human soul (from the interview of Sharf in the collection of the memoirs of survivors, Pankratova, 2003, p.79). According to Sharf's own words during the opening speech, the monument was made secretly under his security control and was installed at night. Sharf said:

People were surprised how it was even possible in the Soviet times, they were worried that we would be punished. But their gratitude pleasant”
(Musagaliyeva, 2016b).

This might be explained by the uncertain political situation in the Soviet Union during that time and Kazakhstan was still part of it. Despite the political persecution that kept the citizens of the SU in fear for many after the Gulag camps were closed, Sharf insisted on establishing this monument (from the speech of Sharf, Video film “ALZHIR. Restored memory”, 2008)

According to the interview of Raissa Zhaksybayeva, the head of the excursion and exhibition department of the museum and memorial complex “ALZHIR”, who has also participated in the first meeting, approximately twenty survivors came to the meeting, and among them, there were also their children. On the meeting there were survivors of “ALZHIR”: Tashitova S.K., Maizholova-Kulenova V., Maltseva K.I., Yendanova A.G., Afonina T.P., Krutko M.I., Vereshagina E.F.; and the children of survivors: Shubrikova I.V., Shadrina I.E., Tovarovskaya E.B., Golubev O.G., Koratsio E.N., Shafarenko E.N., Rachkova G.S., Shevchenko V.S. (Musagaliyeva 2010b). Some of them shared their experiences in the camp (Tashitova, Maizholova-Kulenova, Maltseva and Yendanova), and a daughter of survivor Lazarevna read her poem about her mother's life in “ALZHIR” camp (Musagaliyeva, 2010b). The meeting of survivors was fully funded by the poultry factory, covering living, traveling, and food expenses. (Pankratova, 2003, p. 78). However, as a result of his initiative, Sharf was reprimanded by Moscow for organizing such event without a notification (Pankratova, 2003, p.80). During his speech in front of the monument, Sharf briefly mentioned this incident, but did not want further talk about that, apparently because of

unpleasant memories and possible consequences. However, he immediately continued that Nazarbayev who was the chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Council at that time asked Sharf to wait and supported his initiative (from the speech of Sharf, Video film “ALZHIR. Restored memory”, 2008).

Thus, Sharf tried to create a space for remembrance of the “dangerous” history of “ALZHIR” by starting an anti-communist idea of establishing red split star in the center of the village and inviting women to this space, which was unbelievably courageous at a time when Kazakhstan was still under the Soviet power. However, due to an unstable political situation in the Soviet Union, and in Kazakhstan after December uprisings in 1986, any anti-communist ideas were negatively accepted, so the authorities did not welcome the first practice of commemoration of the Gulag camp on the whole territory of the Soviet space. He presented the survived women as political agents that had their own life stories behind the label “wives” that was imposed on them, and he highlighted their significance by inviting them to the first meeting.

The first museum

In 1997 the President of Kazakhstan declared the day of May 31st as the Day of Remembrance of Victims of Political Repression in Kazakhstan. The same year in 1997 Sharf opened the museum of the “History of the camp ‘ALZHIR’” in the House of Culture (*Dom Kultury*) of Malinovka, eight years after the first meeting of survivors. The first materials to be exhibited in that museum were personal belongings and letters that survivors brought to the first meeting in 1989. This was the first museum of “ALZHIR’s” history, hence the first effort to un-silence the women’s stories to the society by presenting their personal documents and objects. Although the first meeting of survivors was held almost a decade ago, it took a

long time to open the museum, and the official Day of remembrance of victims of political repression became an impetus for it.

As Raissa Zhaksybayeva shared during one of the interviews, Sharf asked her if she could help him with opening the museum:

In 1997, when I was invited to open a museum, a room of 72 square meters was allocated for it, there were two tables and documents on the windowsill. Nothing else. I am a teacher by training, and, of course, I was frightened: we had to open a museum, and not a simple one, but the museum of the history of the camp “ALZHIR”, about those women who were at the meeting of the former prisoners of “ALZHIR”. But when I read the letters and documents, I thought that someone should do this after so many years of silence. For some reason, at that moment, I put myself in the shoes of these women – and agreed. I started to work (Makeyeva, 2014).

Thus, apart from Sharf, Shaksybayeva has also actively participated in the process of un-silencing the camp history, and contributed a lot to the museum history by founding the first connections with the survivors through mailing.¹⁴ As a manager and the methodologist of a small museum she began writing to the former prisoners of the camp, and received many responses with personal documents and letters attached (Makeyeva, 2014). The museum existed ten years.

However, in 2006 the authorities (unidentified in the records or interviews) decided to close the museum, explaining it by the lack of financial resources to maintain the work of the museum. Thus, the authorities expressed no interest in memorialization of the camp “ALZHIR” unless it became President’s national interest (which is described in the following section). To save the museum, Zhaksybayeva went to the authorities to explain how important that museum was in the commemoration of the history of the camp and women of “ALZHIR”:

Then I went to authorities to defend the museum because I read a lot about the spiritual confrontation of women in “ALZHIR”. When I came to the deputies’ offices, they looked at me like crazy. ‘What does this woman need? What is

¹⁴ She did not tell how she found these women.

“ALZHIR”? Malinovka village is not even indicated on the map. Akmola region?’ Then I told them about the camp, its female prisoners, and their stories. By the end, I asked a question: ‘Do you have a heart or a piece of iron there?’ I was told that my question will be solved (Makeyeva, 2014).

This courageous and spirited approach in the attempts to save the museum from unwanted silencing by the government describes the dedication of Zhaksybayeva that was supposedly “inherited” from Sharf’s dedication demonstrated by his initiative since opening the monument and organizing the first meeting of survivors.¹⁵

For a period, the museum was not touched, and on February 22-23rd in 2007 President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nazarbayev issued a decree to open a museum and memorial complex “ALZHIR” for the “Victims of Political Repressions and Totalitarianism” in Malinovka (Makeyeva, 2014). Due to the opening of the new museum, there was no need of keeping the old one, so the museum of the “History of the camp ‘ALZHIR’” was appropriated to the new one. Unfortunately, none of the online or published materials describes what happened to that museum, which I found ironical: the history of the first museum that was the first to un-silence the memory of the camp was totally forgotten.

Thus, the camp “ALZHIR” was finally recognized as an important historical element by the state only 18 years after the first meeting of the survivors of the camp, and apparently 10 years after declaring the Day of Remembrance of Victims of Political Repression. I argue that the long and tenuous years of commemorative attempts by individuals were inhibited by the strategies of authorities which affected the changing of the memorialization frames of “ALZHIR”.

State intervention. Opening of the museum and the memorial complex

In 2007, on May 31st, by the initiative of the President Nazarbayev the official “ALZHIR” Museum and Memorial complex of the “Victims of Political Repressions and

¹⁵ The “spiritual confrontation” of women is described in the Section 4.3 Collections.

Totalitarianism” was opened.¹⁶ The museum was established in the same place where the camp barracks were. It is situated in the village close to the city center and the split red star monument. The opening ceremony started with the speech of the President:

For Kazakhstan, this date is especially significant. Historically, our Republic became the place for deportation of million Soviet citizens. On the whole territory of the state 953, forced labor camps were working under the punitive system of the totalitarian regime. Only in 1937-38, more than 100 000 people were illegally condemned, and about 25 000 of them were shot dead. The camps destroyed prominent representatives of Kazakh culture, science, and education. Mass repressions affected every republic and every nation of the former Soviet Union. By that time 1 500 000 people were deported to Kazakhstan. We will always keep the memory of women. We do this to preserve the memory of the crime against the humanity. Not to let it happen (from the video film “ALZHIR. Restored Memory”, 2012).

First, while analyzing this excerpt from YouTube video in comparison with the whole speech text, I realized that many important details from the whole speech have not been revealed. After reading this text, President’s political position regarding Stalin’s actions is not clear, as he did not mention anything about Stalin in this text. However, after reading the text of the whole speech I identified that Nazarbayev clearly positioned himself as the opponent of Stalin’s policy in a couple of sentences, so the language used by the President set the national framework of remembrance:¹⁷

The system that Stalin began based on totalitarian communist ideology still makes us evidence its repercussions, we still feel the hatred inside. We must bow down forever to all those who suffered from this tragedy. No promises of universal happiness can justify the suffering and death of innocent people. By violence and cruelty, mankind cannot be imposed either prosperity or harmony and progress. This is the most important historical lesson that we have learned and should always remember about (Nazarbayev, 2007).

This speech became momentous in identifying the political position of the President regarding Stalin’s policies. Unlike Nazarbayev, Putin as the President of Russian Federation that historically was the land of the majority of Gulag camps has not opened, let alone participated in the opening ceremonies of any of Gulag museums in the country.

¹⁶ See Appendix 6 The museum description.

¹⁷ See Chapter 5 Two actors and construction of the national history frame.

Second, during the speech Nazarbayev mentioned phrases as “not to let it happen”, “never erase the memory of this event” and “it is a historical lesson to remember”, which is similar to the way of remembrance of the Holocaust that is based on “never-again” call and lessons learnt from the Holocaust. Although this entails the “double genocide” framework, rather comparing the two contexts, I focus on the process of un-silencing and memorialization of the tragic past.

After Nazarbayev’s speech, some descendants of “ALZHIR” as Olkhovaya Lyudmila and Ostrin Grigoriy expressed their gratitude to Kazakh land that became the “shelter for thousands of exiled citizens, victims of struggles” (from the video film “ALZHIR. Restored Memory”, 2012). They thanked the Kazakh nation for preserving the memories of their parents, and not giving it any chance to be repeated. They thanked the president for his idea and initiative of opening the large museum and memorial complex, without any reference to Sharf who owned the first idea of opening the museum in the local House of Culture.

This section analyzed four main chronological processes in the history of the museum. Importantly, it analyzed the individual and state actions in un/silencing the dangerous memories of the camp “ALZHIR” and its inmates. As a result, there are two key actors identified in the memorialization – Sharf and the Kazakh state: former – the director of the poultry factory in Malinovka, and the initiator that tried to document and create a space for women’s individual stories; latter – the Kazakh state with the President Nazarbayev that took over Sharf’s idea of memorialization and put it under national history frame. Overall, the dominance of Nazarbayev in the top down un-silencing, in fact, silenced the role of the first volunteer/initiator Sharf in the history of memorialization of “ALZHIR”. Hence, the memorialization strategies of state’s policy were different from Sharf’s strategies, which affected the process of changing the gendered memories. These strategies will be analyzed in the next section in details.

Section 4.2

The memorialization sites and strategies

The previous section focused on the chronology of the museum and its un/silencing processes, following section categorizes the commemorative practices dividing into separate sites and strategies. In this section I describe two distinctive sites in constructing the gendered memorialization of the camp:

- Collections.
- Historical Reconstruction.

Besides the description and analyses of these sites, I analyze them according to three main strategies I identified, namely *domestication*, *instrumentalization*, and *appropriation* of women's memories. These strategies are used based on Jacobs' (2010) study of gendered memories of museums and monuments of Holocaust, where she identified similar strategies in order to explain how the gendered memories are constructed.

Domestication

Despite the fact that every woman in "ALZHIR" camp had her own individual life story, as well as famous writers, actresses, scientist, doctors, singers and politicians, they were all deprived of their social statuses, and were considered only as "wives" upon imprisonment. They were prisoned because they were wives. Even the camp's name itself "Akmola Camp for the Wives of Traitors of the Motherland" embraces an inevitable status of "wives" on women, making them dependent on their husbands' statuses. Even though there were mothers, daughters and sisters among the prisoners.

In the memorialization of the camp, the museum domesticates these women by connecting their life stories either to the stories of wives or mothers, but not to individual agents. According to Jacobs the image of maternity is the most frequent and prevalent in the remembrance of female Holocaust victims through photographs in the museums and

monuments: “As a trope of memory, the suffering of mothers, their death and the death of their children, therefore act as a powerful reminder of a type of human evil that the Holocaust has come to represent in the collective imagination” (2010, p.33). Similarly, the majority of female victims of “ALZHIR” are represented in the museum as suffering victimized mothers who lost their children, but individual life stories of women as agents are not narrated by the museum.

Instrumentalization

The memorialization practices of women of the Holocaust, analyzed by Jacobs show the national shift in commemorative politics. Using national narratives is demonstrated in many monuments of the Ravensbrück memorial of the Holocaust, which marginalized the Jewish memory from the narrative: “The overall effect of the Ravensbrück site is thus the marginalization of Jewish memory within a motif of national remembrance that Christianizes images of women’s suffering in visual narratives of remembrance and martyrdom.: (Jacobs, 2010, p.75). The remembrance of the history of “ALZHIR” has also been shaped by the national history frame that constructed its memories in the museum and in the national discourse. The museum “ALZHIR” describes the national history frame by designing the biographies of women with diverse nationalities from different parts of the Soviet Union, and by demonstrating how they became the heroes of the struggle for the independent Kazakh nation.

Appropriation

The strong emotive context that is present in the memorialization practices of women of the “ALZHIR” camp is similar in many ways to the remembrance practices of Holocaust memorials. In both cases women are memorialized as gendered victims: powerless suffering

mothers caring for their children. What is important to consider in comparing the memorialization practices of the two camps is that despite their similarities in memorializing women as victims, the exhibits that evidence the crimes against women demonstrate different types of materials. For example, the memorial of the female camp Ravensbrück of the Holocaust contains photographs, documents and texts of women and children in “starvation, infanticide, experimentation, and forced sexual labor” (Jacobs, 2010, p.57). The memorialization of women of “ALZHIR” is similarly based on materials such as documents of arrests and rehabilitations, and personal memoirs of survivors. To appropriate the context of women’s suffering in the camp, the museum of “ALZHIR” tried to demonstrate their camp lives through different installations, reflecting similarities with the Holocaust memorials in terms of memorialization practices.

Although, the strategies introduced above are similar to the strategies used in analyzing the memorialization practices of Holocaust museums and monuments, like similarities in the commemoration and recreation of the images of women in both museums (analyzed in following chapters), I do not claim neither the similarity of the camps nor try to compare their historical significance. Therefore, moving from the concept of “double genocide”, I assume that the only similarity between the Holocaust memorial and the “ALZHIR” museum and memorial complex is their gendered memorialization of these two camps and strategies in addressing contagious memories.

Section 4.3

Collections

This section explains the shift from the absence to the presence of materials that have been used in the museum. The shift in collection of materials is explained by the

instrumentalization strategy dependent on the interests of the Kazakh state, that created the national history frame.

On the first meeting of survivors of the camp organized by Ivan Ivanovich Sharf (1989), many women brought their documents and letters connected to the period of their imprisonment in the “ALZHIR”. Raissa Zhaksybayeva has explained during one of her interviews that these were the first materials that were used in the first museum of the “History of the camp ‘ALZHIR’” in 1997 (Makeyeva, 2014). Anar, a tour guide of the memorial complex and museum, has told me that either many documents disappeared as they were destroyed after the camp was closed, or many of them are still classified by the state archives of the Federal Security Service (Russia) or the Department of Internal Affairs of Kazakhstan. As it was stated in the methodology section, before their liberation from the camp, women had to sign the “disclose document” (*podpiska o nerazglashenii*) (Shapovalov, 2003) that did not allow them to mention anything about the camp, which explained the reason for the lack of materials.

Apparently, there has been a shift from the collection of the first materials in the first museum, consisting of several documents and letters given by twenty women in the 1989’s meeting¹⁸ to today’s collection constituting 12 000 archival documents in the second museum¹⁹. I explain this shift by the *instrumentalization* strategy which entails the formation of the Kazakh nation as an independent state. I suggest that until Kazakhstan gained its independence in 1991, adopted a law on rehabilitation of victims of political repression in 1993 (Inform.kz, 2011), and Nazarbayev officially declared May 31st the Day of Remembrance of Victims of the Political Repression in 1997, access to archival materials and women’s openness about personal experiences was less acknowledged due to political instability. Kazakhstan was formed as an independent state from the Soviet Union, which

¹⁸ See Chapter 4 Memorialization processes, Section 4.1 Chronology of Memorialization: Individual intervention. The first monument and the meeting.

¹⁹ See Appendix 6 The museum description: Primary sources.

gave it the opportunity to recognize and rehabilitate the victims of political repressions, and furthermore form and reimagine a new national history without the Soviet imposed ideologies and regulations. This has also affected the women's abilities to be open and share their experiences in forms of memoirs and documents.

Indeed, after gaining the independence in 1991, the first official correspondence with survivors of the camp started in 1997 when the first museum of the "History of the camp 'ALZHIR'" was opened by Ivan Sharf and Raissa Zhaksybayeva. As Zhaksybayeva recalls:

In the museum of the "History of the camp ALZHIR" I worked as a manager and methodologist. I corresponded with former prisoners of "ALZHIR", and they sent us their documents. And after so many years of work, sometimes it seems to me that they are all my friends: without looking at the lists, I remember who they were, where they were born, who their descendants are. I know them even better than my relatives [laughs]. And now I'm friends with their descendants – children, grandchildren. (Monakhinya, 2014)

President Nazarbayev officially opened the memorial complex and museum in 2007. The President's attention to the commemoration of the camp made it publicly open, and the museum supposedly started to receive more materials from victims and their descendants. However, the main materials that were initially used in the new museum were the letters and documents donated by survivors that came to the first meeting organized by Sharf in 1989. I assume that this switch from a lack to an abundance of materials within less than 20 years was improved by the power dynamics and political *instrumentalization*. Apparently, opening the museum after almost 20 years of independence was politically controlled, because in 1989 Sharf initiated the idea of commemorating the victims of "ALZHIR" and was criticized by Moscow for the initiative (from the speech of Sharf, Video film "ALZHIR. Restored memory", 2008). According to Sharf, Nazarbayev suggested that he should wait, saying it was not the right time:

At that time Nazarbayev had not been a President, yet. He only started working as a chairman of the presidium of the Supreme Council. I had to ask for his help. He told me 'Keep silent, Ivan. Everything will be OK. We will

not let it burst in'. And I thank him for that (from the speech of Sharf, Video film "ALZHIR. Restored memory", 2008).

While the memorial complex and museum nowadays exhibits many materials that were donated by survivors and their descendants, there is no explanation or any remark on the first museum and its materials. Thus the materials of the two museums supposedly were merged.

Concerning the type of materials that are displayed in the museum, the majority are copies of pictures of women before, during and after imprisonment, donated by their families or taken by the NKVD at the moment of imprisonment (Figures 3-5). The pictures on the museum walls show women that were still untouched by disastrous political repressions. They are feminine ladies from the elite class: some of them are posing in a fashionable manner, others are modestly smiling in the portraits (the museum walls stands opposite such personal objects of women such as clothes, female handbags, and dishes that present women as feminine inmates). These pictures are followed up by the documents of arrests and questionnaires of prisoners. Every official document of arrest clearly reflects that these women were arrested without any trials, which explained that they were not considered as citizens who matter. By placing materials in this particular way the museum shows how weak these women were in their attempts to clear their names from the false accusations of the authorities, and prove that they were innocent.

As the act of remembrance of women of "ALZHIR" the museum has made several films: there is a short film shown at the end of the excursion in the small cinema of the museum, representing the history of the camp and interviews of survivors and their children (Video film "ALZHIR. Restored memory" produced by the museum, 2008); a short film where professional actors acted the scenes of camp life, with the idea of sexual violence appearing for the first time in memorialization, and also the idea of the Kazakh nation helping the prisoners by throwing them cottage cheese which the authorities thought was stones

(“ALZHIR” as the part of social video sets for the Great day of Victory, produced by Dzhamilova, 2016);

These two films are constructed around the national history frame, as they begin and end with the ethnicization of the history of the camp: a) the notification of the role of Kazakh elites and intelligentsia that were also the part of political repressions; b) the role of Kazakh villagers close to the camp in helping the prisoners by feeding prisoners by throwing white stones at them, which were actually cottage cheese. However, apart from the national history frame, one of the films reconstructed the frame of sexual violence in the female camp for the first time: the scene when a commander turned on the radio music in his office to silence a woman while raping her.

However, there is another narrative traced in two films created and financed by the grand-daughter of Lidiya Frenkel (1909-2000) Darya Violina (“Longer than life” 2013, and “We will live on” 2009 with English subtitles). Her grandmother – the survivor of “ALZHIR” and a silent film actress, is also present in the video interviews together with other survivors and their children. Their speeches are incredibly open: they speak about their camp lives; they curse Stalin for their imprisonments, personalizing the bad leader, but not the structure: “What were we jailed for? We did not know. I ask: What wrong I have done to Stalin? Stalin is a bastard! Let him rot!” (Shukuria Akhund-Zade, former prisoner of “ALZHIR”). There is another frame of the narrative of the former commander Barinov meeting in 1989 the former prisoner of “ALZHIR” Kozmina, saying that he never believed that these women were innocent.

Some excerpts from this film were taken from the former video film which was also created by Evgeniya Golovnya, grand-daughter of Golovnya – the survivor of “ALZHIR”. The film was made in 1991 right after the first meeting of the survivors. It was created in a similar frame: survivors, especially Golovnya’s leading voice talking about the camp

experience, with many of them referring to the kind attitude of their commander Barinov, and the expedition to the village where the camp was. These women's narratives are different from those presented by the museum, because they speak about the political actors and authorities of those times, they openly position themselves as "haters" of the system, and are presented as "survivors" rather than "victims" as presented in the Kazakh national frame. Violina donated her two films to the museum's archival foundation. Even though the museum was used as a background in her films, they are not shown in the museum in order to avoid the victimization frame.

The museum shows the detailed biographies of survivors, presenting some pictures with their aging faces, personal letters, belongings, some documents of their rehabilitations, and importantly their memoirs in the forms of poems and novels. Thus, these women are characterized as physically weak, yet at the same time spiritually strong and powerful. Taking women's "spiritual confrontation" ²⁰ as an example, during our interview, Zhaksybayeva said several times that these women were strong in various aspects:

Among the inmates, there were also revolutionaries from 1917s that had some experience of camp life. They helped other women to get used to camp conditions. They thought that by supporting each other they had more chance to survive. They knew that their husbands were murdered, but they also knew that their children were alive. Therefore, they believed that it was important to work to survive in order to see their children (from personal interview, April 2017).

This shift in the commemorative presentation of women reminds Jacob's (2010) analysis of the memorialization of Holocaust women. Similarly, she explains that the surviving women in the Ravensbrück memorial, the only concentration camp for women, are also represented as strong but victimized heroes: "...immense billboard-sized photographs of elderly women with lined faces and graying hair create a powerful visual field for the commemoration of those women who survived the atrocities of incarceration" (Jacobs, 2010, p.56). However,

²⁰ See Chapter 4 Memorialization processes, Section 4.1 Chronology of memorialization: The first museum.

what I found missing in the museum's presentation of some of the documents and pictures was the story about the camp life in visuals – no picture was taken on the territory of “ALZHIR” camp. Correspondingly, Jacobs identifies the same lack of information – “the missing space of memory, the one that lies between incarceration and liberation” (Jacobs, 2010, p.56). Therefore, this “space” has been filled by the recreation of the life of prisoners of “ALZHIR” through installations, visual materials, and monuments that are analyzed in the next section to show what the prison life was like.

The strategy of “instrumentalization” used in these collections describes the national frame that prevails in the collection of museum's materials. In comparison with the personal memorialization of survivors on private video films, the museum's presentation of survivors' images is based on the implemented national history frame that was constructed by the state.

Section 4.4

Historical reconstruction

In this section I examine various materials that tried to recreate the camp life and women's stories, and investigate the *domestication* and *appropriation* strategies prevailing in the presentation of the majority of installations on the museum territory. These installations basically focus around the idea of memorialization of the women of the camp as victimized mothers and wives, as appropriate to the memorializing practices of women's images in Holocaust memorials.

The memorialization of “ALZHIR” is not confined to the pictures and personal objects in the museum. At the moment of entering the territory of the memorial complex, one of the first installations that catch the attention is a heated Stalin wagon “Teplushka” of a freight train standing outside the museum building (Figure 6). It is the museum's recreation of the wagon that transported prisoners into different labor camps inside the Soviet territory.

Positioning the wagon at the entrance to the memorial site recreates the beginning of women's prison lives, starting from the poignant installations that keep the visitors tense till the end of exhibition. Inside the wagon there are female mannequins reflecting women arrested without warning. At the moment of the arrest some of them were deceived that they would meet their husbands, so they put on their best dresses. This information was reconstructed according to the memoirs of several survived women, which highlights the role of memoirs used in the museum as the truth. Galina Stepanova, former prisoner of "ALZHIR", said that after the arrest of her husband she was invited to visit him. She put her best dress and fancy shoes on, but could not meet her husband (Pankratova, 2003, p.12). Many of them were arrested unexpectedly and speedily, so they put on clothes and packed their luggage at random if they had a chance. Therefore, the mannequins are dressed to show how different women dressed differently according to their class affiliations before they were transported to the camp. Former prisoner Golubeva Evdokiya shared in her memoirs that number of women were held in these wagons for months, where communal facilities, the place to sleep and eat were in one small "box" closed from outside:

We were driven for one month without knowing where we were going. The wagon was locked from outside, and was opened only to feed us. In general, we were given herring with brown bread and water. Communal facilities consisted of a round hole in the floor in which we could see the railway track (Pankratova, 2003, p.12)

Although, the whole installation seems unique in depicting the lives of Gulag women being held in a small "box" for months, there is a picture that casts doubt on its authenticity (Figure 7). The picture on the wall of the wagon was not taken in the "ALZHIR" camp, but was taken in around 1944 at the train station of the Auschwitz concentration camp (1939-1945). The women in the picture are standing in line exiting the wagons they were brought in.

There might be various intentions by the museum to apply it into this particular context, as comparing the Gulag system with Nazi concentration camps, and making

unfounded assumption about the similarity of two (although, nothing similar was mentioned by the museum workers during interviews). By using the strategy of *appropriation* of the Holocaust frame into this installation, a particular gendered metaphor is formed. Jacobs' (2010) analysis of women's images in pictures and sculptures in the Auschwitz museum specifies the gendered memory that presents scared faces of women and children: "The chiseled gaze of both figures [mother and child] looks outward toward an unseen fate, their expressions of fear and resignation conveying a sense of anxiousness and foreboding" (Jacobs, 2010, p.34). Similarly, the lowered heads of female mannequins in the wagon, drawn wrinkles on their faces, and eyes full of despair questioning their arrests recreate the picture of women in the same way as they were presented in the Auschwitz museum. Nevertheless, neither the description on the wagon nor the excursions organized by museum guides explain the internal wagon in detail. However, using this picture without any explanations makes us wonder about the authenticity of the material, and the motivations of the museum to use it to frame women's experiences.

Further, to the direction of the museum building, there is an installation of the barrack where women used to live (Figures 10, 11). This barrack recreates the typical camp barrack from outside by showing the barbed wire fence around it. The installation inside of an infant who is being taken away from his mother's hands by the camp officer recreates the situation when children in the camp were sent to the orphanages when reaching the age of three years. This installation demonstrates the image of the mother that dominates in the representation of many women's stories in the museum: there is a separate stand on the wall in the museum that shows letters from children to their mothers. Therefore, it is relevant to claim that the creation of this installation is motivated by the *domestication* strategy that enacts the status of the mother besides being a woman and a wife. There is also unintended, hidden resemblance to the image of mother protecting children in Holocaust commemoration: "The mother –

without a doubt the most common image of women in Holocaust memorials. Holding children, protecting toddlers, carrying infants, heavily pregnant – all of these images appear time and again...” (Jacobs, 2010, p. 32). Thus, the conditions in which women’s identities are presented as domesticated subjects in the museum are appropriated to the presentation of women in the Holocaust museums.

Piece of art in the museum

There is an example of *domestication* strategy used in the museum in the form of art. Another two art compositions of men and women created by state architect Moldabayev are situated on the right and the left sides of the museum entrance. The female figure (Figure 8) is named as “War and Hope” (from Russian translation it is “Struggle and Hope”), and the description below says:

This composition represents a woman that hopes to escape from captivity. So, in thinking about possible ways to do it, she turned to poetry, to poems, to the beautiful (personal translation, although the description is in Kazakh, Russian and English).

The male figure (Figure 9) that is situated opposite to the female is named “Despair and Powerlessness”, and the description below says:

The composition symbolizes hopelessness, the loss of the paths to freedom, and therefore resignation to powerlessness.

There are several gendered elements in these two compositions. First, the image of a man as a desperate figure with a lowered head and an arm, sitting on the chair barefoot recreates the man’s weakness and powerlessness. Opposite to him a figure of a woman with a lifted head and a small notebook in her hands, which she seemingly uses to take notes or write poems. The woman’s glance is directed somewhere up, thus creating a feeling that she has hope and strength inside, reflecting on the social composition of the camp contradicting the exhibition. Therefore, the motive of positioning these two figures opposite each other implies a feeling

that we have a powerful woman that believes, unlike the man who has almost given up. Second, there is a small detail in two figures: the man is sitting on the chair that I suppose was used during interrogations by the NKVD officers, while the woman is sitting on a bucket, a symbol of domestic work that supposedly was used in the camp. By questioning this distinction, I find it important to refer to the *domestication* strategy that implicates that women were considered wives that accomplished domestic work in the camp. The reason of positioning a man and a woman separately made me think about their separate lives. Galina Koldomasova, former prisoner of “ALZHIR”, wrote in her memoirs that many prisoners in the camp had not heard anything about their husbands: many of them were murdered after their arrests or imprisoned in camps other than “ALZHIR”:

Wives and husbands were not imprisoned in the same camp. If I were with my husband, my arrest article would be named differently, because it would mean that my husband was still alive, and I could have lived with him after the release. However, we were not simply “wives”, but widows whose husbands were killed (Pankratova, 2003, p.15)

Last, but not least, placing these figures opposite to each other also suggests the dichotomy of powerlessness of the man to help vulnerable woman that was imprisoned due to relational dependency on the man, for being his wife, daughter, mother or sister. This idea has also been mentioned in Jacob’s (2010) analysis of questioning the masculinity in the representation of men of the Holocaust: “This cultural construction of contested masculinity lends support to a type of victim blaming in which Jewish men are held accountable for the suffering of Jewish women and children.” (Jacob, 2010, p.36) Indeed, apart from installations of male figures of commanders and officers, this composition is the only one in the whole museum site that recreates a man’s figure. This positions the image of the women in the camp as vulnerable and unprotected.

This section investigated the domestication and appropriation strategies that are used in memorialization practices in reconstructing women’s images as victimized identities.

These installations demonstrate the gendered commemorative policies used by the museum of female forced labor camp that are similar to the gendered commemorative practices of concentration camps during the Holocaust. Therefore, the strong connection that is formed between the commemorative practices of gendered memories of the Holocaust and the “ALZHIR” camps results in their similar approaches of “dangerous” memories by the museums they are exhibited in.

This chapter has investigated the chronology of processes of memorialization of the “ALZHIR” camp. The results of my analysis show that the processes of memorialization were followed by different strategies of different actors. It also includes the problem of sexual violence that has not been addressed before. The next chapter focuses on the analysis of these actors and on their *instrumentalization* strategies regarding the memorialization of the history of the “ALZHIR” camp and its survivors.

Chapter 5

Two actors and construction of the national history frame

This chapter analyzes the interaction between Ivan Ivanovich Sharf – the first initiator of the first museum of the “History of the camp ‘ALZHIR’”, and the second initiator of the second museum and memorial complex “ALZHIR” – President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nazarbayev. In addition, this chapter identifies the *instrumentalization* strategy applied in the remembrance of the prisoners of the camp in the museum of “ALZHIR” that stem from the national history frame controlled by the newly constructed country’s commemorative policies.

As it has been previously mentioned in the descriptive part of the museum history, Ivan Ivanovich Sharf was the executive director of the poultry factory OJSC “Akmola-Fenix” in Malinovka. According to the information from the museum and the personal interview that is included in the collection of memoirs of survivors of “ALZHIR” (Pankratova, 2003), he was born in 1930 in the Kalinino village of Rostov region. His parents were repressed as Germans: his father was killed, and his mother died in Gulag. He was sent to the Kazakh village Kenes, where he was raised by a Kazakh family. During his life he repeatedly suffered discrimination for being German. He applied to universities couple of times, but was twice rejected despite good exam results: “At the beginning I wanted to study to prove that not all Germans are fascist...” (Pankratova, 2003, p.76). Later he was made the head of the Agricultural Department of Esil District and he was appointed the executive director of the Akmola poultry factory in 1972, which later became OJSC “Akmola-Fenix”. In 1976 by the decision of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Kazakh Republic the name of Akmola village (or 26th point) was changed to Malinovka:

We tried to eradicate the previous name of the village, as well as other things from the past. We destroyed the barracks, and on their places built 90 apartments house blocks (Pankratova, 2003, p.77)

He was repeatedly elected deputy of district and regional maslikhat (local representative agency). On October 17th 1989, he initiated the identification the burial places of former inmates, called a priest and a mullah to read the prayers at Christian and Muslim burial places.²¹ The next day he organized the first meeting of survivors of “ALZHIR” where 20 survivors came and participated in the opening of the memorial of the red split star (mentioned in the history of the museum). The meeting of survivors was fully funded by the poultry factory, covering living, travelling, and food expenses. (Pankratova, 2003, p. 78). In 1997 Sharf opened the museum of the “History of the camp ‘ALZHIR’”, which was operating for ten years.²²

In his interview, Sharf expressed his gratitude to the president for his support in the times when Moscow blamed him for establishing the memorial of the red split star. However, when opening the second museum and memorial complex “ALZHIR” in 2007, Nazarbayev did not mention neither the name of the first initiator nor the memorial/museum that was established by Sharf. Though, the speech of Sharf from the first meeting of survivors (1989) and the speech of Nazarbayev on the opening ceremony of the museum had the same context where both said: “This tragedy must never happen again” (Musagaliyeva, 2016b). In the museum nowadays Sharf features in one of the last display cabinets on the wall. There is his portrait and short biography, but the feeling of him being pushed into the background by the loud action of opening the large memorial complex does not leave to this day (Figures 12, 13).

Although, the second floor of the museum describes the lives of women that were in the camp, it also has other story of national history that is prominently shown on the first floor of the museum. National elites, members of the autonomous state “Alash Orda” that existed in 1917-20 created the party “Alash”. They tried to implement the ideas of educating

²¹ Although there were Jews among the prisoners.

²² See Chapter 4 Memorialization processes, Section 4.1 Chronology of memorialization: The first museum.

the Kazakh nation, gender equality, criticized the Soviet colonialism policy, and wanted to be autonomous (Saduakasova, 2014). The display cabinets on the first floor have the biographies of members of this party, and the documents of their arrests. Their wives, daughters, mothers, sisters were sent to the “ALZHIR” camp whose stories are told on the second floor. The last part on the wall of the second floor is dedicated to the events of December 16th of 1986 when the Kazakh youth participated in protests against communist power. In 1991 Kazakhstan gained its independence, and events of 1986 were considered in the national history as decisive in the formation of the new and independent nation. Thus, there is a national history of the struggle to independence of the Kazakh nation that is prolonged from the first floor to the last display cabinet on the second floor.

The museum applies the strategy of *instrumentalizing* the history of the camp to the history of the Kazakh nation by constructing the last display case in a way that these women’s torments of these women were not in vain, because in the end the Kazakh nation obtained its independence. This way, the museum is presenting the roles of women in the history as being the heroes and predecessors of the present independent Kazakh state. A similar instrumentalization technique was used by the Baltic memory regimes (Pettai, 2015) that supports that a certain historical event can be interpreted differently due to the interests of the actors. Although Pettai (2015) calls them “mnemonic warriors” (based on Bernhard and Kubik) or members of “political society”, she clearly defines that the memory regimes controlled by the state actors definitely shape the Soviet past into the national history:

Regarding their conclusions about the dominant patterns of memory politics in the Central and East European region, we are told that the majority of post-communist democratic states exhibit a high degree of mnemonic contestation, with mnemonic warriors fighting for hegemonic truth, thus qualifying as “fractured memory regimes” (Pettai, 2015, p.167).

Indeed, when giving a speech on the opening ceremony of the museum and memorial complex “ALZHIR” Nazarbayev ended his speech by thanking the victims and survivors with the reference democratic values as integrity, peace and harmony with other nations:

This lesson is still relevant today. A society in which confrontation exists will never be happy. Therefore, we must protect peace and harmony in our Kazakhstan. And if we want to finally get rid of the terrible legacy of those years, we need to uphold and develop the principles of democracy on the basis of national consensus. Kazakhstan is building a modern legal state. We live in an era of democratic reforms. One of the next steps in this direction was the amendment of the Basic Law of the country, which opens up new opportunities for us to build a strong and effective civil society. Today, the international community recognizes that the new reform has become a bold historic step in the path of sustainable development of Kazakhstan. Our main task is to further strengthen the foundations of an open, democratic and rule-of-law state in which both universally recognized democratic values and the traditions of our multinational and multi-confessional society are harmoniously combined. This is the main guarantee of the impossibility of repeating such tragedies in the future. I call to appreciate what has given us free and independent development of our multinational Homeland (Nazarbayev, 2007).

Continuous reference to democracy and the new Kazakhstani reforms shows that Nazarbayev is focused on maintaining the new nation that will not inherit the tragedies of the Soviet past, and value the lives on contributions of those who passed away. Thus, presentation of the history of the camp “ALZHIR” through starting from the national intelligentsia and their struggle to maintain autonomy is central in constructing the national history frame in the centuries-old struggle to gain independence.

Thus, there is a change in the memorialization of the history and women of “ALZHIR” that is controlled by the state action in intervening into the process of changing the memories from Sharf’s memorialization. After the state involved into the memorialization, the stories of women of “ALZHIR” were no longer considered as individual, but became the part of emphasized national history frame that integrated women’s memories into ethnicization frame. Moreover, in this course of changing memories, the

President's dominant position silenced the key actor - Ivan Ivanovich Sharf's role in founding the memorialization of women of the camp "ALZHIR".

This chapter analyzed the interaction of two key actors that contributed into changing the memorialization of the camp and women of "ALZHIR". However, the representation of the history of this camp has been shaped by national history frame that expanded after Kazakhstan's independence date. This explains the *instrumentalization* strategy used by the state that positioned women's individual stories under the national history framework, and memorialized them as part of it.

Conclusion

My research has analyzed the dynamics of memorialization processes of the female camp “ALZHIR” in post-Soviet Kazakhstan. First, I shaped a chronology of remembrance of “ALZHIR” by breaking the processes of memorialization into phases. Second, I discovered three main actors/agents that controlled these processes: survivors of the camp, Ivan Ivanovich Sharf, and the Kazakh state. What is striking from this story is that the survivors and their children almost do not participate in controlling the processes of memorialization, as they are visible only when bringing in their materials and memoirs. Third, I identified the main frames that were used by different actors in the un/silencing of the memories: Sharf, who tried to un-silence the myriads of stories of survivors by initiating the destruction of the first barracks, meeting of survivors, establishing the monument and the museum; and the Kazakh state, that intervened into the process of the camp memorialization, and substituted the first museum with new memorial complex. The state’s intervention resulted in silencing the initiative of Sharf, borrowing the Holocaust memorialization into the “ALZHIR” memorialization framework, and ethnicizing of memorialization of “ALZHIR” by prioritizing a certain victim group to the history of the Kazakh nation.

As it has been analyzed in the literature review by Kurvet-Käosaar (2013), the issue of silence is often present in the memorialization of sexual violence by the survivors. This research has also raised a significant problem of silenced sexual violence in the memories of “ALZHIR” camp. However, as it has not been addressed before, it demands further investigations.

Thus, there emerges a very strong and important perspective on the investigation of memorialization of this specific women’s camp – an untapped area to study. A very little has been conducted on the commemoration of the “ALZHIR” camp and its survivors. Whereas most of the literature has reviewed the history of the camp, rather than its memorialization

processes and frames. My research opens a space for investigation of the memory influx with regards to the un/silencing processes in the memorialization and uncovers the issue of sexual violence in the camp for further investigations.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Table 1:

The number of nationalities of women in the “Akmola Camp for the Wives of Traitors of the Motherland.” 1938-1953. (62 nationalities). From the Museum of “ALZHIR”. (translate from Figure 1)

	Nationality	Number		Nationality	Number
1	Abazins	9	32	Moksha	1
2	Abkhazians	4	33	Moldovans	4
3	Avarian	1	34	Mordovians	21
4	Austrian	1	35	Nogais	2
5	Adzharians	4	36	Germans	169
6	Azerbaijanis	44	37	Norwegian	1
7	English	3	38	Ossetians	10
8	Armenians	79	39	Poles	173
9	Assyrians	2	40	Romanians	3
10	Bulgarians	6	41	Russians	4390
11	Bashkir	1	42	Tajik	1
12	Byelorussians	134	43	Tatars	70
13	Hungarians	7	44	Turkmens	2
14	Dutch	1	45	Turkish	7
15	Greeks	14	46	Ulin	1
16	Georgians	146	47	Uyghur	1
17	Dagestani	1	48	Uzbek	6
18	Jews	855	49	Ukrainian	740
19	Zyryans	2	50	Uman	1
20	Ingush	1	51	Finns	12
21	Italian	1	52	French	4
22	Kabardians	29	53	Roma	1
23	Kazakhs	87	54	Circassians	8
24	Kalmyks	3	55	Montenegrin	1
25	Karachays	10	56	Czechoslovak	1
26	Komi	2	57	Czechs	2
27	Koreans	7	58	Chuvash	2
28	Latvians	102	59	Swede	1
29	Lezgin	1	60	Estonians	21
30	Litvka	1	61	Japanese	1
31	Lithuanian	13	62	Unknown nationalities	20

Appendix 2

Interview questions:

- Where/how did you start your initial research on “ALZHIR”?
- Where/how did you start your initial research on “ALZHIR”?
- What was your motivation (personal/political)?
- What was your experience in archives?
- What other sources did you use in your research?
- What kind of concerns did you have in the process of doing research?

Appendix 3

The list of interviewees:

1. Anar – the tour guide of the museum; female;
Date: April 12th 2017; Place: the museum and memorial complex of the “victims of political repressions and totalitarianism ‘ALZHIR’”, Malinovka;
2. Raissa – the head of the exposition and exhibition department of the museum; female;
Date: April 12th 2017; Place: the museum and memorial complex of the “victims of political repressions and totalitarianism ‘ALZHIR’”, Malinovka;
3. The local villager; female;
Date: April 18th 2017; Place: Astana;
4. The son of the survived woman, anonymous; male;
Date: April 20th 2017; Place: Malinovka
5. The daughter of the repressed, local villager; female;
Date: April 20th 2017; Place: Malinovka

Appendix 4

Chronology of memorialization:

1970s – Destroying barracks;
 1989 – Identifying the buried places of former inmates;
 1989 – The first meeting of survivors of “ALZHIR” camp;
 1989 – Establishing of the monument of a red split star;
 1997 – The first museum of the “History of the camp ‘ALZHIR’”;
 2007 – The second museum and memorial complex of the “Victims of Political Repressions and Totalitarianism”;

Appendix 5

Figure 1 The list of nationals in the Akmola Camp for Wives of Traitors of the Motherland, 1938-1953

НАЦИОНАЛЬНЫЙ СОСТАВ УЗНИЦ
АКМОЛЫНСКОГО ЛАГЕРЯ ЖЕН ИЗМЕННИКОВ
РОДИНЫ. 1938-1953 ГГ.

№	НАЦИОНАЛЬНОСТЬ	КОЛИЧЕСТВО	№	НАЦИОНАЛЬНОСТЬ	КОЛИЧЕСТВО
1	Абхазы	9	32	Молдавы	1
2	Абхазы	4	33	Молдавы	4
3	Авры	1	34	Молдавы	21
4	Азербайджанцы	1	35	Молдавы	2
5	Азербайджанцы	4	36	Молдавы	109
6	Азербайджанцы	44	37	Молдавы	1
7	Азербайджанцы	3	38	Молдавы	10
8	Армяне	79	39	Полки	173
9	Азербайджанцы	2	40	Румыны	3
10	Белорусы	6	41	Русские	4390
11	Белорусы	1	42	Татары	30
12	Белорусы	134	43	Украины	2
13	Белорусы	7	44	Украины	2
14	Белорусы	1	45	Украины	1
15	Белорусы	14	46	Украины	1
16	Белорусы	146	47	Украины	1
17	Белорусы	1	48	Украины	6
18	Белорусы	853	49	Украины	740
19	Белорусы	2	50	Украины	1
20	Белорусы	1	51	Украины	12
21	Белорусы	1	52	Украины	4
22	Белорусы	29	53	Украины	1
23	Белорусы	87	54	Украины	6
24	Белорусы	3	55	Украины	1
25	Белорусы	19	56	Украины	1
26	Белорусы	2	57	Украины	2
27	Белорусы	2	58	Украины	2
28	Белорусы	102	59	Украины	1
29	Белорусы	1	60	Украины	21
30	Белорусы	1	61	Украины	1
31	Белорусы	13	62	Украины	20

Figure 2 The monument “Split red star”. Malinovka village



Figure 3 Aziza Ryskulova (before camp period)



Figure 4 Gertruda Platais (during camp period)



Figure 5 Mimi Brikhman (post camp period)



Figure 6 “Teplushka” wagon



Figure 7 “Teplushka” wagon from inside



Figure 8 “War and Hope”



Figure 9 “Despair and Powerlessness”



Figure 10 The barrack N26



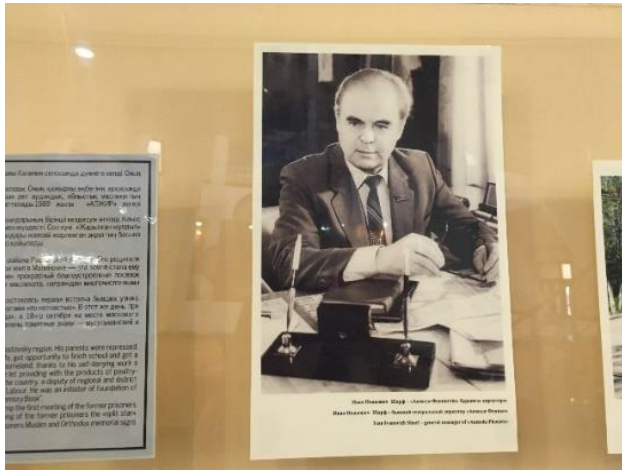
Figure 11 Inside the barrack N26



Figure 12 The apartments built by Sharf's initiative. Malinovka village



Figure 13 From left to right: biography and portrait of Sharf I.I. (1930-2008)



Appendix 6

The museum description

Famous state architect and designer Saken Narynov was appointed by the President as the main architect of the project “ALZHIR”. In his interview, Narynov said that while working on this project he visualized the image of a woman, a mother that is always helping in struggle: “The main monument of the museum – the arch of sorrow is based on the image of woman.” (Video film “ALZHIR. Restored memory”, 2008). The arch is massive and draws the attention from the first minute of entering the memorial site. The arch consists of a black dome and a white veil embodying a mother grieving about the children who died in the years of repressions. According to Narynov, the idea of arch demonstrates the threshold from this world of living to another world of dead. Black and white are different colors of mourning in different nations, therefore the arch is the symbol of harmony, accordance and culture of different nations and religions.

The museum building does not have any windows, except for the one on the top of the building, which lightens all of the exhibits. Narynov explains the light to be the light of the world (from the video film “ALZHIR. Restored memory”, 2012). The memorial complex and the museum consist of several installations outside and inside the museum building.

Outside the museum:

- the installation of the Stalin Wagon “teplushka” (heated wagon) represents the typical wagon where prisoners were transported. The approximate number of inmates transported in the wagon was 70. Prisoners were kept in such wagons for 1 or 2 months. The name was given by political prisoners for heating inside the wagon;²³
- the fenced-off area with barbed wires and the installation of an armed soldier with the dog that represent the security system of the camp. Also, the dogs were usually used by officers to scare or force women to follow commands (from the collection of memoirs of survivors, Pankratova, 2003);
- the figure of a man by Moldabayev representing despair and powerlessness, who does not see any hope, in comparison with the figure of a woman that is located in the opposite direction (Moldabayev) representing the struggle and hope. This is the example of the idea of many men being murdered, and women waiting for some news of their husbands with the hope about their safety;
- the installation of the original barrack where women lived, demonstrating the officers taking a baby from the hands of the inmate, the beds where women slept, and their personal belonging;
- and the wall with 7000 surnames of all the victims of the camp between 1930-1950s.

Inside the museum:

- in the center of the first floor the installation “Flower of memory” by Tussupbekov and Aldabergenov. The rose breaking the stone representing the power of remembering;
- the installation of 15 pigeons in cages under the roof representing 15 former republics of the Soviet Union;
- the installation of interrogation between the officer and the woman in the room of the investigator with Stalin’s portrait on the wall;

²³ See Chapter 4 Memorialization processes, Section 4.4 Historical reconstruction.

- the installation of the work place of prisoners in the garment factory in the darkness (according to the memoirs of survivors, garment factory was the least preferable place. Due to darkness in the room many women lost their sights (from the memoirs of Kozhakhmetova, Pankratova, 2003, p.10);
- the installation of the sleeping place in the barracks representing letters stick to the wall that these women used to receive from their families;
- the installation of hands by Tussupbekov represents the hands in the cages that have the mirror background. The main idea of this installation was to connect the past with present, by letting the visitor see him/herself in the reflection through the mirror.

The entrance to the museum building starts from the tunnel of 12 meters with the drawings on the wall. The drawings represent the struggles of Kazakh nation during political repressions²⁴. The author of the pictures is Sembegali Smagulov. The tunnel leads to the first floor of the museum which represents the history of the Kazakh nation from the period of becoming the part of the Russian Empire, years of mass deportations and famine. The Kazakh party Alash and its important political figures were considered as elites, and during political repressions were all condemned and murdered. Many of their wives were imprisoned in this camp, and their biographies are also shared by the museum.

On the second floor there are biographies and personal items of 56 women that were in this camp. So, if the first floor connects visitors with the general introductory information on the history before the repressions, the second floor situates the individual stories in the history. Although, from the first sight it is not clear, but in fact both floors represent the attempts in struggle of Kazakh nation to obtain its independence⁴. By the end of the exhibition on the second floor there is a stand with the history of the museum that started from the initiative of Sharf, and the next stand leads to the December uprisings of 1986 in Almaty that are considered as the main incentive that led to the independence of Kazakh nation.

Primary sources

Nowadays there are 12 000 archival materials that are constantly expanded with new documents that are either brought by the descendants or volunteers, or found through the museum researches. There are two ways through which the museum gets access to the copies of original archival documents: 1. Department of internal affairs and 2. Through the legal statistics department in the prosecutors' general office where they send the request to the documents of a certain person, and might be given or denied access at the descendants' request.

In many cases descendants keep online contacts with the museum workers via emails and other social networks. As Anar, a tour guide of the memorial complex and museum, said: "Often the descendants are very shy to tell their stories. Very often they come out during the tours, and after that we begin to work with them. We try to keep contact with them, so they would send us some documents and personal materials" (personal interview, April 2017). Every month some of the exhibits in the museum are renewed and reorganized, so once they receive a new material on a certain person they put it in the exhibition immediately. On a regular basis the museum workers visit colleges, universities and high schools with their presentations on the museum and the history of the camp, so they try to share and keep the memory of the camp. They also have strong connections with embassies of different countries, because in the "ALZHIR" camp there were prisoners from 62 nationalities, so in

²⁴ See Chapter 5 Two actors and construction of the national history.

case delegates from a certain country come they try to talk about the women from that country. The museum has its own social fund “Amanat-ALZHIR” that is functioning from the donations from investors and governmental support. On the official website there is a link to this social fund where anyone can invest any amount of financial aid.

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