



# Personal Experiences of Nationality and Power in Soviet Kazakhstan, 1917-1953

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*Personal Experiences of Nationality and Power in Soviet Kazakhstan, 1917-1953*

A dissertation presented

by

Maria Aleksandra Blackwood

to

The Department of History

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the subject of

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Personal Experiences of Nationality and Power in Soviet Kazakhstan, 1917-1953

Abstract

This dissertation examines the first generation of Kazakhs who joined the Communist Party and entered Soviet Kazakhstan's political elite. Because conditions in the Kazakh steppe were so far removed from the Marxist revolutionary program, the backgrounds, motivations, and career trajectories of these early Party activists are essential to comprehending the interrelated processes of nation-building, modernization, and Sovietization in Central Asia, and in the Soviet Union more broadly. I argue that their mediation between Party ideology and local realities was crucial to determining the contours of Soviet Kazakhstan and its institutions, and that their stories demonstrate both the reach and the limits of the Soviet transformative project as a process that was contentious and participatory, both empowering and repressive. In this dissertation, I outline the importance of pre-revolutionary ideas and relationships as they were translated into new, Soviet conditions, arguing that personal ties predating 1917 were often more important than ideology. Analyzing their personal and professional trajectories, I contend that, despite the colonial and imperial dimensions of Soviet rule, local Bolsheviks were not just intermediaries in a Soviet "civilizing mission," but actively shaped Soviet Kazakhstan both figuratively and literally, establishing its borders and pushing for policies that aligned with their vision of the Kazakh nation.

This dissertation is fundamentally about individuals interacting with and exercising power in the context of a regime that was characterized by multifaceted contradictions. The first two chapters lay out the landscape—human and geographic—that determined the contours of

Soviet Kazakhstan. Chapters Three and Four examine the nature of power as it functioned within that landscape. Chapters Five and Six examine these factors in the context of specific individuals and their experiences of and with the Soviet regime in Kazakhstan. The establishment of Soviet power in Central Asia was a messy process, rife with unintended consequences. This dissertation argues for the utility of examining individual lives, separately and in aggregate, as a window onto social and political realities in the Soviet Union. Looking at individuals reveals the contradictions inherent to the Soviet system, and examining individual trajectories illuminates Soviet politics and society in all its complexity.

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## NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND TERMINOLOGY

Geographical names are given as they were at the time in question (Vernyi vs. Alma-Ata vs. Almaty), with one important exception. Until 1925, the precursor to today's Kazakhstan was known as the Kyrgyz ASSR. The republic was known as "Kazakstan" from 1925 to 1936, when the spelling was altered to "Kazakhstan." For the sake of consistency, the modern name is used throughout. Similarly, although the Kazakhs were known in Russian as "Kyrgyz" until 1925, the ethnonym "Kazakh" is used throughout.

Russian is transliterated in accordance with the ALA-LC Romanization for Russian, with the usual modifications. Although Kazakh is slated to transition from a Cyrillic alphabet to a Latin one in the next few years, the exact parameters of that new alphabet remain in flux. In this dissertation, therefore, Kazakh is transliterated in accordance with Allworth (1971). Most of the personal names mentioned in this dissertation are spelled differently in Russian and in Kazakh (Il'ias Dzhansugurov vs. Iliyas Jansügïrov, Mukhtar Auezov vs. Mukhtar Äuëzov), and most of the people involved used both versions in different contexts, with the younger generation heavily favoring the Russian spelling. For the sake of consistency, names are transliterated in accordance with ALA-LC Romanization for Russian. This is also true for the names of other non-Russian figures (Stanislav Pestkovskii as opposed to Stanisław Pestkowski). Authors and titles of works cited are transliterated from the language of the original.

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## INTRODUCTION

“The Central Committee did not balk at the shortage of people and did not wait for them to fall out of the sky as fully prepared and mature Marxists; rather, it decisively and boldly enlisted and promoted to leadership positions those comrades who were on hand.”<sup>1</sup> This assessment of Kazakhstan’s political elite, written on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the Kazakh ASSR in 1935, is deeply revealing in terms of the political dynamics of the early Soviet Union. The fact that the Bolsheviks essentially had to take who they could get—not only in Kazakhstan, but across the territories that would become the Soviet Union—would have far-reaching consequences for the political landscape of the USSR. By enlisting “those comrades who were on hand,” Soviet authorities essentially imported the legacy of imperial structures, including pre-existing social and political relationships, into the process of Soviet development.

When the Bolsheviks began to establish control in the former territories of the Russian Empire in the wake of the October Revolution, they perceived myriad obstacles to the realization of their political program in the conditions of the Kazakh steppe. Throughout the early years of Soviet rule, Party officials both in Moscow and in Kazakhstan complained of the “objective conditions” that made their work in this particular republic especially challenging.<sup>2</sup> At the Kazakhstan’s third Party conference in 1923, one official conceded that “working in Kazakhstan is notoriously difficult.”<sup>3</sup> In 1930, a VTsIK report on the state of political, economic, and cultural development in Kazakhstan laid out the “exceptionally difficult and peculiar conditions” faced

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<sup>1</sup> N. Timofeev, “Bor’ba Kazpartorganizatsii s ukлонami v natsvoprose,” *Bol’shevik Kazakstana*

<sup>2</sup> GARF f.1235 op.125 d.263 l.189.

<sup>3</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.541 l.46.

by Party authorities, citing the republic's vast size, the poor state of communications, "the extreme dispersion of the indigenous population," and "the extreme ignorance and backwardness of the population, which is still under the power of vestiges of feudal-clan relations." Among all of these challenges, "the acute shortage of qualified [Party] workers, especially from among the indigenous population" was singled out as "one of Kazakhstan's greatest handicaps."<sup>4</sup>

These problems reflect the broader challenges that the Bolsheviks confronted as they sought to establish a Marxist state in the territories of tsarist Russia. As a sprawling multiethnic state that had undergone limited industrialization and whose population remained predominantly agricultural, the Russian Empire did not seem like a likely location for a successful socialist revolution. When the Bolsheviks seized power in October 1917, they did not have a clearly formulated policy for approaching the national question. They were forced to address the challenges of translating Marxism to Russian conditions both in their ideology and in their policies, particularly with regards to the multiethnic nature of the Russian state. Because nationalism represented an alternative mobilizing force to class, it presented a threat to the Marxist political program. With the promulgation of Soviet nationalities policy, the Bolshevik state sought meet all the demands of nationalism in order to diffuse them, following the principle that national consciousness had to be articulated and overcome in order to achieve true class consciousness. This meant that even those groups that had not existed as developed "nationalities" would be granted specifically delimited territories within a Soviet Union

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<sup>4</sup> GARF f.1235 op.125 d.263 ll.170, 199-200.

organized along ethnic lines, which would provide them with educational and cultural opportunities in their native languages.<sup>5</sup>

Whereas the Russian Empire needed skilled intermediaries who could serve the imperial administration, the ostensibly anti-imperial Bolshevik political program required the active participation of representatives of local nationalities as political actors. As V.A. Raduzhen'kovich, an Old Bolshevik who was dispatched to Kazakhstan in 1920 and spent two years in the republic in several key positions, remarked in his memoirs, "It was clear that without local [Party] workers familiar with the Kazakh way of life and the Kazakh language, we would be unable to develop our work in any way, we would be unable to penetrate not only the broad masses, but also the relatively narrow and to us highly important milieu of the Kazakh proletariat."<sup>6</sup>

Throughout the early years of Soviet rule in Kazakhstan, Party officials constantly complained of the fact that there were far too few Party functionaries who were far too dispersed. At Kazakhstan's first Party Conference in June 1921, the representative of the Central Committee complained about the ethnic composition of the republic's Party apparatus. "The make up of this conference demonstrates that the comrades working in [Kazakhstan] do not sufficiently value the necessity of enlisting those who up until now have been considered an

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<sup>5</sup> On the development of the Bolsheviks' nationalities policy, see Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Yuri Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (Summer, 1994): 414-452; Jeremy Smith, *The Bolsheviks and the National Question, 1917-1923* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999); Ibid., *Red Nations: The Nationalities Experience in and after the USSR* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>6</sup> APRK f.811 op.2 d.24 ll.82-83.

oppressed nationality.”<sup>7</sup> In that same year, a Communist official lamented that the republic’s Party apparatus was almost exclusively Russian, and that those Kazakhs who were present in Party structures were not proletarians, but rather “representatives of the Kazakh intelligentsia, which has torn itself away from the proletarian layers of its society.”<sup>8</sup> At Kazakhstan’s third Party conference in 1923, the representative of the Central Committee reiterated the sentiment that there were too few Kazakhs within the Party. “Russian Marxists, many of them seasoned [Party] workers who give a lot of weight to the question of class, have paid absolutely no attention to the fact that working here among the Kazakh nationality, we must train a specific cadre of workers in the Marxist spirit,” he said. “At the local level, we must promote good workers from among the Kazakhs.”<sup>9</sup>

On the one hand, Party officials constantly complained of the fact that there were not enough Kazakhs in the Party, regularly lamenting what they saw as insufficient efforts to recruit Kazakh proletarians for Party and Soviet work.<sup>10</sup> Expanding the number of Kazakhs in the Party was deemed the Kazakhstani Party organization’s “most important task.”<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, Party officials were confronted with the fact that there were simply not enough qualified people to recruit. Indeed, the lower levels of the Party apparatus consistently left much to be desired, a frequent topic of discussion at Party meetings. Recruiting skilled Kazakhs was a major preoccupation, and “the acute shortage of qualified cadres from the indigenous population” was

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<sup>7</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.1a l.3.

<sup>8</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.207 l.151.

<sup>9</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.541 l.25.

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., APRK f.139 op.1 d.1a ll.2-3, d.769a l.21ob.; d.818v l.41.

<sup>11</sup> APRK f.141 op.1 d.1842 l.205.

presented as a significant obstacle to the implementation of various Soviet initiatives.<sup>12</sup> “Under present conditions we must carry out a colossal amount of preparatory work in order to organize a [Party] apparatus given the fact that the Party Bureau lacks sufficient [human] material,” one official reported at the first All-Kazakh Conference of the RKP(b) in 1920.<sup>13</sup> Ten years later, a VTsIK report concluded, “The lack of cadres, the need for whom is growing greater and greater, is creating a kind of ‘scissors,’ the long-term result of which may be an insurmountable obstacle to successfully bringing about a cultural revolution in Kazakhstan.”<sup>14</sup>

Those Kazakhs who constituted the potential pool of cadres on which the Bolsheviks could draw to fill Party posts were members of an expanding but tiny educated class. The proliferation of Russian-language schools in the second half of the nineteenth century and the easing of restrictions on publishing in the wake of the 1905 revolution brought about a significant expansion of Kazakh political participation and publishing activities. While only about 80 Kazakh-language books were published in the Russian Empire over the course of the nineteenth century, more than 200 were printed between 1900 and 1917.<sup>15</sup> At the time of the revolution, only about two percent of Kazakhs were literate in Russian.<sup>16</sup> One incomplete estimate posits that as of 1917, only 700 Kazakhs had completed secondary school, while only

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<sup>12</sup> GARF f.1235 op.125 d.263 l.197. See, e.g. APRK f. 139 op.1 d.1a ll.2-4, 21-27, 117; d.36 ll.74, 113; d.39 ll.16, 26; GARF f.1235 op.123 d.339 l.8.

<sup>13</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.1a l.102.

<sup>14</sup> GARF f.1235 op.125 d.263 ll.188-189.

<sup>15</sup> Shirin Akiner, *The Formation of Kazakh National Identity: From Tribe to Nation-State* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1995), 29.

<sup>16</sup> APRK f.811 op.23 d.108 l.179.

about 100 had a university degree.<sup>17</sup> In 1930, ten years after the creation of Soviet Kazakhstan, the rate of illiteracy in some parts of the republic was still as high as 80 percent.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, full adult literacy was not achieved until the 1940s.<sup>19</sup>

These demographic realities meant that, as the Bolsheviks sought to establish power in the Kazakh steppe, they had to rely on those potential partners who were available to them. As Seitgali Mendeshiev explained at Kazakhstan's 1923 Party conference, the issues [*nenormal'nosti*] that the Party faced in the republic were closely tied to Kazakhstan's peculiarities, especially historical factors and the legacy of Russian colonialism.<sup>20</sup> This was also true of the republic's human landscape—structures established by the Russian Empire played a decisive role in determining the contours of Kazakhstan's early Soviet elite. Examining those Kazakhs who entered the Party's upper echelons in the first two decades of Soviet rule reveals that they tended to come from areas with a significant Russian settler presence, and their educational and professional trajectories were shaped by cultural and social contact with Russians. Virtually all of the Kazakhs who reached the upper ranks of the Party between 1920 and 1937 had attended a so-called Russian-native school before 1917. At a very basic level, they were able to reach the upper echelons of the Party because they were literate in Russian at the

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<sup>17</sup> Roza Kairbekovna Nurmagambetova, *Dvizhenie Alash i Alash-Orda: istoriografiia problemy, 1920-1990-e gody XX veka* (Almaty: Ministerstvo obrazovaniia i nauki Respubliki Kazakhstan, Institut istorii i etnologii im. Ch. Ch. Valikhanova, 2003), 11; Dina Amazholova, "Kavaleristy" i "lomovye rabotniki" vo vlasti: *Iz istorii stanovleniia politicheskoi elity sovetskogo Kazakhstana* (Saarbrücken: LAP Lambert, 2011), 5; APRK f.811 op.19 d.248 ll.33-44.

<sup>18</sup> GARF f.1235 op.125 d.263 l.199.

<sup>19</sup> Akiner, *The Formation of Kazakh Identity*, 41.

<sup>20</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.541 l.124.

time of the revolution. As one participant in the Bolshevik takeover of Vernyi (present-day Almaty) remarked, “the bourgeoisie could not have imagined whose cadres it was preparing.”<sup>21</sup>

The fact that qualified Kazakhs were a rare commodity meant that the early years of Soviet rule brought significant opportunities for those who were sufficiently educated to pursue political careers within Party structures. It also meant that Kazakh Party functionaries were given a significant degree of leeway in their activities. Throughout the 1920s, the Bolsheviks conducted a series of membership drives and Party purges as Communist officials alternately sought to increase the number of ethnic Kazakhs in the Party and confronted the realities of a population that was predominantly illiterate and whose social structure did not conform neatly to Communist ideology. The nascent Kazakh Soviet elite was largely exempt from the Party purges of the early 1920s because it was seen as indispensable. One complaint from 1923 illustrated the degree of latitude this afforded Kazakh Communists. As one Party official lamented at Kazakhstan’s Third Party Conference, “Comrade [Saken] Seifullin disappeared for an entire year [...] and the Oblast Party Committee did not know where he was, there was even a rumor that he had died, but Comrade Seifullin materialized a year later and Party organs, taking into account his revolutionary activity since 1917, appointed him to a responsible post as soon as he reappeared.”<sup>22</sup>

The backgrounds, motivations, and career trajectories of these early Party activists are essential to comprehending the interrelated processes of nation-building, modernization, and Sovietization in Central Asia, and in the Soviet Union more broadly. Because conditions in the Kazakh steppe were so far removed from the Marxist revolutionary program, examining the first

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<sup>21</sup> APRK f.811 op.4 d.381 l.5.

<sup>22</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.541 l.46.

generation of Kazakh Bolsheviks provides a valuable lens for exploring these questions. I argue that their mediation between Communist ideology and local realities was crucial to determining the contours of Soviet Kazakhstan and its institutions, and that their stories demonstrate both the reach and the limits of the Soviet transformative project as a process that was contentious and participatory, both empowering and repressive. In this dissertation, I outline the importance of pre-revolutionary ideas and relationships as they were translated into new, Soviet conditions, arguing that personal ties predating 1917 were often more important than ideology. Analyzing their personal and professional trajectories, I contend that, despite the colonial and imperial dimensions of Soviet rule, local Bolsheviks were not just intermediaries in a Soviet “civilizing mission,” but actively shaped Soviet Kazakhstan both figuratively and literally, establishing its borders and pushing for policies that aligned with their vision of what the Kazakh nation was. As V.A. Radus-Zen’kovich reflected in his memoir, “There can be no doubt regarding the importance of the early period of the organization of the republic—the most difficult and the most complicated—for all of its subsequent development.”<sup>23</sup>

## **Background**

Before 1924, the territories that would become Soviet Kazakhstan had never been governed as one administrative unit. Although all of the constituent parts of the future Kazakh republic had been incorporated into the Russian Empire between 1730 and 1824, Kazakh-inhabited territories came under Russian rule at different times and were administered under various structures and policies across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As the Bolsheviks set up their governing apparatus in the wake of the October Revolution, various Kazakh

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<sup>23</sup> APRK f.811 op.2 d.24 l.95.

territories were administered out of Omsk, Orenburg, and Tashkent—none of which were incorporated into Kazakhstan after the national delimitation of 1924.<sup>24</sup> Although the Kazakhs referred to themselves as such in their own language, in Russian they were known as Kyrgyz, or Kyrgyz-Kaisak.<sup>25</sup> When Soviet authorities created an administrative unit for the Kazakhs, it was initially known as the Kyrgyz ASSR. It was only in 1925 that the name was formally changed, and a Kazakh republic officially appeared on the map.<sup>26</sup>

The Kazakhs have their origins in the mid-fifteenth century as a political confederation composed primarily of Turkic speaking nomads, which by the mid-sixteenth century had adopted the designation “Kazakh.” By the early eighteenth century, the Kazakhs existed as three hordes, or *zhüzes*: the Üly Zhüz, the Orta Zhüz, and the Kīshī Zhüz (literally Great Hundred, Middle Hundred, and Small Hundred). The *zhüzes* were tribal federations based in military unions, and their members did not necessarily share common ancestry. Although the hordes were not strictly territorially delimited, they occupied primarily the territories that correspond approximately to today’s southern, central and northern, and northwestern Kazakhstan, respectively. Each horde was further subdivided into various tribes and clans, which existed within a complicated hierarchy of lineages. Despite these divisions, the Kazakhs shared a common language, culture, and economy. Indeed, their identification with the three hordes differentiated the Kazakhs from

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<sup>24</sup> Sarah Cameron, “The Hungry Steppe: Soviet Kazakhstan and the Kazakh Famine, 1921-1934” (PhD diss., Yale University, 2010), 6.

<sup>25</sup> It is generally accepted that this misnomer arose in order to avoid confusion with the Cossacks (Russian *kazak*, versus the Kazakh ethnonym *qazaq*). See Ian Campbell, *Knowledge and the Ends of Empire: Kazak Intermediaries and Russian Rule in the Steppe, 1731-1917* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017), 17-21.

<sup>26</sup> See Chapter Two.

other Turkic groups. By the nineteenth century, there was a strong sense of commonality among the *zhüzes*—a Kazakh would identify himself to an outsider as a “child of the three hordes.”<sup>27</sup>

Between 1730 and 1824, the Russian Empire gradually established hegemony in the territories of all three hordes and began to develop a colonial administration. For much of the imperial period, the Russian state’s penetration of the steppe was limited to isolated forts. In the second half of the nineteenth century, however, the Russian presence in Kazakh lands intensified with the proliferation of agricultural settlers and the development of state institutions. Nevertheless, across the pre-revolutionary period, imperial officials operated within what one scholar has termed “islands of certainty in the midst of a sea they barely knew.”<sup>28</sup> The first systematic census, carried out in 1897, established the number of people whose first language was Kazakh as 4.084 million, placing them as the sixth largest linguistic group in the Russian Empire.<sup>29</sup> The Kazakhs were accorded a special status in the pre-1917 system of classes and class privileges. Like the Jews and most other nomads, they were classified as *inorodtsy*, a status that subjected them to special laws and deprived them of certain rights but also allowed them to maintain their native courts and tribal institutions.

Not long after Russia annexed the Small Horde in 1731, Russian settlers, mostly Cossacks and peasants, began to move onto the Kazakhs’ traditional pasturelands. Peasant migration to Kazakhstan accelerated after the abolition of serfdom in 1861, especially during the implementation of Russian Prime Minister Petr Stolypin’s agrarian reforms from 1906 to 1917.

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<sup>27</sup> Akiner, *The Formation of Kazakh Identity*, 11; Alikhan Bukeikhanov, “Kirgizy,” in *Formy natsional’ nago dvizheniia v sovremennykh gosudarstvakh: Avstro-Vengriia, Rossiia, Germaniia*, ed. A.I. Kastelianskii (St Petersburg: Izdanie t-va “Obshchestvennaia pol’za,” 1910), 591.

<sup>28</sup> Campbell, *Knowledge and the Ends of Empire*, 13.

<sup>29</sup> Bukeikhanov, “Kirgizy,” 577.

This influx of Slavs seeking arable land aggravated the already ailing pastoral economy. Once impoverished Russian farmers began to move into Kazakh territory, they accelerated the deterioration of natural conditions in the steppe and, through continued takeover of nomadic pastures, weakened the Kazakhs' traditional economy.<sup>30</sup> The issues of land and peasant settlement served as a major impetus for polemics and political activity among educated Kazakhs in the years following the 1905 revolution, and they remained a serious preoccupation for Kazakhstan's nascent intelligentsia in the early years of the twentieth century. Indeed, questions of land and settlement continued to be a major issue for Kazakh political actors throughout the early decades of Soviet rule in Kazakhstan.

### **Nationality and Power**

The nature of the Soviet Union as a multi-ethnic polity has long been an object of fascination for scholars in the social sciences, drawing the interest of historians, political scientists, and sociologists. With the fall of the Soviet Union and increased access to archival sources, scholars have reexamined earlier assumptions about and interpretations of the USSR's approach towards its non-Russian peoples, yielding valuable insights into how the central Soviet state engaged with nationality on a policy level. The issue of intra-Party dynamics, including the formation of elites and the role of nationality within Party structures, received a fair amount of attention from political scientists in the 1980s, a period which produced many studies of leadership dynamics within the Communist Party. Nevertheless, before the disintegration of the

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<sup>30</sup> Gulnar Kendirbai, "The Alash Movement in Kazakhstan," in Hasan Celâl Güzel, Cem Oğuz and Osman Karatay, eds., *The Turks*, vol. 5 (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Publications, 2002), 850; Bhavna Dave, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language and Power* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 37; Cameron, "The Hungry Steppe."

Soviet Union and the opening of Soviet archives, Western scholars openly admitted to knowing “remarkably little about the details” of the *nomenklatura* system.<sup>31</sup>

Previously inaccessible archival materials allow for a reevaluation of earlier assumptions and interpretations, providing for more qualitative analysis and a more nuanced approach to a broader array of questions. Nevertheless, in the two decades following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the opening of the archives, scholars studying Soviet nationalities policy have predominantly focused on centrally based decision-making and, even when examining specific republics, emphasize the general patterns made apparent by bureaucratic documents.<sup>32</sup> In discussing the emergence of a Soviet elite in Turkmenistan, for instance, Adrienne Lynn Edgar discusses broad trends without providing an in-depth examination of individual cases.<sup>33</sup> While theorizing Soviet nationalities policy has been a salient subject in the social sciences for over twenty years, this dissertation aims to establish how nationality actually functioned within Soviet power structures at the republic level.

The personalities involved in the establishment of Soviet power across the Soviet Union were broadly written about before the collapse of the USSR, but in primarily hagiographic terms.<sup>34</sup> In Kazakhstan, as elsewhere, many important early Bolsheviks and pre-revolutionary

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<sup>31</sup> John H. Miller, “Cadres Policy in Nationality Areas: Recruitment of CPSU First and Second Secretaries in Non-Russian Republics of the USSR,” in *The Soviet Nationality Reader: The Disintegration in Context*, ed. Rachel Denber (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), 184.

<sup>32</sup> See, e.g., Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*; Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005); Adrienne Lynn Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

<sup>33</sup> Edgar, *Tribal Nation*, 70-100.

<sup>34</sup> For an example, see, e.g. R. Baizharasov, *Zhubanysh Baribaev* (Alma-Ata: Kazakhstan, 1984).

activists were killed in the Great Terror, but some were rehabilitated decades earlier than others. Soviet-era histories of the establishment of Soviet power therefore focused disproportionately on those pardoned under Khrushchev, minimizing the role of other Kazakh political actors who were not rehabilitated until the late 1980s or early 1990s.<sup>35</sup> Beginning in the late 1980s and especially since 1991, historians writing within Kazakhstan have largely concentrated on previously taboo topics such as political repressions, deportations, and the Kazakh famine. Notably, in terms of Kazakhstan’s socio-political history, they have focused primarily on the nationalist movement Alash Orda and its opposition to Bolshevik rule, rather than on the transition to and development of Soviet power.<sup>36</sup>

Building on this existing literature, this dissertation moves beyond the question of whether the Soviet Union was a “maker” or “breaker” of nations—a salient topic for Western scholars during and immediately after the Cold War—and shifts the emphasis to concrete individual experience at the local level, making possible a detailed examination of what central policies meant on the ground. Focusing on the early period of Soviet rule, I examine the role that nationality played in intra-Party dynamics, elite formation, and state building in the USSR’s first decades.

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<sup>35</sup> For a comprehensive examination of Soviet-era historiography, see Zh.B. Abylkhozin et al., eds., *Istoriia Kazakhstana s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, vol. 4, *Kazakhstan v sovetskii period* (Almaty: Atamura, 2010), 11-88.

<sup>36</sup> See, e.g., Dina Amanzholova, *Na izlome: Alash v etnopoliticheskoi istorii Kazakhstana* (Almaty: Taimas, 2009); Ibid., *Kazakhskii avtonomizm i Rossiia: istoriia dvizheniia Alash* (Moscow: Rossiia Molodaia, 1994); Nurmagambetova, *Dvizhenie Alash i Alash-Orda*.

## Colonialism and Empire

The question of the Soviet Union as an example of imperialism or colonialism has long been of interest to scholars. Historians and political scientists have noted the tension between the fact that the USSR is often termed an empire and the Soviet Union's stance as "the first multiethnic state in world history to define itself as an anti-imperial state."<sup>37</sup> Mark Beissinger argues that the Soviet Union "utilized the principle of self-determination as an instrument for domination and control," a result of the shifting normative view of empire, which emerged as a pejorative category over the course of the twentieth century.<sup>38</sup> In the case of Central Asia specifically, Douglas Northrop has argued that "the USSR, like its Tsarist predecessor, was a colonial empire. Power...was expressed across lines of hierarchy and difference that created at least theoretically distinct centers (metropolises) and peripheries (colonies)."<sup>39</sup> Conversely, Adeb Khalid posits that, although the USSR exhibited similarities with various forms of empire, the Soviet Union's nature as a mobilizational state necessarily precludes its classification as party to European-style colonialism.<sup>40</sup>

As Sergei Abashin has noted, the question of the Soviet Union's possible colonial dimensions was and remains highly politicized. From its inception, both internal and external

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<sup>37</sup> Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 19.

<sup>38</sup> Mark Beissinger, "Self-Determination as a Technology of Imperialism: The Soviet and Russian Experiences," *Ethnopolitics* 14, no.5 (2015): 481.

<sup>39</sup> Douglas T. Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 22-23.

<sup>40</sup> Adeb Khalid, "The Soviet Union as an Imperial Formation: A View from Central Asia," in Ann Stoler, Carole McGranahan, and Peter Perdue, eds., *Imperial Formations* (Santa Fe: School of Advanced Research Press, 2007), 123-151; *Ibid.*, "Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization: Early Soviet Central Asia in Comparative Perspective," *Slavic Review* 65, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 231-251.

critics used accusations of colonialism to delegitimize the Soviet state, while demonstrating the anti-colonial nature of the USSR was a major preoccupation for Soviet authorities. Especially in the 1920s and '30s, official rhetoric sought to clearly demarcate “the pre-Soviet as colonial and the Soviet as anti-colonial.”<sup>41</sup> Recent scholarship suggests that we cannot unequivocally state that the Soviet presence in Central Asia was or was not colonial. Writing about Tajikistan, Botakoz Kassymbekova posits that the dichotomy between “modern state” and “colonial empire” is a false one, and that both colonialism and modern state-building should be viewed as repertoires of power.<sup>42</sup> Based on his analysis of political dynamics in the Uzbek SSR in 1945-1964, Claus Bech Hansen terms the Soviet Union an “ambivalent empire,” characterizing the USSR as a state that “paradoxically flanked anti-imperial policy with quasi-imperial practices in its pursuit of communist modernity.”<sup>43</sup>

This dissertation demonstrates the degree to which what Mark Beissinger terms “the [Soviet] practice of performing sovereignty” could coexist with colonial patterns of administration and underscores the fact that Soviet authorities were highly dependent on small administrative elite in the republic.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, it illustrates what Sergei Abashin has termed the “contradictory, ambiguous, complex character of the Soviet.” As Abashin notes, “in this ambiguity, there was a place for inequality along with attempts to overcome it, colonialism

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<sup>41</sup> Sergei Abashin, “Sovetskoe = kolonial’noe? (Za i protiv),” in G. Mamedov and O Shatalova, eds., *Poniatiia o sovetskom v Tsentral’noi Azii* (Bishkek: Shtab-Press, 2016), 29-30.

<sup>42</sup> Botakoz Kassymbekova, *Despite Cultures: Early Soviet Rule in Tajikistan* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016), 15.

<sup>43</sup> Claus Bech Hansen, “The Ambivalent Empire: Soviet Rule in the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic, 1945-1964” (PhD diss., European University Institute, 2013), 12.

<sup>44</sup> Beissinger, “Self-Determination as a Technology of Imperialism: The Soviet and Russian Experiences,” 482.

together with anti-colonial practices, mass political restrictions, including repressions, together with mass social mobilization, and the construction of nations together with the construction of a supra-national community.”<sup>45</sup>

## **Chapter Outline**

This dissertation is fundamentally about individuals interacting with and exercising power in the context of a regime that was characterized by multifaceted contradictions. The first two chapters lay out the landscape—human and geographic, conceptual and physical—that determined the contours of Soviet Kazakhstan. Chapters Three and Four examine the nature of power as it functioned within that landscape. Chapters Five and Six examine these factors in the context of specific individuals and their experiences of and with the Soviet regime in Kazakhstan. The materials considered comprise documents from central archives in Moscow and especially from republic-level archives in Almaty, as well as Soviet periodicals. Given the subject matter, I have also incorporated personal materials whenever possible. These include recently declassified or newly available archival collections as well as published memoirs and recollections dedicated to specific individuals.

Chapter One presents a prosopographical overview of ethnic Kazakhs within the republic’s pre-war *nomenklatura*, using biographical data to provide a statistical picture of Kazakhstan’s Party elite. Analyzing the 44 Kazakhs who served as members of the republic’s Party Bureau between 1920 and 1937—examining when and where they were born, where they went to school, and when and how they joined the Party—offers insight into the broader process of elite formation in the early Soviet period, revealing clear patterns in terms of who became a

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<sup>45</sup> Abashin, “Sovetskoe = kolonial’noe? (Za i protiv),” 45.

Bolshevik and what types of people achieved political success in the first two decades of Soviet rule. Russian colonization was profoundly economically and socially disruptive for the Kazakh population, but the cohort of elite Kazakh Bolsheviks comprised people who had benefited from the Russian imperial presence in concrete ways. They were already at least partially assimilated and already upwardly mobile in the years preceding the establishment of Soviet power. Unlike the educated intellectuals from the areas that would become Uzbekistan, they had opted in to a Russian civilizational model and a Russian-mediated view of modernity. This meant that the nature of the Russian colonial presence in Kazakhstan was deeply influential in determining the course of revolutionary change in the republic, and indeed its political landscape across the first two decades of Soviet rule.

This human landscape had a direct impact on Kazakhstan's administrative geography. The second chapter focuses on local interests and negotiations with Moscow as part of the literal shaping of the republic, considering especially the incorporation of territories from the former Turkestan ASSR and the relocations of Kazakhstan's capital, which was moved from Orenburg to Kzyl Orda to Alma-Ata in the space of nine years. The extensive negotiations involved in this process underscore the degree to which central authorities were highly dependent on small administrative elite in the republic, while also illustrating local political actors' visions of what Kazakhstan should be. The history of Kazakhstan's three Soviet-era capitals illuminates the USSR as a state that was explicitly anti-colonial in its rhetoric but nevertheless replicated patterns associated with European imperialism, even as it empowered local elites.

The third chapter examines the role and enduring influence of the pre-revolutionary Kazakh intellectual movement Alash, outlining the continuing importance of ideas and relationships developed before 1917. Growing out of the post-1905 expansion of press freedoms

and the resulting proliferation of Kazakh-language publications, the Alash movement comprised an older generation of intellectuals who engaged with tsarist-era politics in an attempt to promote modernization and greater political autonomy for the Kazakh people. Like their Communist successors, they understood the path to modernity as leading through Russia, and they actively worked toward Kazakh integration into Imperial Russian politics and society. In the wake of the February Revolution, they hoped for the establishment of a Kazakh autonomy within a federative Russian republic. Although they opposed the Bolsheviks during the civil war, their cultural program largely converged with the dictates of Soviet nationalities policy in the 1920s, affording Alash leaders an avenue for continued influence. While existing scholarship on Alash focuses on the movement's pre-revolutionary activity and engagement in the cultural policies of the early 1920s, this chapter goes beyond this classic view, demonstrating their role as enduring authority figures and objects of political discourse into the 1930s. By considering the evolving role of Alash in Party rhetoric and the importance of personal connections between the old intelligentsia and the new Soviet elite, this chapter examines the nature of power in the Soviet Union's first decades.

The history of Alash's role in post-1917 political discourse is closely tied to broader discussions of fault lines and internecine conflicts among Kazakhstan's governing elite in the 1920s and '30s. The question of factions and factionalism within the Kazakhstani Party apparatus was a major preoccupation for both central authorities and for local political actors. Chapter Four examines the rhetoric surrounding this issue among the republic's Party elite. Although the specter of factionalism was a major concern for central authorities from the advent of Soviet rule in the Kazakh steppe, the beginning of Filipp Goloshchekin's tenure as First Secretary in 1925 brought with it a tightening of centralized control over Kazakhstan's republic-

level Party actors. As part of this process, accusations of nationalism and factionalism came to be employed as a means of disempowering local political figures. By considering factions as a practice rather than a consequence of Soviet power structures, this chapter examines the process of institutionalization and centralization of power beginning in the second half of the 1920s.

The fifth chapter focuses on the figure of Alibi Dzhangil'din, the only Kazakh to join the Party before the revolution, and his subsequent political alienation as someone who deviated from the general pattern of Kazakh Communists. Dzhangil'din's career demonstrates the enduring importance of personal relationships for Kazakhstan's political landscape. To some extent informed by clan affiliations, these friendships and animosities were grounded primarily in pre-revolutionary and revolutionary experience. Although he believed it should confer certain privileges on him, Dzhangil'din's status as the first Kazakh Bolshevik in fact proved detrimental to his standing within the republic because it originated outside of Kazakh networks. Dzhangil'din was the only Kazakh sent to Kazakhstan by central Party authorities during the revolution, and his primary connections were regional rather than to any of the pre-revolutionary Kazakh political groupings. His lack of constituency within the Party proved to be a defining factor for his career and his role within Kazakhstan up until his death in 1953.

The final chapter examines Stalinist repression and its aftermath, focusing on Party literary figures and their families from the late 1930s through the Khrushchev Thaw. The personal archive of Fatima Gabitova, a writer and pedagogue who fell victim to Stalinist repression as a "wife of an enemy of the people," serves as the basis for analyzing survival strategies among Kazakhstan's elite. Throughout her personal writings, Gabitova exhibits a complicated ambivalence towards the reality of Soviet rule that demonstrates the broader contradictions of Stalinism as a system that was at once repressive and participatory. The story of

Gabitova and her family demonstrates the enduring importance of personal networks and relationships that pre-dated the revolution. It also illuminates the remarkable permanency among the Kazakh elite across the twentieth century, despite circumstances that were often highly adverse.

### **Methods and Approach: On Individuals in Soviet History**

Some scholars have posited the recent emergence of a “biographical turn” in the field of Russian and Soviet history.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, historians are increasingly examining individual people as means of dealing with and illustrating the complexity of states such as the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. As Michael Khodarkovsy argues, analyzing individual lives offers “an illustration of an encounter between the worlds of the colonizer and the colonized, and of those who [...] were caught in between.”<sup>47</sup> Willard Sunderland similarly positions examining the lives of imperial subjects as a means of understanding the “incongruous whole” of empire, using the life of Baron Roman von Ungern-Sternberg as lens onto “the Russian Empire and its awkward combination of peoples, spaces, and questions.”<sup>48</sup> Jörn Happel examines the 1916 uprising in Central Asia through “a colonial history from the actor’s point of view,” using individual stories to question fundamental assumptions about the outbreak of violence, but also to understand the

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<sup>46</sup> Stephen M. Norris, “A Biographical Turn?” *Kritika* 17, no.1 (Winter 2016): 163-179; Ian Campbell, “Writing Imperial Lives: Biography, Autobiography, and Microhistory,” *Kritika* 18, no.1 (Winter 2017): 151-164. For an examination of biography within historical writing more broadly, see Barbara Caine, *Biography and History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

<sup>47</sup> Michael Khodarkovsy, *Bitter Choices: Loyalty and Betrayal in the Russian Conquest of the North Caucasus* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 5.

<sup>48</sup> Willard Sunderland, *The Baron’s Cloak: A History of the Russian Empire in War and Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 6, 229.

complexity and ambiguity of the tsarist state's presence in Central Asia and the essential interconnectedness between colonizer and colonized.<sup>49</sup> In the context of Soviet history, Stephen Kotkin frames biography as geopolitics, using Stalin as a means of analyzing the nature of Bolshevik power.<sup>50</sup> On a similarly grand scale, Yuri Slezkine examines the lives of the Soviet elite in order to explain the initial success and the ultimate failure of the Russian Revolution.<sup>51</sup>

Although the Soviet governing apparatus was an object of intense study during the Cold War, Western scholarship on the Soviet elite was long characterized by a high degree of “impersonality.”<sup>52</sup> The approach to individuals in the Soviet context changed fundamentally with the emergence of the study of “Soviet subjectivity” in the late 1990s. Indeed, scholars of Soviet subjectivity posit that examining individuals is especially apt in the context of the USSR, as the Soviet state was acutely aware of and interested in the individual trajectories of its citizens. Jochen Hellbeck argues that, although the USSR is often described as “anti-biographical in character,” the Soviet system was in fact characterized by a “heightened biographical consciousness” and that “Soviet Communists promoted a distinctly autobiographical culture.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Jörn Happel, *Nomadische Lebenswelten und tsarische Politik: Der Aufstand in Zentralasien 1916* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2010).

<sup>50</sup> Stephen Kotkin, *Stalin*, vol. 1, *Paradoxes of Power, 1878-1928* (New York: Penguin Press, 2014).

<sup>51</sup> Yuri Slezkine, *The House of Government: A Saga of the Russian Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

<sup>52</sup> Evan Mawdsley and Stephen White, *The Soviet Elite from Lenin to Gorbachev: The Central Committee and its Members* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), v.

<sup>53</sup> Jochen Hellbeck, “Galaxy of Black Stars: The Power of Soviet Biography,” *The American Historical Review* 114, no. 3 (June, 2009): 615-624.

Recent scholarship demonstrates that examining individual political actors can be deeply revealing. As sociologist Liliana Riga shows in her recent work on the early Bolshevik leadership, an in-depth analysis of individual biographies can challenge fundamental assumptions about the relationship between ideology and mobilization, recasting the very nature of a political movement.<sup>54</sup> Riga's valuable study focuses on members of European and Caucasian ethnic groups within the Party elite of 1917-1923, illuminating the role of class, ethnicity, and pre-revolutionary experience in shaping the Bolsheviks as a revolutionary organization. Similarly, Barbara Clements analyzes the personal lives and careers of female Communists who joined the Party before 1921 in order to provide insight into the functioning of the Party organization.<sup>55</sup> In her work on Stalin's inner circle, Sheila Fitzpatrick examines Soviet high politics by "put[ting] political science models aside and focus[ing] on individuals and their interactions," analyzing "how high politics worked by looking at practices, in other words, what the actors in my story *do*, and deducing from that what the informal rules of the game are."<sup>56</sup>

Such studies can provide broad insights into the nature of Soviet power. In her examination of early Soviet Tajikistan, Botakoz Kassymbekova argues that, for the Bolsheviks, "socialist governance was a personal and personalized project," and that the regime was constructed around individuals rather than around laws and institutions. Kassymbekova explains this as a consequence of both ideology and pragmatism, arguing that the Bolsheviks were

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<sup>54</sup> Liliana Riga, *The Bolsheviks and the Russian Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

<sup>55</sup> Barbara Evans Clements, *Bolshevik Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 10-21.

<sup>56</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick, *On Stalin's Team: The Years of Living Dangerously in Soviet Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 24, 458.

skeptical of the modern state and its institutions as oppressive and therefore turned to personalized rule as a strategy that allowed for flexibility, negotiation, and mass engagement. “Soviet state-building,” Kassymbekova argues, “was eminently actor-centered.”<sup>57</sup>

Examining the role of individual political actors also provides an important lens for understanding the fundamental nature of the Soviet state. Historians and political scientists have noted the tension between the fact that the Soviet Union was an explicitly modernizing, mobilizational state on the one hand and the fact that Soviet social, economic, and political structures replicated certain features of “traditional,” pre-modern societies on the other.<sup>58</sup> With regards to power dynamics within the Party, scholars have emphasized the institutional weakness of the Soviet state as one such “pre-modern” feature. J. Arch Getty describes the Soviet Union as characterized by “an understanding of political authority as patrimonial and personalized rather than derived from formal position or a rule-bound rational bureaucracy.”<sup>59</sup> Similarly, Graeme Gill and Roderic Pitty posit that “the main currency of politics was personal influence and contacts, not official position [...]; it was the personal connections which were primary, the institutional positions secondary.”<sup>60</sup> Gerald Easter argues that it was precisely informal personal ties among the administrative elite that allowed the Soviet Union to implement far-reaching programs for economic and social transformation even as the state remained “infrastructurally”

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<sup>57</sup> Kassymbekova, *Despite Cultures*, 10-12; 14.

<sup>58</sup> On the debate concerning “modernity” versus “neo-traditionalism” among Soviet historians, see Michael David-Fox, “Multiple Modernities vs. Neo-Traditionalism: On Recent Debates in Russian and Soviet History,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 54, no.4 (2006): 535-555.

<sup>59</sup> J. Arch Getty, *Practicing Stalinism: Bolsheviks, Boyars, and the Persistence of Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 3.

<sup>60</sup> Graeme Gill and Roderic Pitty, *Power in the Party: The Organization of Power and Central-Republican Relations in the CPSU* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), 9.

weak for more than a decade after the conclusion of the civil war.<sup>61</sup> Examining political processes in Kazakhstan in the early Soviet period reveals the enduring importance of personal relationships, even when they were not politically expedient, and the changing role of local political actors. It also makes clear the degree to which ideology—and the policies it underpinned—did not necessarily dictate results. As Terry Martin has argued, “modernization is the theory of Soviet intentions; neo-traditionalism, the theory of their unintended consequences.”<sup>62</sup>

Indeed, the establishment of Soviet power in Central Asia was a messy process, rife with unintended consequences. This dissertation argues for the utility of examining individual lives, separately and in aggregate, as a window onto social and political realities in the Soviet Union. Looking at individuals reveals the contradictions inherent to the Soviet system, and examining individual trajectories illuminates Soviet politics and society in all its complexity.

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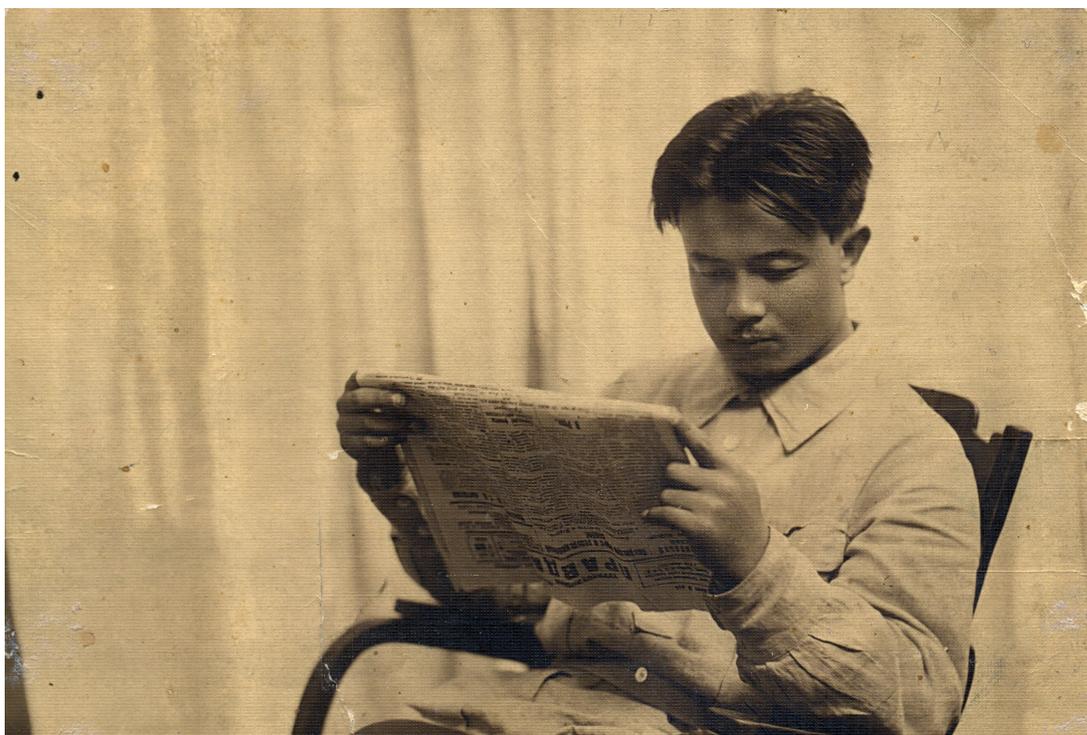
<sup>61</sup> Gerald Easter, *Reconstructing the State: Personal Networks and Elite Identity in Soviet Russia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 163-164.

<sup>62</sup> Terry Martin, “Ascribed Nationality and Soviet Primordialism,” in David L. Hoffman and Yanni Kotsonis, eds., *Russian Modernity: Politics, Knowledge, Practices* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 176.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Kazakhstan's Communist Party Elite in the Early Soviet Period:

#### A Prosopographical Analysis



**Figure 1: Oraz Dhzandosov reads *Pravda* (Kzyl Orda, 1920s). Family collection.**

Establishing Bolshevik control in Kazakhstan in the aftermath of the October Revolution was not a straightforward task, as the Communist Party had limited local resources to draw on. In 1918, ethnic Kazakh Bolsheviks numbered only several dozen. The soviets that sprang up in Kazakhstan in the aftermath of February 1917 were dominated by ethnic Slavs and by members of the Social Revolutionary party; both the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks had a limited presence. Armed confrontations between Bolshevik and anti-Bolshevik forces continued in the

Kazakh steppe into 1919, and it was not until 1920 that Soviet control of the region was firmly established. It was then that the Bolsheviks turned to creating Party and governmental institutions for what would become Soviet Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan's first unified Communist Party organ was created on April 30, 1920 as the Kazakh Oblast Committee, and the Kazakh ASSR was officially created on August 26, 1920.

Recruiting native cadres was a pressing concern for the Kazakhstan-level Party apparatus from its earliest days. "Under present conditions we must carry out a colossal amount of preparatory work in order to organize a [Party] apparatus given the fact that the Party Bureau lacks sufficient [human] material," one official reported at the first All-Kazakh Conference of the RKP(b) in 1920.<sup>63</sup> Throughout the 1920s, the Bolsheviks conducted a series of membership drives and Party purges as Communist officials alternately sought to increase the number of ethnic Kazakhs in the Party and confronted the realities of a population that was predominantly illiterate and whose social structure did not conform neatly to Communist ideology. Indeed, the lower levels of the Party apparatus consistently left much to be desired, a frequent topic of discussion at Party meetings. Recruiting skilled Kazakhs was a major preoccupation.<sup>64</sup>

Kazakh demographic realities meant that the Bolsheviks had a limited pool of qualified people to draw on as potential recruits. This was especially true for the Party's upper ranks. As elsewhere in the Soviet Union, the Party Congress was in theory the Party's highest executive organ, with the Party Committee fulfilling that function when the Congress was not in session. In practice, decision-making authority rested with the Party's Political Bureau, a permanent body that met regularly and made policy determinations. In Kazakhstan this body was known until

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<sup>63</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.1a l.102.

<sup>64</sup> See, e.g. APRK f.139 op.1 d.1a ll.2-4, 17, 21-27; d.36 ll.13, 74; d.39 ll.16, 26.

1924 as the Presidium of the Kazakh Oblast Committee. In 1925 it became the Bureau of the Kazakh Krai Committee, and in 1937 it was reorganized as the Bureau of the Kazakhstani Central Committee. Membership fluctuated from a low of five members and two candidates (1921-1923) to 21 members and seven candidates (1934). Between 1920 and 1937, 44 Kazakhs served as members or candidate members of the republic-level Party's chief executive body. The ethnic breakdown of bureau membership varied over time, with Kazakh representation jumping from 28.5 percent in 1921 to 71.4 percent in 1922. In general, Kazakhs accounted for 50 percent or more of the Party bureau for most of the period between 1920 and 1937.<sup>65</sup>

Although several politically significant figures never served in Kazakhstan's Party bureau, analyzing its 44 Kazakh members offers insight into the broader process of elite formation in the early Soviet period.<sup>66</sup> Examining when and where they were born, where they went to school, and when and how they joined the Party reveals clear patterns in terms of who became a Bolshevik and what types of people achieved political success in the first two decades of Soviet rule. Perhaps this cohort's most salient feature is the fact that virtually all of the Kazakhs who reached the upper ranks of the Party between 1920 and 1937 had attended a so-called Russian-native school before 1917. At a very basic level, they were able to reach the upper echelons of the Party because they were literate in Russian at the time of the revolution.

Understanding who became part of Kazakhstan's early Soviet elite is therefore at least in part a question of understanding who attended school in the pre-revolutionary period. One

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<sup>65</sup> B.A. Tulepbaev, ed., *Kommunistichskaia Partiiia Kazakhstana: Organizatsionno-politicheskoe razvitie* (Alma-Ata: Kazakhstan, 1990), 235-252.

<sup>66</sup> Biographical data compiled from B.A. Dzhaparov, ed., *Nomenklaturnye kadry Sovetskogo Kazakhstana* (Almaty: Arkhiv Prezidenta Respubliki Kazakhstan, forthcoming) and M.K. Zhakupov, ed., *Narkomy Kazakhstana, 1920-1946 gg.: Biograficheskii spravochnik* (Almaty: Arys, 2007).

important consideration was proximity—most of those who went on to advance through the Party ranks lived in, or more often near, population centers that were large enough to have schools. Moreover, they experienced cultural and social contact with Russians, and their trajectories were heavily influenced by the interpenetration of populations in Imperial Russia's colonial periphery in the years before the revolution. Colonization was profoundly economically and socially disruptive for the Kazakh population, but the cohort of elite Kazakh Bolsheviks comprised people who had benefited from the Russian imperial presence in concrete ways. They were already at least partially assimilated and already upwardly mobile in the years preceding the establishment of Soviet power. Unlike the educated intellectuals from the areas that would become Uzbekistan, they had opted in to a Russian civilizational model and a Russian-mediated view of modernity. This meant that the nature of the Russian colonial presence in Kazakhstan was deeply influential in determining the course of revolutionary change in the republic, and indeed its political landscape across the first two decades of Soviet rule.

### **Age, occupation, and Party tenure**

Those Kazakhs who entered this subset of the political elite were predominantly young. The oldest was born in 1882, the youngest in 1906. Their average age at the time of the revolution was 21. The 11 Kazakhs who served in the Party bureau before 1925 had a higher average age of 26 in 1917, but this number is skewed by the fact that three of these earliest Party functionaries were in their 30s at the time of the revolution. Seven of the remaining members were in their early 20s, while the youngest, Nagima Arykova, one of only two women to serve in the Party bureau before 1937, was 19. Although several people born in the first years of the

twentieth century joined the Party bureau in the second half of the 1920s and in the 1930s, between 1925 and 1937 the average Kazakh bureau member was born in 1897.

The relative youth of these 44 Party officials is reflected in the fact that about 20 percent of them were still students in 1917. In terms of pre-revolutionary professions, the single largest group, accounting for about a third of those who had completed their schooling, were teachers. The Kazakh members of the bureau were also young in terms of Party tenure—overall, their average Party membership dated from 1920. This was in stark contrast to their non-Kazakh colleagues, many of whom had extensive pre-revolutionary experience within the Party (though almost invariably outside of the republic). Although a handful of early Kazakh Bolsheviks had experience with politically oriented youth groups before the Bolshevik seizure of power, their political mobilization was in many cases a direct result of the revolution. As Adeeb Khalid has noted, in Central Asia “it was the revolution that created the Communist Party and not the other way around.”<sup>67</sup>

Educated in the years before 1917, those Kazakhs who made it into the political elite were in a position to join the Party and advance up its ranks in the first years of Soviet rule in Kazakhstan. At the same time, their youth gave them an advantage in that their pre-revolutionary political histories were limited. In the years following the 1905 revolution, the dominant political force among educated Kazakhs was the grouping that would become the nationalist party Alash, which was closely aligned with the Kadets. Alash resisted Bolshevik authority until it was militarily defeated in 1919, at which point its members were amnestied. Although the early years of Bolshevik rule saw cooperation between the Party and the pre-revolutionary intelligentsia,

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<sup>67</sup> Adeeb Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan: Nation, Empire, and Revolution in the Early USSR* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), 95.

especially in areas related to cultural policy, Soviet authorities remained suspicious of the older generation of Kazakh intellectuals. Most of them were removed from positions of authority by 1930, when the Soviet state carried out its first wave of anti-nationalist repression in Kazakhstan.<sup>68</sup> The younger generation ultimately met a similar fate—while the same cohort of Kazakhs remained politically dominant in the first two decades of Soviet rule, their lives were almost invariably cut short. Of the 44, only seven survived past 1938, including both female bureau members.

## **Geography**

A significant majority of Kazakh bureau members (68 percent) were from the northern regions of the Russian Empire's Kazakh-inhabited territories. These areas had been incorporated into the Russia earlier than more southern regions and had a more significant ethnic Russian presence. According to the 1897 imperial census, speakers of Russian accounted for 33.1 percent of the population in Akmolinsk Oblast, 25.4 percent in Ural'sk Oblast, 9.5 percent in Semipalatinsk Oblast, and 6.7 percent in Turgai Oblast. The urban population was 56.4 percent Russian and 16.7 percent Kazakh in Akmolinsk Oblast, 54 percent Russian and 29.4 Kazakh in Semipalatinsk Oblast, 76.2 percent Russian and 7 percent Kazakh in Turgai Oblast, and 82.8 Russian and 5.4 percent Kazakh in Ural'sk Oblast. Overall, the urban population of the Steppe Krai was 66.7 percent Russian and 16 percent Kazakh. In each oblast, Tatars accounted for most of the remainder of the urban population.<sup>69</sup> Further south, in Syr Dar'ia and Semirech'e Oblasts, which were part of the Turkestan Governor-Generalship, Kazakh speakers accounted for 79.9

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<sup>68</sup> See Chapter Three.

<sup>69</sup> N.V. Alekseenko, *Naselenie dorevoliutsionnogo Kazakhstana* (Alma-Ata: Nauka, 1981), 83.

percent of the population, with 4.8 and 0.81 percent of the population comprising speakers of Russian and Ukrainian, respectively.<sup>70</sup>

Peasant migration into Kazakh territories began already in the eighteenth century, but accelerated significantly after the abolition of serfdom in 1861, especially during the implementation of Stolypin's agrarian reforms from 1906 to 1917. Between 1896 and 1916, the number of Russian settlers exceeded 1.5 million, most of them concentrated in the northern reaches of the Kazakh steppe. Migrant flows decreased during the Russo-Japanese war, largely because the Trans-Siberian railroad was given over to military use, but increased dramatically from 1906.<sup>71</sup> The influx of Slavic settlers seeking arable land was economically and socially disruptive and had a deep impact on Kazakh livelihoods. The turn of the twentieth century saw an accelerating rate of sedentarization among Kazakhs, especially in areas with greater concentrations of Russian settlers. In Omsk, Kustanai, and Aktiubinsk uezds, nearly all Kazakh households had become sedentary by 1906. This brought with it significant economic and lifestyle changes. According to one estimate, 59 percent of grain harvested in Ural'sk Oblast at the turn of the twentieth century was grown by Kazakhs, who were traditionally nomadic pastoralists.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Alekseenko, *Naselenie dorevoliutsionnogo Kazakhstana*, 83.

<sup>71</sup> George J. Demko, *The Russian Colonization of Kazakhstan, 1896-1916* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969), 74-81.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 189-191.

**Table 1: Russians as a percentage of the population in Kazakh territories<sup>73</sup>**

Oblast	Russians, 1897	Russians, 1914
Akmolinsk	33.1	56.7
Semipalatinsk	9.5	24
Turgai	6.7	37.5
Ural'sk	25.4	40.8
Syr Dar'ia	2.2	6.2
Semirech'e	7.8	23.5
Overall	12.7	29.6

**Table 2: Kazakhs as a percentage of the population in Kazakh territories<sup>74</sup>**

Oblast	Kazakhs, 1897	Kazakhs, 1914
Akmolinsk	61.1	36.6
Semipalatinsk	87.9	73
Turgai	90.6	58.7
Ural'sk	71.3	56.9
Syr Dar'ia	64.4	62.3
Semirech'e	80.4	60.5
Overall	74	58.5

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<sup>73</sup> Data compiled from Alekseenko, *Naselenie dorevoliutsionnogo Kazakhstana*, 83-85. The figures for 1897 are taken from the imperial census, while those for 1914 are based on oblast administrative materials.

<sup>74</sup> Alekseenko, *Naselenie dorevoliutsionnogo Kazakhstana*, 85.

There is some correlation between geography and clan affiliation among the Kazakhs, as certain clans are more prevalent in certain parts of the steppe. Although examination of tribal and clan structures remains a dominant social science paradigm for understanding Kazakhstan's politics and society, a systematic analysis of Kazakh clan affiliation presents distinct challenges for historians.<sup>75</sup> It is especially difficult to consider clans in the Soviet context, given the ideological hostility to such "feudal" or structures inherent to Soviet-era discourse. In the very first years of Soviet rule, some official biographical forms did include a question on clan affiliation.<sup>76</sup> This soon disappeared, however, as did almost any overt mention of the clan and tribal affiliation of specific individuals, especially among the political elite. Even for figures active in the tsarist period, scholars often have no basis for ascribing tribal and clan affiliations beyond circumstantial considerations such as geography.<sup>77</sup>

Moreover, even for those figures whom we can categorize by clan, the results do not necessarily illuminate their political activity. The first Kazakh Bolshevik, Alibi Dzhangil'din, and Mustafa Chokai, the only member of the Kazakh intelligentsia to play a significant role in the anti-Soviet emigration, were both Kipchaks. Leading Alash figures such as Alikhan

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<sup>75</sup> On Kazakh clans, see, e.g., Edward Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics: The Power of "Blood" in Kazakhstan and Beyond* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004); Kathleen Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Dave, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language and Power*.

<sup>76</sup> See, e.g., TsGARK f.5 op.18 d.86, ll.1, 11; d.89 l.3; d.94 l.1; d.115 l.3; d.634 l.35; TsGARK f.1023 op.1 d.3 ll.4, 9.

<sup>77</sup> Xavier Hallez, "Le ralliement des Kazakhs au pouvoir soviétique, 1917-1920: Convictions politiques, système tribal et contexte russe," *Cahiers du monde russe* 56, no. 4 (October-December, 2015): 707; Tomohiko Uyama, "The Geography of Civilizations: A Spatial Analysis of the Kazakh Intelligentsia's Activities, From the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the Early Twentieth Century," in *Regions: A Prism to View the Slavic-Eurasian World*, ed. Kimitaka Matsuzato (Sapporo: Hokaido University, 2000), 89-96.

Bukeikhanov and Akhmet Baitursynov were members of the Arghyn clan, but so were leading Kazakh Communists such as Nigmat Nurmakov, Saken Seifullin, and Uraz Isaev.<sup>78</sup> Tribal relations may have played a role in early Soviet politics in Kazakhstan, but they were only one factor, and often not a decisive one.

## **Education**

Education was easily one of the most crucial factors in shaping Kazakhstan's early Soviet elite. At a basic level, those Kazakhs who advanced to the upper echelons of the Party were able to do so because they were literate in Russian at the time of the revolution. As such, they were part of a very small educated minority. In 1914, there were 2,011 schools of all levels within the boundaries of present-day Kazakhstan. They served a total of 105,200 students, of whom only 4,300 attended secondary schools. Kazakhs accounted for only 7.5 percent of total enrollment.<sup>79</sup> At the turn of the twentieth century, the vast majority of the inhabitants of the Russian Empire were illiterate. According to the 1897 census, the overall literacy rate in the Russian Empire was 27 percent. In Central Asia, it stood at 6 percent (10 percent for men and three percent for

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<sup>78</sup> Amanzholova, "*Kavaleristy*" i "*lomovye rabotniki*" vo vlasti, 62 fn. 65. Examining the political elite in Kyrgyzstan in a similar period, Benjamin Loring argues that "clan or tribal allegiance was clearly less of a consideration than family background, pre-revolutionary employment in tsarist organs, personal allegiance, or political activity in 1916-1919 in determining the factional allegiances of any given Kyrgyz official." Benjamin Loring, "Building Socialism in Kyrgyzstan: Nation-Making, Rural Development, and Social Change, 1921-1932" (PhD diss., Brandeis University, 2008), 87.

<sup>79</sup> Richard Pierce, *Russian Central Asia, 1867-1917: A Study in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), 219.

women), taking into account members of all ethnic groups.<sup>80</sup> For Kazakhs, literacy rates were even lower:

**Table 3: Kazakh literacy rates by oblast, 1897<sup>81</sup>**

Oblast	Overall	Men	Women
Akmolinsk	3.3	5.9	0.6
Semipalatinsk	2.9	5.2	0.4
Turgai	3.0	5.5	0.3
Ural'sk	5.0	8.2	1.3
Semirech'e	1.5	3.0	0.1
Syr Dar'ia	1.3	2.3	0.1

It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that of Kazakh members of the Party bureau, twenty, almost half of the overall total, were from Akmolinsk, Turgai, and Ural'sk, the three oblasts with the highest literacy rates. These oblasts also had the highest rates of primary school attendance:

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<sup>80</sup> Alekseenko, *Naselenie dorevoliutsionnogo Kazakhstana*, 87.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

**Table 4: Primary school students per 1000 inhabitants<sup>82</sup>**

Oblast	1897	1905
Akmolinsk	3	28
Semipalatinsk	2	12
Turgai	5	36
Ural'sk	2	24
Semirech'e	3	11
Syr Dar'ia	2	7
Overall	3	18

Indeed, all 44 Kazakh bureau members attended at least some form of primary school. Sixteen had some form of secondary education, ranging from gymnasiums to pedagogical courses. Interestingly, none had completed any university education at the time of the revolution, although some went on to study at various institutes and universities in the Soviet period. At the beginning of the twentieth century, only about 100 Kazakhs had completed tertiary education. About 700 had completed some form of secondary education at various gymnasiums, secondary schools, and teachers' seminaries.<sup>83</sup> While the members of Kazakhstan's early Party elite were

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<sup>82</sup> Alekseenko, *Naselenie dorevoliutsionnogo Kazakhstana*, 89-90.

<sup>83</sup> Dina Amazholova, "Kavaleristy" i "lomovye rabotniki" vo vlasti, 5. Kh. Kh. Akhmedov, a Kazakh who joined the Party in 1926, conducted research on Kazakhs who had completed university education before the revolution using Kazakh-language newspaper sources in the late 1980s. His list, which is quite possibly incomplete, includes 131 people, among them four women. They include graduates of universities and institutes in Moscow, St Petersburg, Kiev, Warsaw, and Kazan. APRK f.811 op.19 d.248 ll.33-44.

significantly more educated than the vast majority of the Kazakh population, they were not its most educated subset.

This represents an important difference from the pre-revolutionary Kazakh intelligentsia. In his analysis of 65 Kazakh intellectuals who were active before 1917, Tomohiko Uyama notes that 16 of them had studied in St Petersburg, including 12 who were graduates of St Petersburg University. At least eight others had attended universities elsewhere in the Russian Empire, and in one case in Cairo.<sup>84</sup> This striking difference between the pre-revolutionary intelligentsia and the nascent Bolshevik elite may in part be a question of age—the latter group was on the whole significantly younger, and many had not yet completed or had only just completed their secondary schooling at the time of the revolution. Additionally, although the question of social origin is a complicated one to answer on the basis of Soviet sources, it does appear that there was a difference between the two groups in terms of background.<sup>85</sup> Uyama notes that pre-revolutionary intellectuals were disproportionately from traditionally privileged groups. Many were *töres* (descendants of Chingis Khan), *qozhas* (descendants of the first four caliphs), or members of otherwise influential families.<sup>86</sup> As far as can be determined, almost all of the

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<sup>84</sup> Uyama, “The Geography of Civilizations,” 98.

<sup>85</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick has argued that in the 1920s and ‘30s, class was an ascribed category, a consequence of “a Marxist revolution that occurred in a country where class structure was weak” and a tool to differentiate the regime’s allies from its enemies. See: Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Ascribing Class: The Construction of Social Identity in Soviet Russia,” *The Journal of Modern History* 65, no. 4 (December, 1993): 745-770. These conditions were even more pronounced in the Kazakh steppe than in Russia proper. Especially in the 1920s, “Kazakh” seemed to be synonymous with “shepherd” for the purposes of Party biographical forms, and this is likely a reflection of a given individual’s relationship to the regime rather than of his family’s material circumstances.

<sup>86</sup> Uyama, “The Geography of Civilizations,” 82.

Kazakhs who joined the Party bureau were from more disadvantaged backgrounds.<sup>87</sup> Nevertheless, their early years coincided with a period during which educational opportunities were expanding and Russian-language schooling, though still limited, was becoming more widespread in the steppe.

Russian-language schools for Kazakhs were first established in Orenburg and Omsk in the late eighteenth century, but the influence of these early institutions was limited. It was only in the second half of the nineteenth century that Russian-language educational institutions that catered to Kazakhs became more widespread.<sup>88</sup> Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, the tsarist government opened a series of schools intended to serve the local populations in Turkestan and the Steppe *krai*. Known as Russian-native schools, these institutions were meant to create a stratum of educated, literate locals who could serve in the imperial administration and, more broadly, to further the tsarist state's perceived "civilizing mission" in Central Asia through Russification.<sup>89</sup> As one imperial administrator put it, "Kazakh children in Russian schools will Russify and join Russian civilization, after which narrow, one-sided Islam will be unable to

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<sup>87</sup> In this they also differ from the early Soviet elite in other parts of Central Asia. In both Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, the first generation of local Bolsheviks came predominantly from traditionally privileged, urban backgrounds—perhaps reflecting a difference between the urban and settled peoples of what would become Soviet Central Asia. Like the Kazakhs, most of them had been educated at Russian-native schools. On Uzbekistan, see Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan*, 171. On Tajikistan, see Flora Roberts, "Old Elites Under Communism: Soviet Rule in Leninobod" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2016), 66-68, 101-102.

<sup>88</sup> Pierce, *Russian Central Asia*, 205-210.

<sup>89</sup> On the curriculum in such schools, see: N.A. Bobrovnikov, *Russko-tuzemnye uchilishcha, meteby i medresy Srednei Azii: Putevye zametki* (St Petersburg: Senatskaia tipografiia, 1913). For an in-depth overview of the development of educational institutions in Turgai oblast, see: V.A. Vasil'ev, *Istoricheskii ocherk russkago obrazovaniia v Turgaiskoi oblasti i sovremennoe ego sostoianie* (Orenburg: Izdanie Turgaiskogo Oblastnogo Statisticheskogo Komiteta, 1896).

influence them.”<sup>90</sup> Results were generally mixed, especially among the traditionally settled populations of Turkestan, at least in part because of the entrenchment of Islamic educational institutions and anxieties about Russian-sponsored schools functioning as sites of Christian proselytization.<sup>91</sup> “The lower Russian-native schools and national seminaries have not succeeded in obtaining the confidence of the people, and in no way serve to assimilate them with Russian principles,” the Governor of Samarkand concluded in 1908.<sup>92</sup>

Imperial administrators perceived the situation among Kazakhs as different, however. In 1913, the Governor-General of Turkestan, A.V. Samsonov, described the Kazakhs as “unique among all Central Asian peoples” because of their “passion for European education,” citing their extraordinary support, financial and otherwise, for Russian-native schools. “Highly ambitious by nature, with an extraordinary thirst to rise to the level of Russian officials, officers, or members of the liberal professions such as doctors, lawyers, and so on, the Kazakhs strive with every fiber of their souls to get out of their centuries-old patriarchal environment and to join, and least externally, the sphere of their masters, the Russians,” he wrote.<sup>93</sup>

M.T. Shirokov, a lifelong teacher who was born in Perovsk (the future Kzyl Orda) in 1873, also observed a difference between Kazakhs and Uzbeks in terms of their attitude towards Russian schooling. His experience provides insight into the challenges facing Russian-language

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<sup>90</sup> TsGARK f.1692 op.1 d.1734 l.84.

<sup>91</sup> Pierce, *Russian Central Asia*, 215.

<sup>92</sup> Quoted in Alexander Morrison, *Russian Rule in Samarkand, 1868-1910: A Comparison with British India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 71.

<sup>93</sup> “Iz doklada general-gubernatora Turkestanskogo kraia A.V. Samsonova nachal’niku Glavnogo shtaba N.P. Mikhievichu o politicheskoi situatsii v krae,” in *Rossii i Tsentral’naia Aziia, 1905-1925 gg.: Sbornik dokumentov*, ed. D.A. Amanzholova (Karadganda: Izdatel’stvo KarGU, 2005), 90.

education in the region. In 1895, Shirokov was sent to establish the first Russian-native school in Karmakchi, a village in a predominantly Kazakh area of Turkestan. “In search of students I undertook travel through the *auls* on the outskirts of the village of Karmakchi. I went into every yurt, I spoke with the parents, reassuring them of the benefits of education,” he remembered in 1948. “But most of the parents point-blank refused to send their children to school, arguing that their children would be baptized and then sent to serve in the army. I decided to appeal to the children directly, giving them sweets.”<sup>94</sup> Nevertheless, by September he had recruited 12 boys aged 11-12. By the third year, the number of students grew considerably, to 53, including three Russian boys who also lived in the dormitory so that their Kazakh classmates would learn Russian better and more quickly. Shirokov recounts that he made a point of using “native” teachers and merchants to propagandize the benefits of sending children to school and, as a result, students came from as far as 100 km away, including some who had run away from home in order to attend school. In 1900, Shirokov was sent to establish Russian-native schools in Tashkent. He compared his experience among the Uzbeks negatively to his work among Kazakhs, remarking on these two populations’ differing attitudes towards Russian education. He noted that his work was far less successful among the Uzbeks because of a lack of interest on the part of both students and parents.<sup>95</sup>

Indeed, scholars have noted that Kazakhs were generally more open to sending their children to Russian-native schools than were other Central Asian populations, not just in the Steppe *krai* but also in Turkestan. Of the few girls who attended Russian-native schools in

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<sup>94</sup> TsGARK f.1692 op.1 d.1734 l.103ob. Shirokov’s account is part of a collection of memoirs solicited by Kazakhstan’s Ministry of Education between 1947 and 1950. I am very grateful to Anna Whittington for sharing this material with me.

<sup>95</sup> TsGARK f.1692 op.1 d.1734 ll.104-104ob.

Turkestan, for instance, most were Kazakh.<sup>96</sup> At the time of the revolution, many Muslim progressives in Turkestan were not fluent in Russian. Because attendance at Russian or Russian-native schools was much more widespread among Turkestan's Kazakh population, Kazakhs from Syr Dar'ia and Semirech'e oblasts constituted a disproportionate number of the region's Russian-educated natives. Consequently, many of the key political figures in the nascent Turkestan ASSR were ethnic Kazakhs.<sup>97</sup>

### **Integration**

The question of education is closely connected to the nature of the Russian presence in Kazakh territories and the tsarist state's perceived "civilizing mission" in Central Asia. The Steppe Commission, formed in 1865 to determine how Russian Central Asia should be administered, concluded in 1868:

For the spread of Russian civilization among the Kazakhs, for their rapprochement with Russians, and for the development of the productive and industrial potential of the country, one cannot deny the utility and necessity of establishing a Russian population in the steppe—one that, in light of its belonging to a higher race, will have a beneficial influence on the people's way of life and will prepare them for complete unification with Russia. In this regard the Russian colonization of the Kazakh steppes, which have become internal provinces of the empire as a result of our conquests in Central Asia, has tremendous significance for the entire state.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 84.

<sup>97</sup> As Niccolò Pianciola points out, this was true for all the major groupings—Mustafa Chokai for the liberals, Serali Lapin for Shura Ulema, and Turar Ryskulov for the Bolsheviks. Niccolò Pianciola, "Décoloniser l'Asie Centrale? Bolcheviks et colons au Semirech'e (1920-1922)," *Cahiers du monde russe* 49, no. 1 (2008): 106. See also Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan*, 45.

<sup>98</sup> Quoted in A.V. Remnev, "Colonization and 'Russification' in the Imperial Geography of Asiatic Russia: From the Nineteenth to the Early Twentieth Centuries," in *Asiatic Russia: Imperial Power in Regional and International Contexts*, ed. Tomohiko Uyama (New York: Routledge, 114).

Settlement and education were closely intertwined as part of the Russian imperial state's vision for the economic and social development of the region.

They were both important factors in another key feature of Kazakhstan's early Soviet elite—the first Kazakh Bolsheviks were people who had pre-revolutionary social and cultural contact with the steppe's Russian population. They were already Russifying and assimilating into imperial structures in the years before 1917. This experience was hardly typical of most of the Kazakh population, but it was important to determining Kazakhstan's political landscape in the first two decades of Soviet rule.

Lorenzo Veracini outlines settler colonialism as inherently traumatic and violent because it involves the forced displacement of indigenous populations.<sup>99</sup> Indeed, Russian Central Asia saw periodic hostility between settlers and natives, culminating in the 1916 Central Asian Revolt, which resulted in hundreds of thousands of casualties.<sup>100</sup> Nevertheless, despite the existence of interethnic tensions that sometimes erupted into violence, colonial society in tsarist Central Asia was not neatly segregated into “Europeans” and “natives.” Although the tsarist government's general policy encouraged settlement by Slavs in the empire's non-European peripheries, in Central Asia the imperial administration and the upper strata of Russian colonial society were skeptical, even contemptuous, of peasant settlers. Indeed, in some instances they were much more favorably disposed towards elites from Turkestan's settled populations than

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<sup>99</sup> Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 75.

<sup>100</sup> The exact figure is contested, with estimates ranging from 150,000 to 270,000. On the historiography of the 1916 revolt, see Alexander Morrison, “The Revolt of 1916 in Russia and Central Asia,” *Review of The Revolt of 1916 in Central Asia*, by Edward D. Sokol, *Slavic Review* 76, no. 3 (Fall 2017): 772-778.

they were towards the region's poor Russians.<sup>101</sup> There were also conflicts between *starozhil'tsy* and *novosel'tsy*, those peasant settlers who had an extended history in the region and those of newer vintage.<sup>102</sup> At the same time, relations between Russian settlers and local populations were not universally hostile, and there is evidence of various types of cultural and economic integration, especially between settlers and traditionally nomadic groups.

In this colonial context, violence could coexist with familiarity. Alexander Morrison details one 1913 court case concerning an altercation between Slavic peasants and Kazakhs in Aulie-Ata district that resulted in the conviction of eight settlers for murder. Witness statements indicate that the antagonists knew each other by name, and that at least some of the settlers spoke Kazakh.<sup>103</sup> Violence did not exist solely along ethnic lines, and Kazakhs could find themselves allied with Russians against other Kazakhs. In 1905, the family of future Party leader Turar Ryskulov went into hiding after his father murdered the local *volost'* administrator, who was also a local clan leader. As Ryskulov recalled in 1935, "All our family was ransacked by the *volostnoi's* relatives, they took a significant portion of our livestock and our property and the people were beaten. We (my father's family, consisting of women and children) took shelter in the house of the family of a Russian Cossack whom we knew (it seems that their name was Zhiriakov), who were armed and who did not give us up to the *volostnoi's* relatives, despite threats and demands that we be surrendered for reprisal. [...] My father, fearing reprisals against

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<sup>101</sup> See, e.g., Alexander Morrison, "Peasant Settlers and the 'Civilising Mission' in Russian Turkestan, 1865-1917," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 43, no. 3 (2015): 387-417; Jeff Sahadeo, *Russian Colonial Society in Tashkent, 1865-1923* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).

<sup>102</sup> Pianciola, "Décoloniser l'Asie Centrale?," 103.

<sup>103</sup> Morrison, "Peasant Settlers and the 'Civilising Mission' in Russian Turkestan," 390-392.

us, was hiding with his weapon in his hand under a haystack near the house of the said Cossack family.”<sup>104</sup> Pre-revolutionary contacts among members of different ethnic groups could be meaningful even decades later. When the widow of a Russian Bolshevik from Kokchetav uезд who was killed by “white bandits” in 1921 applied for a personal pension in 1960, she supplied witness statements from her neighbors—Russians, Jews, and Kazakhs, many of whom had since relocated. Most of these documents were generated in 1959-1960, but some date from the 1930s, and their authors describe their community in the revolutionary and pre-revolutionary period as characterized by widespread social and economic interaction among its various ethnic groups.<sup>105</sup>

Memoirs by Russians also reveal instances of significant interconnectedness among Russian and Kazakh populations in the pre-revolutionary period. Pavel Petrovich Anisimov, a Party veteran who had spent the early years of his career in Kazakhstan, wrote a memoir addressed to Kazakhstan’s Party Secretary D.A. Kunaev in 1967 in which he described his childhood and early adulthood in the republic. Anisimov was born near Cheliabinsk in 1900, but from age of three he lived in an *aul* in Kustanai uезд, where his father worked as a laborer for a Kazakh *bai*. “In my childhood I grew up among the Kazakhs of this *aul*, and it remains my childhood home. They showered me with affection and called me *petranyng balasy* [Petr’s child].<sup>106</sup> Although there are no statistics to complement such anecdotal personal accounts, archival materials reveal that it was not unheard of for local Russians to know Kazakh or other Turkic languages. In Party biographical forms and official autobiographies, Party members from the territories that are now northern Kazakhstan and from Semirech’e sometimes reported

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<sup>104</sup> APRK f.811 op.2 d.26 l.9.

<sup>105</sup> TsGARK f. 1363 op.1 d.42.

<sup>106</sup> TsGARK f.1363 op.1 d.6 l.36.

knowledge of Kazakh.<sup>107</sup> In one memoir, a veteran of the civil war relates how knowledge of the local language helped him thwart a counterrevolutionary plot in the summer of 1919. He and his wife, both Russians, were invited to a picnic outside of Przheval'sk (modern-day Karakol in Kyrgyzstan) by his in-laws. While there, he overheard a group of Russians and Kyrgyz discussing a plan to rise up against Bolshevik rule. They were speaking in Kyrgyz, which they assumed he did not know. Because he understood them, he was able to notify the local Bolshevik leadership and organize reinforcements.<sup>108</sup>

The traditionally settled areas of Central Asia had the lowest rates of Slavic settlement, at least in part because they were perceived as the most Islamic, and therefore the most dangerous. In Turkestan, the Russian presence was largely urban, and rural settlement was concentrated primarily in the predominantly Kazakh province of Semirech'e.<sup>109</sup> In 1911, even after a period of accelerated settlement, Slavs accounted for only six percent of the population in the governor-generalship, numbering 407,000 out of a population of 6,493,000.<sup>110</sup> The demographic situation further north was quite different. According to the 1897 census, 77.1 percent of the inhabitants of Steppe Krai spoke Kazakh as their native language. The percentage of Russian speakers was significantly higher than in Turkestan at 17.8 percent, with Ukrainian speakers comprising a further 1.5 percent of the population.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> See, e.g., APRK f.141 op.1 d.8050 ll. 303-304; 382-383; TsGARK f.269 op.6 d.33 ll.30, 163.

<sup>108</sup> TsGARK f.269 op.6 d.33 ll.39-30.

<sup>109</sup> Morrison, "Peasant Settlers and the 'Civilising Mission' in Russian Turkestan," 392-396.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 396.

<sup>111</sup> Alekseenko, *Naselenie dorevoliutsionnogo Kazakhstana*, 82.

For the pre-revolutionary Kazakh intelligentsia, peasant settlement was the key factor in political mobilization, making them cognizant of social and economic problems confronting the Kazakh people.<sup>112</sup> Although questions related to land distribution and Russian settlement in Kazakhstan remained highly charged well into the Soviet period, the Russian presence played a different role in the pre-revolutionary development of Kazakhstan's future political elite. Social, cultural, and economic contact with Russians was central to their education, and to their professional trajectories more broadly. An in-depth examination of individual histories reveals the extent to which these issues—education, contact with Russians, and political mobilization—were intertwined for the first generation of the Kazakh Soviet elite.

Education features prominently in the memoirs of Alibi Dzhangil'din, the only Kazakh to join the Bolsheviks before 1917. "I sought to educate myself from my earliest years," he later recounted.<sup>113</sup> The most extensive sources on Dzhangil'din's early life and education came into being at the initiative of Kazakhstan's Institute of Party History, which began to treat Dzhangil'din as a subject of historical study in the post-war years. In 1947, Dzhangil'din dictated a memoir to scholars from the Institute, and after his death Party historians spoke extensively with his first wife, then living in Moscow, and also collected personal objects and archival documents relevant to Dzhangil'din. These memoirs provide a very colorful picture of Dzhangil'din's youth and political radicalization at a distance of several decades, and they differ in certain key particulars. Education facilitated by contact with Russians is a key constant, however. In the memoir he dictated to scholars from the Institute of Party History, Dzhangil'din

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<sup>112</sup> Steven Sabol, *Russian Colonization and the Genesis of Kazak National Consciousness* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 51-53.

<sup>113</sup> Alibi Dzhangil'din, "Moi Put'," in *Alibi Dzhangil'din: Dokumenty i materialy*, ed. Ch.A. Dzhangil'din (Almaty: Ana Tili, 2009), 10.

recalled how, as a child, he met a Kazakh teacher from Turgai and, impressed by his uniform—“a cap with piping, a jacket with gold buttons”—Alibi inquired whether he, too, could become a teacher. Despite the opposition of his father, Dzhangil’din ran away from home twice to attend school in Turgai. He studied first at a Russian-native school, and later at the Orenburg Theological Seminary, where he lived and studied with ethnic Russians, graduating in 1903 and subsequently entering the Kazan teachers’ seminary, from which he claimed he was expelled in 1905 for participating in a revolutionary demonstration.

Dzhangil’din recounted that, with nowhere else to go, he enlisted the help of friends and enrolled in the History Department at the Moscow Theological Academy. Although Dzhangil’din claims he established a reputation as a “heretic and an atheist,” attendance at the Academy would have necessitated conversion to Orthodoxy and, indeed, Dzhangil’din went by the Christian name Nikolai Stepnov. Although he did not join the Party until a decade later, it was at this time in Moscow that Dzhangil’din had his first exposure to revolutionary literature through an underground student group. While his academic career ended when he was expelled in 1906, Dzhangil’din remained active in student circles to the extent that he attracted the attention of the police.<sup>114</sup>

This account differs in some important particulars from that provided by Dzhangil’din’s former wife, Elena Afanas’evna Drobiazgina, who was interviewed by scholars from Kazakhstan’s Academy of Sciences after his death. Her telling, dating from the mid-1950s, begins with rumors that missionaries were traveling to Turgai from Kostanai and that they would take anyone who wanted to study back to the city with them. So ten-year-old Alibi rode off in the middle of the night to find these “*urus*” [Russians] in August of 1894. He intercepted them in the

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<sup>114</sup> Dzhangil’din, “Moi Put’,” 10-13.

steppe, and they told him that they could indeed take him to the city and enroll him in school, but that he would have to be baptized first. As Elena remembered him telling it, “They washed my feet, hands, and head, they anointed my heels with a brush that they had dipped in oil, they poured water on me, sang some songs, and then they dressed me in a clean white shirt and said, now you are *urus*.”<sup>115</sup> Dzhangil’din was given the Christian name Nikolai Vladimirovich Stepnov. His patronymic came from his godfather, the archbishop of Orenburg-Turgai, Vladimir. When he saw him in Kostanai three years later, Vladimir was so impressed with Dzhangil’din’s progress that he decided to take the boy to Orenburg with him and installed him in the household of the Orenburg-Turgai Governor, Iakov Fedorovich Barabash as a companion for the governor’s son, Iakov Iakovlevich. It was while he was living in the Barabash household that Dzhangil’din graduated from the Orenburg Theological Seminary. Shortly thereafter, in 1903, Varvara, the 35-year-old daughter of one of Barabash’s colonels fell into “sin.” As Elena Afanasev’na recalled, “The clergy and the governor decided to cover up the girl’s sin through marriage and they chose as her husband the poor youth Nikolai Stepnov,” then 19, enticing him through promises to support his further education. The archbishop promised to consecrate him as a priest, give him a parish, and marry him to Varvara, whom they would give a sizeable dowry, allowing Dzhangil’din to later use these resources to continue his education.<sup>116</sup>

“But everything happened differently,” Elena Afanas’evna recounts. At Orenburg’s main cathedral, “they married the 19-year-old youth to the old, sinful maiden of 35 years. The old residents of Orenburg, the Orlovs, the Pankratovs, the Protasovs, and others, say that the girls cried when they saw this unsuited pair. But such were the conditions.” Dzhangil’din soon

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<sup>115</sup> APRK f.811 op.6 d.176 l.7.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

realized that he had been deceived. “Right after the wedding night, Ali understood how he had been tricked. He would not be able to continue his studies after his tonsure, as he was supposed to be ordained as a deacon a week after the wedding, and then as a priest. Ali learned that the bride had no dowry whatsoever and that he could not plan on further studies. So, cursing, he ran away from his bride and, selling everything he could, he took the first train to Moscow, where Archbishop Vladimir was temporarily living at the Trinity Lavra of St Sergius.” Dzhangil’din explained his situation to his patron, who initially spurned him but ultimately counseled him to go to Kazan, giving him money and putting him in touch with the rector of the teachers’ seminary there.<sup>117</sup> It was also through Archbishop Vladimir’s support, Elena Afanas’evna relates, that Dzhangil’din ended up as a student of history at the Moscow Theological Academy.

Some of the details of these two accounts cannot be reconciled, and others are difficult to verify. Dzhangil’din was indeed a member of the Barabash household. According to documents from the Orenburg District Court, he was baptized as Nikolai Vladimirovich Stepnov on July 26, 1898.<sup>118</sup> Although he omits the experience from his memoirs, Dzhangil’din briefly worked as a translator for the Orenburg District Court after being expelled from the Kazan teachers’ seminary, from July to October 1905. It is unclear whether his expulsion was connected to the revolutionary events of 1905—researchers from the Kazakhstani Institute of Party History were unable to locate any documents concerning Dzhangil’din at the Tatarstan archives in Kazan during their effort to collect materials on him in the 1950s.<sup>119</sup> Nevertheless, documents

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<sup>117</sup> APRK f.811 op.6 d.176 l.8.

<sup>118</sup> TsGARK f.1023 op.1 d.5 l.2.

<sup>119</sup> APRK f.811 op. 6 d.252 l.16.

connected to his tenure as a translator at the Orenburg District Court note that Dzhangil'din had been hired as a clerk in the Turgai oblast administration in November 1904.<sup>120</sup>

Education received before the revolution was a similarly decisive factor in the political career of Alma Urazbaeva, one of the very few Kazakh women who numbered among the Party elite in the 1920s. Urazbaeva was born in Khanskaia Stavka, today the town of Urda in western Kazakhstan, in 1899. She was one of only a handful of Kazakh women who joined the Party in the earliest days of Soviet rule, and she is sometimes referred to as the first female Kazakh Communist.<sup>121</sup> She joined the Party in 1919 and, after studying in Moscow, held a number of posts in Kazakhstan, later working for the Comintern in Mongolia. She left political life in 1929 due to a debilitating mental illness—some memoirists claim that she was driven insane after her husband, a Russian, cheated on her with her sister; others point to her father's alcohol abuse as the root cause of her affliction. After being treated at the Kremlin hospital in Moscow, Urazbaeva was sent to live with relatives in Kazakhstan. She died, largely forgotten, in 1943.<sup>122</sup> In 1958, a group of women who had been Urazbaeva's childhood classmates and Zhenotdel

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<sup>120</sup> TsGARK f.1023 op.1 d.5 l.2 d.6 l.12.

<sup>121</sup> APRK f.811 op.2 d.47 l.57.

<sup>122</sup> Writing to the Institute of Party History in 1959, Urazbaeva's nephew, Khalil Urazbaev, claimed that she had become mentally ill as the result of being poisoned by "bourgeois imperialists" during her work in Japan [sic]. He explained that after she was hospitalized in Moscow, authorities sent for her brother (the letter writer's father), and she lived with his family in southern Kazakhstan until 1938. From 1939 she lived with her sister, and her condition took a turn for the worse the following year. When he returned from the front, Khalil Urazbaev learned that his aunt had disappeared sometime in 1941 and was presumed dead—one day while her sister was out, Alma left the house and never returned. The family later received information that she had been treated for mental illness at a hospital in Tashkent, but she had checked herself out and it was unclear where she had gone. Her relatives searched for her unsuccessfully in 1946-47, leaving them to assume that she had died somewhere in or near Tashkent. APRK f.811 op.24 d.296 ll.32-34.

colleagues wrote to the Institute of Party History complaining that she was not sufficiently remembered or commemorated.<sup>123</sup> They submitted a range of reminiscences in which they outlined Urazbaeva's contributions to "Soviet construction" in Kazakhstan as they remembered them.

Although they were written with forty years of hindsight and with an explicit agenda, these accounts provide concrete details on Urazbaeva's educational background. Her former schoolmates describe Alma as coming from a poor family that endured material hardships because of her father's alcoholism. In 1906, Alma's mother turned for assistance to Raziia Mendesheva, the wife of Seitgali Mendeshev, a Kazan-educated teacher who went on to become Kazakhstan's Commissar of Education and Chairman of the republic's Central Executive Committee. Mendesheva was working as a teacher's assistant at the school in Khanskaia Stavka, and she convinced the teacher to accept Alma, promising to look after the girl.<sup>124</sup> When Alma finished school in 1910, she was sent to a boarding school in Simbirsk. The following year, a two-year boarding school for Kazakh girls opened in Khanskaia Stavka, and Alma enrolled there in 1912 because her family lacked the money to send her back to Simbirsk. "At that school we studied together with Russian girls and we became close friends with them. We went to some of their homes or studied together in school. Sometimes we organized literary evenings at home—we sang, we read poetry by Pushkin, Lermontov, Turgenev, and others," her classmate Madina Begaliev recalled. "We especially liked Pushkin's 'The Prophet' and 'The Village,' and Lermontov's 'Branch of Palestine' and 'Three Palms.' Of all the girls Alma was the best-read

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<sup>123</sup> APRK f.811 op.7 d.109 ll.46-47ob.

<sup>124</sup> APRK f.811 op.7 d.71 l.3; 109 l.45.

and most developed.”<sup>125</sup> In 1916, Alma graduated from three-year teachers’ courses in Khanskaia Stavka and was one of the first Kazakh women to work as a teacher in Russian-native schools.<sup>126</sup>

Urazbaeva was well-liked and admired by her classmates. “She spoke Russian very well and without an accent. [...] She always got 5’s in Russian,” Begalieva recalled.<sup>127</sup> “I followed her around as if under a spell. Alma was well-read and knew Russian well, which surprised me very much, because I and all the other Russian pupils assumed that only we knew Russian well,” a Russian classmate, Elena Kniazeva, remembered. Indeed, she recalled that Alma would good-naturedly correct Elena’s Russian. “Gradually the idea took root in my mind that I should not only look up to Russians, but that Kazakh girls were also good, knowledgeable, and intelligent, and that I should take an example from them.”<sup>128</sup>

Begalieva describes the girls’ close contact with Russians as a key factor in their intellectual and political development. “Studying together with Russian girls at the two-year school and with boys at the pedagogical courses, as well as the imperialist war, shook our faith in the goodness of the tsar. The boys and the Russian girls were older than us and reasoned like adults. Moreover, at the pedagogical courses we had one exiled [*ssyl’nyi*] teacher (Melent’ev Konstatin Efimovich) who sometimes came to class tipsy and criticized the existing order, ridiculing the inspector of the pedagogical courses and other teachers.” Students also talked among themselves, discussing the difficult life of the poor, especially poor Kazakhs, and the

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<sup>125</sup> APRK f.811 op.7 d.109 ll.29-30.

<sup>126</sup> APRK f.811 op.7 d.71 l.1.

<sup>127</sup> APRK f.811 op.7 d.109 l.30.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, l.6.

wretchedness and illiteracy of Kazakh women. “Alma was indignant that Kazakhs sent their girls to school not so that they would become educated, but because they received full board, in order to get rid of a mouth to feed in the family, and when girls turn 13 or 14, they sell them for *kalym* [bride-price] and force them to marry,” Begalieva wrote. “She gave the following example: in the twenty years of existence of the one-year Russian-Kazakh girls’ school, only ten Kazakh girls had graduated from it, including the two of us, regardless of the fact that every year 17-20 girls studied there.”<sup>129</sup>

Kniazeva also remembered extensive contact between Russian and Kazakh classmates. “We would often meet outside of school in the apartments of Alma and other students from the pedagogical courses. I was always at these meetings. They did not shun me, even though I was 3-4 years younger,” she wrote. “We discussed our future work as teachers and literature we had read; we often sang songs. Alma had a very pleasant soprano, and she led our choir. She knew many Russian songs, and she loved Kazakh songs. She taught us how to sing in Kazakh. Even now I often remember Alma’s comic song, half in Russian, half in Kazakh: ‘*Milenkii khoroshii—qara közing. Nikogda ne zabudu—aytqan sözing.*’”<sup>130</sup> Kniazeva also recalled that Alma would tell her classmates Kazakh stories translated into Russian.<sup>131</sup> Although Urazbaeva’s political career was cut short by her illness, she is remarkable as one of very few Kazakh women who were politically active in the early years of Soviet rule.

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<sup>129</sup> APRK f.811 op.7 d.109 l.31.

<sup>130</sup> “Darling—your dark eyes. I will never forget—the words you spoke.” This is a version of the song “On alty qyz,” which gained prominence after it was recorded by the pop band Dos-Mūqasan, sometimes referred to as the “Kazakh Beatles,” in 1976.

<sup>131</sup> APRK f.811 op.7 d.108 l.7.

Although the preponderance of the first Kazakh Bolsheviks were from the northern oblasts of the Kazakh steppe, similar patterns are evident for Turkestani Kazakhs. Oraz Dzhandosov, one of only two Kazakh bureau members from Semirech'e, was born in 1899 in Chemolanskaia Volost', about 70 kilometers outside of Vernyi in what is today southern Kazakhstan. As with Dzhangil'din and Urazbaeva, his political and professional trajectory was profoundly shaped by his education and by extensive contact with Russians beginning in childhood. In his youth, Dzhandosov's father, Kikim, lived and worked in the household of the local Cossack *ataman*, Andrei Malyshev, and they remained on friendly terms after Kikim married and started a family.<sup>132</sup> "This connection had a beneficial impact on Kikim's later life," his daughter Banu, Oraz Dzhandosov's younger sister, recalled in 1988. Moreover, the family's Russian contacts were not limited to Malyshev. Shortly after Oraz was born, his parents' house burned down. Banu relates that her father's friends from among the local Russian Cossack population provided them with material assistance in rebuilding their house and replacing their belongings, and that Kikim was especially close to a Russian named Afanasii Kozlov.<sup>133</sup>

In 1908, at the age of nine, Dzhandosov began a preparatory course at the Vernyi boys' gymnasium. Founded in 1876, the school already numbered future Bolshevik leader Mikhail Frunze among its graduates. The gymnasium served both Russian and native students, the majority of whom came from relatively prosperous families. Of the 360 pupils studying there in 1913, 220 were children of gentry or government officials, 40 were the children of wealthy

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<sup>132</sup> Banu Qiqymqyzy Zhandosova, "Özgeshe tughan," in *Qayran Oraz: Oraz Zhandosov zamandastar közimen*, ed. A. Dzhandosov (Almaty: TOO Grafika-Print, 1999), 44; K.S. Baitumanov, "Oraz i ego kollektiv v g. Vernom," *ibid.*, 51; Isa Qoshmambetuly, "Orazdyng kanikulda bizding auylgha keluy," *ibid.*, 55

<sup>133</sup> Zhandosova, "Özgeshe tughan," 44-45.

Russian or native peasants, 25 were the children of priests, and 13 were the children of merchants.<sup>134</sup> Dzhandosov came from a poor rural family, but in Vernyi he socialized with both Russians and Kazakhs, including the city's wealthier inhabitants. His contacts included Mukhamedzhan Tynyshpaev, a graduate of the gymnasium who went on to study in St Petersburg and serve in the second Duma and was then working as a railway engineer in Vernyi. Tynyshpaev's wife Gul'bakhram organized fundraising parties to support Dzhandosov and other Kazakh students at the gymnasium.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Pierce, *Russian Central Asia*, 219-220.

<sup>135</sup> Eskendir Tynyshbaev, "Amerikan lotereyasy," in *Qayran Oraz*, 61-62. Tynyshpaev also rendered material assistance to students studying elsewhere. For instance, he gave Turar Ryskylov 150 rubles to travel to Samara to take the admissions exam at that city's Agricultural Institute in the fall of 1915, although Ryskulov ultimately failed to gain entry (see Chapter Three). In Ural'sk oblast (in what is today Northwestern Kazakhstan), a similar patronage role was undertaken by Bakhytzhan Karaldin. Karaldin, a *töre*, studied law in St Petersburg and went on to serve in the Second Duma. He was active in the pre-revolutionary Kazakh press and offered assistance to numerous Kazakh students, including Dzhakhansha Dosmukhamedov, the future leader of the Western branch of Alash Orda. See: Hallez, "Le ralliement des Kazakhs au pouvoir soviétique," 720-721.



**Figure 2: Oraz Dzhandosov as a young student with his father Kikim. Family collection.**

The decision to send Oraz to school was undertaken with the encouragement and material support of *ataman* Malyshev and Koshmambet, the local *volostnoi upravitel'*,<sup>136</sup> the elected head of the smallest administrative unit for the *inorodtsy* of tsarist Central Asia.<sup>137</sup> Nevertheless, Oraz's departure for Vernyi was not without controversy. Dzhandosov's sister remembered that their paternal uncle exhibited "uncompromising opposition" to the decision that Oraz be sent to

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<sup>136</sup> The term was rendered *bolys* in Kazkah.

<sup>137</sup> Zhandosova, "Özgeshe tughan," 45; Qoshmambetuly, "Orazdyng kanikulda bizding auylgha keluy," 55.

the gymnasium. Echoing the anxieties of parents from traditionally settled populations in Turkestan, who were wary of Russian schools as potential vectors for missionary activity, he argued that the boy should be returned to the *aul* in order to “save [him] from baptism” [*shoqyndylyqtan saqta*] and riled up the extended family to the extent that Koshmambet had to intervene in his capacity as local administrator.<sup>138</sup>

Despite the opposition of some of his relatives, Dzhandosov spent ten years as a student in Vernyi, living in a dormitory with Kazakh and Russian students during the school year and returning home during breaks. In 1912, he even traveled to imperial capital as part of a delegation of students from Semirech’e. His classmates remembered Dzhandosov as an able student and a talented artist who copied out paintings by Repin and once sculpted a bust of Nikolai Gogol out of snow. He also stood out in their memory for being enamored of a Russian student from the nearby girls’ gymnasium, socializing with her at dances and engaging her in correspondence. In addition to letters and poetry, he sent her two illustrations of Lermontov’s poem “Demon,” one entitled “Tamara and the Demon” and the other called “The Angel and Tamara,” as well as a watercolor landscape.<sup>139</sup> “You have made such a good and pure impression on me that I tremble involuntarily before you and, wishing to bestow a gift on such a creature as you, I decided on this,” he declared with adolescent sentimentality in a September 1915 letter accompanying one of his drawings. “Accept this insignificant gift from me, which (dare I think it?) will please you. I will dedicate the products of my insignificant talent to you and will send

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<sup>138</sup> Zhandosova, “Özgeshe tughan,” 45.

<sup>139</sup> A.V. Kuznetsova, “Etiud ‘Tamara i Demon,’” in *Qayran Oraz*, 56; I.I. Granitov, “Oraz mog stat’ prekrasnym khudozhnikom,” *ibid.*, 56-58; R.G. Davydova, “On byl vliublen v russkuiu devushku,” *ibid.*, 58-60.

you my pictures, if you will permit it. [...] My sole wish is to see you and to tremble before your image.”<sup>140</sup>



**Figure 3: Oraz Dzhandosov (top left) with his classmates at the Vernyi Gymnasium. Family collection.**

Dzhandosov graduated from the gymnasium in 1918 with a silver medal, one of three students selected for that honor.<sup>141</sup> By that point he was already active in political circles, contributing cartoons and caricatures critical of local authorities to the satirical journal *Sadaq*, which circulated throughout Semirech'e. It is likely that Dzhandosov was drawn into

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<sup>140</sup> Letter quoted in full in Davydova, “On byl vliublen v russkuiu devushku,” 59-60.

<sup>141</sup> Granitov, “Oraz mog stat' prekrasnym khudozhnikom,” 56-58; Baitumanov, “Oraz i ego kollektiv v g. Vernom,” 51.

revolutionary activity by Tokash Bokin, a fellow Kazakh and a graduate of the Vernyi gymnasium nine years Dzhandosov's senior. Bokin served as a translator in the local administration before moving to Petrograd in 1914. It was there that he became politically radicalized, although he did not join the Party. He returned to Vernyi in 1916 and began agitating among the gymnasium's students after the February Revolution. Through his contact with Bokin, who was killed in civil war hostilities in September 1918, Dzhandosov participated in the defense of Vernyi against White forces the preceding May, and he officially joined the Party in November of that year.<sup>142</sup> "The bourgeoisie could not have imagined whose cadres it was preparing," one Czech Communist who was active in Vernyi remarked of Dzhandosov.<sup>143</sup>

From 1918 to 1922 Dzhandosov was active in Party and soviet organs in Vernyi, and from 1922 to 1923 he worked in Tashkent as the head of the agitation and propaganda division of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Turkestan. In 1923, he was sent to Moscow by the Turkestani Central Committee to study at the Timiriazev Agricultural Academy, but he did not graduate—during the national delimitation of Central Asia in 1924, he was recalled to Kazakhstan because of the republic's urgent need for experienced Party workers. He went on to hold a range of positions within the Party and state leadership in Kazakhstan. From 1925 to 1926 he led the Kazakh Krai Committee's agitation and propaganda division, and from 1927 to 1929 he was Kazakhstan's Commissar of Education. He was the first director of Kazakhstan's national library and taught at the pedagogical institute in Alma-Ata in the 1930s. He was also a member

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<sup>142</sup> Abylkhozhin et al., *Istoriia Kazakhstana s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, 4: 98; TsGARK f.5 op. 18 d.303 ll.1-2ob; Baitumanov, "Oraz i ego kollektiv v g. Vernom," 52-53.

<sup>143</sup> APRK f.811 op.4 d.381 l.5.

of Kazakhstan's Central Executive Committee from 1925 through 1936.<sup>144</sup> Like many of his colleagues, he was arrested in 1937 and executed in 1938.

These three cases illustrate some of the fundamental features of Kazakhstan's early Soviet elite. They were literate in Russian because they had attended primary school and usually had some form of secondary schooling. Because they did not come from wealthy families, they attended school thanks in part to material or other assistance from their broader communities. They also had extensive contact with Russians and Russian culture in the years before the revolution. Already before 1917 they were Russifying and upwardly mobile.

Social integration with Russians was also reflected in marriage patterns. As noted above, Alibi Dzhangil'din married a Russian woman from Moscow, and Alma Urazbaeva's husband was a Russian Bolshevik. Oraz Dzhandosov's wife Fatima, meanwhile, was an educated Tatar from Tashkent. Many leading Kazakh Communists were married to non-Kazakh women, either Russians or Tatars. Interestingly, inter-ethnic marriages among the Kazakh elite were not an exclusively Soviet phenomenon. Indeed, the two leading figures of the Kazakh pre-revolutionary nationalist intelligentsia movement Alash, Alikhan Bukeikhanov and Akhmet Baitursynov, were both married to Russian women. Baitursynov's wife converted to Islam and took on the Kazakh name Badrisafa Mukhamedsadykkyzy. Bukeikhanov's wife was the daughter of a *narodnik*, and the couple's two children used Russian first names. Bukeikhanov's daughter Elizaveta was married first to a leading Kazakh Party figure, Smagul Sadvokasov, and later to a Jewish doctor in Moscow. Although they were distinct from the Kazakh cohort that came to political prominence in the 1920s and '30s, Alash leaders retained their significant social influence, and they were respected even by many of their Kazakh political adversaries. Dzhangil'din's wife

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<sup>144</sup> APRK f.811 op.23 d.441 l. 12; op. 4 d.381 l.8; Zhakupov, *Narkomy Kazakhstana*, 135.

Elena Afanas'evna and Dzhandosov's sister Banu, for instance, studied with Baitursynov in Orenburg and Kzyl Orda, respectively.<sup>145</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Examining the Bolshevik political elite at the republic level reveals clear patterns in the process of elite formation in the Soviet Union. In Kazakhstan, those local actors who joined the Party and reached its upper levels in the years between 1920 and 1937 were predominantly young and educated, but they were not the most educated members of Kazakh society. They were literate in Russian, but they did not have any university education. They tended to come from areas with a significant Russian settler presence, and their educational and professional trajectories were shaped by cultural and social contact with Russians. On the whole, they came from less privileged backgrounds than the members of Kazakhstan's pre-revolutionary intelligentsia. Unlike Kazakh intellectuals who were active before 1917, as a general rule the Kazakhs who comprised the republic's future Bolshevik elite did not have significant political experience predating the revolution. Indeed, in most cases it was the revolution that served as the primary factor in their political mobilization. But it was the nature of the Russian colonial presence in Kazakh territories that meant that they were in a position to be politically mobilized in the aftermath of 1917.

In this sense, the case of Kazakhstan differs from the Bolshevik elite in the Soviet Union more broadly. Analyzing the 93 Bolsheviks who were full or candidate members of the RKP(b) Central Committee from 1917 to 1923, Liliana Riga demonstrates that, contrary to popular perceptions, the early Bolshevik leadership was disproportionately non-Russian and

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<sup>145</sup> Zhandosova, "Özgeshe tughan," 47.

disproportionately non-proletarian.<sup>146</sup> Focusing on European and Caucasian Bolsheviks, she argues that these political activists were radicalized and mobilized by socioethnic exclusion made more burdensome by their assimilation. She presents members of the early Bolshevik elite as frustrated in their desire to participate in a Russian empire in its universalizing, *rossiiskii* sense, and argues that they were drawn to the Bolshevik project because they believed it could realize a universalist ideal in which the Russian Empire had failed.

Riga's focus on European and Caucasian Bolsheviks means that she does not consider dynamics at play in Central Asia, where notions of empire and assimilation had a different valence. In a sense, the process that Riga describes was delayed in the Central Asian context—Adeeb Khalid suggests that a similar disillusionment and alienation did not occur until after the establishment of Soviet rule, as a result of Bolshevik nationalities policy: “the main impact of *korenizatsiia* was to provide hope to national cadres; its lack of fulfillment produced discontent that was seen by party authorities and the political police as a sign of disloyalty and ‘nationalism.’ Central Asia changed enormously in the years after 1917, but it saw little of the equalization the revolution had seemed to promise,” he writes.<sup>147</sup> Indeed, although future Kazakh Bolsheviks were already Russifying and assimilating into Russian imperial structures before 1917, it was not until the 1920s that they were promised the prospect of complete political integration. European and Caucasian Bolsheviks were radicalized in the years before the revolution because they felt that the Russian Empire had promised them something on which it

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<sup>146</sup> Liliana Riga, *The Bolsheviks and the Russian Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

<sup>147</sup> Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan*, 158.

did not deliver; for the Kazakh political elite, it was the Soviet Union that offered them that prospect and then failed to deliver on it.

Kazakhstan's political elite also reflects the different implications of empire and revolution in the Central Asian context. Riga notes that after Lenin's death and Stalin's rise to power, the size of the Central Committee expanded, and the all-Union Soviet elite was both proletarianized and russified. At the all-Union level, "1924 marks off the heterogeneity of revolutionary Bolshevism—a product of empire—from the homogeneity of the Stalin years, a product of the revolution."<sup>148</sup> This observation does not hold for Kazakhstan, however—those Kazakhs who served in the Kazakhstani Party's highest executive body between 1920 and 1937 generally had very similar backgrounds. The legacy of Russian colonialism in Kazakhstan shaped the republic's revolutionary elite, and also its political landscape into 1930s. The Kazakhs who joined the Party and advanced through its ranks in the early years of Soviet rule were self-conscious modernizers whose goals and views of progress were informed by their experience within the Russian Empire. The legacy of Russian colonialism in Kazakhstan meant that empire and revolution were closely intertwined.

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<sup>148</sup> Riga, *The Bolsheviks and the Russian Empire*, 9.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Capital Relocation and the Making of Soviet Kazakhstan, 1920-1929

In 1927, Mikhail Sergeevich Riadnin was an ambitious 26-year-old working as the head of the Informational Sub-Division of the Zhetysu Guberniia Party Committee, based in the city that had recently been renamed Alma-Ata. As part of his duties, he compiled reports for Party secretaries at the *guberniia* and *krai* level, and so came to the attention of the Kazakhstani Krai Committee, which summoned him to work in the republic's capital, Kzyl Orda. Although Riadnin was excited about the professional opportunities this move promised to afford him, his colleagues in Alma-Ata gave their condolences—in terms of living conditions, at least, they saw Kzyl Orda as a decided step down. Indeed, when Riadnin arrived in Kazakhstan's new capital, he was disappointed:

Mud-brick huts with windows facing the courtyard. And everywhere adobe walls [*duvaly*], adobe walls. And the dust? The silty soil was terribly broken up and granular. It was enough to ride down the road, either on horseback or in a cart, and clouds of dust would rise up and hang in the air. And if there was even the slightest breeze, a storm of dust would follow us everywhere; even indoors there was no salvation. The dust crowded into apartments, covering the windowsills. Billions of dust particles glowed in the windowpanes," he later recalled. "And finally, the frogs—what a time they had in Kzyl Orda! The water in the *aryks* was stagnant and covered with a green bloom—paradise for them! In the summer evenings the whole old city was at the mercy of the echoing frogs.<sup>149</sup>

Located on the northwestern stretch of the Syr Dar'ia River, some 300 kilometers east of the Aral Sea, Kzyl Orda had its origins as fortress of the Khokand Khanate, constructed in the first quarter of the nineteenth century at a strategic point along the trade routes linking Russia

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<sup>149</sup> APRK f.811 op.38 d.54 l.11-12.

with Khiva and Bukhara. Known as Ak-Mechet' (White Mosque), the outpost had a reputation as impenetrable—the fortress consisted of a rectangular citadel with eight towers, surrounded by walls 4.5 *sazhens* [9.6 meters] tall and a moat 1.5 *sazhens* [3.2 meters] wide. Nevertheless, in 1853, during the Russian Empire's southward expansion into Central Asia, Ak-Mechet' was conquered by the Governor-General of Orenburg, V.A. Perovskii, after a 19-day siege. It was subsequently renamed in his honor as Fort Perovskii and grew into a small town.<sup>150</sup> It went on to serve as an uezd center of Syr-Dar'ia oblast and had a population of 4,823 at the time of the 1897 census.

As Riadin noted, this unremarkable provincial administrative outpost was not an obvious choice for a capital city:

“I often wondered how it could happen that this particular town was chosen as the capital of a republic. At a sharp bend of the highly capricious and inconstant Syr Dar'ia River there stood a small, miserable town. On its high right bank were scattered mud-brick huts, erected abutting one another. There were occasional one-storey brick houses, but they were a negligible presence. One of these stood apart thanks to its unusual size—this was the hospital, perched right above the riverbank. It was here that all the streets began, going in a radial direction, towards the railroad, the train station, and the locomotive depot. Here were the adobe walls [*duvaly*], without a single window facing the street—the windowless walls of the house, the tall wooden gate, and the tall mud-brick fence. Each house, each interior courtyard was a fortress, which an outsider could not penetrate even with his gaze. So this town stood for an age. More than once it fell onto hard times—occasionally it was even wiped off the face of the earth. And its name changed more than once. Here one could expect anything, but that this town would become the capital of a huge republic—no one could have expected such a thing...<sup>151</sup>

However unlikely the city's fate, the question of how Kzyl Orda became the capital of what was at the time the second-largest autonomous republic within the RSFSR is only part of a broader puzzle. In the first decade of its existence, Soviet Kazakhstan had three different

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<sup>150</sup> “Ak-Mechet': Istoricheskii ocherk,” *Sovetskaia step'*, April 19, 1925.

<sup>151</sup> APRK f.811 op.38 d.54 ll.12-13.

capitals, and several other cities were considered as potential political centers for the republic. These relocations were undertaken despite the fact that they were expensive and logistically complicated. Why did Soviet authorities undergo the difficulty and expense of relocating the administrative center of a sparsely populated republic not just once, but twice within the span of nine years?

Capital relocation is generally understood as an exercise in “top-down identity-formation,” a means of “redefining the civilizational identity of a country.”<sup>152</sup> Peter the Great’s relocation of the Russian capital from Moscow to the new city of St. Petersburg is one of the most noted examples of this kind of “redefinition.” Similarly, the move from Istanbul to Ankara was part of Turkey’s redefinition as a secular nation-state following the demise of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>153</sup> In the twentieth century context, capital relocations are often associated with nation- and state-building projects meant to throw off a colonial past, especially in post-colonial states that find that their previous centers do not meet the needs of an independent country, whether because of the peripheral location of the capital city, its colonial connotations, or the desire to create a new national symbol.<sup>154</sup> The construction of Brasilia as the capital of Brazil, for instance, was a top-down project motivated at least in part by a desire to underscore the

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<sup>152</sup> Narek Mkrtychyan, “Nation-Building Projects Through New Capitals: From St. Petersburg to Yerevan and Astana,” *Nationalities Papers* 45, no. 3 (2017): 1-2.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-3.

<sup>154</sup> Deborah Potts, “Capital Relocation in Africa: The Case of Lilongwe in Malawi,” *The Geographical Journal* 151, no. 2 (July, 1985): 182-196; Edward Schatz, “What Capital Cities Say About State and Nation Building,” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 9, no. 4 (2004): 114-115.

country's separation from its colonial past and develop a new Brazilian national identity by pursuing a utopian urbanization project closer to the country's geographic center.<sup>155</sup>

Kazakhstan does not represent the only instance of capital relocation within the Soviet Union. Most famously, the Bolsheviks relocated from Petrograd to Moscow in early 1918. This is usually explained as a question of security—the German army was only two days' march from Petrograd at the time that the Party leadership left for Moscow. As Ewa Bérard demonstrates, however, the decision to move to Moscow was made before military circumstances placed Petrograd in direct danger and was meant primarily as a show of power—to provide a clear demarcation with the end of the tsarist period and to demonstrate that Bolshevik authority extended throughout the country.<sup>156</sup> Similarly, the relocation of the Ukrainian capital from Kharkiv to Kiev, initiated by Stalin rather than by local Party authorities, was a politically motivated show of strength.<sup>157</sup> In both of these instances, capital relocation resulted from top-down decisions, and both can be construed as state-building projects meant to bolster state capacity and further specific conceptions of a Soviet identity. As such, they are very much in line

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<sup>155</sup> Richard L. Wolfel, "North to Astana: Nationalistic Motives for the Movement of the Kazakh(stani) Capital," *Nationalities Papers* 30, no. 3 (2000): 487; James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 119, 130.

<sup>156</sup> Olga Gritsai and Herman van der Wusten, "Moscow and St Petersburg: A Sequence of Capitals, a Tale of Two Cities." *GeoJournal* 51, no.1-2 (2000): 39; Ewa Bérard, "Pourquoi les bolcheviks ont-ils quitté Petrograd?" *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 34, no. 4 (October-December, 1993): 507-527.

<sup>157</sup> Serhy Yekelchuk, "The Making of a 'Proletarian Capital': Patterns of Stalinist Social Policy in Kiev in the mid-1930s," *Europe-Asia Studies* 50, no. 7 (1998): 1229.

with the view of capital relocation as “a process of ‘text inventing’ for nation-building projects,” or a means of “rewriting the history of a country.”<sup>158</sup>

In the case of Kazakhstan, however, the agenda for capital relocation was markedly different. Rather than coming about through centralized decision-making, it resulted from protracted negotiations between various interests. Although Kazakhstan’s capital relocations were retrospectively used in official rhetoric to promote the idea of a Soviet Kazakhstan, the motivations behind the decisions to move and the choice of capital were not those of nation-building. Kazakhstan’s first capital, Orenburg, proved unworkable for Kazakhstan’s Communist elite because of the highly contentious relationship between the republic-level Party apparatus and the city-level Party organization. Consequently, it was decided in 1924 that the capital of Kazakhstan would move elsewhere. Although it was discussed in broader terms of decolonization, this first decision to relocate the Kazakhstani capital cannot be abstracted from the small political elite whose interests it reflected.

After the decision to leave Orenburg, Kazakh Party authorities engaged in protracted attempts to obtain Tashkent, presenting it as the type of nation-building project usually associated with capital relocation. Despite their persistent efforts, however, they were unsuccessful in convincing Moscow that Tashkent should not become part of the Uzbek SSR. Instead, the Kazakhstani capital was relocated to a former uezd center of Syr Dar’ia Oblast, a city known as Ak-Mechet’ and soon renamed Kzyl Orda. Kzyl Orda once again proved unworkable for the Party elite, in this instance because of the city’s harsh climate and deficient infrastructure. In early 1927, less than two years after Kzyl Orda had become the Kazakhstani

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<sup>158</sup> Mkrtchyan, “Nation-Building Projects Through New Capitals: From St. Petersburg to Yerevan and Astana”; Wolfel, “North to Astana: Nationalistic Motives for the Movement of the Kazakh(stani) Capital,” 487.

capital, it was decided that the republic's center would move once again, this time to the far more temperate city of Alma-Ata. Although the move was not enacted until 1929, it was clearly motivated by concern for the material well-being of Kazakhstan's administrative elite. While they do not neatly fit into the nation-building framework usually associated with capital relocation, examining Soviet Kazakhstan's three capitals reveals the degree to which Soviet authorities privileged the needs of the republic's administrative elite, echoing the concerns of European colonial empires in places such as British India and French Indochina. As such, the history of Kazakhstan's capitals illuminates the Soviet Union as a state that was explicitly anti-colonial in its rhetoric but nevertheless replicated patterns associated with European imperialism, even as it empowered local elites.

Historians and political scientists have noted the tension between the fact that the USSR is often termed an empire and the Soviet Union's stance as "the first multiethnic state in world history to define itself as an anti-imperial state."<sup>159</sup> Examining the peregrinations of Kazakhstan's capital serves to demonstrate that the Soviet Union could at once be explicitly an anti-imperial, anti-colonial state and replicate the patterns of European colonialism. Over the course of the protracted negotiations among Party authorities concerning Kazakhstan's capital, "developmental" arguments that presented a given city as a means of counteracting the Kazakhs' "backwardness" or rectifying colonial exploitation proved unsuccessful—the fact that Orenburg had a proletariat and a developed Party organization that could serve as a "vanguard" for the republic was not enough to make it workable for the Kazakh Party elite, and the fact that Tashkent would further the economic and cultural development of Kazakhstan was not enough to convince central authorities that that city should not be incorporated into Uzbekistan. The

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<sup>159</sup> Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 19.

logistical challenges inherent to governing a vast, sparsely populated republic meant that the presence of railroad infrastructure proved to be a necessary condition in determining Kazakhstan's capital, but logistical considerations were not in and of themselves sufficient. Ultimately, the location of the capital had to be agreeable to the republic's administrative elite. The fact that such practical considerations—rather than symbolic ones—won out in determining the location of the republic's capital underscores the nature of power in the early Soviet period as highly personal, based on people rather than institutions, and therefore privileging the relatively small cadre of local elites.

## **Orenburg**

Soviet Kazakhstan's first administrative center and capital was Orenburg, a city that today lies in southern Russia. This was a legacy of tsarist administrative structures and a consequence of civil war considerations rather than the result of any deeper connection between that city and the Kazakh steppe. As one Kazakh Party official put it in 1923, "Orenburg is an artificial center selected because of the old tendency for administering the Kazakh population out of the city of Orenburg."<sup>160</sup> When the Kazakh Revolutionary Committee was established in July 1919, Soviet control over most of the steppe was tenuous at best, with anti-Bolshevik forces predominant in much of the territory that would become Kazakhstan. Given these circumstances, the Kazakh Revolutionary Committee and the Kazakh Military Commissariat were headquartered in Orenburg more or less by default, even though Orenburg Guberniia was not yet officially within their jurisdiction.

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<sup>160</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.776 l.92.

In mid-September 1919, the Revolutionary Committee's Chairman, S.S. Pestkovskii, proposed that Orenburg be officially incorporated into Kazakhstan as its capital, noting that the city's proletariat "should actively participate in the establishment of the Kazakh republic." Several Kazakh members of the Committee voiced their disagreement privately, but they abstained from voting on the question. The proposal also met vocal resistance from members of the city-level Party leadership, who argued that establishing a Kazakh republic was not their business, and that Kazakhstan's government should relocate elsewhere. These sentiments were also echoed in the local press, and they marked the beginning of a remarkably contentious relationship between the predominantly Russian city-level Party apparatus and the republic-level Party organization.<sup>161</sup> Despite these early signs of tension, Orenburg was confirmed as the Kazakhstani capital. Writing of the June 1920 decision to officially incorporate Orenburg into Kazakhstan, confirmed by the All-Russian Central Executive Committee in August, the Orenburg Guberniia Central Executive Committee declared, "the city of Orenburg has great significance to Kazakhstan as a cultural and industrial center; for central Kazakhstan Orenburg represents a center of the proletariat."<sup>162</sup>

The relationship between the city-level Party apparatus, which was well-developed and predominantly Russian, and the Kazakhstani republic-level Party apparatus, which was much less mature as a political organization and more diverse, was often acrimonious. In his memoirs, V.A. Radus-Zen'kovich, who was sent to Orenburg from Saratov and served first as chairman of Kazakhstan's Council of People's Commissars from 1920 to 1921 and then as the secretary of the Kazakh Party bureau from 1921 to 1922, notes that tensions ran high from the very

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<sup>161</sup> APRK f.811 op.7 d.81 ll.37-39, 55, 60-62.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., ll.43-44.

beginning.<sup>163</sup> The degree of acrimony is illustrated by a 1921 Cheka report to Moscow on the Kazakhstani Congress of Soviets: “Banging his feet on the floor and waving his fists, [Smagul] Sadvokasov loudly finished his speech with the following words: ‘We Kazakhs will show you Russian colonialists how to work, we know what must be done, [...] we know that the center of the colonialists [...] is here in Orenburg.’ Protests from Russian delegates, loud ovations and applause from the Kazakh delegates, and calls to order by the presidium of the congress caused disorder in the meeting hall that lasted for ten minutes.”<sup>164</sup>

Once civil war hostilities died down and Soviet rule became more firmly established with the promulgation of the Kazakh ASSR in 1920, Kazakh Communists almost immediately began lobbying that the capital be moved. Rather than advocating for a specific alternative, they were primarily motivated by a desire to leave Orenburg. There was a negligible Kazakh presence in Orenburg, they explained, and the city was not closely connected to the rest of Kazakhstan either historically or economically. “As to Orenburg, other than 29 Kazakh officials there is not a single Kazakh,” Aliaskar Alibekov complained at a 1923 Kazakhstani Central Executive Committee meeting on establishing administrative divisions. “When we talk about natural borders, economic, national, and living [*bytovye*] conditions, what meaning does Orenburg have for Kazakhstan? This forced incorporation of Orenburg Guberniia into the Kazakh republic, and on the other hand the forced recognition of Orenburg as Kazakhstan’s center—this is not right [*nenormal’no*].”<sup>165</sup> Khasen Nurmukhamedov agreed: “What kind of cultural center is Orenburg? In the cultural center of the Kazakh republic there are no institutions of higher education, there

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<sup>163</sup> APRK f.811 op.2 d.24 ll.79-80.

<sup>164</sup> APRK f.811 op.20 d.567 l.26.

<sup>165</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.776 l.86.

used to be no secondary schools, several Kazakhs studied at the *real'noe uchilishche*, now there is no Kazakh theater, there is no Kazakh school, there are no cultural institutions of any kind, there is not a single Kazakh in the city of Orenburg.”<sup>166</sup>

Thanks in part to Kazakh Communists’ recourse to the terminology of Russian “colonialism” [*kolonizatorstvo*] and their allusions to the settler colonialist past, Kazakhstan’s capital was indeed moved, and in fact the entire Orenburg region was excised from Kazakhstan with the national delimitation of Central Asia in 1924. In a 1921 report to the VTsIK Presidium on local conditions within Kazakhstan, Smagul Sadvokasov presented the problem of Russian colonialism in Kazakhstan as inherently tied to the problem of Orenburg. In order to “heal” local organs, he contended, “it is necessary to recall from the Kazakh republic all colonialists interfering with our work. First and foremost the Orenburg colonialists [*kolonizatory*] should be recalled.” Moreover, he argued, full faith should be given to indigenous Communists and, crucially, the capital of Kazakhstan should be moved from Orenburg to some other city.<sup>167</sup>

Sadvokasov complained to VTsIK in 1921 about the pervasive sentiment that “the Orenburg proletariat should not submit to peasant-shepherd Kazakhstan’ (As if the Kazakh Central Executive Committee were not populated by Communists).” Moreover, he argued, even though the city of Orenburg was the capital of Kazakhstan, Orenburg Guberniia was de facto not subordinated to the Kazakhstan-level Party apparatus.<sup>168</sup> Although he was generally perceived as more pro-Russian in his politics, Seitgali Mendeshev, who was then Chairman of Kazakhstan’s Central Executive Committee, expressed similar sentiments in 1924, part of a regular barrage of

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<sup>166</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.776 l.95.

<sup>167</sup> GARF f.1235 op.99 d.1061 l.75. On the discourse of *kolonizatorstvo*, see Chapter Four.

<sup>168</sup> GARF f.1235 op.99 d.1061 l.75.

complaints from Kazakh officials to Moscow concerning Orenburg's unsuitability as a capital for Kazakhstan. "The government of the K[azakh A]SSR, being in Orenburg, in the midst of a large Russian population, cannot extend its organizational influence and work to the Kazakh masses, which are in greater need of it than other population groups," he wrote.<sup>169</sup> Mendeshev argued that Orenburg was not economically integrated with the rest of Kazakhstan. Moreover, he explained, its geographical location at the extreme north of the republic made it impractical as a center of government, especially with the incorporation into Kazakhstan of territories from the former Turkestan ASSR.<sup>170</sup>

One area in which the republic-level and the city-level Party organizations seemed to agree was in their mutual dislike of one another. "The desire of Kazakh [Party] workers to free themselves from Orenburg Guberniia is explained by the fact that the Orenburg [Party] organization, which is strong and seasoned in its proletarian nature, exerts a strong influence on them," Kazakhstan's Party secretary explained in a secret letter to the Central Committee in July 1923. He noted that Orenburg's Communists would similarly welcome the guberniia's removal from the Kazakh ASSR, as it would free them from engaging in republic-level duties that they disdained.<sup>171</sup>

The question of leaving Orenburg and selecting a new capital was not a straightforward one, however. The Kazakh ASSR lacked major urban centers, and the state of infrastructure development rendered the republic's sizeable territory a significant obstacle to effective administration. Even Sadvokasov was forced to admit the difficulty of relocation. At

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<sup>169</sup> APRK f.811 op.20 d.613 l.17.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, l.18.

<sup>171</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.769a ll.21-21ob.

Kazakhstan's Fourth Congress of Soviets in January 1924, he explained: "When it comes to the question of selecting a capital for the KSSR, we face a whole range of difficulties. Not one of the existing cities can be a natural center." Because the Party apparatus could not currently move from Orenburg, they would have to accept it as temporary center, he concluded.<sup>172</sup> As late as December 1924, Kazakhstan's Party Bureau voted to keep the capital in Orenburg due to the lack of a city within the republic that was sufficiently large and developed to serve as a capital without extensive infrastructure investments and the consequent expense of relocating. Additionally, the Bureau proposed to unite Turgai oblast with Orenburg guberniia in order, as Seitgali Mendeshev wrote in his dissent on the decision, to artificially "Kazakhify" the latter.<sup>173</sup> The vote—six to three in favor of retaining Orenburg—was split almost perfectly along ethnic lines. Of the four Kazakhs, only Alma Urazbaeva voted with the majority. Nurmakov, Mendeshev, and Sadvokasov were opposed to the decision.<sup>174</sup> Mendeshev underlined the ethnic tensions that would necessarily result from remaining in Orenburg. "Given Orenburg's isolation from primary Kazakh areas, given its exclusively Russian population (Kazakhifying it would be impossible) and given the difference in economic forms, the antagonism between the center in Orenburg and localities in the KSSR will necessarily continue," he wrote.<sup>175</sup>

Even though he himself was less enthusiastic about the terminology of "nationalists" and "colonialists," Mendeshev grounded his argument for leaving Orenburg in the specter of systemic interethnic tensions. "The representatives of all kinds of factions have always masked

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<sup>172</sup> TsGARK f.5 op.5 d.35 l.49.

<sup>173</sup> APRK f.811 op.20 d.613 l.16; f.139 op.1 d.818v l.236.

<sup>174</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.818v l.236.

<sup>175</sup> APRK f.811 op.20 d.613 l.18.

their factional activity behind interethnic antagonism. Now they have calmed down a bit and claim that the Orenburg [Party] organization was previously carrying out the incorrect line, but now they have straightened themselves out, it is now possible to work with them and there won't be any antagonism with Kazakh areas."<sup>176</sup> Mendeshev maintained that Kazakhstan owed a debt to the Orenburg Party organization because of the support the latter had rendered during the civil war, but nevertheless he argued that there would necessarily be conflict between Orenburg and Kazakhstan because of their fundamentally different conditions. "Even though Sadvokasov has currently calmed down somewhat, there is no guarantee that somewhere, in Turgai or in Akmolinsk, there won't appear a second Sadvokasov who will sing everywhere that Orenburg is taking advantage of the KSSR, that the government in Orenburg is Russian, that *'sary-orystyng bärī orys,'* [literally, "even a yellow Russian is a Russian"] that regardless of what kind of Russian authorities are in power the Kazakhs' suffering will be the same," he warned.<sup>177</sup>

National delimitation provided an additional argument for relocating Kazakhstan's capital following the "unification of Kazakh lands."<sup>178</sup> Orenburg was a center only for the predominantly Russian northwestern part of the Kazakh Autonomous Republic, proponents of relocation argued. With the addition of Syr Dar'ia, Semirech'e, and Karakalpakia to the KASSR, "Orenburg entirely ceased to live up to the role and function of the Republic center."<sup>179</sup> Indeed, in 1925, not only did Orenburg lose its status as Kazakhstan's capital, all of Orenburg Guberniia was excised from the Kazakh ASSR.

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<sup>176</sup> APRK f.811 op.20 d.613 ll.18-19.

<sup>177</sup> APRK f.811 op.20 d.613 l.19.

<sup>178</sup> GARF f.1235 op.120 d.178 l.2.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, l.76.

Given the historical and ethnic context, the relocation of Kazakhstan's capital out of Orenburg could be construed as an act of de-colonization or nation-building. But, at its basis, it grew out of practical considerations: the highly contentious environment proved detrimental to Party authorities' work in the city. Indeed, the process of separating Orenburg out from Kazakhstan proved to be no less contentious than the respective local and republic authorities' cohabitation in the city. Republic and city officials engaged in protracted arguments over the division of property such as office furniture, the projector from Orenburg's Apollo movie theater, archival materials, library collections, and horses from state stables. This fighting over various assets, mediated by Moscow, continued into the late 1920s and spurred impassioned complaints from officials dispatched by central authorities regarding the highly contentious nature of the discussions.<sup>180</sup>

### **What Makes a Capital?**

Even before the ultimate decision to leave Orenburg was undertaken, Kazakhstan's Party authorities were confronted with the question of where to relocate. Their deliberations on this issue reveal their varied and varying criteria for what would make a city appropriate as Kazakhstan's capital, illuminating their conception of what a capital city should be. Ultimately, the considerations that won out were technical, rather than symbolic. This is underscored by the fact that two attempts to designate a capital that would serve to bolster the republic's political and economic development—first Orenburg and then Tashkent—proved unsuccessful. The selection of Kazakhstan's capital in the 1920s was ultimately not an exercise in nation-building,

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<sup>180</sup> See, e.g., GARF f.1235 op. 119 d.72 ll.38-48, GARF f.1235 op.120 d.180.

but an attempt at accommodating the administrative elite, privileging functionality over loftier considerations.

That such practical factors would win out was not immediately apparent, and indeed the earliest discussions of Kazakhstan's potential republican center focused on its symbolic valence. The initial vision of Kazakhstan's capital was that it would serve as a kind of revolutionary vanguard for the whole republic. In September 1919, arguing that Orenburg should be officially designated as the republic's administrative center, S.S. Pestkovskii had laid out his vision of Kazakhstan's capital as modernizing force via its non-Kazakh population. The fact that the Kazakh republic had "a ten-million-strong uneducated [*nekul'turnoe*] population, without a proletariat, with a *kulak* element" meant that Orenburg's "resources and Party apparatus" would be necessary to Sovietizing the republic, he contended, and that the city would have to "be a center standing guard for Soviet and Party rule." A representative from the First Army's Revolutionary Military Council agreed: "Kazakhstan needs cultural strength, and only Orenburg can provide that strength."<sup>181</sup>

Pestkovskii argued that because Kazakhstan was an ethnically diverse republic and would necessarily remain one, designating Orenburg as its capital was the only way to "avoid ethnic strife" and the only path toward the "development [...] of Soviet Kazakhstan in all senses, both in terms of the administrative apparatus and Soviet construction and agricultural-industrial relations." Similarly, Vadim Lukashev from the Kazakh Revolutionary Committee supported Orenburg as a means of countering "the constant desire of the Kazakh bourgeoisie and nationalists to wall the Kazakhs off from Russian cultural centers and establish their own national center." The only Kazakh to express his opinion at the meeting, Akhmet Baiturysnov,

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<sup>181</sup> APRK f.811 op.20 d.568 ll.93-96.

contended that Orenburg was no better suited than other cities such as Omsk, Vernyi, Semipalatinsk, or Ural'sk, and that the question of Kazakhstan's capital could only be answered by an All-Kazakh Congress. Nevertheless, the meeting voted to incorporate Orenburg Guberniia into Kazakhstan, with the city of Orenburg serving as the republic's capital.<sup>182</sup> As one observer later put it, Orenburg and its working class would serve as the "avant-garde of the emancipation of the nationalities of the East."<sup>183</sup>

Nevertheless, as discussed above, Orenburg proved unworkable as a capital, and this vision of the capital city's better-developed (Russian) Party apparatus and proletariat serving as a kind of revolutionary vanguard for Kazakhstan was rejected by the republic's Party elite. The failure of Orenburg underscores the importance of practical considerations rather than more abstract ambitions in determining Kazakhstan's capital. The timing of the move from Orenburg also reflects the promulgation and implementation of Soviet nationalities policy. The vision of a Russian-dominated Party apparatus and urban proletariat leading the Kazakh masses did not accord with the *korenizatsiia* policies implemented beginning in 1923. *Korenizatsiia* in the Soviet Union's "eastern" republics began in earnest in the wake of the Twelfth Party Congress, with a series of decrees that mandated the introduction of paperwork in the local national language and the large-scale promotion of titular nationals in state and Party organs. The policy that was later derided as "mechanical" *korenizatsiia* resulted in quotas or even the direct replacement of "Europeans" with titular nationals.<sup>184</sup> The paternalistic argument for Orenburg advanced by Pestkovskii in 1919 was out of step with the evolution of Soviet nationalities policy.

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<sup>182</sup> APRK f.811 op.20 d.568 ll.95-97.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 1.321.

<sup>184</sup> Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 25, 132-139.

In considering their options beyond Orenburg, Kazakhstani officials discussed a range of geographical considerations, not only in terms of communication with Moscow and with the rest of the republic, but also in terms of “proximity” to the Kazakh population. Geographical factors had an administrative dimension in the sense that the republic’s vast size impeded travel and made Kazakhstan difficult to govern. As one Party official explained at a 1923 Kazakhstani Central Executive Committee meeting on establishing administrative divisions within the republic, “Omsk and Orenburg are both so peripheral [*stoiat na takikh okrainakh*], that if we move to Omsk we will cut off the western part of the Kazakh Republic, if we are in Orenburg the eastern part will be cut off.”<sup>185</sup> Aliaskar Asylbekov concurred, noting that distance was discouraging representatives from Semipalatinsk from participating in Party conferences and sessions of Kazakhstan’s Central Executive Committee. “If we look at the map of Kazakhstan, we see that Akmolinsk and Semipalatinsk are several thousand *versts* from Orenburg, and it is difficult to govern like that,” he said.<sup>186</sup> It was not only local authorities who considered distance as a crucial factor in determining the location of Kazakhstan’s capital. The Central Committee suggested Aktiubinsk as a possible option because it was roughly equidistant from the western, eastern, and southern reaches of the republic.<sup>187</sup> Geographic centrality was not in and of itself sufficient, however. Kustanai was put forward as a potential capital because it was more of a center both territorially and in economic terms than Orenburg, but was ultimately rejected as a city that was not workable as “the center of a rather large republic.”<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.776 l.85.

<sup>186</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.776 l.85.

<sup>187</sup> APRK f.811 op.20 d.568 l.620.

<sup>188</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.776 ll.85, 94, 97.

The notion of “proximity” to the Kazakh population was also put forward as a criterion for selecting Kazakhstan’s capital, especially in contrast to Orenburg. “Is there anything Kazakh in Orenburg—Nothing,” proclaimed Aliaskar Asylbekov at a 1923 Kazakh Central Executive Committee meeting. Unlike Orenburg, “the center should be recognized by the masses,” he argued. “Omsk is the cultural center of Kazakhstan because that is where Kazakh children study.” He also mentioned Kustanai as a possibility, but posited that Turgai would be a “much better” choice because it was “closer to the Kazakhs.”<sup>189</sup> Similarly, Khasen Nurmukhamedov contended, “we must place the center where there are real [*podlinnye*] Kazakhs.”<sup>190</sup> Nevertheless, such arguments were not strictly defined in demographic terms and were used primarily to discredit the idea of Orenburg as a viable capital.

Logistical considerations were much more concrete and, ultimately, more determinative in the course of these deliberations. Indeed, existing and planned railroad lines were a key factor as Party authorities discussed both potential capitals and the administrative divisions that should be created within the republic.<sup>191</sup> At an October 1924 meeting, the Central Committee commission on delimiting the Kazakh republic decreed that the capital should be placed somewhere along the Tashkent railroad.<sup>192</sup> That same month, a Control Committee report rejected the possibility of moving the capital to Chymkent because the city was unsuitable “purely in technical terms,” emphasizing the lack of developed infrastructure. “There is no electricity, there are no phones, no theaters (there is no space for them), there are no public

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<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, ll.86-87.

<sup>190</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.776 l.95.

<sup>191</sup> See, e.g., APRK f.811 op.20 d.568 ll.620-620ob; APRK f.139 op.1 d.776 l.92.

<sup>192</sup> APRK f.811 op.20 d.568 l.626.

buildings. In a cultural sense, Chymkent has nothing to offer.” The damning factor, however, was the fact that the city was three *versts* from the railroad.<sup>193</sup> Indeed, railroad infrastructure would serve as a key determining criterion in the location of Kazakhstan’s capital, ultimately proving more important in practice than notions of geographic centrality.

The broad criteria that emerged over the course of these discussions were that Kazakhstan’s capital should be relocated to a city that could be construed as Kazakh or “close” to the Kazakh population, preferably centrally located, and necessarily connected to railroad infrastructure. Even within the confines of these broad considerations, there were no obvious front-runners within the Kazakh ASSR, which perhaps at least partially explains why, even once it was decided that Kazakhstan’s governing structures would leave Orenburg, there was no immediate decision as to where they should go. Although they were unconvinced by the developmental arguments for Orenburg, as discussions concerning Kazakhstan’s capital dragged on, Kazakh Party officials put forth an ambitious vision of their own.

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<sup>193</sup> APRK f.811 op.20 d.568 l.621ob.



**“Kazakhstan left without Tashkent would be the same as a body left without a head”**

At the end of June 1924, the Presidium of Kazakhstan’s Party Obkom resolved, “acknowledging the necessity of bringing the center closer to the masses of the native population, as well as taking into account the disconnectedness [*razobshchennost’*] of various parts of the Kazakh republic and proceeding from the necessity of moving the unifying center of Kazakhstan out of Orenburg Guberniia, considering the enormous economic and political significance of the southern oblasts to Kazakhstan,” to request that the Party’s Central Committee allow them to move their capital out of Orenburg. Rather than moving somewhere geographically central, however, they appealed for a city that was not even within the administrative borders of Kazakhstan—Tashkent.<sup>194</sup> This was not the first time the idea of Tashkent as Kazakhstan’s capital was put forward, and for the next several months, Kazakhstani authorities expended a great deal of effort in attempting to convince Moscow that that city should be their republic’s administrative center.

Kazakhstan’s Party officials advocated for the choice of Tashkent in nation-building terms. Much like the earliest advocates for Orenburg, proponents of incorporating Tashkent into Kazakhstan as its capital presented the city as a shortcut to development for the entire republic.<sup>195</sup> At the time of the revolution, Tashkent was arguably the most developed city in Central Asia. Conquered by the Russian Empire in 1865, it had served as the administrative, cultural, and economic center of colonial Turkestan, and had benefitted from significant

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<sup>194</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.818v ll.72-73.

<sup>195</sup> On the influence of a dominant city on national development and national identity, see Mark Jefferson, “The Law of the Primate City,” *Geographical Review* 29, no. 2 (1939): 226-232. Roman Szporluk discusses the applicability of this paradigm to a Soviet republic using the case of Ukraine in Roman Szporluk, “Kiev as Ukraine’s Primate City,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 3/4 (1979): 843-849.

infrastructural investments. The European-style “new city” was intended to showcase the “superiority” of Russian modernity as a means of “civilizing” the local population.<sup>196</sup> In a sense, Kazakh Party leaders were applying this logic to their own republic—they hoped that relocating Kazakhstan’s capital to Tashkent would jumpstart the republic’s development and modernization. Of course, Kazakh Party officials were not the only group that laid claim to Tashkent, and these contested claims resulted in protracted discussions between Kazakh and Uzbek Party officials, mediated by Moscow. Even 50 years later, Viacheslav Molotov remembered these discussions surrounding Tashkent as “a vicious fight” between the Kazakhs and the Uzbeks.<sup>197</sup>

“Our Kazakh comrades are laying claim to organizing their capital in Tashkent,” the Uzbek representative Rakhimbaev complained at a meeting of the national delimitation committee in Moscow in May, 1924. “The question arises, what difference is there between Orenburg and Tashkent for the Kazakh republic? Moreover, Tashkent is the cultural, political, and economic center of the Uzbeks,” and as such, he contended, should become the capital of the Uzbek SSR. “If we are currently establishing a capital in Samarkand, it is only so that the Bukharans do not have the impression that they are being annexed to Tashkent.”<sup>198</sup> His colleague Mukhitdinov pointed out that Tashkent uezd was 53 percent Uzbek and 26 percent Kazakh, although these numbers were contested by Kazakh officials.<sup>199</sup> The deputy chairman of the

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<sup>196</sup> Paul Stronski, *Tashkent: Forging a Soviet City, 1930-1966* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 18-19; Sahadeo, *Russian Colonial Society in Tashkent*.

<sup>197</sup> F.I. Chuev, *Sto sorok besed s Molotovym* (Moscow: Terra, 1991), 249.

<sup>198</sup> RGASPI f.62 op.2 d.100 l.13.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, l.14.

Central Asian Bureau, O.Ia. Karklin, largely supported the Uzbek position: “I do not know, but I think that the majority of the population [in Tashkent] is Uzbek. I doubt that this issue can be resolved any other way. It would be unfair if the issue were resolved any other way. ... Today we can say that the fate of the city of Tashkent is predetermined, that we cannot leave it as the capital of Kazakhstan.”<sup>200</sup>

Nevertheless, Kazakh Party officials persisted in their insistence that Tashkent should become their capital. When the question of national delimitation in Central Asia was raised at the Thirteenth Party Congress in Moscow at the beginning of June 1924, the Kazakh delegation argued that Tashkent should be the capital of Kazakhstan. The Kyrgyz representative, although underlining that the Kyrgyz and the Kazakhs were completely separate national groups, with different languages and lifestyles, and that in economic terms the Kyrgyz were much closer to the Uzbeks, concurred with the Kazakh position. The Turkmen did not express any clear opinion on Tashkent, while the Uzbeks argued that the city should be part of their republic. Although the Congress resolved that Central Asia should be divided into separate republics along national lines, the question of Tashkent was left for later.<sup>201</sup>

On June 18, 1924 Seitgali Mendeshev reported to the Kazakh Central Executive Committee that, although it had been decided that Syr Dar’ia Oblast, which included the city of Tashkent, should go to Kazakhstan because the population was mostly Kazakh, Uzbek representatives in Moscow claimed that Tashkent was an Uzbek city [*gosudarstvenno uzbekskii gorod*], and as such should be ceded to the Uzbek SSR. “The Uzbeks’ justifications are weak in this regard: Tashkent uezd, the neighboring Mirzachul’ uezd, and some volosts of Dzhizak uezd

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<sup>200</sup> RGASPI f.62 op.2 d.100 l.16.

<sup>201</sup> RGASPI f.62 op.2 d.102 ll.1-2.

are inhabited by a significant Kazakh population, so that in the area around the city of Tashkent the majority of the population is Kazakh,” Mendeshev explained. Moreover, he contended that Tashkent had closer economic ties to Syr Dar’ia and Semirech’e to the north than to more heavily Uzbek areas to the south. If the border of Kazakhstan were established north of Tashkent, this would disrupt waterways and irrigation patterns.<sup>202</sup> On July 8, the Kazakh Obkom Presidium passed a resolution calling for the relocation of Kazakhstan’s capital “from Orenburg to a region populated by Kazakhs,” requesting that the Central Committee allow Kazakhstani authorities to relocate to Tashkent, even if only temporarily.<sup>203</sup>

On August 12, 1924 in the Tashkent-based Kazakh-language newspaper *Aq Zhol*, Mendeshev laid out the case for designating Tashkent as Kazakhstan’s capital. Syr Dar’ia and Semirech’e, “the cradle of the Kazakh nation’s history,” had finally been incorporated into the Kazakh ASSR. “With the incorporation of the Turkestani Kazakhs into the Kazakh Republic, Orenburg cannot remain the center of Kazakhstan, and the capital must be relocated to a more appropriate and more heavily Kazakh place. That place is Tashkent,” Mendeshev explained, framing this choice in nation-building terms. “That is why we are pursuing all means and requesting that Tashkent be left to the Kazakh republic. As long as we have not definitively lost hope of obtaining Tashkent, we will not relocate our center anywhere else. There is no benefit to remaining in Orenburg, or to moving the capital to Omsk or Semipalatinsk, as all of those cities are located at the edges of the Kazakh Republic. Our aspirations for obtaining Tashkent stem from the following reasons: Firstly, the Kazakh republic does not exist only for Kazakhs of Semipalatinsk or Akmolinsk Guberniias. It is the unifying unit for all Kazakhs.” Moreover, he

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<sup>202</sup> TsGARK f.5 op.5 d.37 l.42.

<sup>203</sup> RGASPI f.62 op.2 d.102 l.31.

argued, the capital should be “in the middle” of Kazakhstan’s vast territory, although this designation does not correspond to Tashkent’s actual geographic situation. “In short,” Mendeshv concluded, “Kazakhstan left without Tashkent would be the same as a body left without a head.”<sup>204</sup>

Other Kazakh officials raised similar arguments, contending that Tashkent’s population was mostly European; the Uzbeks constituted a majority only in relation to other “native” populations. Moreover, they claimed, the Kazakhs had no other potential cultural center, “while in the cultural life of the Uzbek nation, which has such ancient cultural centers as Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khokand, the city of Tashkent is only of secondary importance.”<sup>205</sup> As part of its case, Kazakhstan’s representative office in Moscow forwarded to VTsIK a letter addressed to Kalinin from the Karakul Volost’ Congress of Soviets, in which the local authorities complained that “Tashkent, which is the main economic and cultural center of the entire Turkestan region and especially the Kazakh part of the region, is going to the Uzbeks.” They noted that Tashkent was home to Kazakh cultural institutions, including schools, print shops, and the editorial offices of the Kazakh-language press, and that the city served as their primary market for the sale of livestock and related products on the one hand and the purchase of industrial goods on the other.<sup>206</sup>

Kazakh officials also advanced the argument that Tashkent should be ceded to Kazakhstan in order to counteract the Kazakh nation’s colonial exploitation—not by Russians,

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<sup>204</sup> RGASPI f.62 op.2 d.107 ll.55-55ob.

<sup>205</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.921 ll.244-247. On more successful attempts by republic-level elites to exploit the notion of their relative backwardness vis-à-vis other republics in order to secure concessions from Moscow, see Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 130-132.

<sup>206</sup> GARF f.1235 op.118 d.8 l.43.

but by Uzbeks. “The Uzbeks, thanks to their economic and cultural advantage, despite our numerical preponderance, have up until now mercilessly exploited us,” the Kazakhs from Karakul complained. “If Tashkent goes to the Uzbeks, then this exploitation and oppression will assume extraordinary proportions and in fact we will consider the transfer of Tashkent to the Uzbeks as the deliberate abandonment of Kazakh workers to complete enslavement by Uzbek speculators and kulaks.” Tashkent should instead be left to the Kazakhs, they argued, “who constitute the majority in comparison with the Uzbeks, who are an obvious minority.”<sup>207</sup> The notion that Kazakhs were facing colonial exploitation at the hands of Uzbeks in Turkestan was echoed in the Kazakh-language press, prompting an acerbic response. The Uzbek-language newspaper *Turkestan* accused “parasitic [Kazakh] intellectuals” such as Khodzhanov of pressing “unfounded demands” in “long, demagogic articles,” to the extent that “the issue of national delimitation has taken on the form of a brawl between Uzbeks and Kazakhs.”<sup>208</sup>

After the Central Committee decided in late July that Tashkent should remain in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan’s Party leadership continued to appeal.<sup>209</sup> They maintained their argument that Tashkent was the only viable option for the Kazakhstani capital. Already in April, 1922, Kazakh representatives in Moscow had argued that the incorporation of predominantly Kazakh areas in Turkestan’s Semirech’e and Syr Dar’ia Oblasts into Kazakhstan would benefit Kazakhstan because these areas were more developed than Kazakh territories to the north.<sup>210</sup> Similarly, they now posited that designating Tashkent as Kazakhstan’s capital would serve the

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<sup>207</sup> GARF f.1235 op.118 d.8 l.43.

<sup>208</sup> RGASPI f.62 op.2 d.102 ll.45-45ob.

<sup>209</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.818b l.112; d.820 ll.17-17ob.

<sup>210</sup> APRK f.811 op.20 d.568 l.51.

development of the republic. As Kazakh authorities wrote to the Central Committee, Tashkent was the only possible capital for Kazakhstan because “the basic principle of national delimitation in Central Asia is the strict observance of the interests of weak nationalities, which in this case describes the Kazakh population, in order to provide a broad opportunity for their national, cultural, and economic development through the consolidation of territories that, in the historical development of the nation, should serve as pockets of settled life, foundations of culture and civilization that favor the progress of the national economy.”<sup>211</sup>

Writing to Moscow in September 1924, Kazakhstan’s Central Executive Committee explained that while national delimitation was a good policy, it was much more difficult to establish borders for the Kazakhs than it was for the Uzbeks, who inhabited compact and densely settled territory, or for the Turkmen, who were territorially isolated. “The Tashkent oasis was and is the key to the Kazakh steppes, their commanding cultural and economic center,” the Kazakhstani authorities maintained, underlining that it was impossible for the capital to remain in Orenburg because of its geographical location and its exclusively Russian population. Because of Tashkent’s importance to the Kazakh steppe, they contended that VTsIK should give Tashkent to Kazakhstan as its capital. Interestingly, they conceded that, because Uzbek claims on Tashkent’s old city were justified, the old city could be ceded to the Uzbek SSR while the new city was transferred to Kazakhstan.<sup>212</sup>

The question of Tashkent’s fate was ultimately decided by the Central Committee on October 11, 1924 during a special session held with representatives of the new Central Asian

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<sup>211</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.921 l.203.

<sup>212</sup> APRK f.811 op.20 d.568 ll.327-329.

republics, at which the city was definitively delegated to Uzbekistan.<sup>213</sup> On October 27, VTsIK officially decreed the national delimitation of the former Turkestan ASSR, “in accordance with the principle of national self-determination,” creating the Uzbek SSR, the Tajik ASSR, the Turkmen SSR, and the Kyrgyz Autonomous Oblast. As part of this territorial division, most of the lands comprising Semirech’e and Syr-Dar’ia Oblasts, inhabited primarily by Kazakhs, were officially ceded to Kazakhstan, which also received jurisdiction over the newly created Karakalpak Autonomous Oblast. As with the case of Orenburg, the argument that the choice of Kazakhstan’s capital should be determined by Tashkent’s potential to contribute to the development of the republic proved unsuccessful. Ultimately, more practical concerns proved to be decisive.

### **Kzyl Orda**

Once it had become clear that, despite its concerted efforts, Kazakhstan’s Party organization would not succeed in convincing Moscow that Tashkent should be Kazakhstan’s capital, several other cities were put forward as potential options, including Chymkent, Aktiubinsk, Semipalatinsk, and Petropavlovsk.<sup>214</sup> Ak-Mechet’ was proposed as a possible capital

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<sup>213</sup> Abylkhozhin et al., *Istoriia Kazakhstana*, 4: 232. Although the archival record does not clearly indicate what motivated this decision, Arne Haugen posits that it was driven by a desire to more firmly establish Soviet control over southern Central Asia because central Soviet authorities considered themselves more vulnerable there than in Kazakhstan. See: Arne Haugen, *The Establishment of National Republics in Soviet Central Asia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 200-201. Despite some of the arguments raised by the Uzbek side during the discussions concerning Tashkent and the fact that it had served as the capital of the Turkestan SSR, the city did not at this point become the capital of the newly created Uzbek SSR. Instead, Samarkand was designated as Uzbekistan’s capital city, a position it held until 1930, when the center was relocated to Tashkent.

<sup>214</sup> APRK f.811 op.20 d.568 l.334.

by a group of Turkestan Kazakhs (Khodzhanov, Kuramysov, Sergaziev, Kuletov, and Eskaraev) in December 1924.<sup>215</sup> The city was confirmed by the Central Committee as Kazakhstan's new republican center on January 26, 1925. That summer the republic's state and party authorities relocated from Orenburg "into the thick of the indigenous population," to the newly rechristened Kzyl Orda, which had been renamed from White Mosque to Red Capital.<sup>216</sup>

The considerations that led to Kzyl Orda's designation as Kazakhstan's capital were technical and practical—the city was more or less in the center of the republic and, crucially, it was located directly on the Tashkent railroad. Moreover, the fact that the process of deciding on a new capital had been contested and contentious was not a secret, and it was openly discussed by Party officials in the press.<sup>217</sup> Nevertheless, once the decision to move to Ak-Mechet' had been undertaken, it was reframed in nation-building terms. The Fifth All-Kazakh Congress of Soviets was held in the republic's new capital in May 1925. They officially renamed Ak-Mechet' (formerly Perovsk) Kzyl-Orda, or "Red Capital."

They also took the opportunity to change the name of the republic itself, which was at that point known in Russian as the Kyrgyz ASSR.<sup>218</sup> "Russians know two nationalities

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<sup>215</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.921 l.260.

<sup>216</sup> GARF f.1235 op.120 d.178 l.76; f.3316 op.18 d.776. As explained by Kazakh Communist Asfendiiar Kenzhin in 1922, "the word 'Orda' in translation [...] means the seat of the country's government, or sometimes the word 'Orda' is used to mean 'government.'" A. Kenzhin, "K stat'e 'Revdvizhenie v Kirgizii,'" in *Dvizhenie Alash: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, vol. 4, *Iz istorii izucheniia voprosa*, ed. M.K. Koigeldiev et al. (Almaty: El-shezhire, 2008), 237-246, 240.

<sup>217</sup> See, e.g., "O perenesenii tsentra: Politicheskoe znachenie i ekonomicheskie perspektivy novogo tsentra Kirgizii (Beseda s chlenom Biuro Obkoma RKP(b) tov. Sadvokasovym S.)," *Sovetskaia step*, February 2, 1925.

<sup>218</sup> GARF f.3316 op.18 d. 776 ll.1-4, 10-11.

[*narodnosti*] that are distinct, although not entirely alien to one another, under the name ‘Kyrgyz’: the Kyrgyz nation and the Kazakh nation, both of which belong to the large Western branch of Turkic tribes,” Kazakhstan’s representative in Moscow, Mukhamedkhafii Murzagaliev, explained. “The Kazakhs have never called themselves Kyrgyz and are perplexed when they hear this name addressed to them, or when they hear the word ‘Cossack’ [*kazak*] addressed to a Russian; when asked what their nationality is, they always answer: ‘We are Kazakhs,’ adding to this general national name the name of the tribe to which they belong.” Writing to the VTsIK Presidium in June, Murzagaliev noted that VTsIK had already renamed the Kara-Kyrgyz Autonomous Oblast the Kyrgyz Autonomous Oblast at the latter’s request, and so the KSSR’s representative in Moscow petitioned that central Soviet authorities officially confirm the Kazakh Congress of Soviets’ decision to change the name of their republic to the Kazakh ASSR, a change that was already being enacted by local institutions.<sup>219</sup> Kazakhstan’s request was officially confirmed by the VTsIK Presidium on June 15, but, to the consternation of Kazakhstan’s representatives in Moscow, it took several months for central authorities to approve the renaming of Kzyl Orda’s railway station and post office.<sup>220</sup>

As Nigmat Nurmakov explained at the Fifth All-Kazakh Congress, the incorporation into Kazakhstan of the two formerly Turkestanian *oblasts* as well as the Karakalpak autonomous *oblast* had “decided the long-debated question of establishing a national center, of moving the center of our republic into the thick of the laboring Kazakh people.” Although nation-building had not been the motivation for the move, the relocation of the capital was now presented as an integral part of the broader nation-building project inherent to national delimitation in Central Asia. “It

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<sup>219</sup> GARF f.1235 op. 119 d.72 ll.36-36ob.

<sup>220</sup> GARF f.3316 op.18 d. 776 l.4; f.1235 op. 119 d.72 ll.67, 89, 121-123.

was the delimitation of Central Asia, which gave us the transfer of our southern Kazakh *oblasts*, the relocation of our capital to Kzyl-Orda, and the partial internal delimitation of the Kazakh Republic in the form of Orenburg Guberniia's departure to the RSFSR that definitively gave shape [*oformilo*] to Kazakhstan as a national Soviet republic," Nurmakov explained.<sup>221</sup>

On paper, at least, Ak-Mechet' appeared to be a promising location for a new capital. Compared to most of Kazakhstan in the early 1920s, Ak-Mechet' was well connected both to other cities in the republic and to the rest of the Soviet Union. The Tashkent railroad, which passed through western Kazakhstan, connecting Orenburg and Tashkent, stopped at the city's centrally located railroad station. As one observer noted in 1925, this meant that Ak-Mechet' was connected to both the industrial center of the Soviet Union and its cotton-growing southeast. Moreover, the city had a rail connection to the agricultural areas of Semirech'e via the Semirech'e railroad (which was later developed into the Turksib railroad), and water routes led to Karakalpakia on the Amu Dar'ia via the Aral Sea. Caravan routes stretched south to Bukhara and Khorezm and northwards into the Kazakh steppe.<sup>222</sup> The railroad infrastructure already present in Ak-Mechet' was a decisive factor in that city's selection as Kazakhstan's new republican center. Indeed, distance from the railroad—even of only several *versts*—was a reason why other options, such as Chymkent, were rejected as potential capitals.<sup>223</sup>

Such logistical considerations were important in justifying the relocation of the capital, which was presented as "bringing the administrative apparatus closer to the native population

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<sup>221</sup> APRK f.811 op.20 d.568 l.284.

<sup>222</sup> Anton Gaev, "V prisoedinennykh oblastiakh (putevye obzory): Ak-Mechet'," *Sovetskaia step'*, January 29, 1925.

<sup>223</sup> APRK f.811 op.20 d.568 l.621ob.

and the related, perhaps slow, but certain re-education [*perevosпитanie*] of the backwards Kazakh masses in the Soviet spirit.” As Smagul Sadvokasov explained, Orenburg was located at the republic’s periphery, making it difficult to maintain contact with population centers throughout Kazakhstan. “Consequently, we had to find a place from which the political brain’s impulses would reach even the most distant extremities of the country’s body and finally lead them in the movement that we require.”<sup>224</sup>

In January 1925, before the relocation of the capital, *Sovetskaia Step’* described the city in fairly romantic terms. As part of a series on the territories newly incorporated into the Kazakh ASSR, the newspaper’s correspondent encountered a sleepy provincial town (although he noted that the bazaar was “relatively lively”) where “adobe and, rarely, brick buildings, sometimes with metal roofs, border on broad streets lined with *aryks* and poplars.”<sup>225</sup> In the early spring, before the onslaught of mosquitoes and gadflies, Ak-Mechet’ was “a continuous park—unusually gratifying. The dark caps of the elms are mixed in among smoky green bushes of oleaster. Beneath them the small *dzhangil* shrubs, among the cool damp of the *aryks*—and all the greenery is interspersed with slender poplars, like gothic arrows soaring upwards into the hot Turkestani sky.”<sup>226</sup>

Despite this positive early assessment and the logistical advantages it seemed to enjoy, the new capital quickly proved disappointing to Kazakhstani officials. At the end of February,

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<sup>224</sup> “O perenesenii tsentra: Politicheskoe znachenie i ekonomicheskie perspektivy novogo tsentra Kirgizii (Beseda s chlenom Biuro Obkoma RKP(b) tov. Sadvokasovym S.),” *Sovetskaia step’*, February 2, 1925.

<sup>225</sup> Anton Gaev, “V prisoedinennykh oblastiakh (putevye obzory): Ak-Mechet’,” *Sovetskaia step’*, January 29, 1925.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*

only after the city had already been designated as the future capital, Kazakhstan's Council of People's Commissars sent a commission to Ak-Mechet' in order to assess the city's current state and lay the groundwork for relocation. The new capital's amenities were limited—the city boasted a club with a movie theater, a small library, a hotel, and three “insignificant” bathhouses. Moreover, Ak-Mechet' lacked a sewage system. Only the area around the train station had electricity, and the city's streets were unpaved.<sup>227</sup> Asfendiir Kenzhin, the head of the SNK commission, complained, “we lost two days just finding a room where the committee could meet and an apartment for its members.” He was also taken aback by city's unsanitary conditions: “The streets were covered with dead dogs, cats, crows, everywhere underfoot there were heaps of manure, ashes, all kinds of trash.”<sup>228</sup>

In preparing for the move, Party authorities' first priority was securing housing and office space for state and Party institutions and their employees. The population of the city was expected to double as a result of the relocation, from about 6,500 to just under 13,000.<sup>229</sup> There was insufficient living space for this influx of officials, and those accommodations that were available were in need of significant renovation. This difficulty was compounded by the fact that there were almost no building materials available in the city, and it was impossible to procure them anywhere in the area.<sup>230</sup> But housing was only the most immediate of the challenges facing the

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<sup>227</sup> “V budushchem tsentre KSSR,” *Sovetskaia step'*, March 17, 1925.

<sup>228</sup> “Stroitel'stvo Kzyl-Ordy (Iz besedy s predkomissii SNK t. Kenzhinym), *Sovetskaia step'*, July 8, 1925.

<sup>229</sup> “K pereneseniiu tsentra v Ak-Mechet': Podgotovlennye raboty,” *Sovetskaia step'*, February 19, 1925; “V budushchem tsentre KSSR,” *Sovetskaia step'*, March 17, 1925.

<sup>230</sup> “K pereneseniiu tsentra v Ak-Mechet': Rabota komissii Sovnarkoma KSSR v Ak-Mecheti,” *Sovetskaia step'*, March 6, 1925; “Stroitel'stvo Kzyl-Ordy (Iz besedy s predkomissii SNK t. Kenzhinym), *Sovetskaia step'*, July 8, 1925.

Kazakhstani authorities as they prepared for the move. For instance, a total of 1,429 schoolchildren were expected to move to Ak-Mechet' as a result of the relocation. The city lacked sufficient educational resources for this influx of pupils, meaning that new schools would have to be built and some 60 teachers would have to be hired.<sup>231</sup> Dealing with such challenges proved to be enormously expensive. Kazakhstan received 1.2 million rubles from Moscow in 1925 to support the relocation of the capital. A further 8 million were allocated in 1926, to be disbursed over the following five years.<sup>232</sup> Over 2.1 million rubles had been spent by the time Kazakhstan's leadership decided to move to Alma-Ata in early 1927.<sup>233</sup>

Moving from Orenburg to Ak-Mechet' was considered an "assignment to a remote place" [*komandirovka v otdalennuiu mestnost'*], meaning that Party and state workers were entitled to certain privileges in accordance with Soviet labor laws, including doubled salaries in their first three months of employment in the new capital. In case of illness or injury, they would receive compensation commensurate with the cost of relocating back to their previous domicile, and in case of their death their dependent family members would receive similar support. Highly qualified workers were entitled to additional incentives, including extra vacation, access to supplemental education, and financial support for sending their children to educational

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<sup>231</sup> "K pereneseniiu tsentra v Ak-Mechet': Rabota komissii Sovnarkoma KSSR v Ak-Mecheti," *Sovetskaia step'*, March 6, 1925.

<sup>232</sup> APRK f.141 op.1 d.486b l.6.

<sup>233</sup> TsGARK f.30 op.1 d.795 l.200.

institutions anywhere in the RSFSR. Moreover, Soviet authorities promised that moving to Ak-Mechet' would entail lower cost of living as compared to Orenburg.<sup>234</sup>

Despite such incentives, many officials were unenthusiastic about the prospect of moving to Ak-Mechet'. "Some specialists believe that they possess all specializations save one—following their institution wherever it might move. They are entirely unwilling to connect their fate with the fate of the nation that they have served for so long," the head of the Kazakhstani office of the All-Union Council of Trade Unions complained. "These workers are running around Orenburg eyeing those institutions that will remain here. Some of the latter are not against using this opportunity to entice such workers."<sup>235</sup>

One of the primary challenges Soviet authorities faced was the weather. Ak-Mechet' had a desert climate, with negligible precipitation that was concentrated in the winter months. Extreme temperature fluctuations were not uncommon—although the city saw snowfall from November until March (and sometimes into April), temperatures remained below freezing for an average of only 75 days a year. The winters were relatively cold, with temperatures occasionally dropping as far down as -35 degrees Celsius, while summers were hot and long, with temperatures in the 30's Celsius from April through September. In June, as mountain snow accumulation melted, the Syr Dar'ia would overflow its banks, flooding significant portions of the city.<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> All of Kazakhstan except for the cities of Ural'sk and Orenburg fell under the category of "remote place." "Perenesenie tsentra i polozhenie sluzhashchikh," *Sovetskaia step'*, February 2, 1925.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>236</sup> N. Makeev, "Klimat Ak-Mecheti," *Sovetskaia step'*, February 18, 1925.

Indeed, the city's climate and physical environment proved to be a constant source of complaint. Prominent Kazakh actor Kapan Badyrov later recalled: "How was the dust of Kzyl Orda? From head to toe, all were grey from the dust raised by the feet of horses and pedestrians."<sup>237</sup> The city's dust was seen as not only unpleasant, but actively detrimental to human health, part of Kzyl Orda's broader problems with sanitation. "It is already warm. Any day now the flies, mosquitoes, and other vermin will appear," a March 1926 article in *Sovetskaia step'* complained. "Dust—that charming local feature that represents a terrible danger to human lungs and eyes—is coming into force. Everything is ready for spring, except for the city, which—we must openly say—finds itself in outright unsanitary conditions." The river was lined with "dunes of dung," the streets were piled with dog carcasses, and the *aryks* were overflowing with dung and trash. "The aroma of burning dung spreads throughout the city. The smoke hangs in the air like a fog," the author warned. "Inhale deeply, take a whiff, and chemicalize yourself."<sup>238</sup>

Despite its location on the banks of the Syr Dar'ia River, the city was plagued by a chronic lack of running water due to infrastructural deficiencies.<sup>239</sup> Another 1926 article described the situation of the city as "nightmarish" and actively deleterious to the health of its inhabitants. "The city is drowning in dust, which is a terrible thing—a scourge from which there is decidedly no salvation," the author lamented. "It is everywhere—in heavy, thick layers on the

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<sup>237</sup> Qapan Badyrov, "Ötkender men ötkelder," in Kenges Aukhadiev et al., eds., *Qazaq elining astanalary: Orynbor, Qyzylorda, Almaty, Astana* (Almaty: n.p., 2008), 217.

<sup>238</sup> Elle, "Ne mogu molchat'! Vesennyi vopl' zhitelia stolitsy Kazakstana," *Sovetskaia step'*, March 26, 1926.

<sup>239</sup> I. Rutsipskii, "V stolitse Kazakstana: Bol'noi Kzyl-Ordynskii vopros," *Sovetskaia step'*, August 29, 1926.

streets, a dirty gray coating on tree branches, saturating the clothing of passersby. No matter how much you tend to the cleanliness of your rooms, they will always be covered in dust, which settles on the floors, on the furniture, on your books—it seems that there is no place, not even the tiniest corner, that it does not penetrate.” The author complained that the pervasive dust caused damage to the eyes and the respiratory system, giving rise to inflammation.<sup>240</sup>

Although Kzyl Orda was the capital of a newly delimited Soviet republic, and as such was closely tied to the Soviet Union’s anti-imperial and anti-colonial agenda, these complaints echo Russian attitudes towards Tashkent in tsarist period, when “visitors described traditional Central Asian regions of the city as having piles of rotting garbage, frequent dust storms, extreme temperatures, and dirty water.”<sup>241</sup> Complaints about Kzyl Orda are also reminiscent of European colonial attitudes more broadly. Climate-driven anxieties and concerns about the health of colonial administrators “actively shaped” European imperial priorities in places like French Indochina.<sup>242</sup> Inhospitable climates were seen as dangerous not only in a physical sense—in Africa and Indochina, colonial officials accused of violent crimes claimed that they had been driven insane by the heat.<sup>243</sup> European colonial regimes went to great lengths to ensure the health and material well being of their officials. One of the justifications for relocating the capital of

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<sup>240</sup> I. Rutsipskii, “V stolitse Kazakstana: Bol’noi Kzyl–Ordynskii vopros,” *Sovetskaia step’*, August 29, 1926.

<sup>241</sup> Stronski, *Tashkent*, 21-23.

<sup>242</sup> Eric T. Jennings, *Imperial Heights: Dalat and the Making and Undoing of French Indochina* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 6-8.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, 23-26.

British India from Calcutta to New Delhi, for instance, was the fact that “the climate of Delhi is good enough all the year round for the residence of Europeans.”<sup>244</sup>

Similar concerns for material conditions and health-related anxieties were voiced by Soviet officials sent to Central Asia from Russia. In one such example from 1923, Robert Lepsis, a Party member working in the Turkestani Division of the Upper Court, appealed to the Turkestani Central Committee and the Central Asian Bureau to be sent back to Central Russia. He had worked a year in Turkestan, and could no longer endure the weather. “I find the climate unbearable and I sometimes reach such a nervous state that I fear for myself,” he wrote. Moreover, he complained, his working conditions were made very difficult by the contentious atmosphere among his co-workers.<sup>245</sup>

It was not only individual Soviet officials sent to work in Central Asia who made such complaints, however. Kazakhstan’s People’s Commissariat for Labor described the Kzyl Orda’s climate and living conditions as “extremely negative,” and the republic’s People’s Commissariat for Public Health issued a special report on how these were “sharply differentiated [...] from other cities of the RSFSR.” At least 50 percent of dwellings inhabited by state employees did not meet the minimum requirements for habitability in the colder months. Inflation in the city was high, with prices for food and basic necessities subject to marked increases, driven at least in part by the fact that there was almost no local agricultural or industrial output to speak of. Indeed, some 8 million *puds* of grain had to be imported into Syr Dar’ia Oblast from central Russia annually, and the lack of a completed rail connection impeded procurement of agricultural

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<sup>244</sup> “Reuters’ Telegram. India’s New Capital: Why Delhi was Chosen,” May 13, 1921, in *New Delhi: Making of a Capital*, ed. Rudrangshu Mukherjee and Malvika Singh (New Delhi: Lustre Press, 2009), 26.

<sup>245</sup> RGASPI f.62 op.2 ll.17-18.

products from more fertile Semirech'e. At the same time, state employees in Kzyl Orda were paid significantly less than their counterparts in Tashkent, and in real terms their pay was down 30 percent compared to Orenburg. State institutions and People's Commissariats were significantly understaffed, as it was difficult to attract employees from other cities and, given its small population, Kzyl Orda itself had no unemployment to speak of.<sup>246</sup>

Ultimately, the city's climate and the resulting problems in accommodating and attracting administrative officials played a decisive role in depriving Kzyl Orda of its status as Kazakhstan's capital. As Turar Ryskulov explained to the RSFSR Council of People's Commissars, "we moved from Orenburg, we got stuck in the sand, we wasted money. No decent employee wants to come to this sandy capital. Over the course of five years, because of its unsuccessful choice of capital, Kazakhstan has not been able to recruit good workers from the center."<sup>247</sup> In April, 1928, long after it had decided to move but before its departure from Kzyl Orda had been enacted, Kazakhstan's Kraikom concluded, "The relocation from Orenburg and the construction of a new capital for Kazakhstan, which had significant political importance and was generally justified, was significantly weakened by the haste of the relocation and the failure to take into account the extremely unfavorable climactic, soil, and housing conditions in Kzyl Orda."<sup>248</sup>

On March 3, 1927 Kazakhstan's Central Executive Committee decided that, given the "local economic and natural historical conditions" in Kzyl Orda and the fact that "in connection

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<sup>246</sup> TsGARK f.30 op.8 d.8 ll.115-117; "O perenesenii tsentra: Politicheskoe znachenie i ekonomicheskie perspektivy novogo tsentra Kirgizii (Beseda s chlenom Biuro Obkoma RKP(b) tov. Sadvokasovym S.)," *Sovetskaia step'*, February 2, 1925.

<sup>247</sup> APRK f.811 op.23 d.2 l.78.

<sup>248</sup> APRK f.141 op.1 d.1842 l.167.

to the construction of the Frunze-Semipalatinsk railway and the prospect of extending the railway in a meridional direction, the city of Alma-Ata will acquire the importance of a major economic point linking the economically powerful regions of northern and southern Kazakhstan,” the capital should be moved to Alma-Ata. This decision was confirmed by the Sixth All-Kazakh Congress of Soviets at the end of that month.<sup>249</sup>

“Kzyl Orda obviously did not meet the needs of a capital,” M.S. Riadnin, the young Party worker who was recruited from Alma-Ata to work as Goloshchekin’s private secretary in Kzyl Orda, recalled of the decision. “We needed greater capacity both in terms of accommodating soviet, party, and agricultural organs and in terms of establishing contact between the capital and the regions [*okrugi*] than was possible in Kzyl Orda. Climactic conditions also played a certain role—in Kzyl Orda they were rather difficult.”<sup>250</sup>

### **Alma-Ata**

After his brief sojourn in Kzyl Orda, Riadnin was pleased to return to Alma-Ata. “The city was bigger and the conditions were better; this was not just a city, but a garden city [*gorod-sad*],” he wrote.<sup>251</sup> Alma-Ata was much larger than Kzyl Orda—at the time of the revolution, its population numbered about 47,000.<sup>252</sup> Although some construction would be required, Party and state institutions could make use of existing buildings, and the housing situation was much more promising than it had been in Kzyl Orda. Moreover, Alma-Ata had a reputation as a pleasant

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<sup>249</sup> APRK f.141 op.1 d.1467 l.23; GARF f.5446 op.55 d.1731 l.35.

<sup>250</sup> APRK f.811 op.38 d.54 l.77.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>252</sup> APRK f.811 op.19 d.121 l.6.

place to live. Indeed, before it was designated as Kazakhstan's capital, Alma-Ata had already successfully lobbied Turksib's Southern Administration to relocate its offices from Frunze precisely because of the former city's favorable climate. As one Turksib official put it, Alma-Ata was, compared to Frunze, "a paradise, or if not a paradise, then semi-paradise."<sup>253</sup>

Once the relocation was announced, a lengthy article in *Sovetskaia step'* laid out the health benefits of Alma-Ata's climate, drawing a stark contrast to Kzyl Orda. "The mountain climate is generally the healthiest," the author proclaimed.<sup>254</sup> He noted that the average temperature in Alma-Ata was 7.8 degrees Celsius, 1.3 degrees lower than in Kzyl Orda, but this difference stemmed only from the fact that summer and fall were milder in Alma-Ata; winters were no colder than in Kzyl Orda. Moreover, unlike the previous capital, Alma-Ata was not characterized by extreme changes in temperature. The city also benefitted from favorable humidity levels and mountain breezes. The predominant winds were the warm westerly and southwesterly winds; the cold northeasterly winds "so unpleasantly felt" in Kzyl Orda were "almost absent" in Alma-Ata. The new capital was "a life-friendly [*blagopriiatnaia dlia zhizni*] setting" that promised to offer a significant change from Kzyl Orda. "Within Kazakhstan, in any case, the Alma-Ata region is one of the very best areas in terms of its climactic conditions," the author concluded.<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> Quoted in Matthew J. Payne, *Stalin's Railroad: Turksib and the Building of Socialism* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001), 26.

<sup>254</sup> V. Borsun, "Tam, gde budet tsentr Kazakhstana: Klimat Alma-Ata," *Sovetskaia step'*, March 27, 1928.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*

A 1927 memorandum compiled for Kazakhstan’s Council of People’s Commissars on the transfer of the capital to Alma-Ata placed similar emphasis on the city’s favorable climate and geography:

The air in the city is refreshed by a breeze that descends nightly from the nearby Alma-Ata Glacier. Thanks to its exceptionally favorable location, among all the cities of Turkestan the city of Alma-Ata may well be called a garden city. The presence of large tracts of coniferous forest, beginning 8-10 *versts* from the city (1980 meters above sea level) and of warm sulfur springs in the area, given the good climatic conditions, makes it possible to hope for the subsequent establishment of climatological stations and sanatoria, which would be unique not only in Kazakhstan but in all of Central Asia at the present time. Despite the logistical difficulties, people from various regions of Turkestan come to spend the summer in dachas close to the city.<sup>256</sup>

Although the decision was undertaken in the first months of 1927, the actual relocation of the capital was put off for logistical reasons—at that point there was not yet a direct rail link between the two cities. In February 1927, Kazakhstani authorities decided that the move should be undertaken as soon as a “normal and uninterrupted connection” was established between the Kzyl Orda and Alma-Ata.<sup>257</sup> The decision to relocate the capital was officially confirmed by the RSFSR’s Council of People’s Commissars on April 29, 1927.<sup>258</sup> Despite the “range of difficulties” involved, Kazakhstani authorities, clearly eager to leave Kzyl Orda, wanted to move in the summer of 1928, before the completion of the railway line. Nevertheless, Stalin decided that the move should be put off until the completion of Turksib construction.<sup>259</sup> In the end, the Kazakhstani government’s arrival in Alma-Ata preceded the arrival of Turksib by several

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<sup>256</sup> TsGARK f.30 op.1 d.799 l.45.

<sup>257</sup> TsGARK f.30 op.1 d.795 l.180.

<sup>258</sup> TsGARK f.30 op.1 d.792 l.3.

<sup>259</sup> RGASPI f.558 op.11 d.63 l.32.

months. In the summer of 1929, Kraikom staff and their families went by train to Frunze, and then by car or by horse to Alma-Ata. Goloshchekin and his staff made the last leg of the trip by airplane.<sup>260</sup>

Alma-Ata's selection as Kazakhstan's capital was discussed and presented in matter-of-fact terms, and the city's role was not re-conceptualized until its 1935 general plan called for the reconstruction of Alma-Ata "a model capital of the East."<sup>261</sup> Even with its changing symbolic value, Alma-Ata's pleasant climate continued to be a defining element of how the city was portrayed. As N. Iusupov, an Azeri who headed Alma-Ata's city-level Party organization in the mid-1930s, recalled, "Our city is very beautiful and green. Its special charm lies in the fact that it combines European planning and buildings with Eastern elements, lots of greenery, the murmur of *aryks*; the city's charm is especially palpable in the spring and summer."<sup>262</sup>

## Conclusion

Although it does not represent the only example of capital relocation in the USSR, Kazakhstan was the only Soviet republic to have three capital cities in the space of nine years. To place this peregrination into perspective, thirteen countries have relocated their capitals since the 1950s (including Kazakhstan's 1997 move from Almaty to Astana).<sup>263</sup> Kazakhstan's capital relocations in the 1920s are notable not only for their frequency, but also for their motivations, which depart from the generally understood model of capital relocation as a nation-building

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<sup>260</sup> APRK f.811 op.38 d.54 ll.78-80; f.141 op.1 d.1842 l.173.

<sup>261</sup> APRK f.811 op.19 d.121 l.9. On similar efforts in Tashkent, see Stronski, *Tashkent*.

<sup>262</sup> APRK f.811 op.19 d.121 l.9.

<sup>263</sup> Schatz, "What Capital Cities Say About State and Nation Building," 113.

project. Instead, the discussions and decisions surrounding Kazakhstan's capitals demonstrate the degree to which Soviet authorities privileged technical considerations and were dependent on a small administrative elite within the republic, and as such they resemble the attitudes of European colonial states.

Indeed, the decisions surrounding Kazakhstan's capital in the 1920s closely echo the concerns of British colonial officials when they decided to relocate the capital of British India from Calcutta to New Delhi in 1911. "That the government of India should have its seat in the same city as one of the chief Provincial Governments, and moreover in a city geographically so ill-adapted as Calcutta to be the capital of the Indian Empire, has long been recognized as a serious anomaly," one British official wrote in August 1911. "The considerations which explain its original selection as the principal seat of Government have long since passed away with the consolidation of British rule throughout the Peninsula and the development of a great inland system of railway communication." He contended that the capital should be moved to "a more central and easily accessible position," noting, "Delhi is the only possible place. It has splendid communications, its climate is good for seven months of the year, and its salubrity could be ensured at reasonable cost."<sup>264</sup> Similarly, relations with a provincial government, geographical location, logistical considerations, and climate were all key concerns for Soviet authorities as they considered the relocation of Kazakhstan's capital in the 1920s.

The difference between capital relocation in Soviet Kazakhstan and the predominant nation-building script is underlined by the further fate of Kazakhstan's capital. In 1997, Almaty (as Alma-Ata had been renamed in 1993) ceded its position to the northern city of Aqmola, which was rechristened several months later as Astana—a name that means simply, "Capital."

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<sup>264</sup> Quoted in Mukherjee and Singh, eds., *New Delhi: Making of a Capital*, 20.

This relocation is widely understood—and explicitly presented—as a nation-building project meant to underline the country’s post-Soviet sovereignty and to bolster Kazakh identity.<sup>265</sup>

In a sense, the designation of Aqmola as Kazakhstan’s new capital was almost an exact reversal of the move from Kzyl Orda to Alma-Ata in the late 1920s—Kazakhstan’s newly independent government chose to move from a well-developed city with an agreeable climate to a remote, inhospitable region of the steppe. The city’s previous Kazakh name, Aqmola, is most commonly translated as “white tomb,” perhaps a reflection of its highly unwelcoming climate. The average high in January is -15.5 degrees Celsius (as opposed to -6 degrees in Almaty). In the warmer summer months, meanwhile, the city is overrun by mosquitoes, a byproduct of its situation on a swamp. Fierce winds make winter temperatures feel even colder and give rise to dust storms in the summer. At the time of its designation as Kazakhstan’s new capital, Aqmola lacked modern infrastructure and had poor housing stock. The move was expensive and broadly unpopular. Moreover, at the time of the move there was concern that the city was on the verge of a tuberculosis epidemic.<sup>266</sup> Nevertheless, these factors did not deter the relocation of the capital, precisely because it was understood as “the cornerstone of the Kazakh nation-building

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<sup>265</sup> Mkrtchyan, “Nation-Building Projects Through New Capitals: From St. Petersburg to Yerevan and Astana”; Wolfel, “North to Astana: Nationalistic Motives for the Movement of the Kazakh(stani) Capital”; Henry R. Huttenbach, “Whither Kazakhstan? Changing Capitals: From Almaty to Aqmola/Astana,” *Nationalities Papers* 26, no. 3 (1998): 581-587.

<sup>266</sup> Wolfel, “North to Astana: Nationalistic Motives for the Movement of the Kazakh(stani) Capital,” 498-500.

process.”<sup>267</sup> As one observer noted in 1998, “No matter what harsh conditions nature imposes, they are no obstacle to determined politicians, to their visions and to their engineers.”<sup>268</sup>

In Soviet Kazakhstan in the 1920s, those visions and determinations were markedly different from the nation-building motivations usually ascribed to capital relocation projects. The example of Kazakhstan’s three Soviet capitals demonstrates the degree to which what Mark Beissinger terms “the [Soviet] practice of performing sovereignty” could coexist with colonial patterns of administration and underscores the fact that Soviet authorities were highly dependent on small administrative elite in the republic.<sup>269</sup> Moreover, it illustrates what Sergei Abashin has termed the “contradictory, ambiguous, complex character of the Soviet.” As Abashin notes, “in this ambiguity, there was a place for inequality along with attempts to overcome it, colonialism together with anti-colonial practices, mass political restrictions, including repressions, together with mass social mobilization, and the construction of nations together with the construction of a supra-national community.”<sup>270</sup> Indeed, Adeb Khalid, who argues that the comparison of the Soviet Union to twentieth-century colonial empires “does not work” given the USSR’s agenda of cultural transformation and modernization, concedes that the Soviet state “could not completely vanquish the habitus of empire.”<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> Mkrtchyan, “Nation-Building Projects Through New Capitals: From St. Petersburg to Yerevan and Astana,” 7.

<sup>268</sup> Huttenbach, “Whither Kazakhstan? Changing Capitals: From Almaty to Aqmola/Astana,” 586.

<sup>269</sup> Beissinger, “Self-Determination as a Technology of Imperialism: The Soviet and Russian Experiences,” 482.

<sup>270</sup> Abashin, “Sovetskoe = kolonial’noe? (Za i protiv),” 45.

<sup>271</sup> Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan*, 9-10.

The messy process of selecting a capital for Kazakhstan reveals that the role of the republic's administrative center in the first two decades of Soviet rule was fundamentally technical rather than symbolic. More ambitious agendas were ascribed only to Orenburg and Tashkent, neither of which was a successful variant. Kzyl Orda and Alma-Ata were assigned symbolic importance as capital cities, but only once the decision to designate them as such had been made, and in the case of the latter only several years later. Ultimately, the factors that mattered in determining Kazakhstan's capital were the working conditions for the Party elite and the existence of a rail connection. Scholars have long discussed railroads as a technology of imperial rule, serving to further modernization, economic development, military preparedness, and also the European "civilizing mission" in places such as French Indochina, British India, and colonial Africa.<sup>272</sup> In the Soviet Union, railroad infrastructure was key to the Bolshevik conquest of Central Asia, and later to Soviet industrial development and social transformation in the region.<sup>273</sup> The fact that the railroad was a necessary but not sufficient factor underscores the nature of power in the Soviet Union's first two decades. In the short-term, Kazakhstan's capital was functionally defined as the physical seat of the political elites, and political power was largely personal, rather than institutional—the elites made the center, rather than the center generating elites through educational and political institutions.

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<sup>272</sup> See, e.g., Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); David W. Del Testa, "Workers, Culture, and the Railroads in French Colonial Indochina, 1905-1936," *French Colonial History* 2 (2002): 181-198; Christian Wolmar, *Railways and the Raj: How the Age of Steam Transformed India* (London: Atlantic Books, 2017).

<sup>273</sup> See, e.g., Payne, *Stalin's Railroad*; Partyk Reid, "Managing Nature, Constructing the State: The Material Foundation of Soviet Empire in Tajikistan, 1917-1937" (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2016).

## CHAPTER THREE

### The Kazakh Intelligentsia and the Legacy of Alash Orda

On December 1, 1917, Kazakh intellectual and political leader Alikhan Bukeikhanov published a tract blasting the Bolshevik's October seizure of power. "Remember, peasants, workers, and soldiers, that the Bolsheviks consider accountability before the nation, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, universal elections with a secret ballot, inviolability of citizens and deputies, and rule by the people to be *bourgeois prejudices*," he wrote. Bukeikhanov criticized the Bolsheviks harshly, comparing Lenin to Nicholas II. He accused various party functionaries of hypocrisy and emphasized that they could not be trusted. "Remember, peasants, workers, and soldiers, the red mask of the revolutionary has fallen from the face of the Bolshevik to reveal the essence of a Black-Hundreder," he concluded.<sup>274</sup>

Several days later, the Alash Orda Autonomy was born, and Bukeikhanov was chosen as the chairman of its provisional government. Along with other Kazakh leaders, he attempted to establish alliances with various White forces while endeavoring to forge a national government for a people that had no prior experience with modern statehood. By 1920, however, everything had changed. Bukeikhanov was actively cooperating with the Party, and some of his closest colleagues were joining the nascent Soviet government. "The liberated Kazakh nation can obtain happiness only together with the rest of oppressed humanity, that is, through world revolution and world federation. No party other than the international communist party of the Bolsheviks ...

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<sup>274</sup> Alikhan Bukeikhanov, "Pamiatka krest'ianam, rabochim, i soldatam, 1 dekabria 1917 g.," in *Dvizhenie Alash: sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, vol. 2, *Dekabr' 1917—mai 1920*, ed. E.M. Griбанова and S.O. Smagholova (Almaty: Alash, 2005), 13-14. The Black Hundred [*chernaiia sotniia*] was an extreme right-wing nationalist movement in tsarist Russia.

can achieve this,” wrote Akhmet Baitursynov, a poet and linguist who had been prominent in Alash Orda’s leadership, in his petition for admittance into the Party.<sup>275</sup> Much as the weakness of the tsarist state had rendered it especially dependent on non-Russian intermediaries in imperial peripheries such as the Kazakh steppe, the Bolsheviks were forced into a pragmatic accommodation with their former adversaries.<sup>276</sup>

In later years, men such as Baitursynov would be denounced as opportunists attempting to undermine Soviet authority in order to further their “bourgeois-nationalist” agenda. “The Alash party set itself the task of collectively joining the Party, thus hiding behind their Party cards in order to defend their work,” declared Filipp Goloshchekin, Party Secretary of the Kazakh ASSR, in October 1930. “They joined the Soviets only so that they could use legal forms to fracture the Soviet apparatus and use it for their own goals as *bais*.”<sup>277</sup> In Party discourse, Alash was written off as an irrelevant, counterrevolutionary movement that had completely discredited itself. “The activities of Alash Orda—its alliance with the Whites—clearly revealed the essence of the nationalist intelligentsia, its aspirations and its class physiognomy,” wrote Kazakh Communist Turar Ryskulov in 1927. “After this, the nationalist intelligentsia, having bankrupted itself, completely lost its former influence on the Kazakh masses.”<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> “Zaiavlenie A. Baitursynova v orenburgskii komitet RKP(b) o vstuplenie v RKP(b), 4 apreliia 1920 g.,” in *Dvizhenie Alash: sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, vol. 3, book 2, *Aprel’ 1920-1928 gg.*, ed. Q.C. Aldazhumanov et al. (Almaty, El-shezhire, 2007), 33.

<sup>276</sup> On Kazakh intermediaries in the Russian Empire, see Campbell, *Knowledge and the Ends of Empire*.

<sup>277</sup> F.I. Goloshchekin, *Desiat’ let proidennykh i predstoiashchie zadachi* (Alma-Ata: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo RSFSR, Kazakhskoe Kraevoe Otdelenie, 1930), 13.

<sup>278</sup> Turar Ryskulovich Ryskulov, *Kazakstan* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo, 1927), 51.

But Ryskulov was incorrect in his assertion that the advent of Soviet power marked the end of Alash influence—as he himself would have known from personal experience. The Bolsheviks and Alash offered two competing visions of how society should be modernized and developed, with the latter embracing the idea of a federative Russian democracy as articulated in the aftermath of the February Revolution. For a time, however, there was a convergence between their interests as the Bolsheviks sought partners in the implementation of Soviet nationalities policy, allowing members of the pre-revolutionary intelligentsia an avenue for pursuing their cultural agenda. As Adeeb Khalid has argued, Bolshevik nationalities policy during the early years of Soviet rule in Central Asia represented “the fulfillment in contingent Soviet conditions of a national project that long predated the Russian Revolution.”<sup>279</sup> But the relationship between Soviet authorities and the Kazakh pre-revolutionary intelligentsia was always fraught. After the October Revolution, initial resistance to the Bolsheviks on the part of Alash gave way to a period of cooperation, followed by the expulsion of former Alash figures from Soviet power structures and their political marginalization. Nevertheless, they did not disappear from Kazakhstan’s political landscape. The specter of the old intelligentsia remained a fixture of Party discourse. Moreover, their personal relationships with members of the new Soviet elite endured even long after they were no longer politically expedient.

Alash became a subject of scholarship from the earliest years of Soviet rule. In the first part of the 1920s, when the Communist Party was most interested in cooperation with the Kazakh intelligentsia, Soviet authors sought to write the Alash intelligentsia into a class-based narrative as an “objectively revolutionary movement” in the pre-1917 period. Over time, however, the narrative shifted, increasingly relegating Alash to the role of counterrevolutionary

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<sup>279</sup> Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan*, 1.

force. By the early 1930s, Party rhetoric universally criticized Alash as a “bourgeois nationalist” movement. From that point until Perestroika, writing on Alash was characterized by what one Kazakh historian has termed “stagnation of scholarly thought.”<sup>280</sup> The topic became largely taboo, and to the limited extent that Alash was written about, the movement was written off as irrelevant and counterrevolutionary. Since the late 1980s, and especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Alash has become a primary focus for historians in Kazakhstan, who generally frame it as a “national liberation movement” that represents an important element in the national history of Kazakhstan as an independent nation state.<sup>281</sup> Indeed, Kazakhstan’s president Nursultan Nazarbayev has written about Alash as an important precursor to the country’s modern statehood.<sup>282</sup> Similarly, scholars outside of Kazakhstan have focused on the role of Alash in the formulation of Kazakh national identity.<sup>283</sup> Nevertheless, less attention has been paid to the fate of Alash activists after 1920, and to political actors of the 1920s and ‘30s more broadly.

Examining the role of Alash in Party polemics and the relationships of its members to representatives of the new Soviet elite reveals the difficulty of drawing a stark line between the

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<sup>280</sup> Nurmagambetova, *Dvizhenie Alash i Alash-Orda*, 7.

<sup>281</sup> See, e.g., Dina Amanzholova, *Alash: istoricheskii smysl demokraticeskogo vybora* (Almaty: Taimas, 2013); *Ibid.*, *Na izlome: Alash v etnopoliticheskoi istorii Kazakhstana* (Almaty: Taimas, 2009); Mambet Koigeldiev, “The Alash Movement and the Soviet Government: A Difference of Positions,” in *Empire, Islam and Politics in Central Eurasia*, ed. Tomohiko Uyama (Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, 2007), 153-184.

<sup>282</sup> Nursultan Nazarbayev, *V potoke istorii* (Almaty: Atamura), 169-172.

<sup>283</sup> See, e.g., Akiner, *The Formation of Kazakh National Identity*; Sabol, *Russian Colonization and the Genesis of Kazak National Consciousness*; Peter Rottier, “Creating the Kazak Nation: The Intelligentsia’s Quest for Acceptance in the Russian Empire, 1905-1920” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 2005); Ayse Deniz Balgamis, “The Origins and Development of Kazakh Intellectual Elites in the Pre-Revolutionary Period” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 2000); Özgecan Kesici-Ayoubi, “Attaining Modernity through Nationalism: The Kazakh Alash Orda Movement” (PhD diss., University College Dublin, 2016).

old intelligentsia and the new. Indeed, the enduring ties between former Alash leaders and Kazakhstan's leading Communists—and the lasting influence of the former—reveal important continuities across the revolutionary divide. They illuminate the kind of compromises the Bolsheviks had to make in the early years of Soviet rule, and the flexibility that was required of them in the face of circumstances that did not align neatly with Marxist ideology. Moreover, examining the fate of Alash after 1920 demonstrates that the Party was not the sole locus or source of power in the early years of the Soviet Union. Recent scholarship has examined Soviet governance as “a personal and personalized project,” one based on people rather than on institutions, where “political authority [was] patrimonial and personalized rather than derived from formal position or a rule-bound rational bureaucracy.”<sup>284</sup> The enduring relationships between members of Kazakhstan's old and new elite demonstrate the degree to which the Party could serve as a vehicle for the exercise of personal authority, rather than as an institutional locus of power. In the early years of Soviet rule, personal ties could serve a source of power and an avenue for exerting agency. At the same time, the continued and evolving presence of Alash in Party rhetoric reflects how the personalization of power could ultimately be used against those it sometimes empowered. The factors that made individual political actors attractive and effective as participants in the development of Soviet power also made them vulnerable to repression.

### **The Pre-Revolutionary Kazakh Intelligentsia**

As discussed in Chapter One, educated Kazakhs were a tiny minority at the time of the Russian Revolution. Indeed, at the turn of the twentieth century, the vast majority of the

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<sup>284</sup> Kassymbekova, *Despite Cultures*, 10-11; Getty, *Practicing Stalinism*, 3. On the institutional weakness of the Soviet state, see, e.g., Graeme Gill, *The Origins of the Stalinist Political System* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Gill and Pitty, *Power in the Party*; Easter, *Reconstructing the State*.

inhabitants of the Russian Empire overall were illiterate. According to the 1897 census, the general level of literacy in the Russian Empire was 27 percent. In Central Asia, it stood at 6 percent (10 percent for men and three percent for women), taking into account members of all ethnic groups. For Kazakhs, literacy rates were even lower. Nevertheless, by the end of the nineteenth century, a tiny but active Kazakh intelligentsia had begun to take shape.

These early representatives of the Kazakh intelligentsia had received Russian-language education, often worked for Imperial Russian institutions, and actively participated in the politics of the Russian Empire. They engaged in polemics about the problems facing the Kazakhs, especially land and education, and grappled with the question of how to modernize their society. The most prominent of these intellectuals came to be associated with the Alash movement and its newspaper *Qazaq*. Unlike the Jadid circles active in what the territories that became Uzbekistan, theirs was a vision of progress and modernity as mediated by Russia, and they ably played the role of imperial intermediaries.<sup>285</sup> At the time of the revolution, about 100 Kazakhs had completed a university degree. They had studied at universities in Moscow and St Petersburg, as well as in Kazan, Tomsk, Kiev, and Warsaw, while other educated Kazakhs had attended institutions such as teacher's seminaries in cities including Orenburg, Omsk, Troitsk, and Ufa. Based on an analysis of Kazakh intellectuals active before 1917, Tomohiko Uyama concludes that they generally were members of traditionally privileged groups, such as *töres*, who claimed

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<sup>285</sup> Uyama, "The Geography of Civilizations," 76-80; Sabol, *Russian Colonization and Kazakh National Consciousness*, 53-55; Nurmagambetova, *Dvizhenie Alash i Alash-Orda*, 10-11; Gulnar Kendirbai, "Challenging Colonial Power: Kazakh Cadres and Native Strategies," *Inner Asia* 10, no. 1 (2008): 67; On Jadidism, see: Adeeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998). On the whole, the Kazakh pre-revolutionary intelligentsia were more Russia-oriented and more involved in Imperial Russian political processes than their southern counterparts, and they framed their ambitions for reform in ethno-national, rather than confessional, terms.

descent from Chingiz Khan, or *qozhas*, who claimed descent from the first four caliphs, and that they tended to come from the steppe rather than from urban settlements.<sup>286</sup>

The new class of secular intellectuals that had emerged by the turn of the twentieth century saw their nation as confronted by a series of weighty economic and social problems. The 1905 revolution meant that they could become more active in confronting those issues. The land question continued to be a defining problem, and in the wake of 1905, Kazakh leaders stepped up their efforts to alert the Russian government to the Kazakhs' economic plight, lobbying for land reform. Their ultimate failure to accomplish anything significant through the State Dumas further piqued Kazakh dissatisfaction with the tsarist regime. The Kazakh intelligentsia did not, however, see their problems purely as external impositions. Rather, they identified problems within Kazakh society itself, which they believed had failed to confront the challenge of Russian colonization with modernization and unity. For Bukeikhanov and his colleagues, reform was not confined to a gradual transition from nomadism to sedentarization and criticism of colonization and Russification policies. They were also concerned with identifying those elements of Kazakh culture that had facilitated colonization and rendered it so destructive.<sup>287</sup>

The easing of censorship in 1905 led to a flourishing of Kazakh-language publications and an expansion of written discourse. Over the course of the nineteenth century, only about 80 Kazakh-language books were published in the Russian Empire, while more than 200 were printed between 1900 and 1917. These included translations of Russian and European writers,

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<sup>286</sup> Uyama examines 65 individuals, taking into consideration those who were engaged in social and political activities before 1917 but excluding those who had only received a traditional Islamic education. Nevertheless, because of an absence of data on certain people, a good number of active intellectuals are excluded from his analysis. Uyama, "The Geography of Civilizations," 80-81.

<sup>287</sup> Sabol, *Russian Colonization and the Genesis of Kazak National Consciousness*, 152.

textbooks, and poetry, as well as the first Kazakh-language novels. Many of these publications were explicitly political in tone, and a proliferation of pamphlets addressed perceived problems with government policies. Several influential periodicals also contributed significantly to public discourse among educated Kazakhs in this period, especially the newspaper *Qazaq* and the journal *Ai qap*. They addressed range of topics, foremost among them land, education, and language policy, but also Kazakh history, women's emancipation, and Kazakh communities living outside of the Russian Empire.<sup>288</sup>

The revolution of 1905 also opened new avenues for political participation to educated Kazakhs. A total of ten Kazakhs served as deputies in the State Duma, with six sitting in the First Duma and seven in the Second. Like the pre-revolutionary intelligentsia overall, they were predominantly from wealthy and privileged families. One was a mullah who had been educated in Bukhara, but the rest attended various Russian educational institutions. Seven were university graduates, and three would go on to be active in the Alash leadership.<sup>289</sup> In both sessions, the Kazakhs were allied with the Kadets and worked unsuccessfully to encourage the government to act on the land question. Although the Kazakhs were excluded from membership in the third and fourth Dumas, Kazakh intellectuals continued to engage with the politics of the Russian Empire, advocating for their ideas in the Russian- and Kazakh-language press.

In many respects, Alikhan Bukeikhanov was the preeminent representative of the pre-revolutionary Kazakh intelligentsia, and his background is emblematic of his milieu. Bukeikhanov was born in Semipalatinsk uezd, and although the exact date of his birth is

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<sup>288</sup> Sabol, *Russian Colonization and the Genesis of Kazak National Consciousness*, 65-70; Akiner, *The Formation of Kazakh National Identity*, 29.

<sup>289</sup> Kh.F. Usmanov, ed., *Musul'manskie deputaty gosudarstvennoi dumy Rossii, 1906-1917 gg.: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Ufa: Kitap, 1998), 276-313.

disputed, it is usually given as 1866, 1869, or 1870. A *töre* and a grandson of a Kazakh khan, he studied at the local Russian-native school and at a technical school in Omsk before graduating from the Economics Department at the Imperial Institute of Forestry in St Petersburg in 1894. As a student in St Petersburg, Bukeikhanov exhibited interest in the Marxist economic theory fashionable among his peers, although he ultimately embraced liberalism. After he completed his studies, he worked as a teacher in Omsk and conducted research for the Shcherbina Expedition and other government-sponsored scholarly endeavors. He married a Russian, and in 1905, at the same time he became a Kadet, Bukeikhanov also became a Freemason. He went on to become the most prominent Kazakh Duma deputy and a member of the Kadets' central committee. Bukeikhanov's political activity attracted the attention of the imperial security services, and he was arrested twice while the Duma was in session. In 1908 he was exiled to Samara, but he continued to publish widely. He was an important contributor to Kadet publications as well as to the nascent Kazakh press. He was widely recognized as the leader of the Kazakh intelligentsia in the years before the revolution.<sup>290</sup>

The most prominent of Bukeikhanov's colleagues was Akhmet Baitursynov, an educator and linguist who was born in 1873 in Turgai oblast. Baitursynov attended the Russian-native school in Turgai and graduated from the teachers' seminary in Orenburg in 1895. Like Bukeikhanov, he became a Kadet in 1905 and was also married to a Russian. In 1909, when he was working as the director of a Russian-native school in Karkaraly, Baitursynov was arrested and prohibited from living in the Steppe *krai*. He moved to Orenburg, where he became the editor-in-chief of *Qazaq*. The preeminent Kazakh-language philologist and literary scholar of his

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<sup>290</sup> Kendirbai, "Challenging Colonial Power," 74; Sabol, *Russian Colonization and the Genesis of Kazak National Consciousness*, 73-75; Nurmagametova, *Dvizhenie Alash i Alash-Orda*, 14; Hallez, "Le Ralliement des Kazakhs au pouvoir soviétique," 712; Usmanov, *Musul'manskie deputaty gosudarstvennoi dumy Rossii*, 284-285.

time, he formulated a reformed Arabic script for writing in Kazakh and translated numerous works from Russian. In 1912 he published a guide to teaching Kazakh and a spelling primer that reflected his alphabetic reforms, which adapted the Arabic script to reflect Kazakh phonetics. Both texts, intended to lay the foundations for expanding literacy, were reprinted numerous times and became widely used in primary schools. In 1915, Baitursynov authored the first textbook of the Kazakh language, analyzing Kazakh phonetics, morphology, and syntax. In a series of articles in *Qazaq*, Baitursynov also laid out a program for reforming primary schools so that they would both provide Kazakh-language education and allow students to continue their studies at either Russian or Muslim educational institutions. After the February Revolution, he served as a member of the Committee of Deputies of the Constituent Assembly.<sup>291</sup>

Bukeikhanov and Baitursynov played a key role in political and cultural developments among the Kazakhs before and during the revolution. They were emblematic of their peers both in their backgrounds and in their views—they both engaged with and opposed Imperial Russian authority, and they were committed to a vision of European-style modernization mediated by Russia. Although they actively opposed the establishment of Soviet rule, the nature of the Bolshevik project in Central Asia meant that their influence did not dissipate after 1917.

### **The Revolution Comes to Kazakhstan**

The February Revolution seemed to offer the Kazakh intelligentsia an opportunity to realize their vision of reform and modernization, and they were quick to embrace the Provisional Government. “The sun of freedom, equality, and brotherhood has risen for all the nations of Russia,” wrote a group of Kazakh intellectuals associated with *Qazaq* in March 1917 in an

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<sup>291</sup> Kendirbai, “The Alash Movement in Kazakhstan,” 854; Sabol, *Russian Colonization and the Genesis of Kazak National Consciousness*, 93-105.

appeal urging Kazakhs to support the new Provisional Government.<sup>292</sup> “The [February] Revolution was met with joy by the Kazakhs because ... it freed them from the oppression and violence of the tsarist government,” Baitursynov explained in 1919.<sup>293</sup>

In the wake of the February Revolution, the *Qazaq* intellectuals worked closely with the new Provisional Government, seeing the reconstitution of the Russian Empire as a federative republic as the best avenue for realizing their goals with regards to social and political modernization. Bukeikhanov was appointed Commissar of Turgai Oblast, while his colleagues Mukhamedzhan Tynyshpaev and Mustafa Chokai became members of the Turkestan Committee. Baitursynov, Mirzhakyp Dulatov, and Khalel Gabbasov also served the Provisional Government. Throughout the spring of 1917, a number of mass meetings were held throughout the steppe to establish order, mobilize the population, and give voice to Kazakh grievances. The most successful of these took place from April 2 to April 8 in Orenburg. This congress brought together some 300 people, but the meeting was unquestionably dominated by figures from the *Qazaq* editorial board, who had organized it. The session opened with a speech by Baitursynov, who was subsequently chosen as chairman.<sup>294</sup> The congress laid out a progressive political program, calling for the separation of church and state, universal suffrage, “direct, secret, equal, and universal” voting, the guarantee of minority rights, and mandatory, universal, and co-

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<sup>292</sup> “A. Bukeikhanovu v g. Karkaly: ‘K kirgizam, svobodnym grazhdanam obnovliaemoi Rossii, 16 marta 1917 g.,’” in *Dvizhenie Alash: sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, vol. 1, *Aprel’ 1901—dekabr’ 1917 gg.*, ed. E.M. Griбанова and S.O. Smagholova (Almaty: Alash, 2004), 219.

<sup>293</sup> Akhmet Baitursynov, “Revoliutsiia i kirgizy,” *Zhizn’ natsional’nostei* 29 (1919): 1.

<sup>294</sup> Kendirbai, “The Alash Movement in Kazakhstan,” 855; Nurmagambetova, *Dvizhenie Alash i Alash-Orda*, 17; “Protokol turganskogo oblastnogo kirgizskogo-s”ezda s uchastiem predstavitelei oblastei ural’skoi, akmolinskoi, semipalatinskoi, syr-dar’inskoi i bukeevskoi ordy, 2-8 apreliia 1917 g.,” in *Dvizhenie Alash: sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, 1: 229-230.

educational primary schools, with the first three grades taught in Kazakh. They decreed that the new Russia should be a “democratic, parliamentary, and decentralized republic.”<sup>295</sup>

This meeting was followed by an All-Kazakh Congress, which was held from July 21 to July 26 in Orenburg, with delegates attending from Akmolinsk, Semipalatinsk, Turgai, Ural’sk, Semirech’e, Syr-Dar’ia, and Fergana oblasts. The Congress also took care to underline the paramount importance of Kazakh participation in the coming Constituent Assembly and the All-Russian Muslim Soviet. In order to facilitate that participation, the Congress ruled that it was imperative that a Kazakh political party be founded.<sup>296</sup> Bukeikhanov—who had left the Kadet party in June out of frustration with its indecisive stance regarding the Kazakhs’ primary concern, the land question—became the leader of this grouping, which came to be known as “Alash,” after the mythical founder of the Kazakh people.<sup>297</sup>

Throughout the summer and fall of 1917 Alash began developing from a loose association of intellectuals into an active political organization geared toward ensuring Kazakh participation in the Constituent Assembly. By the fall, the party claimed to have more than 5,000 members.<sup>298</sup> A Second All-Kazakh Congress, planned for November, was to be the founding session of the Kazakh autonomous government that would form part of the new federative Russian republic. The Bolsheviks’ seizure of power, however, was carried out a week before the scheduled meeting, confronting Alash with problems that the party’s leadership had not

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<sup>295</sup> “Protokol turgaiskogo oblastnogo kirgizskogo s’ezda s uchastiem predstavitelei oblastei ural’skoi, akmolinskoi, semipalatinskoi, syr-dar’inskoi i bukeevskoi ordy,” in *Dvizhenie Alash: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, 1: 234-235.

<sup>296</sup> “Rezoliutsii obshchekazakhskogo c’ezda, 21-26 iulia 1917 g.,” in *Dvizhenie Alash: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, 1: 371, 373-375.

<sup>297</sup> Sabol, *Russian Colonization and the Genesis of Kazak National Consciousness*, 88-89.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

anticipated. They had envisioned the future Kazakh autonomous unit as the local iteration of a liberal, democratic Russian regime. When the Provisional Government was overthrown, however, the continuation of the Kazakhs as part of the Russian state came into question. On October 28, Bukeikhanov responded to the Bolshevik seizure of power by declaring his plan for a Kazakh autonomy under the name “Alash Orda” to a meeting of leading Kazakh intellectuals that included Baitursynov, Mustafa Chokai, and Dzhakhansha Dosmukhamedov.<sup>299</sup>

Because the Kazakh steppe was separated from Russia proper by anti-Bolshevik Cossack forces, the October Revolution had little immediate impact on the Kazakhs in terms of Bolshevik influence. The Bolshevik seizure of power nevertheless caused consternation and fear among the Kazakh intelligentsia. “As much as the February Revolution was comprehensible to the Kazakhs, so was the October Revolution incomprehensible to them. As great as their joy in greeting the first revolution, such was the horror with which they met the second,” wrote Baitursynov in *Zhizn’ natsional’noei* in 1919. “In the outlying districts [the October Revolution] was accompanied everywhere by violence, robbery, abuse, and local dictatorship; put simply, the Bolshevik movement in the provinces was not a revolution (as it is commonly understood) but complete anarchy.”<sup>300</sup>

It was in this atmosphere of apprehension that the Second All-Kazakh Congress convened in December 1917. “Considering that the Provisional Government fell at the end of October, that the Russian Republic, which had enjoyed the trust of the nation and moral authority, has been deprived of power, that given a lack of any power in the country there might erupt a civil war, that anarchy is, wave by wave, engulfing large cities and villages throughout

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<sup>299</sup> Akhmed Zeki Velidi Togan, *Vospominaniia: Bor’ba musul’man Turkestana i drugikh vostochnykh tiurok za natsional’noe sushchestvovanie i kulturu* (Moscow: n.p., 1997), 144.

<sup>300</sup> Baitursynov, “Revoliutsiia i Kirgizy,” 1.

the state, that anarchy is growing with every day and threatens those oblasts inhabited by the Kazakhs, that the only way out of this difficult situation appears to be the establishment of firm authority that would be recognized by the entire population of the Kazakh oblasts,” the Congress unanimously voted to establish a Kazakh national territorial autonomy, to be known as “Alash Orda.”<sup>301</sup> Although the Congress called for minority rights and proportional representation, the uniting principle of the Alash Autonomy was to be the “one lineage, one culture and history, and one language” of the Kazakhs. Nevertheless, the declaration of autonomy did not stem from a desire to establish Kazakh statehood—something for which Alash Orda’s leaders believed the Kazakh populace was not prepared. Indeed, the Congress reaffirmed its recognition of the authority of the hypothetical Constitutional Assembly.<sup>302</sup> Rather, Khalel Dosmukhamedov explained, the Congress declared autonomy in order to “avoid the penetration of the Bolshevik contagion into the steppe.”<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> “Protokol zasedaniia obshchekirgizskogo s’ezda, 5-13 dekabria 1917 g.,” in *Dvizhenie Alash: sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, 1: 476-477. As explained by Asfendiiar Kenzhin in 1922, “The Kazakhs comprise one nation [...] otherwise known as Alash, after one of the mythical leaders of the Kazakh nation. Thus the word ‘Alash’ is the name of the nation, like the word ‘Chuvash,’ ‘Mordva,’ and others. The word ‘Orda’ in translation [...] means the seat of the country’s government, or sometimes the word ‘Orda’ is used to mean ‘government.’ Therefore, ‘Alash-Orda translates [...] as the government of the Kazakh nation.” A.Kenzhin, “K stat’e ‘Revdvizhenie v Kirgizii,’” in *Dvizhenie Alash: sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, 4:237-246, 240.

<sup>302</sup> “Protokol zasedaniia obshchekirgizskogo s’ezda, 5-13 dekabria 1917 g.,” in *Dvizhenie Alash: sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, 1: 477.

<sup>303</sup> Quoted in Serge A. Zenkovsky, *Pan-Turkism and Islam in Russia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), 213.

“Bolshevik incursion into the Kazakh steppe means the death of the entire Kazakh nation. Bolshevik rule is far more hateful than tsarist rule,” Baitursynov wrote in *Qazaq*.<sup>304</sup> Because of their opposition to the Bolsheviks, Alash Orda leaders attempted to establish alliances with various White forces—the Siberian Provisional Government, the Cossacks under Ataman Dutov, and Admiral Kolchak—as well as other nationalist groups, such as the Bashkir autonomy headed by Akhmed Zeki Velidi Togan.<sup>305</sup> These efforts were not very successful, however. The unsympathetic assessment of Kazakh Communist Gabbas Togzhanov illustrates the plight of Alash Orda’s leaders during the revolution and the subsequent civil war: “They allied themselves with the Kadets—it came to nothing. They allied themselves with Kerenskii—it came to nothing. Finally, they allied themselves with Kolchak and Dutov. That, too, came to nothing.”<sup>306</sup>

Indeed, by late 1919, the military situation and their lack of effective allies left Alash leaders with few choices. In February of that year, Togan wrote a letter to Baitursynov and Bukeikhanov, explaining his decision to capitulate. “We are preparing to go over to the Soviet side,” he wrote. “But know that this conversion is a compulsory step. [...] You must understand that concluding peace with the Soviets does not mean trusting them, for it is impossible to trust their words completely.”<sup>307</sup> The leaders of Alash Orda soon found themselves in a similar position. On December 10, 1919, they sent a delegation to Orenburg to negotiate with Frunze. Further discussions were held the following month, and on January 20, the Kazakh

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<sup>304</sup> Quoted in Gabbas Togzhanov, “O Baitursynove i Baitursynovshchine,” *Bol’shevik Kazakstana* 1932, no. 5 (May 1932): 22.

<sup>305</sup> For documents pertaining to these negotiations, see Gribanova and Smaghulova, *Dvizhenie Alash: sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, vol. 2.

<sup>306</sup> Togzhanov, “O Baitursynove i Baitursynovshchine,” 23.

<sup>307</sup> Togan, *Vospominaniia*, 192.

Revolutionary Committee—which had been founded by the Bolsheviks in July in the wake of their military successes—declared Alash Orda abolished.

### **Cooperation with the Bolsheviks**

But the end of the Alash Orda Autonomy did not mark the end of its leaders' political careers. Indeed, Bolshevik leaders saw the old intelligentsia as crucial to the establishment of Soviet power in the steppe. When the Kazakh Revolutionary Committee was formed in the summer of 1919, Baitursynov was appointed by Lenin to serve as one of its members. This decision was not uncontroversial. At a September 20, 1919 meeting of Party authorities in Orenburg, the chairman of the Revolutionary Committee S.S. Pestkovskii decried the presence of nationalists within its ranks and argued that Baitursynov should be removed as “the most dangerous of these swindlers [*zhuliki*].”<sup>308</sup> Nevertheless, the Bolsheviks' upper-level leadership understood the importance of incorporating Baitursynov into the nascent Soviet government. As Stalin explained in October 1919, “I did not and do not believe him to be a Communist revolutionary, or even a sympathizer, but nevertheless his presence in [the Kazakh Revolutionary Committee] is indispensable.”<sup>309</sup>

This attitude is reflective of the Bolsheviks' tenuous hold on power at the end of the civil war. Military victory was not enough to establish Soviet rule in the former peripheries of the Russian Empire, and local cooperation was required for both ideological and pragmatic reasons. Although the term was not used in reference to former Alash activists, they can be grouped with the *smenovekhovtsy*, nationalist intellectuals—both Russian and non-Russian—who reconciled

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<sup>308</sup> Quoted in Timofeev, “Bor’ba kazakstanskoi partiinoi organizatsii na dva fronta s uklonami v natsional’nom voprose,” 75.

<sup>309</sup> Quoted in Amanzholova, *Kazakhskii avtonomizm i Rossiia*, 187.

themselves to Bolshevik rule because they thought Soviet policies would serve nationalist ends. As with the case of Ukraine or Belarus, the Bolshevik alliance with the Alash intellectuals, however fraught, supplied much-needed expertise and granted credence to the Bolsheviks' commitment to *korenizatsiia* policies.<sup>310</sup> Nevertheless, their position as intellectual and social authorities was independent of the Party, and as such was inherently threatening.

An episode from October 1919 illustrates the sensitivity with which Party authorities approached the old intelligentsia's political participation in the wake of the October Revolution. In a telegram to Lenin on the state of the Kazakh Revolutionary Committee, the leadership of the Turkestani Front and the Committee on Turkestani Affairs laid out a recent conflict between Vadim Lukashev, a member of the Kazakh Revolutionary Committee who had been appointed from Moscow, and Baitursynov: "We witnessed an ugly scene at a meeting of the Revolutionary Committee, when Lukashev through his tactlessly voiced suspicions forced the member of the Revolutionary Committee Baitursynov to call his statement a lie. After the meeting concluded, Lukashev grabbed his revolver and demanded that Baitursynov take back his words. Not possessing the formal authority to do so, we were forced to suggest to Lukashev that he immediately leave for Moscow."<sup>311</sup>

The telegram concluded with a request that Lukashev be formally excluded from the Revolutionary Committee and possibly tried in court if the Kazakh Revolutionary Committee so demanded. Given the delicate situation in Kazakhstan, "we consider it necessary to pay careful attention to the composition of the Russian part of the Revolutionary Committee and to change it

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<sup>310</sup> Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 222-225; Per Anders Rudling, *The Rise and Fall of Belarusian Nationalism, 1906-1931* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014), 276-277.

<sup>311</sup> GARF f.130 op.3 d.597 l.21.

urgently and decisively,” the Turkeستاني authorities contended. “Procrastination will lead to the ultimate disintegration of Kirrevkom.”<sup>312</sup> Lukashev was indeed formally removed from his post in Kazakhstan and, although he had been put forward by Dzherzhinskii as the potential head of a Cheka unit focused on “Eastern” regions, he was ultimately reassigned to work in Petrograd.<sup>313</sup>

In September 1919, Kirrevkom acknowledged the need to elicit cooperation from the leaders of Alash Orda more broadly, discussing the measures necessary to unite the Kazakhs under Bolshevik rule.<sup>314</sup> On November 4, 1919, after a series of discussions on the matter, the Revolutionary War Soviet of the Turkestan Front, “in full accordance with the guiding directives of central Soviet power,” resolved to offer amnesty to all Kazakhs who had engaged in fighting the Bolsheviks. Soviet power, they proclaimed, “has never let itself be guided and is not guided in its internal policies by vengeance or anger.”<sup>315</sup> The conditions of the amnesty were straightforward—unconditional recognition of Soviet authority, cessation of all aid to White forces fighting the Bolsheviks, and provision of assistance to Red forces in combating their White enemies—and they were aimed specifically at enticing the leaders of Alash Orda.<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>312</sup> GARF f.130 op.3 d.597 l.21.

<sup>313</sup> E.P. Sharapov, *Naum Eitington—Karaiushchii mech Stalina* (St Petersburg: Neva, 2003), 24-25.

<sup>314</sup> “Postanovlenie Kazrevkoma: O sklonenii na storonu sovetskoi vlastii alashordintsev, 15 sentiabria 1919 g.,” in *Dvizhenie Alash: sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, 2: 349; “Postanovlenie Kazrevkoma: O merakh po ob”edineniiu kazakhov, 27 oktiabria 1919 g.,” in *Dvizhenie Alash: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, 2: 354.

<sup>315</sup> “Postanovlenie Revvoensoveta Turkfronta o primenenii amnistii v otnoshenii kazakhov, srazhaiushchikhsia protiv sovetskoi vlastii, 4 noiabria 1919 g.,” in *Dvizhenie Alash: sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, 2: 358.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*, 359.

In Kazakhstan, as elsewhere, Stalin supported the need to recruit qualified cadres regardless of their previous ideological affiliations. As he explained at a 1923 Party meeting, “*Intelligently*, thinking people, even literate people, are so few in the eastern republics that you can count them with your fingers—how then can we not treasure them?”<sup>317</sup> Stalin had assumed a similar stance in negotiating with national leaders during the civil war. “Although you are both nationalists, we know you to be people who can accept the idea of world revolution. It is no matter that you have some opinions that differ from ours regarding this matter,” Bashkir leader Zeki Velidi Togan recalled Stalin telling him and Baitursynov in December 1919. “Today, Party life is beginning in our lands. We want to see you take part in this work. Life will leave behind those who find themselves outside of the organization. You are not Communists, but I want to see you become members of the Party and to work with you. Among the members of the Party—both Russians and those of other nationalities—there are quite a few nationalists.”<sup>318</sup>

This posture vis-à-vis their former opponents on the part of the Bolshevik leadership was a function of necessity. As discussed in Chapter One, the Bolsheviks faced an acute shortage of qualified Kazakh cadres. As they sought to establish Soviet power and later implement their nationalities policy, they were especially dependent on the expertise of people like Bukeikhanov and Baitursynov, who in turn pressed their advantage. “Among the Kazakhs, there are a number of well-known intellectuals whom the nation trusts completely,” Baitursynov wrote of his Alash colleagues to Lenin in 1920. “The shortest path for the Russian proletariat, if it wishes to win the trust of the Kazakhs, lies through these intellectuals. But that will require that these intellectuals be trusted by Soviet authorities. The entire difficulty of the Kazakh question lies in the fact that

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<sup>317</sup> Quoted in Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 231.

<sup>318</sup> Togan, *Vospominaniia*, 224.

the Kazakhs cannot trust their former oppressors, and Soviet authorities cannot trust their former opponents.” Baitursynov posited that the Bolsheviks and Alash were now united by common interests. “Even if they are not Communists, but honest nationalists, Soviet power can trust them completely, as the interests of the nation, which they love sincerely, will compel them to embrace Soviet rule,” he wrote of the Kazakh intelligentsia.<sup>319</sup>

Indeed, in the years immediately following the revolution, Party authorities openly discussed former Alash leaders as key contributors to the process of establishing Soviet power. At the first Kazakh Party Conference in June 1921, A.D. Avdeev, the military commissar for Kazakhstan and a member of the republic’s Party bureau, contended that even though some within the Party criticized cooperation with the old intelligentsia, there were few alternatives. “On the one hand, the Alash-Ordists were amnestied last year; on the other, 97 percent of Kazakhstan is illiterate, and if we do not count the Alash-Ordists the percentage of the population that is literate decreases to 1-2 percent,” he said, noting that it was very difficult to find people suited to republic-level work.<sup>320</sup> At the same conference, V.A. Radus-Zenkovich, chairman of the Kazakhstani Council of People’s Commissars, described Alikhan Bukeikhanov as “the best expert on this country,” explaining that he was indispensable to the Bolshevik cause. “It is necessary to skillfully make use of him. His influence may be greater than that of an ordinary technical worker, but he is so quick to orient himself in the local situation that he helps us significantly. He possesses truly encyclopedic knowledge when it comes to Kazakh life [*byt*’], the history of this land, and in general. No books could replace him.”<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>319</sup> APRK f.811 op.20 d.568 l.47.

<sup>320</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.2 l. 41.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*, ll.48-49.

For their part, working with the Bolsheviks allowed Baitursynov, Bukeikhanov, and their colleagues to promote and continue their previous work in the fields of education and culture. His role as National Commissar of Education, for instance, empowered Baitursynov to lay the foundation for a new network of schools, cultural clubs, and museums.<sup>322</sup> Indeed, Baitursynov received heavy criticism from Party officials for devoting more time to his pedagogical pursuits than to Party business. Although he rejected the reproach, he did not deny the underlying accusation, asserting that working to promote literacy was more important than attending Party meetings.<sup>323</sup> Other former Alash figures were also active in the fields of education, scholarship, and culture, contributing to the “soft-line” institutions responsible for implementing Soviet nationalities policy, much like the pre-revolutionary intelligentsia in other areas of the Soviet Union.<sup>324</sup> In January 1921, a Kazakh Scholarly Committee was established within the Commissariat of Education, under the leadership of Khalel Dosmukhamedov. This body was tasked with generating Kazakh-language scholarship, literature, and teaching materials. Dosmukhamedov, for instance, wrote textbooks on zoology and human anatomy, Mirzhakyp Dulatov authored a textbook on arithmetic, and Magzhan Zhumabaev wrote a textbook on

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<sup>322</sup> “Iz doklada A. Baitursynova v Sovnarkom KASSR o sostoianii narodnogo prosveshcheniia, 1920 g.,” in *Dvizhenie Alash: sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, 3: 88-89. Similarly, in Turkestan, the new “Soviet” schools that were established beginning in 1918 (after the abolition of Russian-native schools in the summer of 1917), were a “direct continuation” of the Jadids’ pre-revolutionary educational activities. Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, 290.

<sup>323</sup> APRK f.811 op.23 d.171 ll.14-15; “Zaiavlenie A. Baitursynova s protestom protiv ego iskliucheniia iz riadov RKP(b), 15 noiabria 1921 g.,” in *Dvizhenie Alash: sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, 3: 98-100.

<sup>324</sup> On the distinction between “soft-line” and “hard-line” institutions, see Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 22-23 and *ibid.*, “Interpreting the New Archival Signals: Nationalities Policy and the Nature of the Soviet Bureaucracy,” *Cahiers du monde russe* 40, no. 1-2 (1999): 113-124.

Kazakh philology.<sup>325</sup> Such activities allowed Kazakh intellectuals an avenue for promoting and implementing the ideas they had formulated before the revolution, with the sanction of Soviet authorities.<sup>326</sup>

### **Alash Orda's Evolving Role in Party Rhetoric**

From the very beginning, cooperation between the Bolsheviks and the Alash intelligentsia was fraught. Already in January 1921, Radus-Zen'kovich characterized Baitursynov as “in Party terms, a complete zero.” Baitursynov was expelled from the Party ten months later as “an Alash-Ordist [...] who has not proven himself in political work.”<sup>327</sup> In March 1922, Lenin proclaimed the need for a “systematic [...] struggle against bourgeois ideology,” which in its Kazakhstani iteration took on the form of an anti-Alash offensive. In July of that same year, the republic's Party bureau adopted a decision banning former members of Alash from joining its ranks. In the following months, Asfendiiar Kenzhin was removed from his position as Commissar for Education, and Alikhan Bukeikhanov and several other Alash figures were briefly arrested. Bukeikhanov was sent to Moscow under armed guard and was effectively exiled to the Soviet capital.<sup>328</sup>

The case of Bukeikhanov is illustrative of attempts by Soviet authorities to marginalize Alash figures—and their limits—as well as the Party's ambivalent posture towards the old

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<sup>325</sup> Nurmagambetova, *Dvizhenie Alash i Alash-Orda*, 39-40.

<sup>326</sup> In a similar vein, Flora Roberts examines how the pre-revolutionary elite in Tajikistan was able to maintain its influence through engagement in the nascent Soviet educational system. Roberts, “Old Elites Under Communism,” 43-104.

<sup>327</sup> APRK f.811 op.23 d.171 l. 15.

<sup>328</sup> Nurmagambetova, *Dvizhenie Alash i Alash-Orda*, 47; Sultan Khan Akkuly, *Alikhan Bukeikhan: Sobiratel' kazakhskikh zemel'*, vol. 2 (Astana: Obshestvennyi fond “Alashorda,” 2017), 535-546.

intelligentsia, a stance that resulted directly from the shortage of local knowledge and expertise on Central Asian populations. Indeed, as late as 1930, the head of the state publishing house Kazizdat complained about the lack of qualified literary cadres outside of the “bourgeois-nationalist writers of the Alash-Orda camp.”<sup>329</sup> The influence of the Alash intellectuals was a constant source of anxiety for Party authorities. Bukeikhanov’s forcible relocation to Moscow was directly inspired by apprehension at his standing among the Kazakh population. As explained in the closing indictment in Bukeikhanov’s criminal case from September 3, 1937, “In order to isolate Bukeikhanov, as an implacable enemy of Soviet power, from Kazakh workers, on whom he exerts a strong influence, in 1922 he was SENT to Moscow.”<sup>330</sup> Bukeikhanov was deemed too problematic to be left in Kazakhstan, but at the same time he was seen as too useful not to be used. From December 1922 until October 1927, Bukeikhanov was a literary worker in the Kazakh Section of the Central Publishing House of the Peoples of the USSR. He was given a two-room apartment on Bol’shoi Kislovskii Lane, a short walk from the Kremlin. There he frequently received guests, including members of the leadership of the Kazakh ASSR, Kazakhs studying at Moscow universities, and his former Alash colleagues. Bukeikhanov’s two children, his son Sergei and his daughter Elizaveta, were also with him in Moscow. Elizaveta was married to the Kazakh Bolshevik Smagul Sadvokasov, but she was in Moscow studying at the Medical Institute.<sup>331</sup>

Bukeikhanov’s first five years in Moscow were relatively productive. He was engaged in scholarly and pedagogical work, and also published broadly. He had a wide circle of friends

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<sup>329</sup> TsGARK f.30 op.7 d.50 ll.6-6ob.

<sup>330</sup> Quoted in Akkuly, *Alikhan Bukeikhan*, 541.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*, 556; Ravil’ Mazhitov *Zhakhansha Dosmukhamedov* (Almaty: Arys, 2007), 183.

among the creative and scholarly intelligentsia in Moscow and in Leningrad. In many cases these were people whom he had known before the revolution. He regularly received Kazakhstani newspapers and corresponded with political figures in Kazakhstan. Although he was taken there under armed guard, Moscow was not literally a place of imprisonment for Bukeikhanov, and he did occasionally travel to Kazakhstan. In 1923-1924, he went several times to his native village. In 1924 he participated in the First Congress of Scientific and Pedagogical Workers of the Kazakh ASSR in Orenburg. In the summer of 1925 he again travelled to Kazakhstan, this time as part of an anthropological expedition sent by the Special Committee of the USSR Academy of Sciences, heading the economic research division.<sup>332</sup>

Nevertheless, Bukeikhanov undertook various attempts to be returned to Kazakhstan for a permanent work position. His efforts were consistently rejected. In 1926, while participating in another Academy of Sciences expedition to Kazakhstan, Bukeikhanov was once again arrested and sent to Moscow under armed guard. Upon arrival, he was held in Butyrka Prison for 15 days. Stalin ordered his release after the intervention of the Old Bolshevik Vasilii Shelgunov, whose daughter was friends with Bukeikhanov's daughter Elizaveta. In October 1927, Bukeikhanov lost his position at the Central Publishing House of the Peoples of the USSR and he was once again arrested. The details of his last ten years are obscure, but he remained in Moscow until his final arrest in July 1937.<sup>333</sup> Nevertheless, Bukeikhanov's trajectory after he was removed from Kazakhstan demonstrates that repression and political marginalization did not obviate either his personal influence or Soviet authorities' pragmatic willingness to take advantage of his expertise.

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<sup>332</sup> Akkuly, *Alikhan Bukeikhan*, 564-570.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*, 606-612.

In addition to the political marginalization of figures such as Bukeikhanov, 1922 also marked a change in how Alash was written about and discussed within the Party. Over the next decade and a half, the evolving role of Alash in Party discourse in Kazakhstan reflected changing power dynamics, but also continued ambivalence with regard to the old intelligentsia and their expertise. Beginning in 1922, there was increased interest in the history of the Alash movement and the Alash Orda autonomy, with a series of articles criticizing Alash appearing in the press that year.<sup>334</sup> This increased attention apparently did not go unnoticed by its subjects. According to a GPU report sent to Moscow, shortly before Bukeikhanov's departure for the capital in December 1922, he met with other leading Alash figures in Orenburg. "Bukeikhanov indicated that recently some individuals have begun to throw light on the activities of Alash Orda, speaking ironically and not hiding his hostile feelings towards those Alash-Ordists who have become Communists and are illuminating the activities of Alash Orda."<sup>335</sup> According to one scholar who has analyzed materials from Kazakhstan's KGB archive, beginning in 1922 Alash attracted more attention from the security services than did other potentially destabilizing forces such as banditism.<sup>336</sup>

But the fact that Alash had become an object of study and criticism did not mean that the old intelligentsia was rejected wholesale. For the next decade, the dominant narrative was one

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<sup>334</sup> See, e.g., N.Sh., "Istoriia revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia v Vostochnoi Kirgizii," *Stepnaia Pravda* July 26, 1922; *Ibid.*, *Stepnaia Pravda*, July 27, 1922; A. Baidil'din, "Po povodu istorii revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia v Vostochnoi Kirgizii," *Stepnaia Pravda*, August 4, 1922; S. Seifullin, "Po povodu revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia v Vostochnoi Kirgizii," *Stepnaia Pravda*, August 17, 1922; M. Anatiiazov, "Alash partiiasynyng tarikhi syny," *Qyzyl Qazaqstan* No. 13 (November 19, 1922), 10-12.

<sup>335</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.488 l.183.

<sup>336</sup> G.I. Moldakhanova, "Deiatel'nost' organov OGPU v Kazakhstane (1922-1934 gg.)," in M.K. Kozybaev et al., eds., *Istoriia organov bezopasnosti Kazakhstana* (Almaty: RIO Akademii KNB RK, 2003), 71.

that positioned the Alash intelligentsia in an “objectively revolutionary” role before the February Revolution, and a “counterrevolutionary” one after October. In the first half of the 1920s Alash Orda’s leaders were generally presented as misguided rather than malicious, with emphasis placed on the “naïveté of the founders of this party, who overly believed in the sincerity of the policies of the Provisional Government on the issue of liberating the peripheries” and “the weakness of their political education.”<sup>337</sup> Over time, however, the emphasis shifted to their deleterious actions after October. “Up until the revolution, the nationalist intelligentsia worked against the tsarist regime, against the old order and for the creation of new social relations and that is why it was at that point progressive,” Turar Ryskulov explained in a 1926 article addressed to Kazakh students studying in Moscow. “After the February Revolution, and especially after the October Revolution, a certain part of the nationalist intelligentsia came out against the revolution—for maintaining the old regime, and these actions on their part should be considered damaging to the further progress of the people [*narod*].”<sup>338</sup>

Even after the Party line shifted toward concerted criticism of Alash, Party officials exhibited continued ambivalence regarding the old intelligentsia. At Kazakhstan’s Third Party Conference in 1923, A.I. Vainshtein, the Deputy Chairman of Kazakhstan’s Council of People’s Commissars, expressed anxiety about the Alash intellectuals’ enduring influence, especially among the youth and within educational institutions.<sup>339</sup> However, Central Committee Secretary Emel’ian Iaroslavskii, who had travelled from Moscow to attend the meeting, argued that

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<sup>337</sup> A. Kenzhin, “K istoricheskoi otsenke deiatel’nosti partii ‘Alash,’” in *Dvizhenie Alash: sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, 4: 258-264, 263. See also Nurmagambetova, *Dvizhenie Alash i Alash-Orda*, 6.

<sup>338</sup> Quoted in Togzhanov, “O Baitursynove i Baitursynovshchine,” 26. Beginning in 1926, the Jadids were discussed in similar terms in Uzbekistan. Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan*, 321-322.

<sup>339</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.541 ll.119-120.

although Bukeikhanov should not be returned to Kazakhstan, his skills should still be placed in the service of the Party. “There is no doubt that those like Bukeikhanov and Baitursynov, former members of our Party, should be made use of and at least tasked with translating the *Communist Manifesto*,” he said.<sup>340</sup>

Although the former leaders of Alash were largely removed from positions of political power, they continued to engage in educational and cultural activities. In 1924, Baitursynov’s new Arabic-script orthography was introduced. Indeed, he published actively until 1928, authoring pedagogical texts that included illustrated primers geared specifically towards adults or towards Red Army soldiers, methodological texts for teachers of Kazakh, and Kazakh-language readers.<sup>341</sup> Moreover, Party discourse on Alash and its leaders was not universally critical. In connection to Baitursynov’s 50th birthday in 1923, a series of articles appeared in the Kazakhstani press commemorating his contributions to Kazakh-language scholarship and Kazakh society, penned by his former Alash colleagues and by prominent Kazakh Communists alike, both in Russian and in Kazakh.<sup>342</sup>

Members of the old intelligentsia also maintained their personal and political relationships with Kazakh Party officials. As one Kazakh Party member wrote to the Control Committee in November 1926: “The non-Party intelligentsia is, of course, connected to the Kazakh Communists, sometimes they are better informed about Party decisions, about the contents of debates on one question or another within Party committees, than even Party

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<sup>340</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.541 l.59.

<sup>341</sup> Nurmagambetova, *Dvizhenie Alash i Alash-Orda*, 38-39.

<sup>342</sup> See, e.g., M. Dulatov, “Akhmet Baitursynovich Baitursynov: Biograficheskii ocherk,” in *Dvizhenie Alash: sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, 4:250-257. See also, Gabbas Togzhanov, “O Baitursynove i baitursynovshchine: O revoliutsionnoi roli natsionalisticheskoi intelligentsii Kazakstana,” *Bol’shevik Kazakstana* 1932, no. 2-3 (February-March, 1932): 34-38.

members. [...] They indisputably get this information from within Party ranks, from Communists. Because of [...] personal accounts there are cases in which a Party member is closer to a non-Party member than to a comrade from the Party.”<sup>343</sup>

Even as members of the former Alash leadership were removed from positions of political power, the Alash movement increasingly became an object of study. The second half of the 1920s saw the publication of a range of Alash Orda-related documents and document collections, emphasizing interactions between Alash and various White forces in order to underline the movement’s counterrevolutionary role after the October Revolution.<sup>344</sup> “It is necessary to know the history and battle methods of Alash-Orda, which actively opposed Soviet power in the ranks of the united counterrevolution,” Uraz Isaev explained in the introduction to one such collection.<sup>345</sup> A.K. Bochagov’s publication *Alash-Orda: Kratkii istoricheskii ocherk o natsional’no-burzhuznom dvizhenii v Kazakhstane perioda 1917-1919 gg.*, issued in 1927, also followed this line of interpretation, presenting the movement as “objectively revolutionary” before February and “counterrevolutionary” after October.<sup>346</sup>

That book and discussions surrounding it reflect the degree to which such shifts in rhetoric concerning Alash reflected broader trends within the Party. “We judge Alash Orda in accordance with our general Party resolutions,” Oraz Dzhandosov explained in a 1927 speech for

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<sup>343</sup> APRK f.719 op.1 d.66 l.116. See also, e.g., APRK f.811 op.23 d.109 l.86.

<sup>344</sup> See, e.g.: APRK f.141 op.1 d.492 l.449; APRK f.141 op.1 d.1827a l.304; APRK f.141 op.1 d.1828a l.119. The 1929 Martynenko document collection was re-published in 1992 as N. Martynenko, ed., *Alash Orda: Sbornik dokumentov* (Alma-Ata: Aikap, 1992).

<sup>345</sup> Uraz Isaev, “Predislovie k sborniku dokumentov ‘Alash-Orda,’” August 1929, in *Dvizhenie Alash: sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, 4: 264-278, 269.

<sup>346</sup> A.K. Bochagov, *Alash-Orda: Kratkii istoricheskii ocherk o natsional’no-burzhuznom dvizhenii v Kazakhstane perioda 1917-1919 gg* (Kzyl-Orda: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo KSSR, 1927).

Kazakhstan's agitation and propaganda cadres. "So, let us say that the resolutions of the Twelfth Congress say that this is a party of bourgeois nationalism and so on, but no one has attempted to work through this question theoretically, more or less in-depth, on the basis of concrete historical information, considering the actions, programs, and activities of this party, with the exception of Comrade Bochagov," he continued. "It is very good that Comrade Bochagov has undertaken this question and has dared at least to clearly say what he has gathered," Dzhandosov said. "This question has been repeatedly debated and debated among the Kazakh leadership, both in connection to factions and in connection to all variety of other questions, but nevertheless no one from among our Kazakh Communists has given us systematized material on Alash Orda that could serve as material for educating our Communists."<sup>347</sup> Alash was a malleable enemy, discussions of which were dictated by broader policy considerations.

Uraz Isaev's introduction to the 1929 document collection similarly reflects how broader policy impacted the presentation of Alash. Written at the height of the anti-*bai* campaign, Isaev's text emphasizes the "'general national' [*obshchenatsional'nye*] slogans of the notorious Alash-Orda" as a weapon of the *bai* class. He presents the pre-revolutionary nationalist movement as a phenomenon of the nascent Kazakh bourgeoisie, criticizing Alash leaders for their actions during the 1916 uprising and the civil war and the "clearly [...] counterrevolutionary character of the alliance between the Alash-Orda government and the most inveterate enemies of the revolution."<sup>348</sup> Despite this negative assessment, Isaev maintained the general position regarding Alash before October 1917. "The national movement and Alash-Orda itself objectively played a revolutionary role so far as they nevertheless undermined the common enemy—Russian

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<sup>347</sup> Oraz Dzhandosov, "Iz doklada 'Partiia, ideologiya i massy,'" in *Uraz Dzhandosov: Dokumenty i publitsistika (1918-1937 gg.)*, ed. M.K. Kozybaev et al., 2: 13.

<sup>348</sup> Isaev, "Predislovie k sborniku dokumentov 'Alash-Orda,'" 274.

imperialism,” he wrote.<sup>349</sup> With the shifting Party stance on Alash, Isaev would go on to publically renounce this thesis in publications and in Party meetings in 1931, 1933, 1935, and 1937.<sup>350</sup>

Isaev’s analysis also reflects the broader ambivalence towards Alash. “We should not think that former Alash-Ordists represent a stiff and indivisible whole,” he wrote. “There are some incorrigible political hunchbacks who will only be reformed by the grave. But there is also a certain segment of young people who were not especially active in Alash-Orda in the past, who under the influence of our positive work have noticeable changed their convictions. Such people must be more closely drawn into Soviet work and be given the opportunity to more actively cooperate with us.” Isaev posited that such people were still a valuable resource, and even those who had actively participated in Alash Orda could be successfully “re-educated in the spirit of Communism.” Nevertheless, he warned that there were those who had become Communists only because of the Party’s struggle against imperialism and national oppression. “Such elements entered our Party either because they have the wrong address, or because they want to use the Party in their own interest. [...] Such elements should be decisively removed from the Party ranks.”<sup>351</sup>

Indeed, the publication of this text by Isaev coincided with decisive action against the old intelligentsia. In June 1929, Baitursynov and 43 other Kazakhs, including some of the most prominent Alash intellectuals, were arrested for their “counterrevolutionary activity.” Initially, all were sentenced to be shot. Ultimately, however, only five were executed, while the rest were

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<sup>349</sup> Isaev, “Predislovie k sborniku dokumentov ‘Alash-Orda,’” 273.

<sup>350</sup> “Iz vystupleniia U. Isaeva na pervom s’ezde KP(b) Kazakhstana ob ego oshibochnoi otsenke Alashordyntsev,” June 9, 1937, in *Dvizhenie Alash: sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, 4:30.

<sup>351</sup> Isaev, “Predislovie k sborniku dokumentov ‘Alash-Orda,’” 276-277.

sentenced to various terms of imprisonment.<sup>352</sup> This was part of a broader wave of terror against perceived nationalists that encompassed the “national” areas of the Soviet Union between 1928 and 1930. In Tatarstan, the victims were primarily Tatar Communists, while in Ukraine and Belarus the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine (SVU) show trial and the Union for the Liberation of Belorussia (SVB) purge, respectively, targeted supposed counterrevolutionary organizations among the intelligentsia.<sup>353</sup> As Terry Martin has argued, “the cultural revolution show trials in all national regions were used to decisively mark the end of the era of national *smenovekhovstvo*.”<sup>354</sup> In Kazakhstan, the wave of arrests targeting Alash figures preceded the detention of the supposed SVU conspirators, and there was no show trial. Nevertheless, this wave of repression did mark a significant shift in the official Party stance towards the old intelligentsia. Although the second half of the 1920s was also marked by the marginalization of certain influential Kazakh Communists who were accused of nationalism, they were removed from the republic rather than being imprisoned or executed.

Even this wave of repression did not completely obviate the influence of Alash, however, as Kazakh Communist Idris Mustambaev explained to Goloshchekin in a September 1929 letter. “I was educated and raised on the works of the ‘former leaders’ and regardless of their current misconceptions and their crimes against the Party, I consider their past work and the merit of

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<sup>352</sup> APRK f.811 op.1 d.23 ll.2-5, 12; Abylkhozhin et al., *Istoriia Kazakhstana*, 4: 432-433; Moldakhanova, “Deiatel’nost’ organov OGPU,” 97-98.

<sup>353</sup> Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 205- 206, 249-251; Jeremy Smith, “Nation Building and National Conflict in the USSR in the 1920s,” *Ab Imperio* 2001, no. 3, 260-263. In Belarus, almost the entire Belarusian-speaking intellectual elite was arrested, followed by leading national Communists. See Rudling, *The Rise and Fall of Belarusian Nationalism*, 296. On the wave of arrests that took place in Uzbekistan beginning in November 1929 see Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan*, 373-377.

<sup>354</sup> Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 252.

their labor to be an immense asset and inheritance for the Party and for the revolution,” Mustambaev wrote. “Since the beginning of my conscious life (I am now 32 years old), I received my political baptism from their lips, and therefore I respected them.”<sup>355</sup> But while such sentiments may have been expressed in private, public discourse was a different matter.

Two lengthy articles by Gabbas Togzhanov in the republic’s Party journal, *Bol’shevik Kazakstana* demonstrate the shift that had taken place in Party rhetoric regarding Alash by the early 1930s. Writing in 1932, Togzhanov contended that, due to a lack of understanding and knowledge concerning the history of the Kazakh national liberation movement, much of Kazakhstan’s “Marxist literature” propagated the “incorrect, non-Party” view that up until the February Revolution, or even until the October Revolution, the Kazakh nationalist intelligentsia led by Baitursynov and Bukeikhanov had played a progressive, revolutionary role in combatting the tsarist colonial regime. Togzhanov conceded that he himself had expressed such sentiments in publications in the mid-1920s, and he was especially critical of the 1927 Bochagov text that Oraz Dzhandosov had praised five years earlier. Togzhanov was especially critical of Alash actions during the 1916 uprising, when, he argues, they “betrayed this objectively revolutionary movement” and thereby “decisively went down the path of reaction and support for the tsarist government.”<sup>356</sup> Moreover, he contended, because they acted within the framework of Imperial Russian law, the Alash intellectuals were not truly combatting tsarist policies. Their focus on education and culture meant that they were never a revolutionary movement, he explained, as they did not engage in any efforts to overthrow the state. “They conceived of the liberation of the

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<sup>355</sup> APRK f.141 op.17 d.356 l.66.

<sup>356</sup> Togzhanov, “O Baitursunove i baitursunovshchine: O revoliutsionnoi roli natsionalisticheskoi intelligentsii Kazakstana,” 29, 31.

Kazakh people as merely clarifying some points of tsarist law,” he contended.<sup>357</sup> Whereas earlier treatments of Alash had positioned the movement as a part of the Kazakh “petite bourgeoisie,” it was now presented as a party of the “semi-feudal *bai* class.”<sup>358</sup>

Togzhanov was also critical about the propagation of the “Alash-Ordist legend about Baitursynov” as a national hero and a leader for the entire Kazakh nation, even by leading Kazakh Communists. Togzhanov warned that those among the old intelligentsia who had joined the Bolsheviks in the early 1920s remained “the same Alash-Ordist[s], but with a party card of the Communist Party,” while even those who had not participated in the movement were susceptible to its influence. He raised the dangers of Alash infiltration of the Party, both in the form of a concerted campaign to join the Party’s ranks and through published materials, especially textbooks.<sup>359</sup>

A speech by Iz mukhan Kuramysov, published in *Bol’shevik Kazakstana* in 1933, further illustrates the shift that had taken place. “The cultural front in Kazakhstan was long a monopoly of the Alash Ordists, including those who were in our Party,” Kuramysov complained.<sup>360</sup> He denounced the fact that Alash Orda’s influence was especially pervasive in textbooks. Even after former Alash activists had been “driven out” of the Party, Kuramysov contended, their influence persisted through the textbooks published in Kazakhstan. “And we contributed to this because our Communists did not realize the importance of this fact,” he lamented. “Although many

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<sup>357</sup> Togzhanov, “O Baitursunove i baitursunovshchine: O revoliutsionnoi roli natsionalisticheskoi intelligentsii Kazakstana,” 32.

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>360</sup> “Iz doklada I. Kuramysova na I s’ezde po kul’turnomu stroitel’stvu,” in *Dvizhenie Alash: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, 4: 19.

among our older leadership cadres in Kazakhstan were teachers, none of them drew the Party organization's attention to this fact; no one actively fought Alash Orda ideology in textbooks. That is precisely why up until recently the Alash Ordists remained monopolists in this area."<sup>361</sup>

Whereas ten years earlier Alash intellectuals had been put forward as potential translators of Marx, they were now presented as unfit vectors for spreading Lenin's words among the Kazakh masses. "The fact that the only three translations of Lenin's articles into Kazakh were done by Magzhan Zhumabaev speaks to the shameful state of our textbooks. Just imagine—a Kazakh worker, a Kazakh farm-hand, a poor Kazakh, a Communist, a Komsomol member who does not know Russian is supposed to read Lenin in the translation of Zhumabaev—one of the most visible and most determined Alash Ordists!" Kuramysov complained.<sup>362</sup> The role of Alash in Party discourse had shifted from a resource to be used—however cautiously—to an insidious threat. This shift was further underscored at a 1933 conference at Kazakhstan's Institute of Marxism-Leninism, convened to "reveal the counterrevolutionary essence of Alash Orda and the final exposure of its vile, despicable role in the history of the Kazakh nation."<sup>363</sup>

This new emphasis on Alash as inherently threatening is reflected by the discussions surrounding the book *Ocherki po istorii Alash Ordy* by S. Brainin and Sh. Shafiro, published in 1935 and comprising both an analysis of Alash history and a collection of documents. Alash Orda-related documents had been published for over a decade, presented as a useful tool for

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<sup>361</sup> "Iz doklada I. Kuramysova na I s"ezde po kul'turnomu stroitel'stvu," in *Dvizhenie Alash: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, 4: 19.

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-21.

<sup>363</sup> "Stenogramma zasedanii po voprosu ob istoricheskoi roli Alash-Ordy, sostoiavshikhsia v Kazakhskom Nauchno-Issledovatel'skom Institute Marksizma-Leninizma," 8-29 dekabria 1933, in *Dvizhenie Alash: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, 4: 68-197.

understanding the movement and combatting its ideology. Now, the very act of publishing such documents was deemed dangerous. “Instead of showing the history of our Party’s struggle against Alash Orda, [Brainin and Shafiro] have attempted to show the struggle of the Alash Orda counterrevolution against our Party,” one Party official complained.<sup>364</sup> On April 13, an article in *Pravda*, entitled “Alash-Ordist Contraband,” condemned the book for its uncritical inclusion of Alash Orda documents such as the party’s program, speeches by various Alash figures, and resolutions from various Alash congresses.<sup>365</sup>

As the article contended, Brainin and Shafiro “obligingly provide lurking Alash-Ordists an entirely legal means of having at their disposal and distributing Alash-Orda’s most important counterrevolutionary documents,” while also failing to include any Soviet documents to combat the Alash narrative.<sup>366</sup> On April 14, the Party Committee of the Communist Academy’s History Institute, under whose aegis the book had been published, issued an endorsement of the criticism in *Pravda* and denounced the publication of “counterrevolutionary documents” that amounted to “half of the text of the book, which does not demonstrate examples and methods of the revolutionary struggle against Alash Orda. [...] No revolutionary documents and no facts of revolutionary activity are included.”<sup>367</sup> In response to this criticism, on April 16, the Kazakhstani Kraikom issued a decision on halting the distribution of the book so that the offending

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<sup>364</sup> Quoted in Nurmagambetova, *Dvizhenie Alash i Alash-Orda*, 64.

<sup>365</sup> P. Rysakov, “Alashordinskaia kontrabanda,” *Pravda*, April 13, 1935.

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>367</sup> “V Institute istorii Kommunisticheskoi akademii: Ob ‘Ocherkakh po istorii Alash-Ordy,’” in *Dvizhenie Alash: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, 4: 23.

documents could be excised.<sup>368</sup> One month later, the 1929 document collection edited by Martynenko was also removed from circulation because it “facilitates the propagandizing of the ideas and activities of the counterrevolutionary Alash Ordist organization.”<sup>369</sup>

In an article on Brainin and Shafiro’s book, Turar Ryskulov reiterated the accusation that publishing Alash Orda documents amounted to “popularizing the ideas of Alash Orda through the pages of the Soviet press,” but he also expanded criticism of the volume, noting that the authors had failed to address “the harmful work of the Alash-Ordists under Soviet rule.” Ryskulov contended that although the authors “correctly characterize the Alash-Ordist intelligentsia as an appendage of the Russian imperialist bourgeoisie and an accomplice of the latter,” he complained that they had neglected to include any evaluation of the movement’s harmful activities after the establishment of Soviet rule.<sup>370</sup> The criticism of publishing Alash documents continued to reverberate, as laid out at the First Congress of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan in June 1937 by Uraz Isaev, then Chairman of Kazakhstan’s Council of People’s Commissars. “It is clear that the very fact of gathering and publishing Alash Orda documents did not amount to combatting Alash Orda, but rather resembled giving our enemies a platform and meant popularizing and propagandizing Alash Orda’s ideas,” Isaev explained.<sup>371</sup>

Although the Party narrative on Alash did not evolve significantly after the early 1930s, the specter of the old intelligentsia continued to haunt Party discourse. Accusations of ties to or

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<sup>368</sup> APRK f.141 op.1 d.8074 l.203.

<sup>369</sup> APRK f.141 op.1 d.8074 l.252.

<sup>370</sup> Turar Ryskulov, “O kontrevoliutsionnoi Alash-Orde i ee oskolkakh (Eshche o knige tt. S. Brainina i Sh. Shafiro ‘Ocherki po istorii Alash-Ord’y),” *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, May 10, 1935.

<sup>371</sup> “Iz vystupleniia U. Isaeva na pervom s’ezde KP(b) Kazakhstana ob ego oshibochnoi otsenke Alashordytsev,” June 9, 1937, in *Dvizhenie Alash: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, 4: 30.

sympathies for the pre-revolutionary movement were weaponized almost from the beginning, but they grew especially aggressive in the years of the Great Terror, targeting Kazakh Communists regardless of their actual relationships to Alash. Indeed, it was not just publishing Alash documents that came to be perceived as dangerous, but giving any voice to Alash figures at all. 1928, Kazakh writer Gabit Musrepov had published his first literary work, the short story “V puchine” (“In the Abyss”), and it was reprinted without corrections in 1935. Following his expulsion from the Party, Musrepov attempted to explain the story’s treatment of Alash, which reflected Party orthodoxy at the time of its publication but had since become problematic. “In this story, describing the sufferings of my heroes at the hands of the counterrevolutionary Alash Orda, I include two or three speeches by Alash Orda representatives, who, of course, rail against the Bolsheviks. In its time, this was considered unmasking Alash Orda, showing what kind of enemies they were to Soviet power. But giving the counterrevolutionary Alash Orda a platform for their propaganda and their anti-Soviet speeches is, of course, a nationalist and counterrevolutionary mistake,” Musrepov wrote to the Kazakhstani Central Committee in a June 1938 petition to be readmitted into the Party ranks. “I have been announcing this for ten months and continue to announce it.” No one pointed out these errors until 1937, at which point Musrepov himself suggested that the work be removed from circulation. “From that time, over the course of nine months, I have continued to admit these nationalist errors, but they are raised again and again.”<sup>372</sup>

## **Personal Ties**

Although the evolution of Party rhetoric concerning Alash reflected broader changes in

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<sup>372</sup> APRK f.708 op.1 d.113 ll.4-5.

Soviet politics of the 1920s and '30s, it did not necessarily correspond to the actual relationships between members of the old and new elites in Kazakhstan. Party functionaries could say one thing and do another.<sup>373</sup> They socialized with Bukeikhanov and Baitursynov even after the former had been sent to Moscow and the latter had been expelled from the Party. Indeed, Baitursynov served as a Kazakh-language tutor for the family members of several prominent Kazakh Bolsheviks even as they were speaking and writing critically of the former Alash leader and the movement more broadly.<sup>374</sup> Moreover, highly placed Kazakh Party officials would sometimes go out of their way to provide assistance to former Alash activists. The old intelligentsia was not completely divorced from the new. Examining the relationships between them demonstrates both the degree to which former Alash activists continued to exert influence via their expertise and the avenues through which the new Soviet elite was able to leverage personal power. Shifts in language corresponded to shifts in policy, but they did not necessarily describe the reality of personal and political relationships.

Turar Ryskylov provides one prominent example of personal ties that did not correspond to political positions. Ryskulov, who went on to become an important Party official both in Central Asia and in Moscow, was from a very different background than the pre-revolutionary intelligentsia, and he was not part of the politically active Kazakh milieu in the years before 1917. As Ryskulov explained in a 1921 autobiography submitted to the People's Commissariat for Nationalities Party cell in Moscow, "it would be difficult to find anyone among the educated

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<sup>373</sup> Botakoz Kassymbekova describes a similar disconnect between Party rhetoric and individual functionaries' behavior towards each other in Tajikistan in the early 1930s, noting the "staged and performative nature of public accusations." Kassymbekova, *Despite Cultures*, 121.

<sup>374</sup> Oraz Dzhandosov's younger sister discusses being taught by Baitursynov in Zhandosova, "Özgeshe tughan," 47. Alibi Dzhangil'din's wife describes a similar experience in her memoirs. APRK f.811 op.6 d.176 l.23.

Kazakhs who has a better claim to coming from among the oppressed than I.”<sup>375</sup> While he differed in background from the old intelligentsia, Ryskulov was in many ways typical of the first generation of Kazakhs who joined the Party in the years immediately following the revolution and reached its upper echelons.<sup>376</sup> Examining Ryskulov’s actions towards members of the Alash intelligentsia reveals the degree to which Party rhetoric did not always dictate personal behavior.

Ryskulov was born in 1894 in Semirech’e, in what is now southern Kazakhstan, into a family that was not wealthy but was not especially poor. Ryskulov’s father, Ryskul, enjoyed some local renown as a *barymtashy*,<sup>377</sup> although his son maintained in his later writings that he was a poor laborer [*batrak*]. In 1904, Ryskul shot the local *volost’* administrator, who was also a local clan leader, and was subsequently sentenced to ten years of exile in Siberia. Ryskulov began to learn to read and write in Russian while he was living at the Vernyi prison where his father was being held. After Ryskul was dispatched to Siberia, Turar spent several years working. He attended the Russian-native school in the village of Merke, graduating in 1910, and went on to the Agricultural College in Pishpek (present-day Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan). He was not accepted into either the Samara Agricultural Institute or the newly opened teachers’ institute in Tashkent. In his later writings, Ryskulov explained this as the result of discrimination against

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<sup>375</sup> T.R. Ryskulov, “Kratkaia avtobiografiia,” in *T.R. Ryskulov: Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh*, ed. M.K. Kozybaev et al. (Almaty: Qazaqstan, 1998) 3: 197.

<sup>376</sup> See Chapter One.

<sup>377</sup> A *barymtashy* was one who engaged in *barymta*, a traditional Kazakh practice of dispute resolution that centered on driving off the other party’s livestock in order to force a meeting before a judge. On the practice of *barymta* and how it was approached by Imperial Russian authorities, see Virginia Martin, “*Barimta*: Nomadic Custom, Imperial Crime,” in Daniel R. Brower and Edward J. Lazzarini, eds., *Russia’s Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700-1917* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 249-271.

Central Asians, but this claim is somewhat dubious given the fact that numerous other Kazakhs studied at agricultural schools and other educational institutions throughout the Russian Empire. Instead of continuing his studies, Ryskulov found work at the Krasnovodsk agricultural experiment station, where he remained until the outbreak of the 1916 uprising. At that point he returned to Merke and began agitating among the local population, marking the beginning of his political career.<sup>378</sup>

Ryskulov's support for the uprising placed him in opposition to the Alash intelligentsia, which generally saw the conscription decree as an opportunity for Kazakhs to integrate into imperial structures.<sup>379</sup> As discussed above, this stance became problematic in later decades, providing an avenue for criticism of Alash by Party officials. After the rebellion was put down, Ryskulov left to continue his studies in Tashkent. In the wake of the October Revolution, he once again found himself opposing the Alash position. He established contact with the Bolsheviks in 1917, joining the Party in the first months of 1918, and by 1920 he had enjoyed a rapid rise to some of the highest positions within the Turkestan ASSR.<sup>380</sup> Although he was not connected to the politically active class before the revolution, Ryskulov now found himself at the center of

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<sup>378</sup> APRK f.811 op.2 d.26 ll.7-15; T.R. Ryskulov, "Kratkaia avtobiografiia," in *T.R. Ryskulov: Sbranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh*, 3: 197-200. See also Xavier Hallez, "Turar Ryskulov: The Career of a Kazakh Revolutionary Leader during the Construction of the New Soviet State, 1917-1926," *Colloquia Humanistica* 3 (2014): 121-124, and especially *ibid.*, "Communisme national et mouvement révolutionnaire en Orient: parcours croisé de trois leaders soviétique orientaux (Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev, Turar Ryskulov et Elbekdorž Rinčino) dans la consultation d'un nouvel espace géopolitique 1917-1926" (PhD diss., École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 2012), 64-76, which provides a detailed examination of the archival record documenting Ryskulov's early years.

<sup>379</sup> On the Alash intellectuals' attitudes towards conscription, see Campbell, *Knowledge and the Ends of Empire*, 159-160, 180-185.

<sup>380</sup> On Ryskulov's political activities in Turkestan in 1917-1918, see Hallez, "Communisme national et mouvement révolutionnaire en Orient," 253-457.

events in Central Asia.

Despite the fact that they were more antagonists than allies in a political sense, Ryskulov provided concrete assistance to representatives of the Alash intelligentsia in the early years of Soviet rule. When the former Alash activist Khalel Dosmukhamedov found himself without work in the early 1920s, Ryskulov invited him to Tashkent to work in the Turkestan Commissariat of Education and issued credentials for his family to relocate to Tashkent from Orenburg.<sup>381</sup> He provided similar assistance to Sandzhar Asfendiiarov.<sup>382</sup> When Alikhan Bukeikhanov was arrested in October 1922, Ryskulov and Sultanbek Khodzhanov, then the Chairman of the Turkestan Central Executive Committee, telegraphed Stalin to express their dismay at this action on the part of Kazakhstani authorities. “Taking into account the decree on amnesty for Alash Ordists, the weak connection between Soviet authorities and the masses of the native population of Kazakhstan [...] and also considering the possibility of the adverse reverberation of this news among the Kazakh masses, we consider it necessary to request your intervention in this case and, if [the arrest] is unfounded, to suggest Bukeikhanov’s immediate release,” they wrote.<sup>383</sup>

Although Ryskulov was Kazakh, his Party career began in Turkestan and, after a stint as the Comintern representative in Mongolia, he spent the last 11 years of his life as the Deputy Chairman of the RSFSR SNK in Moscow. Nevertheless, he remained invested in Kazakhstani

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<sup>381</sup> Nurmagambetova, *Dvizhenie Alash i Alash-Orda*, 46.

<sup>382</sup> APRK f.141 op.1 d.12843 l.2.

<sup>383</sup> “Telegramma zamestitelia predsedatelia TsIK TASSR S. Khodzhanova i predsedatelia SNK TASSR T.R. Ryskulova v TsK RKP(b) v sviazi s arestom lidera dvizheniia Alash A.N. Bukeikhanova,” in *Rossii i Tsentral’naia Aziia, konets XIX-nachalo XX veka: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, ed. D.A. Amanzholova, T.T. Dalaeva, and G.S. Sultangalieva (Moscow: Novyi khronograf, 2017), 488.

affairs and would travel to Kazakhstan in an official capacity despite the fact that he did not hold any posts within the republic. According to Aziza Ryskulova, her husband maintained “uninterrupted contact” with intellectuals and politicians from Kazakhstan throughout the years he spent working in Moscow.<sup>384</sup> He also took an active interest in Kazakhs who were studying in the Soviet capital, “supporting them morally and materially,” in the words of Damesh Ermekova, who visited Ryskulov and his family in Moscow on more than one occasion with her husband, a prominent Kazakh academic and former Alash activist.<sup>385</sup>

While Ryskulov was not part of Kazakh pre-revolutionary intelligentsia networks, he did have one important connection pre-dating 1917 that echoed throughout his Party career. Ryskulov’s relationship with Mukhamedzhan Tynyshpaev, a prominent member of the pre-revolutionary Kazakh intelligentsia, illustrates the difficulty of drawing a sharp line between pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary political circles, especially in the first decade of Soviet rule. Just as Ryskulov’s early biography was in many ways typical of the first generation of Soviet Kazakhstan’s political elite, Tynyshpaev was emblematic of the Kazakh intellectual milieu that was politically active before 1917. The son of a *volost’* official, he studied at the Vernyi Gymnasium and graduated with a gold medal. He was the first Kazakh to train as a railroad engineer, graduating from the Emperor Alexander I Imperial Institute of Railway Engineers in St. Petersburg in 1906. He went on to work as an imperial functionary in Semirech’e, overseeing

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<sup>384</sup> APRK f.811 op.2 d.26 l.39.

<sup>385</sup> Damesh Ermekova, “Moi sovremenniki,” in *Stranitsy tragicheskikh sudeb: Sbornik vospominanii zhertv politicheskikh repressii v SSSR v 1920-1950e gg.*, ed. E.M. Gribanova et al. (Almaty: Zhety Zharghy, 2002), 103-105. In 1973, Mutash Davletgaliev, who studied at the Plekhanov Institute and later went on to be a Party official in Kazakhstan, composed a memoir about the deep impression made on him when he heard Ryskulov speak in Moscow in 1929, when Davletgaliev was a student. APRK f.811 op.19 d.197 ll.1-4.

railroad construction, and was elected to the Second Duma as a representative from that oblast in 1907. He contributed regularly to the Alash newspaper *Qazaq*. After the February Revolution, Tynyshpaev was selected as a delegate to the Constituent Assembly, and in December 1917 he was elected to the Alash Orda government. He served briefly as the prime minister of the anti-Bolshevik Turkestan Autonomy in Kokand but, like most of his Alash colleagues, he went over to the Soviets with the declaration of the 1919 amnesty.<sup>386</sup>

Like several other prominent Kazakhs, Tynyshpaev had provided Ryskulov and other Kazakh students with material assistance in pursuit of their studies before the revolution.<sup>387</sup> In the summer of 1915, Tynyshpaev was approached by some of Ryskulov's relatives when he was overseeing construction near Tul'kubas station on the Semirech'e Railroad. "Someone said that a young Kazakh living in the village of Tul'kubas was the son of Ryskul and that he wanted to go study, but did not have a single coin in his pocket," Tynyshpaev later explained. "I asked him to bring the young man to me. That was when I met Ryskulov for the first time. His poverty was immediately apparent. So I got some money together, I don't remember if it was 100 or 150 rubles. [...] I embraced him and told him, 'You will amount to something. Do not hesitate to write if you need money, it will not be a problem for me to send you 30 rubles.'"<sup>388</sup> Although the two men were subsequently out of touch for several years, this meeting marked the beginning of

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<sup>386</sup> Michael Hancock-Parmer, "Running Until Our Feet Turn White: The Barefooted Flight and Kazakh National History" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2017), 171-177.

<sup>387</sup> On Tynyshpaev's support for Kazakh students, see also Chapter One.

<sup>388</sup> This account is from an interrogation protocol from November 1931, when Tynyshpaev was questioned by the OGPU in connection to an investigation into Alash Orda. A Kazakh translation of the document is published in Q.S. Aldazhūmanov et al., eds., *Däuirding zharyq zhūldyzy: Khalqymyzyng körnektī qayratkerī M. Tynyshpaevqa (M. Tynyshbaevqa) arnalady* (Almaty: Ortalyq ghylymi kītapkhana, 2001), 144-145.

almost two decades of active mutual assistance.

Ryskulov was unsuccessful in gaining admission to the Samara Agricultural Institute or the teachers' institute in Tashkent, but he did not forget Tynyshpaev's contribution to his studies. With the advent of Soviet power, Ryskulov returned the favor by inviting Tynyshpaev to work in Tashkent. "In 1920, I heard that Ryskulov, that young man I had once met, was Chairman of the SNK [of Turkestan]," the older man later explained. "I immediately sent him a letter and he wrote a reply. After that he invited me to Tashkent."<sup>389</sup> With Ryskulov's assistance, Tynyshpaev filled a range of roles in the Turkestan ASSR in the first half of the 1920s, managing railroad and irrigation projects and also teaching at the Kazakh Pedagogical Institute in Tashkent. From 1922, Tynyshpaev also assisted Ryskulov in collecting documents for a history of the 1916 uprising, which was published in 1927 as *Vosstanie tuzemtsev Srednei Azii v 1916 godu*.<sup>390</sup> At the July 1923 plenum of the Turkestani Central Committee, when Ryskulov argued that the "national intelligentsia" should be included in the process of Soviet construction in accordance with its abilities and its loyalty, he held Tynyshpaev up as an example of someone whose advanced professional skills were being placed in the service of Soviet power.<sup>391</sup>

In 1927, when Ryskulov was heading the construction of the Turksib Railroad—and at the same time he was publishing material highly critical of Alash—he had Tynyshpaev appointed to the Assistance Committee for the Semirech'e Railroad under the RSFSR SNK, which was responsible for financing, recruiting laborers, procuring construction materials, and

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<sup>389</sup> Aldazhūmanov et al., *Däuirding zharyq zhūldyzy*, 145.

<sup>390</sup> Turar Ryskulov, *Vosstanie tuzemtsev Srednei Azii v 1916 godu: V dvukh chastiiakh* (Kzyl-Orda, Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo KSSR, 1927).

<sup>391</sup> Hallez, "Communisme national et mouvement révolutionnaire en Orient," 741, 764.

coordinating Turksib's work with local authorities, as well as studying the areas through which the railroad was being constructed and their potential for economic development. In December 1926, Ryskulov telegraphed the head of Kazakhstan's SNK, Nigmat Nurmakov, and the republic's Party Secretary Filipp Goloshchekin indicating his plan to recruit Tynyshpaev (who was then in Alma-Ata overseeing road construction in Semirech'e) as "a specialist, an expert" for the Assistance Committee. Goloshchekin replied, "we object to [Tynyshpaev's] inclusion." Nevertheless, when Ryskulov informed Tynyshpaev via telegram in January 1927 that he was offering him the position, he noted that the arrangement had been agreed upon with Nurmakov.<sup>392</sup> Tynyshpaev went on to work on Turksib until the railroad's completion in 1930. He was highly qualified for the job, as he had extensive experience working on the Imperial Russian precursor to Turksib, the Semirech'e Railroad. He worked overseeing construction on Turksib until the railroad's completion in 1930, and is credited with significantly streamlining construction costs.<sup>393</sup>

In addition to these many years of professional contact and cooperation, Ryskulov's relationship with Tynyshpaev also had a personal dimension. It was through Tynyshpaev's son Iskender that Ryskulov met his wife Aziza in Alma-Ata in 1929.<sup>394</sup> Interestingly, this was not

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<sup>392</sup> M. Asylbekov, "Mukhamedzhan Tynyshpaev i Turar Ryskulov na Turksibe," in *Däuirding zharyq zhüldyzy*, 159-160.

<sup>393</sup> On the Assistance Committee and its use by Ryskulov as a means of exerting his personal authority, see Payne, *Stalin's Railroad*, 24-26. Payne does not discuss Tynyshpaev's significant contributions to the construction of the railroad, which generally remain unstudied outside of Kazakhstan. For an overview of Tynyshpaev's influence on Turksib, see, e.g., S. Isaeva, "Turksib Mukhamedzhana Tynyshpaeva," in *Däuirding zharyq zhüldyzy*, 195-197 and Asylbekov, "Mukhamedzhan Tynyshpaev i Turar Ryskulov na Turksibe," 156-165.

<sup>394</sup> Born in 1911 in Dharkent, Aziza was the daughter of Tubek Isengulov, a Kazakh who studied at the Vernyi Boys' Gymnasium and graduated from the Kazan Veterinary Institute in 1902. In 1922, Isengulov moved with his family from Dzharkent to Alma-Ata, where he served as the

Ryskulov's first familial connection to the old intelligentsia. Indeed, his previous marriage gave him a very direct link to the Alash leadership. In the fall of 1923, he had married Nadezhda Pushkareva, whose sister Olga was married to Dzhakhansha Dosmukhamedov, the former leader of the Western Branch of Alash Orda. Despite the fact that they had been on opposite sides of the political struggle during the civil war, the brothers-in-law subsequently became close friends in Tashkent. When Ryskulov was recalled to Moscow in 1923, he left part of his property to Dosmukhamedov. Indeed, his connections with Dosmukhamedov outlasted his marriage to Pushkareva. Ryskulov helped his former brother-in-law move to Moscow in 1930, initially giving him a place to stay in his apartment on Novinskii Boulevard and subsequently assisting him in procuring an apartment on Lesteva Street.<sup>395</sup>

Such assistance had its limits. Dosmukhamedov was arrested on October 31, 1930 as part of a campaign against former Alash leaders. In 1932, he was sentenced to five years of exile in Voronezh. After the term of his exile had concluded, he returned to Moscow, where he was arrested on June 1, 1938, and executed on August 3 of that year.<sup>396</sup> Similarly, although

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head of the veterinary administration. Aziza also studied veterinary medicine, first in Alma-Ata and, after her marriage, in Moscow. Ryskulov was arrested in May 1937 and executed in February 1938. Two months later, Aziza was arrested and sent to Karlag, where she spent ten years, separated from her two children. After her release, she moved to Alma-Ata and continued working as a veterinarian. See: S.T. Ryskulova, "Aziza – zhena Turara Ryskulova," in *Stranitsy tragicheskikh sudeb*, 222-227.

<sup>395</sup> Hallez, "Communisme national et mouvement révolutionnaire en Orient," 750; Mazhitov, *Zhakhansha Dosmukhamedov*, 185. This was far from the only example of a similar marital union across political divides. Kazakh Communist Smagul Sadvokasov was married to Alikhan Bukeikhanov's daughter Elizaveta, but this familial connection did not become a cause for criticism until Sadvokasov had already suffered his political fall from grace (see Chapter Four). Flora Roberts describes similar marriages between Communists and relatives of the old intelligentsia in Tajikistan. Roberts, "Old Elites Under Communism," 309.

<sup>396</sup> Mazhitov, *Zhakhansha Dosmukhamedov*, 207-208.

Tynyshpaev's history with Alash did not discourage Ryskulov's patronage of him, Tynyshpaev's ties to Ryskulov did not inoculate him against state repression. In August, 1930, Tynyshpaev was arrested as part of the anti-Alash campaign. After being held in prison for two years, he was also exiled to Voronezh together with his family. He was allowed to return to Kazakhstan in 1935, and resumed his work as a railroad engineer. He was arrested in November 1937 and died while in custody in February 1938.<sup>397</sup>

Despite the evolving rhetoric on Alash, it was only terror that decisively changed the valence of personal connections such as those that existed between Ryskulov and former Alash leaders. In a December 1934 letter to Stalin and Kaganovich on the purging of the Party apparatus in Central Asia, Ryskulov claimed that in 1920-1921, under the leadership of G.I. Safarov and Ia.Kh. Peters, members of the Central Committee's Turkestan Bureau who functioned as Moscow's top representatives in Tashkent, "all the leaders of the counterrevolutionary Alash Orda were extracted from Orenburg [and] seized the leadership of all Kazakh educational institutions [in Tashkent], the editorial board of the newspaper *Ak zhol*, and led the land reform in Semirech'e." Among those who had come to Turkestan in this way, Ryskulov specifically named individuals he himself had helped in Tashkent, including Dosmukhamedov.<sup>398</sup>

### **Old Elites and Bourgeois Specialists**

The early years of Soviet rule in Kazakhstan are hardly the only example of a counterintuitive alliance between the Bolsheviks and a group that could not easily be slotted into

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<sup>397</sup> Q.S. Aldazhūmanov et al., *Däuirding zharyq zhūldyzy*, 13.

<sup>398</sup> APRK f.141 op.1 d.12843 l.2.

the framework of Marxist ideology. Although an obvious analogue are the *smenovekhovtsy* in other national republics, extending the comparison outside the nationalities context can be more revealing in terms of power dynamics. Indeed, there are many parallels between Alash and the so-called “bourgeois specialists” who were recruited to work with the nascent Soviet regime despite the fact that they did not fit neatly into the dictates of Marxist ideology. Derisively termed *spetsy* in the 1920s, this group comprised intellectual workers—scientists, engineers, managers, teachers, university professors, and other members of the liberal professions—who had received their education and established their careers prior to 1917. Like the pre-revolutionary Kazakh intelligentsia, the specialists were members of the generations born before 1890, and many of them were employed directly by the state or its agencies in the years before the revolution. Like Alash, they were a tiny—but disproportionately influential—minority within Imperial Russian society. Based on data from the 1897 census, they numbered a mere 673,868 people out of a population of 125 million, roughly half of one percent of the tsar’s subjects.<sup>399</sup>

Like the Alash intelligentsia, Russia’s specialists generally supported the February Revolution but opposed the Bolshevik takeover in October. Indeed, many of them actively resisted the Bolsheviks’ seizure of power. Only a small percentage of the technical intelligentsia fought for the Whites, but many joined a massive boycott campaign supported by professional associations and technical societies, or engaged in other acts of passive resistance. Doctors, nurses, teachers, engineers, and others took part in such campaigns on a large scale. By 1918,

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<sup>399</sup> Ronald George Charbonneau, “Non-Communist Hands: Bourgeois Specialists in Soviet Russia, 1917-1927” (PhD diss., Concordia University, 1981), 13. Charbonneau does not include military specialists and the purely literary and artistic intelligentsia in his calculations.

however, such resistance had almost entirely disappeared.<sup>400</sup>

As the Bolsheviks secured their power, “bourgeois specialists” engaged in what historians have termed “conscientious collaboration” that amounted to “more a marriage of convenience than a love match.”<sup>401</sup> Large-scale industrialization and economic modernization formed an integral part of the Bolsheviks’ vision for transforming society, making the specialists’ expertise invaluable to the realization of their plans. Thomas Remington has argued that the specialists were able to find common ground with the nascent Soviet regime because of “the rationalistic and developmental perspectives shared by the revolutionary movement and many scientists and technical specialists trained under the old regime.” He argues that the specialists’ cooperation with the Soviet regime was grounded in scientific rationalism, Russian nationalism, and confidence in a centralized state as the only effective vehicle for economic progress.<sup>402</sup> Similarly, Francine Hirsch has argued that working with the Bolsheviks allowed imperial experts to “pursue their own revolutionary agenda—using scientific knowledge to turn Russia into a modern state.”<sup>403</sup> Peter Holquist has likewise posited that experts saw working with

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<sup>400</sup> Charbonneau, “Non-Communist Hands,” 48-51; Jeremy R. Azrael, *Managerial Power and Soviet Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 28-29; Ettore Cinnella, “État ‘prolétarien’ et science ‘bourgeoise’ (Les *specy* pendant les premières années du pouvoir soviétique,” *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 32, no. 4 (1991): 477.

<sup>401</sup> Charbonneau, “Non-Communist Hands,” iv; Azrael, *Managerial Power and Soviet Politics*, 29; Kendall E. Bailes, *Technology and Society under Lenin and Stalin: Origins of the Soviet Technical Intelligentsia, 1917-1941* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).

<sup>402</sup> Thomas F. Remington, *Building Socialism in Bolshevik Russia: Ideology and Industrial Organization, 1917-1921* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1984), 117-120.

<sup>403</sup> Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 22.

the Bolsheviks as a means of promoting modernization.<sup>404</sup> Others have contended that specialists cooperated with the Bolsheviks out of necessity and in order to “fulfill a patriotic duty to save what could be saved.”<sup>405</sup>

Regardless which of these factors is emphasized, the bourgeois specialists’ circumstances were very similar to the considerations faced by the Kazakh intelligentsia in the wake of their military defeat. Whether by virtue of ambitious engineering projects or the dictates of nationalities policy, the Bolsheviks’ political program included elements that appealed to those who had stark ideological differences with the new government. Fundamentally, it was a confluence of interests that brought the bourgeois specialists into the Soviet fold—just as was the case with Alash.

The problem of attracting bourgeois specialists required flexibility and ideological innovation. Before the October Revolution, the question of how to harness the technical expertise of non-proletarian experts was largely unaddressed in Marxist literature. At the First All-Russian Congress of Councils of the National Economy in May 1918, Lenin laid out the challenge facing the Party as it sought to enlist the skills of those whose expertise would be necessary to ensuring the Bolsheviks’ success. “I cannot recall the work of a single socialist or the opinions of any prominent socialists on future socialist society which pointed to this concrete practical difficulty that would confront the working class when it took power, when it set itself the task of turning the sum total of the very rich, historically inevitable, and necessary store of culture and knowledge and technology accumulated by capitalism from an instrument of

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<sup>404</sup> Peter Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution: Russia’s Continuum of Crisis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 2002.

<sup>405</sup> Cinnella, “Etat prolétarien et science bourgeoise,” 481.

capitalism into an instrument of socialism,” he said.<sup>406</sup> The Bolsheviks would need bourgeois experts, therefore they would need a policy on how to attract them. This was an unanticipated difficulty, meaning that the Party’s leadership had to figure out their strategy regarding bourgeois specialists as they went along, much as was the case with policy in Central Asia.

This was not a straightforward process, one that “followed rather than determined the course of events.”<sup>407</sup> Ultimately, the Bolsheviks reached their accommodation with the bourgeois specialists through a combination of material and non-material incentives, providing them with increased pay as well as honored status within Soviet society. This gave rise to resentment both among workers and within the Party. But although they were accorded certain privileges, members of the technical intelligentsia were not allowed any influence over economic policy, which was exclusively within the purview of Party authorities, and they were not granted any political concessions.<sup>408</sup> On the whole, however, the Soviet leadership was largely pleased with the performance of the old technical cadres in the 1920s, and saw them as important contributors to the new order. Feliks Dzerzhinskii summarized that sentiment in a 1925 speech: “if we have achieved a level [of industrial recovery and development] ... that we did not anticipate, it is only because our party has been able to ... draw the nonparty technical personnel into our creative economic work.”<sup>409</sup> In 1927, less than one percent of Party members had completed higher

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<sup>406</sup> V.I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow: Izdanie politicheskoi literatury, 1974), 36: 382.

<sup>407</sup> Charbonneau, “Non-Communist Hands,” 466.

<sup>408</sup> Azrael, *Managerial Power and Soviet Politics*, 49-52; Charbonneau, “Non-Communist Hands,” 464-469.

<sup>409</sup> Quoted in Azrael, *Managerial Power and Soviet Politics*, 32. See also E.G. Gimpel’son, *Sovetskie upravlentsty, 20e gody: Rukovodiashchie kadry gosudarstvennogo apparata SSSR*

education, and in 1928 a mere 138 Communist engineers were employed in Soviet industrial enterprises. The vast majority of positions that required technical expertise were staffed by bourgeois specialists.<sup>410</sup> The official stance towards bourgeois specialists changed in 1928 with Shakhty trial, which marked a significant turning point with the promulgation of a new cadres policy that was “essentially anti-intelligentsia and pro-worker” and heralded the rise of a new elite.<sup>411</sup>

Focusing on the work of pre-revolutionary ethnographers in Soviet Central Asia, Francine Hirsch has termed Soviet nationalities policy “the product of a collaborative effort between Bolsheviks and imperial experts,” who put aside their differences with respect to their conflicting long-term goals in order to pursue a common vision of progress.<sup>412</sup> But it was not only tsarist-era ethnographers whose cooperation enabled the implementation of Soviet nationalities policy in Central Asia. Old elites were also crucial to this process, and their participation and the manner in which it was presented in Party discourse illuminate the different kinds of negotiations the Bolsheviks engaged in with representatives of different groups as they sought to establish Soviet power in the former territories of the Russian Empire.

The differences between Party attitudes towards the national intelligentsia and bourgeois specialists are also illustrative, demonstrating the flexibility that was required of the Bolsheviks in the process of establishing Soviet rule, and how it sometimes empowered or privileged pre-

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(Moscow: Institut Rossiiskoi Istorii RAN, 2001), 62-64; Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Stalin and the Making of a New Elite, 1928-1939,” *Slavic Review* 38, no. 3 (1979): 378-379.

<sup>410</sup> Fitzpatrick, “Stalin and the Making of a New Elite,” 378.

<sup>411</sup> *Ibid.*, 382. The Shakhty trial was followed by a series of show trials against the national intelligentsia in Ukraine, Belarus, Tatarstan, Crimea, and Uzbekistan, as discussed above.

<sup>412</sup> Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 24.

revolutionary groups in certain ways. Although considerable concessions were made to the specialists, “they were made by terms unilaterally laid down by the Party. The specialists possessed no independent position of strength from which to negotiate.”<sup>413</sup> Party authorities were less accommodating and more openly hostile towards the Alash intelligentsia. This difference is especially interesting given the fact that economic issues fell into the realm of more fundamental, “hard-line” policy, as opposed to “soft-line” nationalities policy. This echoes the disconnect between rhetoric and policy regarding the “greatest danger principle” of Soviet nationalities policy and “the striking and consistent asymmetry between terror against local nationalist and great-power chauvinists” that was present throughout Stalin’s rule.<sup>414</sup> Although the cooptation of both bourgeois specialists and the pre-revolutionary intelligentsia was crucial to the Soviet regime’s survival in its earliest years, the Alash intellectuals were seen as fundamentally more dangerous and less easy to control. Whereas the *spetsy* alienated workers, the Alash intelligentsia could make claims to authority and support outside of Party structures.<sup>415</sup>

## Conclusion

The process of establishing power in the former territories of the Russian Empire required flexibility and pragmatism on the part of the Bolsheviks. The fact that qualified people were a scarce resource meant that the nascent Soviet government had to work even with those

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<sup>413</sup> Charbonneau, “Non-Communist Hands,” 467.

<sup>414</sup> Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, 248, 430-431.

<sup>415</sup> Per Anders Rudling argues that the Belarusian intelligentsia was similarly seen as threatening because its influence and power existed independent of Party structures. Unlike in the case of Kazakhstan, however, Belarusian nationalism was seen as a threat to the territorial integrity of the USSR. Rudling, *The Rise and Fall of Belarusian Nationalism*, 277.

who were undesirable partners from an ideological point of view. Examining the role of Alash in the politics and political rhetoric of the first years of the USSR underscores the messy nature of power in the early Soviet period. Soviet power was repressive, but in its first two decades, repression did not necessarily, or immediately, mark the end of someone's career or influence. The political realities of the 1920s allowed for various avenues of influence and the exertion of personal authority. Personal relationships were both a source of authority and a means of exerting agency, but the fluidity of the division between old and new intelligentsia could be used as a weapon against individual political actors.

Indeed, personal factors were determinative even for “hard-line” policies. Sarah Cameron argues that during the anti-*bai* campaign, which was launched in Kazakhstan in 1927, “personal connections, whether long standing feuds or loyalties to kin-members, appear to have played a far greater role in determining who would be named a *bai*, as well as who would not, than any other factor.”<sup>416</sup> This demonstrates the flexibility of Party rhetoric and its policy applications—“while the category of ‘*bai*’ might be broadened to suit the regime’s needs, it was also narrowed when deemed politically necessary.”<sup>417</sup> As discussed in the following chapter, factions were a similarly flexible category that could be ascribed by Party authorities and used as a political tool. Personal authority and the ability to exert power based on personal connections were defining features the political landscape in Kazakhstan in the early years of Soviet rule. With the advent of Filipp Goloshchekin’s tenure as Party Secretary in 1925, however, came a marked shift towards the institutionalization and centralization of power.

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<sup>416</sup> Cameron, “The Hungry Steppe,” 120.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid., 122. See also Isabelle Ohayon, *La sédentarisation des Kazakhs dans l’URSS de Staline: collectivisation et changement social, 1928-1945* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2006), 57.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Factions and Factionalism in Early Soviet Kazakhstan

In the 1920s, the question of internal divisions within the Party was of great consequence to the Bolsheviks both in Moscow and at the republic level. Combatting “deviations” and factionalism was a major political preoccupation, especially as Stalin solidified his hold on power. At the Tenth Party Congress in March 1921, the resolution “On Party Unity” banned factions. This was followed by a Party purge in 1921-1922 that was at least in part aimed at opposition groups within the organization’s ranks.<sup>418</sup> At the All-Union level, the Party contended with the Left Opposition and the Right Opposition. Trotsky was marginalized beginning in 1924, joining with Zinov’ev and Kamenev in the United Opposition from 1926 until its defeat the following year. In the republics, national factionalism was the dominant concern, and it was presented as especially rampant in Kazakhstan. “Anyone who is offended or dissatisfied searches for support and searches for it [...] among the ‘leaders’ and thereafter joins a faction,” one Kazakh Communist explained in 1926. “In recent years it has somehow become fashionable to figure among the ranks of a faction. As a result, the Kazakh part of the [Party] organization comprises a mass of groups and smaller groups, factions with ‘leaders’ at their head, a range of non-party relations have been exposed [*vviavilis*’], including even the use of non-Party members for factional purposes, the invention of false accusations, and the exploitation of both the Soviet and the Party *apparat*.”<sup>419</sup>

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<sup>418</sup> See T.H. Rigby, *Communist Party Membership in the USSR, 1917-1968* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1968).

<sup>419</sup> APRK f.719 op.1 d.66 l.113 ob.

From the earliest years of Soviet rule in Kazakhstan, internal divisions within the republic's leadership were a major concern for Party authorities, and they remained a recurring trope in Party discourse. Initially, Party authorities worried about the prevalence of Russian colonialism, or *kolonizatorstvo*, and Kazakh nationalism in the republic.<sup>420</sup> These were soon eclipsed by factionalism, which was closely related to nationalism and was presented as rampant among Kazakh cadres, and which became the dominant concern after 1925.<sup>421</sup> Indeed, at Kazakhstan's Third Party Plenum in 1926, the republic's Party Secretary declared, "the special nature of factions here in Kazakhstan lies in the fact that they are a greater danger than within the Party in general."<sup>422</sup> Considering the phenomenon of factionalism in Kazakhstan offers insight into the changing center-republic dynamics in the Soviet Union, and the changing scope of action for local political actors. More broadly, examining the nature political factionalism and its function in Party discourse illuminates the nature of power in the early Soviet Union.

Scholars focusing on the Communist Party contend that factionalism was a natural outgrowth of the Soviet Union's ruling structures, with the weakness of institutional power contributing to the potency of personal ties and the political importance of patron-client relationships.<sup>423</sup> In the context of the USSR's national republics, Terry Martin has argued that national factionalism was a structural consequence of Soviet power dynamics. Martin suggests

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<sup>420</sup> *Kolonizatorstvo* as a term to connote colonial exploitation was minted in the aftermath of the revolution. See Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan*, 108 fn.55.

<sup>421</sup> The term used for national factions was *gruppirovka*, as opposed to *fraktsiia*.

<sup>422</sup> F.I. Goloshchekin, *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo v Kazakstane: Sbornik rechei i stat'ei* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo RSFSR, 1930), 104.

<sup>423</sup> Gill, *The Origins of the Stalinist Political System*, 6-8, 314-315; T.H. Rigby, "Early Provincial Cliques and the Rise of Stalin." *Soviet Studies* 23, no.1 (1981): 3-28; Gill and Pitty, *Power in the Party*, 9.

that a distinctive aspect of Party politics in the Soviet Union’s “eastern” regions was the propensity for two factions to emerge among the political leadership of the titular nationality—a “right” that consisted of prerevolutionary nationalists who sought to reconcile nationalism and Communism, and a “left” that comprised members of prerevolutionary leftist parties and young Bolsheviks with no prerevolutionary political experience. As a rule, Stalin staffed the leadership of republic-level Soviet organs with representatives of the titular nationality, and appointed someone from outside the titular nationality as the republic Party apparatus’s First Secretary. Within this framework, the role of the First Secretary was to reign in the “nationalist trend”—to make sure that *korenizatsiia* policies were implemented, but not too hastily or overly enthusiastically. This placed the Party Secretary in conflict with the national “right,” forcing him to seek an alliance with the national “left.”<sup>424</sup> In its broadest contours, this framework can be applied to the Kazakhstani Party apparatus in the 1920s, although the various factions discussed within the context of Kazakhstan do not always neatly map onto a left-right division.

If we consider factionalism as a practice—rather than a consequence—of Soviet governance, we can gain additional insight into the nature of power in the USSR’s first decades. In her recent examination of Soviet rule in Tajikistan in the 1920s and ‘30s, Botakoz Kassymbekova argues that official Soviet language was not “the primary means of information sharing but rather of tactics,” framing Party discourse as a series of “tactics and practices.”<sup>425</sup> The discourse of factionalism was a kind of categorization that rendered Kazakhstan’s political landscape legible within the framework of Soviet ideology, and as such can be considered a tactic of rule. Indeed, the most intensive discussions of factionalism coincided with a shift

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<sup>424</sup> Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 229-233.

<sup>425</sup> Kassymbekova, *Despite Cultures*, 4-5.

towards the formalization and centralization of power in Kazakhstan and in Central Asia more broadly. At the All-Union level, the struggle against the Opposition cemented Stalin's power and brought a new emphasis on Party unity.<sup>426</sup> At the local level, factionalism was used to same effect, reflecting fundamental changes in Kazakhstan, other Central Asian republics, and the rest of the Soviet Union.<sup>427</sup> The second half of the 1920s saw "the party's increasing sense of strength in the aftermath of the national delimitation, which was routinely touted as the 'second revolution' in Central Asia," and in Kazakhstan the advent of Filipp Goloshchekin's tenure as Party Secretary and his call for a "Little October" to bring the transformative power of the October Revolution to the Kazakh steppe.<sup>428</sup> Goloshchekin's appointment also coincided with a general increase in the relative power of Party secretaries within the local-level governing apparatus.<sup>429</sup> It was in that context that he focused his attention on the problem of Kazakh factionalism.

The fact that accusations of factionalism were used as a political tool does not mean that the phenomenon itself was not perceived as a genuinely harmful one. J. Arch Getty argues that factionalism was disruptive to the functioning of the Party apparatus and impeded the imposition of central control, effectively "paralyzing" Party work.<sup>430</sup> Flora Roberts suggests that in Central Asia, factionalism was especially threatening and disruptive to Party unity because it extended

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<sup>426</sup> Getty, *Practicing Stalinism*, 162-163.

<sup>427</sup> Cameron, "The Hungry Steppe"; Loring, "Building Socialism in Kyrgyzstan."

<sup>428</sup> Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan*, 317. On the "Little October" campaign, see Cameron, "The Hungry Steppe," 50-61.

<sup>429</sup> Getty, *Practicing Stalinism*, 164.

<sup>430</sup> *Ibid.*, 148-151.

beyond the Party apparatus and activated “loyalties and identities that were opaque to the state.”<sup>431</sup> Nevertheless, as Per Anders Rudling argues in the context of Belarus and the potential danger of a conflict with Poland during the “war scare” of 1927, Party authorities could exploit real threats to undermine and eliminate troublesome political actors.<sup>432</sup>

That does not mean that accusations of factionalism should be accepted at face value, or that they are unproblematic as categories of analysis. Indeed, interrogating Soviet practices of categorization in order to make Central Asian realities legible to Party authorities reveals that they did not always correspond to actual conditions. Analyzing a February 1930 anti-Soviet uprising near the town of Suzak, in southern Kazakhstan, Niccolò Pianciola argues that although tribal categories and allegedly tribal groupings were used as “categories of practice” by Kazakhs as an “interpretive tool” by the OGPU, they do not adequately explain the leadership and of anti-Soviet revolts, and that “tribal and clan names cannot be considered as corresponding to corporate groups and to social actors.”<sup>433</sup> Rather, Pianciola suggests that clan and tribal classifications were at least as important as tools for understanding Kazakh realities as they were as constitutive elements of those realities. Moreover, they were used as a lens by Soviet security organs to understand Kazakh social and political realities. Similarly, Sarah Cameron outlines how understandings of Kazakh clan relations shaped Soviet officials’ view of the particular

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<sup>431</sup> Roberts, “Old Elites Under Communism,” 135.

<sup>432</sup> Rudling, *The Rise and Fall of Belarusian Nationalism*, 302.

<sup>433</sup> Niccolò Pianciola, “Interpreting an Insurgency in Soviet Kazakhstan: The OGPU, Islam, and Qazaq ‘Clans’ in Suzak, 1930,” in *Islam, Society and States across the Qazaq Steppe*, ed. Niccolò Pianciola and Paolo Sartori (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2013), 298.

nature of Kazakh “backwardness” and informed economic policies in the republic, even though they did not correspond to the realities of Kazakh nomadic existence.<sup>434</sup>

If we extend this notion of categorization as a political and rhetorical tool to the debate on factionalism, which played a major role in Party discourse in Kazakhstan in the 1920s, we can gain a new understanding of power dynamics in the republic, and in the Soviet Union more broadly. Intra-Party dynamics in Kazakhstan in the first decades of Soviet rule were decidedly marked by personal animosities, political differences, and policy disputes. Nevertheless, the existence of factions as ascribed by Party authorities cannot be accepted uncritically. Indeed, scholars with access to Kazakhstan’s KGB archive note the existence of fabricated cases against Kazakh political actors implicating them in various purported factions beginning in the 1920s.<sup>435</sup> G.I. Moldakhanova argues that such categorization was inspired by events in other republics.<sup>436</sup>

Regardless of whether or not they reflected real political groupings, factions were employed as a political tool—and often a weapon—within the Communist Party. In October 1925, A. Lekerov, a member of the Party’s Aktiubinsk City Committee and the chairman of that city’s Executive Committee, wrote to the Kraikom bureau to complain that Kazakh factions in Aktiubinsk were being “artificially created” by Gubkom Secretary Bekker, who was “poisoning the Kazakh [Party] workers against one another” and dividing them into two camps so as to bolster his own position.<sup>437</sup> Regardless of the validity of this accusation, factionalism was unquestionably being used as a political weapon—whether by Bekker to strengthen his own

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<sup>434</sup> Cameron, “The Hungry Steppe,” 83-88.

<sup>435</sup> Akkuly, *Alikhan Buleikhan*, 544; Moldakhanova, “Deiatel’nost’ organov OGPU,” 97-101.

<sup>436</sup> Moldakhanova, “Deiatel’nost’ organov OGPU,” 99.

<sup>437</sup> APRK f.719 op.1 d.66 l.12.

position, by Lekerov to discredit Bekker, or both. Specific factions may or may not have been fabricated, but factionalism was unquestionably important as a rhetorical tool.

Although the prevalence of factions was a major topic of discussion within the Party, what one Kazakh Communist termed “the inner aspect of factions (illegal meetings, plans, the distribution of forces)” remains inaccessible to researchers.<sup>438</sup> Given the available source base and the nature of the accusations, the degree to which allegations of factionalism corresponded to actual political groupings is to a significant extent unknowable. Nevertheless, factions were an outsized presence in Party discourse. Examining the rhetorical role of factions illuminates the concept of factionalism as a tool of political discourse and as a means of rendering the Kazakh political landscape legible—and malleable—to Party authorities. The fact that in Kazakhstan, as elsewhere in the “national” areas of the Soviet Union, factions were associated with and named after specific political actors, rather than ideological positions, reflects the importance of individuals within the Soviet political system, and illuminates a shift towards an institutionalization and centralization of power in the second half of the 1920s. That factions became divorced from the individuals who were their purported leaders only underscores their importance as a tool to disempower specific political actors. The real or imagined political divisions that purported factions reflected are ultimately less important to understanding Soviet power dynamics than is the use of the language of factionalism as a tool to impose centralized control over Kazakhstan’s political landscape.

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<sup>438</sup> APRK f.719 op.1 d.66 l.112.

## **Nationalists and colonialists: interethnic tensions within the Kazakhstani Party apparatus**

In the earliest years of Soviet rule, Party authorities' anxieties centered not on intra-Kazakh factions, but on inter-ethnic tensions within the republic's Party *apparatus*. Throughout the 1920s, Party officials both within and outside of Kazakhstan discussed tensions within the republic's political apparatus using a framework of Kazakh "nationalists" and Russian "colonialists" that endured in Party discourse even if it did not always correspond to the actual political landscape within the republic. The specter of interethnic tensions within the Party apparatus and within Kazakhstan more broadly was an enduring concern, and the language of "nationalists" and "colonialists" continued to be invoked into the 1930s. Nevertheless, it was most salient in the first years of Soviet rule. Although they were presented as ostensibly equivalent, "nationalism" was clearly the greater sin. This represents an inversion of what Terry Martin has termed the "greatest danger principle" of Soviet nationalities policy, whereby Russian, or "great power" chauvinism was considered a greater danger than local nationalism. Although it met with resistance, this position that was consistently supported by Stalin.<sup>439</sup> At the republic level in Kazakhstan, however, local nationalism was consistently discussed as the greater threat. Whereas local nationalism was generally construed as a defensive response to chauvinism, in the context of Kazakhstan, Russian "colonialism" was often presented as dangerous primarily because it was seen as fueling pre-existing nationalist sentiments among the Kazakhs.

Despite that fact, and despite the fact that some Party officials considered it to be an inaccurate reflection of political realities within Kazakhstan, Kazakhs within the Party elite were sometimes able to use this language to their advantage. Ultimately, however, the framework of

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<sup>439</sup> Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 6-8; 240-249. See also Kassymbekova, *Despite Cultures*, 132-135.

“nationalists” and “colonialists” was part of a broader system of nationally determined criticism that was used to marginalize and push out those Kazakh Party officials whose concern for local interests placed them at odds with the Party secretary, especially once that post was assumed by Filipp Goloshchekin in September 1925. Unlike the factionalism debates that dominated the Kazakhstani Party in the second half of the decade, the rhetoric of “nationalists” and “colonialists” focused on positions and abstract groups rather than individual political actors. This made it a more effective tool for Kazakh Communists to pursue their agendas, whether with regards to staffing decisions or broader policy considerations. The fact that rhetorical attacks concerning “nationalism” and “colonialism” did not focus on individuals allowed them to serve as a vehicle for individual authority.

As discussed in Chapter One and Chapter Three, the realities of Kazakhstan’s political landscape in the first years of Soviet rule privileged the individual. Kazakh cadres were a constant focus of anxieties within the Party apparatus. On the one hand, Party officials in the early 1920s discussed the need to recruit educated Kazakhs at great length, exhibiting significant concern for mobilizing literate members of the local population.<sup>440</sup> At the same time, these discussions display a marked anxiety about educated Kazakhs, especially about the “chauvinist” intelligentsia.<sup>441</sup> In 1922, ethnic Kazakhs accounted for fewer than 20 percent of the Kazakh ASSR’s Party membership, fewer than half of a percent of whom had pre-revolutionary experience in the Party.<sup>442</sup> The lower levels of the Party apparatus consistently left much to be desired, a frequent topic of discussion at Party meetings. Recruiting skilled Kazakhs was a major

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<sup>440</sup> E.g., APRK f.139 op.1 d.1a l.25, 117, 126; TsGARK f.14 op.1 d.61 l.10a, d.63 l.22.

<sup>441</sup> APRK f.140, op.1 d.25 l.3; f.139 op.1 d. 36 l.75, d.39 l.16.

<sup>442</sup> Amanzholova, “*Kavaleristy*” i “*lomovye rabotniki vo vlasti*,” 29.

preoccupation.<sup>443</sup> Although many of its members came from non-proletarian backgrounds, the nascent Kazakh Soviet elite was largely exempt from the Party purges of the early 1920s because it was seen as indispensable, and individual political actors were given a significant degree of latitude with regard to their actions.

Throughout the 1920s, Party discourse centered heavily on ethnic tensions between Kazakhs and Russians as a major problem in the republic in general and as a source of discord within the Party apparatus. These animosities were presented as rooted in the legacies of tsarist-era settler colonialism. “We have still not overcome the national hostilities established by the colonial policies of the tsarist government,” a 1927 report on inter-ethnic tensions within the Party explained.<sup>444</sup> Authorities both at the republic level and in the Soviet center used this premise as the basis for understanding divisions within the Kazakhstani Party, criticizing anything perceived as factionalism among the Kazakhs as “nationalism” and denouncing members of perceived Russian factions as “colonialists.” In a circular letter to the Communists of the Kazakh ASSR in June 1922, the Central Committee noted that, unlike in other national areas, such as Azerbaijan and Tatarstan, in Kazakhstan, “Party organizations have not grasped the foundations of nationalities policy, which are being distorted in practice. Fighting is continuing both on the part of colonialists, and on the part of equally strong nationalist elements,” yielding petty squabbles and fruitless debates detrimental to the development and strengthening of the Party within the republic.<sup>445</sup>

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<sup>443</sup> See, e.g. APRK f. 139 op.1 d.1a l.2-4, 21-27, 117; d.36 l.74, 113; d.39 l.16, 26.

<sup>444</sup> APRK f.811 op.20 d.648 l.132.

<sup>445</sup> Z.A. Shvydko et al., eds., *KPSS i sovetskoe pravitel'stvo o Kazakhstane, 1917-1977: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Almaty: Kazakhstan, 1978), 61.

Although these categories were very widely used, Communists within Kazakhstan, especially ethnic Kazakhs, often pointed out that they did not necessarily reflect the republic's actual political realities. "We have two very fashionable terms, 'Alash Ordists' and 'colonialists,' and we repeat these words so much that they hang in the air. We need to talk less and do more. We should go out into the villages to the poor, out into the steppe to the Kazakhs, and there work and learn from life instead of sitting in our offices and writing treatises far removed from reality," one Kazakh Party official proclaimed at the Party conference in 1921.<sup>446</sup> One of his colleagues warned against falling into hysteria over supposed "nationalist" and "colonialist" sentiments. In effect, these had become the default terms of criticism, used in accordance with the relevant Party members' nationality. As such, they functioned as a framework for making the republic's political landscape legible and conceptually manageable. At Kazakhstan's Third Party Conference in 1923, one Kazakh Communist noted: "Squabbles are arising between Russians and Kazakhs on the basis of settling personal accounts. Russians report on Kazakhs as nationalists, and Kazakhs report on Russians as colonialists."<sup>447</sup>

Nevertheless, Kazakhs were sometimes able to employ this terminology of categorization to their advantage. Although some Kazakh Communists argued that the local Russian population should be seen as a valuable resource for the republic's nascent Party apparatus, the majority contended that if there must be Russians among Kazakhstan's *nomenklatura*, let them be sent from Moscow, rather than being brought in from among the local "colonialists." Indeed, even in the post-War period, those Russians who reached the upper levels of Kazakhstan's Party apparatus were invariably from outside the Republic. In fact, the anti-"colonialist" posturing of

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<sup>446</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.5 l.134.

<sup>447</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.541 ll.31-32.

Kazakh Bolsheviks even affected those Russians who had been sent in from outside the Republic. In some instances, Russian functionaries were in fact forced out of Kazakhstan as the result of accusations of “colonialism,” or *kolonizatorstvo*.<sup>448</sup> In 1924, for instance, a group of Russian Party officials from Semipalatinsk wrote to Moscow requesting that they be recalled for work in more central regions of the RSFSR. They explained that Kazakh Communists invariably accused all non-Kazakhs of exhibiting “colonialist” attitudes, creating a very difficult atmosphere and making their positions in Semipalatinsk untenable.<sup>449</sup>

Indeed, accusations of *kolonizatorstvo* could serve as a powerful political weapon. They were not limited to individuals within Kazakhstan, and were employed more broadly in support of Kazakh and Kazakhstani interests. In a November 1921 report to the VTsIK Presidium, Smagul Sadvokasov detailed the “colonialist activities” of the Siberian Revolutionary Committee, which he denounced for its lack of cooperation with Kazakhstani authorities, accusing SibRevKom of dispatching settlers and “colonialists” to Akmolinsk and Semipalatinsk Guberniias in northern Kazakhstan.<sup>450</sup> This accusation, together with Sadvokasov’s broader complaints about lack of cooperation on the part of Siberian authorities, was part of a bigger territorial dispute between Kazakhstan and Siberia that was ultimately decided in the latter’s favor.

Sadvokasov was one of the most enthusiastic Kazakh Party officials when it came to employing accusations of *kolonizatorstvo*. At the same time, he was vehement in downplaying the importance of nationalism while concurrently staging strong defenses of Kazakh interests.

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<sup>448</sup> See, e.g., GARF f.1235 op.99 d.1061 l.71ob.

<sup>449</sup> APRK f.811 op.20 d.613 ll.114-116.

<sup>450</sup> GARF f.1235 op.99 d.1061 ll.73-74.

“As to the so-called ‘nationalism’ within the Communist Party in Kazakhstan, I must say that this is an invention of the colonialists,” he wrote to VTsIK in 1921. “There are no nationalists among the Kazakh Communists. If we posit that ‘nationalism’ is sometimes displayed among the indigenous Communists, this is primarily a result of the manifestation of *kolonizatorstvo* on the part of Russian Communists,” he argued.<sup>451</sup> Sadvokasov differentiated between concern for the nation and nationalism, unapologetically endorsing the former. “In the end we became Communists [*sdelalis’ kommunistami*][...] not in order to watch indifferently as the Kazakh nation dies. We are not interested in being such ‘Communists.’ No party, much less the Communist party, teaches its members to hate their nation. There is no Marxist literature that states that it is over the corpses of oppressed nations that the working class of civilized nations will achieve the kingdom of Communism.”<sup>452</sup>

Sadvokasov was not the only Party official to use the language of “colonialism” to openly advocate for specifically Kazakh interests. In a June 1923 secret report to the Central Committee, Kazakhstan’s Party secretary complained that the Kazakh Party elite had fundamentally misinterpreted the underlying meaning of Soviet nationalities policy as empowering them to pursue those interests. “Some of our senior Kazakh officials have completely misunderstood the decision of the Twelfth Party Congress on the national question. Some of them seem to have understood this decision as meaning that they are the absolute masters of the autonomous republic, and therefore that they should act at their own discretion, without regard for the relevant authorities.”<sup>453</sup> Men like Sadvokasov—educated Kazakhs literate in Russian—were a

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<sup>451</sup> GARF f.1235 op.99 d.1061 l.75.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid.

<sup>453</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.769a l.18.

scarce commodity in the early 1920s. As such, they were given a much greater degree of leeway in outlining and pursuing their political positions than would be the case later in the decade, when Soviet power was much more firmly established. Although nationalism was the greater sin in Party discourse, in the first years of Soviet rule *kolonizatorstvo* could be used as an effective means of pursuing specifically national interests.

Although it was not universally endorsed, the rhetoric of “colonialists” and “nationalists” did reflect the existence of real tensions between Kazakh and Russian (or as they were often termed, “European”) Communists. While they did not necessarily agree with the nationalist-colonialist framework, Kazakh Communists were to an extent able to use it to their advantage. This is especially clear when we consider Kazakhstan’s shifting territorial and administrative boundaries between 1920 and 1925, when Kazakh Communists were able to successfully restructure the republic’s center of political gravity not only by advocating for the incorporation of territories from the former Turkestan ASSR, but also by successfully lobbying for the relocation of the Kazakhstani capital from Russian-dominated Orenburg to the blank slate of Kzyl Orda.<sup>454</sup>

### ***Shchinalar***

National delimitation and the “gathering of the Kazakh lands” was presented as a turning point for the republic and its political organs.<sup>455</sup> In December 1924, the Central Committee addressed a letter to the Kazakhstani Party organization stressing the importance of overcoming

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<sup>454</sup> See Chapter Two.

<sup>455</sup> GARF f.1235 op.120 d.178 l.2. See also, e.g., APRK f.139 op.2 d.118 ll.5-6; f.719 op.1 d.66 l.96; Uraz Isaev, “K voprosu bor’by s gruppirovkami,” *Sovetskaia step*, November 22 1926.

internal divisions now that Kazakhstan had entered this new phase: “Those differences that existed among Kazakh [Party] workers, as well as some deviations in nationalities policy on the part of individual European [Party] workers should be eliminated throughout the Party organization, first and foremost in the Party’s governing organs. It is necessary to achieve complete unity among the Kazakh workers as well as between Kazakh workers and European workers.”<sup>456</sup> In May, 1925 Sultanbek Khodzhanov expressed a similar sentiment in a letter to the Kraikom Bureau, but illustrating the new emphasis on intra-Kazakh factionalism that arose in the wake of national delimitation. “The primary trouble with the work of the Kraikom up until now was the fact that its Bureau, called upon to realize the goals of the Kraikom Plenum and the Central Committee of the RKP(b) was itself a kind of democratic confederation of all possible factions and in its essence represented a coalition of groups, rather than a working organ of the Kraikom,” he wrote. “Now we have entered the track of fiery practical work on the internal construction of Kazakhstan, and that which was tolerable in our earlier particular stagnant situation can now no longer be tolerated.”<sup>457</sup>

The specter of intra- and interethnic tensions within the Party apparatus maintained its status as an enduring trope of political rhetoric within the republic. Although Kazakh-Russian tensions remained a concern, in the second half of the 1920s it was factionalism among the Kazakh portion of the Party elite that attracted the most attention as a problem facing the Party. As in other “national” areas of the Soviet Union, factions were associated with and named after specific individuals. In Kazakh, this phenomenon of intra-Party factionalism was termed *shchinalar* (combining the Russian suffix *-shchina*, used to denote factions, with the Kazakh

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<sup>456</sup> APRK f.139 op.2 d.118 l.5.

<sup>457</sup> APRK f.719 op.1 d.66 l.28.

plural ending *-lar*). This new emphasis on factionalism brought with it a new emphasis on the detrimental effects of individual authority on Party work. “Now we are faced with the task of creating our center, of establishing a truly unified Kazakhstani republic, the internal development of this republic, the urgent practical measures towards servicing the peasant masses of the population of Kazakhstan,” one Kazakh Party official explained in 1926. “Now, in the face of these tasks, tolerating factions, allowing [Party officials] to engage in mutual surveillance [*slezhka*], allowing the settling of personal accounts to lead to the failure of projects led by people who are rivals to some other group, would be simply criminal.”<sup>458</sup> From 1925, combatting factionalism became associated with the institutionalization of power in the republic and a new assertion of central control.

Factionalism among Kazakh cadres had been a salient issue for central Party authorities from the earliest days of Soviet rule. In 1919, the chairman of the Kazakh Revolutionary Committee S.S. Pestkovskii reported to Lenin on the problems posed by intra-Kazakh divisions within the Party. Although described, these groupings remained unnamed. In Pestkovskii’s estimation, one grouping centered around the self-interested and ostensibly nationalist Mukhamed’iar Tunganchin and Akhmet Baitursynov, concerned primarily with securing their own influence. Another formed around Alibi Dzhangil’din and Bakhytzhan Karataev, a former Kadet who joined the Party in 1919. “They are both political careerists, but they have bound their careers to the establishment of Soviet power, while Tunganchin and Baitursynov can always go over to the side of the White Guards,” Pestkovskii wrote.<sup>459</sup> The third faction centered around

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<sup>458</sup> APRK f.719 op.1 d.66 l.28.

<sup>459</sup> “Doklad predsedatelia KirVRK S.S. Pestkovskogo v TsK RKP(b) V.I. Leninu o vzaimootnosheniakh s natsional’noi intelligentsiei,” in *Rossiiia i Tsentral’naia Aziia, 1905-1925 gg.: Sbornik dokumentov*, 181.

Seitgali Mendeshev (In Pestkovskii's estimation, "a personally honest man, but not very intelligent and poorly versed in this challenging environment... A true supporter of Soviet power").<sup>460</sup>

Nevertheless, although it was often invoked in the first years of Soviet rule, it was not until the late 1920s that the idea of Kazakh factionalism was seriously attacked as a problem within the Party. Whereas in the first half of the 1920s Kazakh Communists had been accorded a fair amount of flexibility, that changed with the beginning of Filipp Goloshchekin's tenure as Party Secretary. Goloshchekin was sent to Kazakhstan in September 1925 as the republic's new Party Secretary, replacing V.I. Naneishvili, a Georgian Old Bolshevik who had held the post for less than a year.

The advent of Goloshchekin's tenure as Party Secretary brought with it a new assertion of central control over Kazakhstan. This was accompanied by a fundamental change in the structure of power—whereas in the first five years of its existence, the Kazakh Party organization had ten secretaries, Goloshchekin would remain in his post until 1933.<sup>461</sup> Goloshchekin determined that Kazakhstan—especially representatives of the republic's titular nationality—had not experienced the social and economic transformation of the revolution. Consequently, under Goloshchekin the Party initiated a "Little October" in Kazakhstan, aiming for rapid modernization and social transformation. Beginning in 1927, Soviet authorities launched a campaign against rural elites in the republic that was meant to further tighten the regime's control in Kazakhstan, foreshadowing subsequent campaigns against *kulaks* and other rural "class exploiters" elsewhere in the Soviet

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<sup>460</sup> "Doklad predsedatelia KirVRK S.S. Pestkovskogo v TsK RKP(b) V.I. Leninu o vzaimootnosheniakh s natsional'noi intelligentsiei," in *Rossiiia i Tsentral'naia Aziia, 1905-1925 gg.: Sbornik dokumentov*, 181.

<sup>461</sup> See below, Table 5.

Union, and contributing directly to the destructive famine that engulfed Kazakhstan in the early 1930s.<sup>462</sup>

**Table 5: Kazakhstan’s Party Secretaries, 1920-1938<sup>463</sup>**

Name	Nationality	Party membership	Tenure
Pestkovskii, S.S. (1882-1943)	Polish	1902	5/1920-6/1920
Argancheev, S.D. (1887-1938)	Kazakh	1917	6/1920-9/1920
Akulov, I.A. (1888-1939)	Russian	1907	9/1920-12/1920
Kulakov, A.N. (1891-1972)	Russian	?	12/1920-1/1921
Murzagaliev, M. (1887-1938)	Kazakh	1919	1/1921-3/1921
Anokhin, A.V. (1894-1938)	Russian	1914	4/1921-6/1921
Kostelovskaia, M.M (1878-1964)	Russian	1903	6/1921-9/1921
Korostelev, G.A. (1885-1932)	Russian	1905	9/1921-10/1924
Naneishvili, V.I. (1878-1940)	Georgian	1901	9/1924-8/1925
Goloshchekin, F.I. (1876-1941)	Jewish	1903	8/1925-1/1933
Mirzoian, L.I. (1897-1939)	Armenian	1917	1/1933-5/1938

<sup>462</sup> On the anti-*bai* campaign, see Cameron, “The Hungry Steppe,” 75-123. On the analogous campaign against “*manaps*” in Kyrgyzstan, see Loring, “Building Socialism in Kyrgyzstan,” 279-350.

<sup>463</sup> Data compiled from Dzharparov, *Nomenklaturnye kadry Sovetskogo Kazakhstana*.

Goloshchekin's "Little October" was closely tied to an attack on Kazakh factions and on individual Kazakh cadres as inimical to the proper functioning of the Party and the Soviet state. Writing in the Central Asian Bureau journal *Za partiiu*, Goloshchekin described the period between the establishment of the Kazakh republic in 1920 and the beginning of his tenure as Party secretary in 1925 as characterized by "not Party construction, but domination by the ideology of *Khodzhanovshchina*, *Ryskulovshchina*, and *Sadvokasovshchina*, which reflected Alash Orda ideology within the Party."<sup>464</sup> As part of his broader push for a "Little October" and accelerated Soviet construction in Kazakhstan, Goloshchekin launched a concerted assault on Kazakh factionalism and its leaders—those members of the Kazakh Party elite who most vocally opposed his policies. A 1927 report by the republic's Control Committee deemed factionalism and interethnic tensions to be the most serious problem confronting the Kazakhstani Party organization.<sup>465</sup> Indeed, Kazakh factionalism became the primary focus of Party discussions at the republic's Fifth and Sixth Party Conferences and the intervening plenums, during which factional leaders were subjected to increasingly hostile criticism.

Relations between Goloshchekin and Kazakh Party members were very tense, and the Party Secretary was accused of being markedly heavy-handed in his leadership.<sup>466</sup> Goloshchekin was accused of mistrusting and disliking his Kazakh colleagues, both in closed Party settings and in the press. He had especially contentious relationships with outspoken Kazakh Communists

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<sup>464</sup> Quoted in N. Dzhagfarov and V. Osipov, "Natsional-uklonizm: mify i real'nost'," in *O proshlom—dlia budushchego: Nekotorye aktual'nye problemy istorii Kompartii Kazakhstana v svete glasnosti*, ed. A. Sarmurzin (Alma-Ata: Kazakhstan, 1990), 174.

<sup>465</sup> APRK f.811 op.20 d.648 l.60.

<sup>466</sup> See, e.g., APRK f.141 op.1 d.1648 ll.5-56; APRK f.141 op.1 d.1127 ll.251-255; APRK f.719 op.1 d.1046 l.34; APRK f.811 op.38 d.54 ll.34-37.

such as Sadvokasov and Sultanbek Khodzhanov, prompting Sadvokasov to write in open criticism of Goloshchekin in 1928, “an indigenous Communist [*communist-natsional*] is also a Communist.”<sup>467</sup> Gabbas Togzhanov described this strained atmosphere at one 1928 meeting: “I must state that both Comrade Goloshchekin and Comrade [Nigmat] Nurmakov were very agitated [*ochen’ nervno sebia veli*] yesterday and for me, a member of the Kraikom, seeing such behavior on the part of Party leaders, whom we seek to emulate, their behavior towards each other yesterday was completely unbearable.”<sup>468</sup> Goloshchekin went on to work closely with Uraz Isaev and Iz mukhan Kuramysov, but he was generally unable to establish good working relationships with Kazakh Party officials.

Indeed, especially when coupled with accusations of factionalism, Goloshchekin’s hostility had the effect of alienating Kazakh cadres. In December 1926, Idris Mustambaev wrote to the Central Committee in Moscow requesting to be reassigned somewhere outside of Kazakhstan, preferably to Tashkent, where his wife was studying, or otherwise to Omsk, Orenburg, Samara, or Moscow. “Working conditions in Kazakhstan have become impossible for me,” he wrote. “At the present time there has arisen on the part of certain leading *krai* [Party] workers a mistrustful, or even directly hostile, attitude towards me, especially on the part of the Secretary of the Kraikom Comrade Goloshchekin.” Mustambaev conceded that he had participated in a faction and exhibited resistance to what he perceived as Goloshchekin’s one-sided rule, but he maintained that he was guilty of no other infractions and had nothing suspicious in his past. As a result of his conflict with Goloshchekin, he had been demoted from his post as chairman of the Syr-Dar’ia Guberniia Executive Committee and sent to the Kazakh

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<sup>467</sup> Smagul Sadvokasov, “O natsional’nostiakh i natsionalakh,” *Bol’shevik* 1 (1928), 62.

<sup>468</sup> APRK f.141 op.1 d.1648 l.17.

Central Executive Committee as an instructor.<sup>469</sup> The Central Committee forwarded Mustambaev's letter to Goloshchekin, and his request was not granted. In the coming years, criticism of Mustambaev within Kazakhstan would only grow more acute as he became implicated in an alleged alliance between Kazakh factionalists and the Left Opposition.

Factionalism was presented as primarily an elite phenomenon, although one that had reverberations further down the Party ranks. A 1926 Kraikom statement on factionalism outlined the general state of the problem facing Kazakhstan's Party organization. Among the lower ranks of the Party, it stated, factionalism reflected clan-based tensions and was a reflection of earlier antagonisms. Among the political elite, however, clan relations played a much smaller role. "At their core, factions among the Party leadership have as their basis, in addition to certain differences of principle (regarding the implementation of nationalities policy and its pace, relations with Alash Orda, etc), the consolidation of the personal situation and influence on the masses of certain 'leaders,'" the report concluded.<sup>470</sup> The problem of factionalism, then, was primarily a problem of elite personalities.

This was reflected in the Party's disciplinary approach to factionalism. Of the 167 Communists disciplined in Syr-Dar'ia Guberniia from May to October 1926, at the height of the factionalism debates among the Party's upper ranks, only ten (all Kazakhs) were brought to account for factionalism. Drunkenness, "violation of Party discipline," and "official offenses" were much more common infractions.<sup>471</sup> Over the course of the purge of Party and Soviet organs

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<sup>469</sup> APRK f.141 op.1 d.1 d.1129 ll.75-75ob.

<sup>470</sup> APRK f.141op.1 d.492 l.237-237ob.

<sup>471</sup> Dina Amanzholova, "Ispytanie vlast'iu: Iz istorii formirovaniia biurokratii Kazakhskoi ASSR, 1920e gg.," *Cahiers du monde russe* 56, no. 4 (2015): 770.

carried out in 1929-1930, which encompassed all levels of the republic's governing apparatus, a total of 5800 people were removed from the Party. Overall, only 2 percent of those who were expelled were purged for factionalism (for comparison, 22 percent of infractions were classified as "official and criminal offenses").<sup>472</sup>

Writing in 1926 on the first years of Soviet rule, A. Lekerov described factionalism as inherently tied to specific political personalities. "Mendeshev was a unifying figure not just around himself, but in opposition [to himself]," he explained.<sup>473</sup> Others also underlined the importance of individual leaders as focal points for factions.<sup>474</sup> Indeed, factions were discussed as a dangerous avenue for exerting personal authority, especially with regard to appointments, and as undermining the Party as an institution.<sup>475</sup> A letter issued by the Kraikom Bureau at the height of the factionalism controversy decried "the harmful self-confidence of certain members of the Bureau [...] who pretend to such a role within the Bureau that they should be considered not just as members of the Bureau, but as people in a privileged position."<sup>476</sup> In the estimation of the Kazakhstani Kraikom, factions among the Party leadership "have as their foundation [...] the

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<sup>472</sup> Dina Amanzholova, "Formirovanie kazakhskoi sovetskoi biurokratii v 1920e gody: bol'shevizatsiia ili etnizatsiia?" *Res Historica* 40 (2015): 203.

<sup>473</sup> APRK f.719 op.1 d.66 l.24.

<sup>474</sup> *Ibid.*, l.86ob.

<sup>475</sup> APRK f.719 op.1 d.66; Goloshchekin, *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo v Kazakhstane*, 97.

<sup>476</sup> Quoted in Goloshchekin, *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo v Kazakhstane*, 103.

struggle for personal influence, for power.”<sup>477</sup> Factions represented “a struggle for primacy, for power, for influence, and so on.”<sup>478</sup>

The fact that factions were equated with individual authority was precisely what made them supposedly inimical to the proper functioning of the Party. One Kazakh Communist decried the “harmfully not businesslike [*vredno ne delovaia*]” nature of factionalism, noting, “we know how the constant factional fever paralyzed the organization and distracted it from its direct and urgent tasks.”<sup>479</sup> He went on to complain of “the common situation in which, because the individual manager of some matter was disliked by individuals who for some reason had a decisive role in decision-making, the interests of the entire institution suffered, meaning personal considerations stood above the task at hand.”<sup>480</sup> Indeed, Goloshchekin talked about factionalism explicitly in the context of undermining individual authority in favor of institutionalization. Combatting factionalism, he explained, meant thinking “outside of factions, outside of the individual who heads the institution, independent of which ‘leader,’ which Bureau member stands at the helm.”<sup>481</sup>

Similarly, accusations of factionalism were perceived as personal attacks.<sup>482</sup> Seitgali Mendeshev expressed exasperation at Goloshchekin’s attacks on him for factionalism: “I truly do

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<sup>477</sup> Goloshchekin, *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo v Kazakhstane*, 104-105.

<sup>478</sup> APRK f.719 op.1 d.66 l.108.

<sup>479</sup> Ibid.

<sup>480</sup> Ibid., 1.99.

<sup>481</sup> Goloshchekin, *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo v Kazakhstane*, 95.

<sup>482</sup> APRK f.141 op.1 d.860a l.4.

not understand, what is the point here [*v chem tut delo*]?”<sup>483</sup> In 1933, Turar Ryskulov denounced the continued invoking of factions in Party discourse as a “Goloshchekin-style method” of distracting from the (unspecified) true problems facing “socialist construction” in Kazakhstan. “Comrade Goloshchekin and I had a peculiar relationship,” Ryskulov wrote. “When I criticized his work [...] Comrade Goloshchekin would, in response, put forward [accusations of] ‘*Ryskylovshchina*,’ but whenever I established good relations with him, he would cease mentioning ‘*Ryskulovshchina*.’”<sup>484</sup>

It is difficult to trace the extent to which the rhetoric of factionalism reflected real divisions. Nevertheless, it is clear that there did exist divisions within the Kazakh segment of the Party elite, especially at the level of allegiance to particular individuals. In an August 1925 letter to Sultanbek Khodzhanov, Oraz Dzhandosov related a conversation he had had with Sadvokasov, during which the latter explained, “There are three groups in Kazakhstan (his, yours, and Mendeshev’s), positing that ‘one cannot be outside of a group—it is unworthy of a Communist.’”<sup>485</sup> It was generally acknowledged that such groups centered on personality rather than on ideology. As Sadvokasov explained to the Control Committee in 1923, there existed various groupings among Kazakh Communists, but “there are no fundamental disagreements between us.”<sup>486</sup> This was echoed in official condemnation of factionalism. “It cannot be said that disputes over principle are the sole basis of factionalism,” Uraz Isaev wrote in a *Sovetskaia step*’

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<sup>483</sup> APRK f.141 op.1 d.860a l.4.

<sup>484</sup> “Pis’mo pervomu sekretariy Kazkraikoma VKP(b) L.I. Mirzoianu,” December 1933, in *T.R. Ryskulov: Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh*, 3: 356-357.

<sup>485</sup> APRK f.719 op.1 d.66 l.3.

<sup>486</sup> APRK f.718 op.1 d.210 l.25ob.

article criticizing the phenomenon more generally and Sadvokasov specifically.<sup>487</sup> Indeed, in the Soviet Union more broadly, factions were generally understood as personality-driven, rather than being motivated by ideological differences.<sup>488</sup>

Both in speeches at Party meetings and in the press, Party officials such as Goloshchekin gestured at differentiating between the personal and the ideological in denouncing factionalism, stating, for instance, that the problem was not Sadvokasov himself but rather *Sadvokasovshchina* in the abstract. Ultimately, however, the concept of factionalism was an effective political weapon for targeting specific individuals, rather than political groupings. It was a means of criticizing and marginalizing vocal Kazakh Communists and, in the most prominent cases, forcing them out of the republic.

Although there were reports of limited participation by “European” Communists, factionalism was generally presented as a particularly Kazakh problem within the republic. At the Kazakhstani Kraikom Plenum in April 1925, Kazakhstan’s Party secretary Viktor Naneishvili described factionalism among Kazakhs as the “fundamental disease” facing the republic’s Party apparatus.<sup>489</sup> This was true not only at the highest levels, Naneishvili explained, citing a letter he received from guberniia officials: “Any Kazakh [Party] worker who says that he does not sympathize with one group or another is speaking dishonestly.”<sup>490</sup> This sentiment was echoed by the Party elite. “Any honest Kazakh Communist, including all of us, cannot but admit that we directly or indirectly, often without realizing it, were the objects of factionalism, and sometimes

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<sup>487</sup> Uraz Isaev, “K voprosu bor’by s gruppirovkami,” *Sovetskaia Step’*, November 22, 1926.

<sup>488</sup> See Getty, *Practicing Stalinism*, 148, 160.

<sup>489</sup> APRK f.718 op.1 d.411 l.34.

<sup>490</sup> *Ibid.*, l.36.

even headed factions, usually with the most favorable of intentions, believing that we were engaging in a principled struggle, not realizing that we were doing something far from helpful,” Uraz Isaev wrote in 1926.<sup>491</sup>

### **Smagul Sadvokasov and *Sadvokasovshchina***

Smagul Sadvokasov, who had long been a vocal proponent of Kazakh interests within the Party, became the primary target of Goloshchekin’s anti-factionalist campaign. As Sadvokasov complained during Kazakhstan’s Sixth Party Congress in November 1927, “in his six-and-a-half-hour address, Comrade Goloshchekin devoted almost half of his time to attacks against me.”<sup>492</sup> Examining Sadvokasov’s career and the phenomenon of *Sadvokasovshchina*, which became a major consideration in Party discourse in 1926-1928, illuminates the role of factionalism as a political tool used to marginalize and disempower specific political actors.

Sadvokasov was born in Akmolinsk oblast, in what is now northern Kazakhstan, in 1900. He worked briefly as a teacher, and from 1916 to 1920 he was active in Kazakh student groups in Omsk, where he attended an agricultural school. He graduated in 1920, in which year he also joined the Party. As an educated, articulate, and highly driven “national,” he experienced a rapid rise through the Party ranks. Despite his connections—ideological, professional, and personal—to former Alash Orda members, he maintained important Party positions into the late 1920s, long after the “bourgeois intelligentsia” had been largely forced out of Party structures. From 1920 to 1921 he served as Kazakhstan’s Komsomol secretary and as the editor of the republic’s youth newspaper *Engbekshi zhastar*. From 1921 to 1922 he served as the representative of

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<sup>491</sup> Uraz Isaev, “K voprosu bor’by s gruppirovkami,” *Sovetskaia Step’*, November 22, 1926.

<sup>492</sup> “Rech’ tov. Sadvokaova Sm.,” *Sovetskaia Step’*, November 22, 1927.

Kazakhstan's Central Executive Committee in Semipalatinsk, Kustanai, and Bukei Guberniias. For part of 1922 he was Kazakhstan's representative in Turkestan before returning from Tashkent to become Deputy Commissar of Agriculture. From 1924 to 1925 he worked in Kazakhstan's Gosplan, first as deputy chairman and then as chairman. From 1925 to 1927 he was Kazakhstan's Commissar of Education, replacing former Alash Orda leader Akhmet Baitursynov. He served concurrently as editor in chief of the republic's Kazakh-language daily, *Engbekshī qazaq*, and published widely both in Kazakh and in Russian.<sup>493</sup>

Sadvokasov was outspoken and assertive in his political views, and his positions got him in trouble almost from the beginning of his Party career. The varying degree to which he could get away with pursuing his political positions reflected changing attitudes towards the Kazakh Party elite, which was given a significantly greater degree of leeway in the early 1920s. Sadvokasov sometimes aggressively advocated explicitly Kazakh interests, and he was a strong proponent of incorporating former Alash Orda members into the Party. In 1921 he aroused controversy by dissolving the guberniia- and uezd-level executive committees in Semipalatinsk, appointing himself as the head of a new revolutionary committee. The oblast-level Control Committee found that in doing so Sadvokasov "did in fact display a nationalist deviation," weakening the Party and leading to a heightening of interethnic tensions. They recommended that he be given a severe reprimand and excluded from positions of responsibility for two years. However, this decision was overturned at the republic level, a reflection of both Sadvokasov's importance within the Party apparatus as a young, educated Kazakh and the flexibility accorded to Kazakh Communists in the early years of Soviet rule.<sup>494</sup> Indeed, the republic's Party apparatus

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<sup>493</sup> Dzhaparov, *Nomenklaturnye kadry Sovetskogo Kazakhstana*, 118-119.

<sup>494</sup> APRK f.719 op.1 d.1049 l.34.

clearly understood Sadvokasov to be a valuable asset. In 1922, Kazakhstan's Party secretary and the head of the republic's Central Executive Committee sent a series of telegrams to Moscow requesting that Sadvokasov be exempted from mobilization given "his necessity to the K[azakh A]SSR as one of the best workers whose departure would affect the course of our work."<sup>495</sup>

As for many Kazakh Communists, the question of land policy was of especial importance to Sadvokasov. Land was a highly contentious issue in Kazakhstan throughout the 1920s. Indeed, it was often presented as the root cause of ethnic tensions within the republic.<sup>496</sup> It would become the primary axis of disagreement between Sadvokasov and Goloshchekin. Already at the Third Kazakhstani Party Congress in 1923, Sadvokasov spoke out against expropriation of *bais*, arguing that it would only serve to heighten interethnic tensions and destabilize the Kazakh *aul*.

Although Sadvokasov remained a member of Kazakhstan's Kraikom Bureau until the Sixth Party Conference, his political marginalization was essentially complete by the end of 1927. He was subjected to additional criticism after the January 1928 publication of an article in the all-Union journal *Bol'shevik*, in which Sadvokasov outlined his economic views, by then clearly at odds with Party orthodoxy. Sadvokasov argued for industrialization as the solution to interethnic relations within the Soviet Union and the means of establishing true equality among its nationalities. The imperialist Russian bourgeoisie only extracted raw materials from the periphery, building factories in the center, he explained. This legacy of the past should be stamped out via industrialization. The Twelfth Party Congress had decreed that "the policies of Stolipyn and the Russian bourgeoisie, aimed at transforming the periphery into exclusively resource regions [*syr'evye raiony*]" should be eradicated. "In the peripheries, in this case in

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<sup>495</sup> TsGARK f.5 op.18 d.815 ll.11, 12, 14.

<sup>496</sup> RGASPI f.17 op.25 d.7 l.79.

Central Asia and Kazakhstan, this directive is being implemented insufficiently, and, more accurately, is not being implemented at all,” Sadvokasov complained.<sup>497</sup>

Sadvokasov was especially critical of Isaak Zelenskii, the head of the Central Asian Bureau, and Filipp Goloshchekin for their stances on economic development in the region—Zelenskii contended that because the USSR desperately needed to free itself of dependency on the capitalist world, Central Asia should first and foremost develop as a source of raw materials, while Goloshchekin wrote that Kazakhstan should focus not on heavy industry but on light and medium industrial development. Sadvokasov argued that raw material extraction did not preclude industrialization—From the point of view of economic efficiency, he contended, industry should be brought closer to raw materials. Moreover, Sadvokasov argued that absence or weak development of industry was detrimental to agricultural development.<sup>498</sup>

The most controversial aspect of Sadvokasov’s article proved to be his position on land distribution. He argued that the basis of land policy in Kazakhstan should be the distribution of land [*zemleustroistvo*] to the indigenous population and a temporary ban on new settlement in Kazakhstan. “The point was not and is not now to expel Russians from Kazakhstan, the point is to solder the old wounds of a sick organism, torn up by the policies of a shameful past. The Russian *muzhik* is not culpable for the fact that by Stolipyn’s will he ‘took’ land from the Kazakh, ‘turning him out’ into the desert,” Sadvokasov wrote.<sup>499</sup> Although central authorities expressed concerns about “rural overpopulation” in the Russian village, Sadvokasov contended that the solution should be the industrialization and rationalization of agriculture, not settlement.

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<sup>497</sup> Sadvokasov, “O natsional’nostiakh i natsionalakh,” 59.

<sup>498</sup> *Ibid.*, 57-58.

<sup>499</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

Land policy in the peripheries, he argued, should focus on the distribution of land in a strictly prescribed order: first to the indigenous population, including old settlers, then to more recent *samovol'tsy*, and only then, if there remained surplus land, to new settlers.

This article provoked great controversy and became a focal point of criticism of Sadvokasov within Kazakhstan's Party apparatus and outside of the republic. It was published together with a retort by Kosta Tabulov, who declared Sadvokasov to be "blinded by nationalism" and "poisoned by the poison of nationalism" in his failure to see the achievements of Soviet industrialization.<sup>500</sup> Sadvokasov's insistence on Kazakh economic interests was particularly risky, as economic policy belonged to the Soviet "hardline," and economic authorities were generally hostile to nationalities policy considerations.<sup>501</sup>

Sadvokasov's critics targeted not only his political positions, but also him personally. Tabulov criticized Sadvokasov's economic positions as a "hopeless attempt to reconcile nationalism and Communism."<sup>502</sup> Moreover, he contended, Sadvokasov "descends to sinful ground and attacks Party policy from the point of view of the interests of the Kazakhstani peasantry."<sup>503</sup> The denunciations of Sadvokasov in the Kazakhstani press were even more virulent. "In this article Sadvokasov has shown himself in all his bourgeois-nationalist finery,"

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<sup>500</sup> Tabulov, "Protiv linii natsional'noi demokratii (otvet tov. Sadvokasovu)," *Bol'shevik* 1 (1928): 66.

<sup>501</sup> See Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, 14, 21-22. On similar discussions concerning industrialization in Uzbekistan, see Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan*, 160-161.

<sup>502</sup> Tabulov, "Protiv linii natsional'noi demokratii (otvet tov. Sadvokasovu)," 70.

<sup>503</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

Uraz Isaev wrote in *Sovetskaia Step'*.<sup>504</sup> Isaev underlined that nationalist opposition to the Russian bourgeoisie did not automatically render Sadvokasov a Communist.<sup>505</sup> Employing more colorful language, Izmukhan Kuramysov decried Sadvokasov as a Kazakh “Don Quixote,” with the Kazakh *bai* class serving as his Dulcinea.<sup>506</sup>

As Sadvakasov later explained, he intended the article for publication in *Pravda* before the Fifteenth Party Congress, as material for debate. The newspaper did not run the text, however, and instead sent it to the journal *Bol'shevik*, which printed it in January 1928. This exposed Sadvakasov to accusations of criticizing the Fifteenth Congress, which had taken place in December. “Against my will, I am placed in the position of someone coming out against the decisions of the Fifteenth Party Congress,” he wrote to the editor of *Pravda Vostoka*. “I declare that I entirely stand behind the decisions of the Fifteenth Party Congress, and I reject the contents of the article both in form and in substance.”<sup>507</sup> This defense was ineffective, however. “It is evident that he wrote [the article] as an oppositionist,” Uraz Isaev wrote of Sadvokasov in *Sovetskaia step'*. “Up until the Sixth Party conference, Sadvokasov was a member of the Kazkraikom Bureau, which stands completely and entirely in line with the party of Lenin and its

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<sup>504</sup> Uraz Isaev, “O natsional'nostiakh i burzhuaznykh natsionalakh,” *Sovetskaia step'*, February 26, 1928.

<sup>505</sup> Uraz Isaev, “O natsional'nostiakh i burzhuaznykh natsionalakh (Okonchanie),” *Sovetskaia step'*, February 27, 1928.

<sup>506</sup> TsGARK f.30 op.1 d.850

<sup>507</sup> APRK f.811 op.20 d.669 ll.1-2

Central Committee. Sadvokasov voted for the Party line, while at the same time being an oppositionist. This is true political charlatanism.”<sup>508</sup>

By this point Sadvokasov had already been forced out of the republic, following a well-worn path of prominent Kazakhs who were sent to study or work in Moscow following a political fall from grace. In July 1927 he was sent to Tashkent as the rector of the Kazakh Pedagogical Institute, and in November he formally ceased being a member of Kazakhstan’s Kraikom Bureau. From Tashkent he went to Moscow, where from 1928 to 1931 he served as a researcher at the Oriental Institute at the Soviet Academy of Sciences and studied at the Moscow Institute of Transport Engineers. From 1931 until his death in 1933 he worked as a railroad engineer. He died in Moscow in 1933 of sulfur dioxide poisoning as the result of an industrial accident.<sup>509</sup>

Ultimately, Sadvokasov was unapologetic about his views. At a 1930 meeting in Moscow to consider the question of his exclusion from the Party, Sadvokasov continued to maintain that the only mistake he perceived in his *Bol’shevik* article was the timing of its publication. His connection to Alash Orda was purely familial (Although it was widely known that Sadvokasov was married to Alikhan Bukeikhanov’s daughter Elizaveta, it was not until after his political fall from grace was complete that he was openly criticized for this connection), and his accommodation of non-Party intellectuals had been a necessary element of his work in the People’s Commisariat for Education.<sup>510</sup> His stance on the anti-*bai* campaign, too, remained

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<sup>508</sup> Uraz Isaev, “O natsional’nostiakh i burzhuznykh natsionalakh (Okonchanie),” *Sovetskaia step’* no. 48, February 27, 1928.

<sup>509</sup> Dzhaparov, *Nomenklaturnye kady*, 119.

<sup>510</sup> APRK f.141 op.17 d.470 l.2ob.

unchanged—he was not against the principle of confiscation, but he believed the way it was carried out served only to heighten interethnic tensions. “Everyone says that my line is not compatible with me remaining within the ranks of the Party,” Sadvokasov said. “This is not correct, as all my close comrades, such as Mustambaev and Sultanbekov, who are in the Kazakhstani capital, have remained within the ranks of the Party. If our line had in fact been so anti-Party, then they would have been expelled.”<sup>511</sup> In fact, Sadvokasov was not formally excluded from the Party, a circumstance that stemmed from the fact that he was in Moscow rather than in Kazakhstan. Nevertheless, he continued to be subjected to harsh criticism from his Kazakhstan-based colleagues. “He was with the Party only temporarily, that is, he was with the Party only as long as the *bai* in the *aul* was left in peace, as long as the factionalist struggle reigned within (formally, and in fact together with the entire non-Party intelligentsia) the Kazakhstani Party organization,” one Kazakh Communist concluded.<sup>512</sup>

Even though he was no longer in Kazakhstan, Sadvokasov became the central figure in denunciations of Trotskyism in Kazakhstan. Sadvokasov’s political trajectory demonstrates the degree to which factionalism was used as a rhetorical device to discredit and undermine individual political actors within the Kazakhstani Party apparatus. Until 1927, the Left Opposition was uninterested in—or even actively hostile to—nationalities policy. While their ultimate platform represented an attempt to outdo *korenizatsiia* in an effort to attract support in “national” regions, it failed to resonate.<sup>513</sup> In Kazakhstan, the notion of support for—or even contact with—the opposition was closely tied to the rhetoric of factionalism. Indeed, accusations

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<sup>511</sup> APRK f.141 op.17 d.470 l.3.

<sup>512</sup> *Ibid.*, l.2.

<sup>513</sup> Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 235-237.

of contact with oppositionist forces were aimed at those Kazakh cadres who already had tense relations with Party authorities (and especially with Goloshchekin), foremost among them Sadvokasov. The fact that association with the opposition was used to target individuals is further underscored by the fact that the supposed oppositionist threat in Kazakhstan—although it was presented as very serious—was numerically very small, especially as opposed to the vast conspiracies that were alleged during the Great Terror.

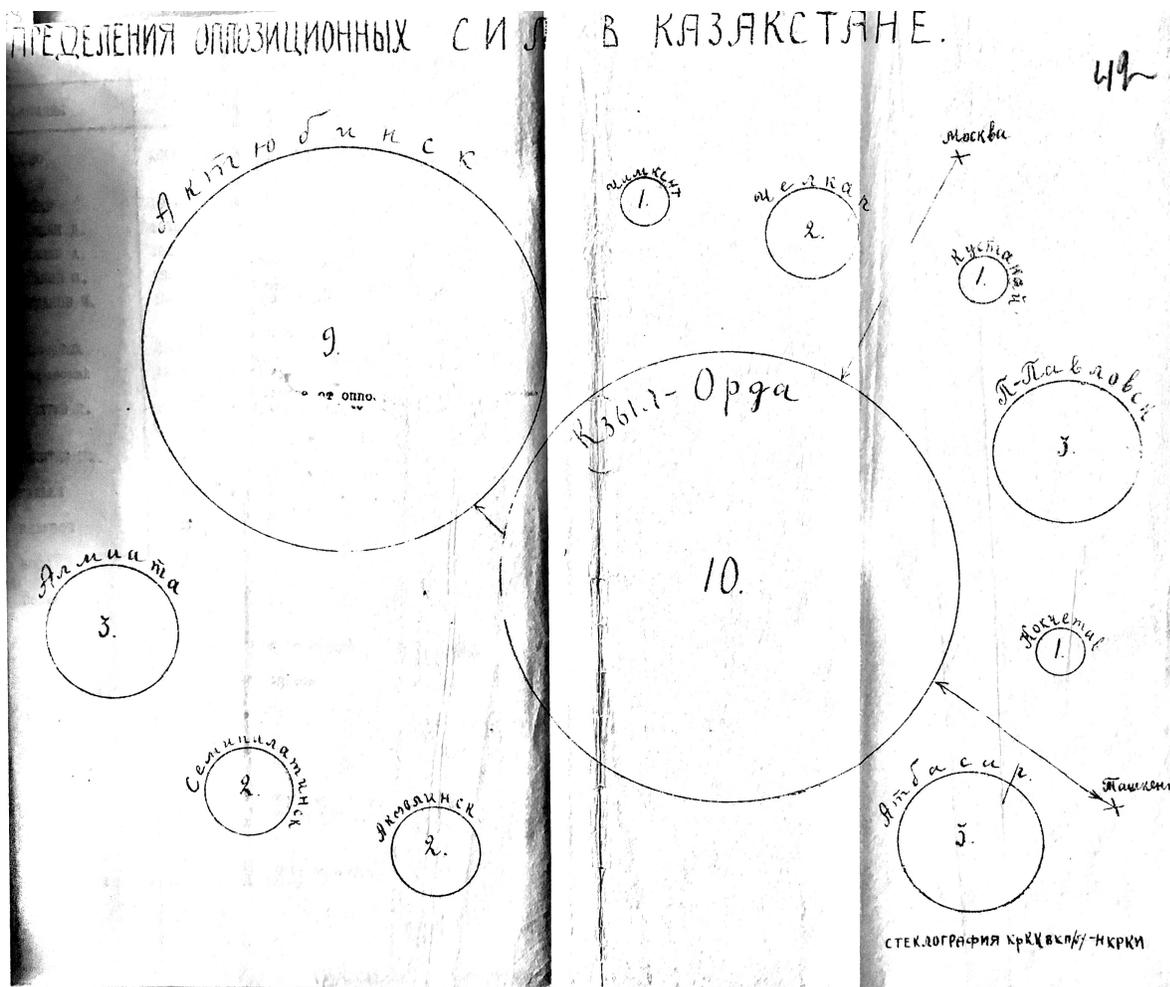


Figure 5: Diagram of the distribution of Trotskyist forces in Kazakhstan (April 1928).<sup>514</sup>

<sup>514</sup> APRK f.719 op.1 d.1049 l.41.

As the republic-level Control Committee explained in 1928, the number of oppositionist cadres in the Kazakhstani Party apparatus was limited. The most active oppositionists were those who had come to Kazakhstan from Leningrad and Moscow. In all, the Control Committee identified 39 oppositionists, all in city-level organs. The “active nucleus” of the opposition in Kazakhstan comprised only 8 Party members, however, most prominently comrades Toivo and Rozner, based in Kzyl Orda.<sup>515</sup> The members of this small oppositionist grouping were isolated, posted in various Kazakhstani cities at great distances from each other. Their contact with Moscow was based on personal meetings and correspondence with Zinov’ev and Safarov, especially on the part of Kzyl Orda-based oppositionists, who also received literature from Moscow. These Kzyl Orda oppositionists also had contacts with Tashkent, attending opposition meetings there during business trips.<sup>516</sup> Thus the Trotskyist opposition was presented as a problem that had in effect been imported into Kazakhstan—most of the oppositionists had become convinced in their anti-Party views before they entered the Kazakhstani Party apparatus.<sup>517</sup> This view was also reflected in the Control Committee’s understanding of Kazakh contact with the Trotskyist opposition.

Those Kazakhs who sympathized with Trotskyism were seen as part of a “homegrown opposition that has completely different roots,” motivated by dissatisfaction with the course of nationalities policy and “inclined towards opposition independent of contacts with the Trotskyist opposition and merely attempting to enter into the general opposition in order to take advantage

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<sup>515</sup> APRK f.719 op.1 d.1049 ll.56-57.

<sup>516</sup> Ibid., ll.59-62.

<sup>517</sup> “O likvidatsii trotskistskoi oppozitsii v KSSR,” *Sovetskaia step*, April 27, 1928.

of difficulties within the Party.”<sup>518</sup> The imported oppositionists attempted to take advantage of pre-existing problems within Kazakhstan’s Party apparatus: “Knowing that some of the nationals were dissatisfied with the Kraikom leadership, the Kzyl Orda group attempted to win over these dissatisfied comrades from among the nationals and beginning in the spring of 1927 began working on them, supplying them with oppositionist literature and ultimately carrying out discussions between Toivo and [Dzhagfar] Sultanbekov about the signing of the opposition platform, on which the latter consulted with Smagul Sadvakasov and [Idris] Mustambaev.”<sup>519</sup>

The Control Committee concluded that this was not a directive from the center, but rather a local initiative grounded in the opportunities provided by personal contact with Kazakh Communists. Tashkent-based oppositionists had no contact with local Communists, Toivo explained. “It turned out that contact in the form of personal friendship existed only between myself and Comrade Sultanbekov, whom I befriended in Aktiubinsk while we were both working in the gubispolkom. Exchanging opinions with the Kzyl Orda oppositionists, we decided to begin our work with the nationals through Sultanbekov. Moreover, it turned out that Krasotkin knew Comrade Sadvokasov, which is why we began with bringing these comrades over to the opposition.” Toivo related that they had very limited success in this regard, however. “The nationals were very negatively disposed towards the tactical methods of the opposition, accusing us of establishing a second party. Consequently our wishes to attract them to the opposition did not yield positive results.” Their contacts were limited to conversation and the passing on of oppositionist literature to Sultanbekov, who returned it upon finishing it.

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<sup>518</sup> APRK f.719 op.1 d.1049 ll.58-59.

<sup>519</sup> Ibid., l.64.

In September of 1927, Toivo received a copy of the opposition platform from Moscow and suggested to Sultanbekov and Sadvokasov that they sign it, but the Kazakhs replied that they would think about it. They ultimately refused, however, because they disagreed with the “principal positions” of the opposition platform. Toivo related to the Control Committee that Sultanbekov was more open to speaking about opposition ideas in the fall of 1927 after returning from Moscow, where he met with Safarov and Muralov and “spoke with them about local issues.”<sup>520</sup> As Deikhman explained to the Control Committee, “It was decided that at the [sixth] Party conference we would speak in coordination with one another, but separately: the nationals on local issues, the oppositionists on general issues.”<sup>521</sup>

Although interethnic tensions within the Party were frequently denounced as a source of major problems for Kazakhstan’s political apparatus, Toivo’s statements to the Control Committee reflect the degree to which interethnic friendships could also be problematic, and the potential dangers of personal ties. “Sultanbekov, knowing that the oppositionist group was disseminating oppositionist literature failed to inform the Party of this fact, allegedly because of his personal friendship with Toivo,” the Control Committee concluded.<sup>522</sup> Indeed, in his interrogation by the Control Committee, Sultanbekov pointed to his personal friendship with oppositionists as the main factor attracting his interest in the opposition, together with his disagreements with Kazakhstan’s Kraikom over the land question.<sup>523</sup> Mustambaev, meanwhile, emphasized Goloshchekin’s “dictatorial” style as the factor pushing him towards the

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<sup>520</sup> APRK f.719 op.1 d.1046 l.45.

<sup>521</sup> APRK f.725 op.2 d.718 ll.59-60.

<sup>522</sup> APRK f.811 op.20 d.648 l.188.

<sup>523</sup> APRK f.719 op.1 d.1049 l.65.

opposition.<sup>524</sup> In both cases, personal considerations were the dominant factor in attracting these Kazakh Party functionaries to Kazakhstan's Trotskyists. The Control Committee concluded that Sadvokasov, Sultanbekov, and Mustambaev's ties to the opposition were a continuation of their previous factionalist activity.<sup>525</sup> As Adeeb Khalid has written, "natives could only be national; political deviation was the job of the Europeans."<sup>526</sup>

Sultanbekov was given a severe reprimand, while Mustambaev was expelled from the Party. Sadvokasov's case, deemed worthy of "the most severe Party punishment," was transferred to the Central Control Committee in Moscow, where Sadvokasov was then studying.<sup>527</sup> The Central Control Committee supported the Kazakh Kraikom position that "the ideological essence of the Sadvokasov group is bourgeois-nationalist influence on the Party, *bai* and Alash Orda ideological influence on the VKP, and that the aggregate of the group's views (Sadvokasov, Mustambaev, Sultanbekov) is directed at disrupting the Kazakhstani Party organization's activities in the area of national land policy, Party leadership, and socialist construction in the national republic." Nevertheless, the Committee found that there were no grounds to the accusation of "factional work" [*fraktsionnaia rabota*] on Sadvokasov's part and concluded that the case should be closed.<sup>528</sup> This is especially revealing with regard to the function of the rhetoric of factionalism, which was employed for the purpose of marginalizing

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<sup>524</sup> APRK f.719 op.1 d.1049 l.65.

<sup>525</sup> APRK f.811 op.20 d.669 l.14.

<sup>526</sup> Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan*, 387.

<sup>527</sup> APRK f.719 op.1 d.1046 l.6.

<sup>528</sup> APRK f.811 op.20 d.669 ll.16-17.

political actors at the republic-level—Sadvokasov had already been pushed out of Kazakhstan, and *Sadvokasovshchina* had no role to play in Moscow.

Factionalism among ethnic Kazakhs and divisions between Kazakhs and Russians remained enduring tropes within Kazakhstan's Party apparatus. Ironically, personal contact with Trotsky was not an accusation levied against Kazakh Communists, even though such meetings did apparently take place. As Trotsky reported to Grigorii Sokolnikov in 1927, "The European Communists carry out the general line of the center. Among them there are no disputes or clashes on grounds of principle; the explanation given for this is their 'indifference.' Among the nationals, on the other hand, things are bubbling. There are various groupings among them."<sup>529</sup> Trotsky recounted a conversation he had had with two Kazakh Communists detailing contentious relations with both the central Soviet authorities and with ethnic Russian Communists within Kazakhstan. "A layer of national Communists has arisen," Trotsky wrote, "but the leaders sent from the center give them no opportunity for advancement. 'They think we haven't grown up yet.' Between the European and the Kazakh Communists there is a wall. They live totally apart. They do not even play chess together."<sup>530</sup> Trotsky's interlocutors also discussed tensions between central and republic-level agendas, especially when the latter were expressed by ethnic Kazakhs. "When we raise the question of Kazakhstan's interests in regard to land and other matters, the answer we get is, 'What are you trying to do, get revenge for the tsarist policies?'"

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<sup>529</sup> Leon Trotsky, "National Aspects of Politics in Kazakhstan," in Naomi Allen and George Saunders, eds., *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1926-1927)* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1980), 211-212.

<sup>530</sup> *Ibid.*, 211

They have little confidence that we, as Communists, are capable of approaching such questions from the viewpoint of the general interests of the state.”<sup>531</sup>

## Conclusion

The discourse of factionalism was not specific to Kazakhstan’s Party apparatus, with discussions of *Kasimovshchina* taking place in Uzbekistan, *Khudaikulovshchina* in Kyrgyzstan, *Petliurovshchina* in Ukraine, and various similar factions in other republics. One of the most widely discussed factions in the late 1920s was *Sultangalievshchina*, named after the prominent Tatar Bolshevik and national leader Mirsaid Khaidargalievich Sultan-Galiev. Although his heterodox views had previously been tolerated, Sultan-Galiev ran into trouble after he attempted to establish an alliance with Trotsky against Stalin at the Twelfth Party Congress in April 1923. Based on letters intercepted by the GPU, Sultan-Galiev was accused of orchestrating a broad anti-Party conspiracy involving both Communists and non-Communists domestically as well as in Persia and Turkey, and on May 4, 1923, he was arrested and expelled from the Party. The following month, a conference was organized in Moscow to discuss the case of Sultan-Galiev, and nationalities policy more broadly.<sup>532</sup>

It was at this conference that the term *Sultangalievshchina* originated as a criticism of Sultan-Galiev’s brand of nationalist deviation; it was only later transferred to Tatarstan. Gary Guadagnolo examines the process by which the concept of *Sultangalievshchina* became divorced from the person of Sultan-Galiev, and argues that as such it became a tool employed by Stalin in

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<sup>531</sup> Trotsky, “National Aspects of Politics in Kazakhstan,” 211.

<sup>532</sup> On the “Sultan-Galiev affair,” see Smith, *The Bolsheviks and the National Question*, 229-239; Ibid., “Nation Building and National Conflict in the USSR in the 1920s,” 236-237; Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 230-231.

establishing his own political hegemony. Sultan-Galiev's arrest and expulsion from the Party in 1923 marked the end of his political career, but not of his presence in political discourse. Although *Sultangalievshchina* faded from political discourse after 1923, the term was revived in 1928 and came to figure prominently as a rhetorical attack. Indeed, the publication of literature on *Sultangalievshchina* tracks the waves of terror against "nationalists" and national Communists implemented in 1928-1930, 1932-1933, and 1937-1938.<sup>533</sup> The use of the language of factionalism in Party discourse demonstrates the degree to which accusations of factionalism—and, indeed, rhetoric concerning individual actors—could function as a tool of management. As Guadagnolo argues, "the power to create a Soviet subject belonged not just to individuals, but to the Party as well."<sup>534</sup>

Indeed, in the case of Kazakhstan, accusations of factionalism persisted even when the alleged factional leader was no longer in the republic, often to the chagrin of the purported ringleader.<sup>535</sup> Indeed, Goloshchekin continued to denounce *Sadvokasovshchina* and *Khodzhanovshchina* even long after Sadvokasov and Khodzhanov had been removed from Kazakhstan. Moreover, the discourse of factionalism also outlasted Goloshchekin's tenure in the republic. In 1933, shortly after Goloshchekin was removed from Kazakhstan and replaced as First Secretary by Levon Mirzoian, Turar Ryskulov wrote to the new head of the Kazakhstani Party apparatus from Moscow to complain about how he was being written about in the republic.

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<sup>533</sup> Guadagnolo, "Who Am I?": Revolutionary Narratives and the Production of the Minority Self in the Early Soviet Era," *Region 2*, no. 1 (2015): 69-93. On the successive terror campaigns, see Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 23.

<sup>534</sup> Guadagnolo, "Who Am I?": Revolutionary Narratives and the Production of the Minority Self in the Early Soviet Era," 71.

<sup>535</sup> See, e.g., APRK f.141 op.1 d.860a l.4.

In October 1933, the Kraikom published a series of theses on the occasion of the thirteenth anniversary of the Kazakh ASSR. Among these, “*Khodzhanovshchina, Sadvokasovshchina, Ryskulovshchina, Mendesheshchina*” were rejected by the Party organization as carriers of alien ideology.” Of these four supposed factional leaders, only Mendeshesh was still in Kazakhstan. Sadvokasov, who would die that same month, Khodzhanov, and Ryskulov were all in Moscow. “I strongly protest against such criticism of me on the part of the Kraikom’s *kul’tprop*,” Ryskulov wrote. Given that the theses were sufficiently clear concerning the importance of Great-Russian chauvinism and local nationalism, he complained, “why was it necessary to enumerate these long-obsolete ‘*shchinas*’?”<sup>536</sup>

In May 1937 Ryskulov again wrote an angry letter to the Kazakhstani leadership complaining that the previous year, Party Secretary L.I. Mirzoian had twice “promised that the criticism of me in the pages of the Kazakhstani press would be stopped,” once in a private conversation with Ryskulov and again in the presence of members of the Council of People’s Commissars at a party in Kliaz’ma marking the tenth anniversary of Ryskulov’s tenure as Deputy Chairman of the RSFSR Council of People’s Commissars. Nevertheless, the criticism—which prominently featured accusations of *Ryskulovshchina*—continued, in “the sharpest and most unacceptable form.”<sup>537</sup> Ryskulov received such accusations as highly personal attacks. “Because of the criticism [*prorabotka*] of me in Kazakhstan I am constantly in a tense state,” he complained. “Every time I pick up a Kazakhstani newspaper or journal, I look for my name,

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<sup>536</sup> “Pis’mo pervomu sekretariu Kazkraikoma VKP(b) L.I. Mirzoianu,” December 1933, in *T.R. Ryskulov: Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh*, 3: 356. Similarly, in Tajikistan, the harmful influence of *Makhsumovshchina* and *Khodzhibaevshchina* continued to be discussed within the Party even after Makhsumov and Khodzibaev were sent to Moscow. See Roberts, “Old Elites Under Communism,” 263-267.

<sup>537</sup> APRK f.141 op.1 d.12843 l.62.

which they are dragging across the pages of those newspapers and journals. Is it possible that I over the course of my work have done something to deserve this kind of harassment from Kazakhstan, where I am from?”<sup>538</sup> Moreover, Ryskulov underlined the seemingly anachronistic nature of these accusations, noting that Uraz Isaev had written in *Bol'shevik Kazakhstana* in 1935—long after Ryskulov himself had relocated to Moscow—that the struggle against *Ryskulovshchina* remained an important task. “What kind of *Ryskulovshchina* can we talk about now?” Ryskulov asked. “Why do we have to fight against Ryskulov now, if he is not guilty of anything.”<sup>539</sup>

Ryskulov framed his complaint in the context of personal political relationships and personal authority. “I was not subjected to this kind of criticism even under Goloshchekin. It seems to me that there is no basis for criticizing me in this fashion. Even more so given the fact that I have the most positive disposition towards the current leadership of Kazakhstan,” he wrote. “Moreover I am, after all, the Deputy Chairman of the SNK of the RSFSR, which is the largest part of the USSR. I was appointed to this position personally by Comrade Stalin, what is the sense in discrediting someone whom the Party placed in such an important position? Whom does this benefit? [...] The Kazakh nation does not have such a great wealth of [Party] workers with significant experience that it can squander the authority of those that it does have.”<sup>540</sup> Ryskulov’s complaint harkens back to the earlier trope of skilled Kazakh cadres as scarce resource, and to the importance of individual authority. But the dynamics of power within the Party had changed, with tragic consequences for Ryskulov and most of his colleagues from the Kazakh Party elite.

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<sup>538</sup> APRK f.141 op.1 d.12843 l.62.

<sup>539</sup> Ibid., l.64.

<sup>540</sup> Ibid., l.62.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### **Alibi Dzhangil'din within and without the Kazakh Party Elite, 1884-1953**

As outlined in Chapter One, one of the major challenges to the establishment of Bolshevik control in Kazakhstan and the development of the republic's political apparatus was the limited nature of the Communist presence in the steppe before the revolution, a factor that had lasting implications across the first decades of Soviet rule. Indeed, there was only one Kazakh Bolshevik whose Party tenure predated 1917. Alibi Dzhangil'din, celebrated as the first Kazakh Communist, joined the Party in Petrograd in 1915. Although he conformed to some of the broader patterns of Kazakh elite formation in terms of geographic origin, social background, and education, crucial aspects of his political trajectory were distinct from those of his Kazakh Party colleagues. The site of his political mobilization was far from the steppe, in Moscow and, further still, in the Near East and the Indian Subcontinent. His pre-revolutionary experiences informed a fundamentally internationalist outlook that set him apart from many of his Kazakh Party colleagues. Although he maintained political appointments into the 1950s, the fact that he had joined the revolution outside of Kazakhstan proved to be a lasting disadvantage—he lacked a constituency within the Kazakhstani Party, which meant that he was a perpetual outsider with a profound sense of political alienation, despite the fact that he was ideologically much more committed to the Bolshevik cause than were many of his colleagues. His career demonstrates the enduring effect of pre-revolutionary political configurations well into the Soviet period, the lasting importance of personal rather than political relationships, and the complicated interplay between nationalism and revolution in Soviet Kazakhstan.

Alibi Dzhangil'din was born in 1884 in Turgai uezd, in what is today western Kazakhstan. He was one of eight children, three sons and five daughters, born into the family of an agricultural laborer from the Middle Horde. First attending a Russian-native school in Turgai, he later studied at the Kazan Teachers' Seminary and the Moscow Theological Academy. After completing a two-year trip across Eurasia and North Africa, he worked as a hydrologist in Simferopol before returning to Turgai to participate in the 1916 Central Asian Uprising. Of all his ethnic Kazakh colleagues in Soviet Kazakhstan, Dzhangil'din had the longest Party experience, becoming a Bolshevik in Petrograd in 1915.

In the aftermath of the February Revolution, Dzhangil'din engaged in political agitation in his native Turgai Oblast as a representative of the Petrograd Soviet. Indeed, he was the only Kazakh sent to Kazakhstan by central Party authorities. In 1917, he became a member of the Turgai Oblast Executive Committee and the region's military commissar. In 1918, he was appointed the Extraordinary Military Commissar of the Kazakh Steppe, and he was an inaugural member of the Kazakh Revolutionary Committee when it was organized in 1919. He later served as Commissar of Social Welfare (1921-1928), Deputy Chairman of the Kazakh Central Executive Committee (1930-1931, 1933-1938), and head of the republic's administration for nature reserves and historical monuments (1938-1941), among other positions in Party and state organs.<sup>541</sup> Within the first generation of ethnic Kazakh Bolsheviks, Dzhangil'din was both typical and distinct. Like his colleagues, he was fluent in Russian, a member of a tiny literate subset of the population educated in Russian-native schools. Dzhangil'din, however, had a distinct relationship to the general Kazakh population and to other Communists, both Kazakh and Russian. Although he believed his position as the first Kazakh Bolshevik and his long

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<sup>541</sup> Zhakupov, *Narkomy Kazakhstana*, 134.

experience within the Party should grant him a privileged position, his lack of constituency within the republic's political apparatus gave Dzhangil'din an enduring sense of political isolation and alienation. Despite the fact that he numbered among Kazakhstan's political elite until his death in 1953, Dzhangil'din remained in many ways an outsider.

Like many of his Kazakh Party colleagues, Dzhangil'din received his initial education at a Russian-native school and then went on to secondary schooling, in his case attending the Teachers' Seminary in Kazan until he was expelled in 1905. But in one aspect of his schooling, Dzhangil'din stood out significantly from his peers. As discussed in Chapter One, Dzhangil'din converted to Orthodoxy while he was attending school and was given the Christian name Nikolai Vladimirovich Stepnov. His patronymic came from his godfather, the archbishop of Orenburg-Turgai, Vladimir, who later had the boy installed in the household of the Orenburg-Turgai Governor, Iakov Fedorovich Barabash, as a companion for the governor's son, Iakov Iakovlevich.

Conversion to Orthodoxy was very uncommon among the Kazakhs, and among Central Asians more broadly. In the last years of the nineteenth century, only some 50 Kazakhs annually were baptized in Omsk Diocese.<sup>542</sup> According to one estimate, only 1,544 Central Asians converted to Christianity during the entire period of Imperial Russian rule in the region.<sup>543</sup> Despite official pronouncements concerning the desirability of conversion, Orthodox missionary activity among the Kazakhs was at most half-hearted and generally unsuccessful. Yuriy Malikov

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<sup>542</sup> Robert P. Geraci, "Going Abroad or Going to Russia? Orthodox Missionaries in the Kazakh Steppe, 1881-1917," in Robert P. Geraci and Michael Khodarkovsy, eds., *Of Religion and Empire: Missions, Conversion, and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 291.

<sup>543</sup> Malikov, "Disadvantaged Neophytes of the Privileged Religion: Why Qazaqs Did Not Become Christians," in *Islam, Society and States across the Qazaq Steppe (15<sup>th</sup> – Early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries)*, 184.

argues that “conversion to Christianity was tantamount to starting their lives from scratch in an environment where their pre-Christian knowledge and skills were useless,” while also severing tribal ties and rendering a return to the nomadic lifestyle impossible, which made conversion to Christianity “a very rare exception.”<sup>544</sup>

Malikov argues that, as a direct result of Russian policies, the benefits of conversion did not outweigh the economic and social costs, and that conversion was successful only when it was the final step in Russification for those who were already integrated into Russian society. Indeed, most Kazakh converts came from among poor, semi-settled populations or men and boys who had been living with Russians since childhood.<sup>545</sup> But Dzhangil’din’s conversion is better understood as a targeted means for advancement in the context of a patronage relationship. A similar case is that of Petr Badmaev, a Buriat who became prominent as a “Tibetan Doctor” in St Petersburg and an “empire-builder” in the Russian Far East in the last decades of the tsarist empire.<sup>546</sup> In the early 1860s, Badmaev, who was born Zhamsaran, studied at the Irkutsk *gimnaziia* as a recipient of a scholarship from the tsar. After he graduated, he moved to St Petersburg, where he studied at the university’s Oriental Department. In Petersburg he converted to Orthodoxy and took the name Petr Alexandrovich, taking his patronymic from his godfather—the future Alexander III. David McDonald argues that it “seems plausible that the education and conversion of a Buriat from farthest Siberia exemplified to Alexander a model for the civilization

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<sup>544</sup> Malikov, “Disadvantaged Neophytes of the Privileged Religion: Why Qazaqs Did Not Become Christians,” 181-182.

<sup>545</sup> Geraci, “Going Abroad or Going to Russia? Orthodox Missionaries in the Kazakh Steppe, 1881-1917,” 289-291.

<sup>546</sup> David McDonald, “Petr Badmaev,” in *Russia’s People of Empire*, ed. Stephen M. Norris and Willard Sunderland (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 199-209.

of the empire's non-Christian *inorodtsy*.”<sup>547</sup> This selected youth could serve as an emblem of Russia's “civilizing mission.” Like Dzhangil'din, Badmaev married a Russian woman. Unlike Dzhangil'din, he seems to have been more attached to Orthodoxy. He opened a school for promising Buriat children in St Petersburg, but this project was disrupted by tensions with parents because of his emphasis on Orthodoxy and attempts to baptize students without the consent of their families.<sup>548</sup> Dzhangil'din's patron was not nearly as prominent, but his conversion can be understood as part of a similar patronage relationship.

After Dzhangil'din was expelled from the teachers' seminary in Kazan, he went to Moscow to study at the Moscow Theological Academy through the support of his connections in the Russian Orthodox Church.<sup>549</sup> Regardless of the reasons behind his departure from Kazan, Dzhangil'din's education was permanently disrupted when he was expelled from the Moscow Theological Academy, and he found himself with no means of support in the city. It is interesting to note that, although he describes his Moscow milieu as primarily Russian, Dzhangil'din was not completely disconnected from Kazakh networks. “I knew about the lawyer Plevako,” he explains in his memoir, referring to a Moscow attorney and renowned orator who was the illegitimate son of a Polish nobleman and a Kazakh woman. “I knew from the stories of other Kazakhs that he helped our people.” After his expulsion from the Moscow Theological

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<sup>547</sup> David McDonald, “Petr Badmaev,” in *Russia's People of Empire*, 200.

<sup>548</sup> Martin Saxer, “Journeys with Tibetan Medicine: How Tibetan Medicine Came to the West. The Story of the Badmayev Family” (M.A. Thesis, University of Zurich, 2004), 25-26, 31; McDonald, “Petr Badmaev,” in *Russia's People of Empire*, 203.

<sup>549</sup> See Chapter One.

Academy, Dzhangil'din turned to Plevako's son, who worked in Moscow as the editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Utro Rossii*, and got a job soliciting advertisements for the paper.<sup>550</sup>

Dzhangil'din related that after his involvement with student groups drew police attention, he decided to leave Moscow and, unenthusiastic about returning home to the steppe, decided to embark on a round-the-world trip. Although he did not end up circumnavigating the globe, Dzhangil'din spent more than two years travelling, primarily on foot, through Europe and North Africa, across the Middle East, India, and China to Japan, and then back to Moscow via the Russian Far East, walking for more than 12,000 kilometers. Initially he was joined by three travel companions, all Russians, one from Samara, one from St Petersburg, and one from Moscow, whom he recruited through a newspaper advertisement. The men departed from Moscow in June 1910, travelling first to St Petersburg and then to Poland. "I had strong sports shoes, a short jacket, a felt Caucasian hat, a travel bag on my back, 25 rubles in my pocket, and a camera," Dzhangil'din remembered.<sup>551</sup> Dzhangil'din related that he and his companions supported themselves by selling postcards with Dzhangil'din's likeness and giving lectures. They parted ways after they left the Russian Empire's Western borderlands—Dzhangil'din continued south, while the Russians remained in Europe.<sup>552</sup>

Recounting his trip almost 40 years later, Dzhangil'din conveyed a mixed sense of identity that was grounded in both the Kazakh Steppe and the Russian Empire. Dzhangil'din noted that, throughout his European travels, people were struck by the fact that a Kazakh, a member of a backwards nationality, was undertaking such a trip. In Budapest he conversed with

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<sup>550</sup> Dzhangil'din, "Moi Put',"15.

<sup>551</sup> *Ibid.*, 17, 19.

<sup>552</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

scholars who had conducted ethnographic studies in the Kazakh Steppe, while in Bulgaria he was warmly received as a “representative of an oppressed nation.”<sup>553</sup> He discussed the history of the Kazakh people and the etymology of their ethnonym with European scholars.<sup>554</sup> In his later telling, Dzhangil’din did not identify solely as a Kazakh, however, exhibiting more nostalgia for Russia proper than for the steppe. When he was struck by homesickness in Egypt, he sought solace at a Russian sanatorium, which, he had heard, was located some 40 kilometers from the pyramids. “They started asking me about Russia, especially about Moscow and St. Petersburg,” Dzhangil’din recalled of the sanatorium’s Russian staff. “It seemed to me that I was home. Six or seven days I lived with them.... After my long journey, I felt renewed.”<sup>555</sup> Although Dzhangil’din noted that his knowledge of a Turkic language proved useful, he writes that it was Russian that really opened doors. In Baghdad, he met with the governor-general, Imam Shamil’s son Muhammad, thanks to his knowledge of Russian. “Learning that I was undertaking an around-the-world trip and hearing the Russian language, known to him from childhood, he gave me a luxurious oriental welcome,” Dzhangil’din recounted. “He asked me all about Russia and spoke about the weight of homesickness, but at the same time he did not hide his deep hatred for the tsarist government.”<sup>556</sup>

While Dzhangil’din was a product of the Russian Empire, it was his travels outside of Russia that spurred him further towards revolutionary activity. In his memoirs, he remembers his time in the Near East as especially important in informing his class-oriented worldview. “This

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<sup>553</sup> Dzhangil’din, “Moi Put’,” 18, 20.

<sup>554</sup> APRK f.811 op.6 d.176 l.7.

<sup>555</sup> Dzhangil’din, “Moi Put’,” 21-22.

<sup>556</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

bright and colorful endless chain of unforgettable experiences—against the riches and luxury of the East the oppression and misery of the masses is especially striking,” he recounted. “In Egypt and Palestine—the British, in Syria—the French, in Turkey—the Germans. I involuntarily recalled my distant native steppe. The methods of occupation and enslavement of the people were the same in the West as they were at home.”<sup>557</sup>

Although it may seem like an improbable journey, Dzhangil’din’s trip was thoroughly documented in a book he kept throughout his travels, with stamps from Russian, British, and American consulates from Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia. His narrations of the journey varied somewhat throughout the years, in some instances incorporating a supposed meeting with Lenin in Switzerland, but his travels remained an important element of Dzhangil’din’s political identity regardless of how they might have been received in the political climate of a given moment (the fact that his international travels make up the bulk of his 1947 memoir is telling). After Dzhangil’din’s death, M.L. Strakhovenko-Fabrikant wrote down his recollections of working with him in Orenburg in the early 1920s, noting that he especially liked hearing stories of Dzhangil’din’s extensive travels before the revolution. “Capitalism everywhere is disgusting, and colonialism is even worse,” he remembered Dzhangil’din saying.<sup>558</sup> That this recollection is typical of those who worked with Dzhangil’din across various periods suggests that his international experience remained a key aspect of how he understood himself as a revolutionary and as a political actor.

Dzhangil’din described his observations in Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East as inspiring him to engage in political agitation on a new scale. Upon his return to the Russian

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<sup>557</sup> Dzhangil’din, “Moi Put’,” 21.

<sup>558</sup> APRK f.811 op.6 d.195 l.6.

Empire, Dzhangil'din headed to Turgai oblast equipped with a Pathé film projector and 40 reels of film demonstrating the plight of dockworkers in Spain, India, and China. He showed these in improvised movie theaters throughout the oblast, using bedsheets as screens. "This was a huge novelty. People had no idea about movies. Hundreds of people would gather in the room. Old people, women with children, and young people all came. I would tell them about the mechanism of the projector, about the countries to which I had travelled, the culture of Europe, the East, about national customs," Dzhangil'din recalled. "Showing how Indian, Chinese, and Spanish laborers worked, I would also tell them that in our country relations with workers were worse and more exploitative: they pay kopeks but earn rubles."<sup>559</sup> Dzhangil'din claimed that he spent a month and a half screening these films around Turgai Oblast before he attracted police attention and had to flee arrest, relocating to Crimea.<sup>560</sup> Even before he joined the Bolsheviks, Dzhangil'din was essentially a freelance promoter of class-consciousness and internationalism.

Internationalism was also a key aspect of Dzhangil'din's revolutionary experience. In late 1917, Dzhangil'din was appointed by Lenin as Extraordinary Military Commissar of Turgai Oblast, replacing Bukeikhanov, the Provisional Government's appointee and Alash Orda leader. In January 1918, Dzhangil'din participated in the taking of Orenburg from Ataman Dutov, and on March 21, at the Turgai Congress of Soviets, he was elected as the Chairman of the Oblast Executive Committee. When Orenburg was retaken by Dutov shortly thereafter, Dzhangil'din narrowly escaped capture. He spent late spring 1918 in Moscow, overseeing preparations for an expeditionary force to bring supplies to Orenburg, ultimately assembled outside of Saratov at the end of July. Their task was to transport supplies including weapons, uniforms, medication,

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<sup>559</sup> Dzhangil'din, "Moi Put'," 29.

<sup>560</sup> *Ibid.*, 29-32.

typographical ink, political materials, and a sum of 68 million rubles, 30 million of which was designated for Turgai Oblast with the remaining 38 million earmarked for Turkestan.<sup>561</sup> The expedition's participants, recruited in Moscow and Turgai, included Russians, Ukrainians, and Kazakhs, but also Serbs, Croats, Slovenians, Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks, and Poles who had found themselves in the Russian Empire as prisoners of war.<sup>562</sup> After they assisted in quelling an anti-revolutionary uprising in Astrakhan', Dzhangil'din and his forces sailed to Fort-Aleksandrovsk and then made their way across the deserts of the Mangystau peninsula to Chelkar, a station on the Tashkent railroad, where they were met by representatives from the Orenburg front.<sup>563</sup> The expedition was credited with reestablishing direct contact between the Bolsheviks' central authorities and Turkestan and became one of the most celebrated episodes of the civil war in Kazakhstan.

In 1920, already recognized as a civil war hero, Dzhangil'din married Elena Afanas'evna Drobiazgina, a young Russian woman from Moscow whom he met through his political activities. In December 1919, at the age of 18, Elena was one of a group of girls recruited to work at the 7<sup>th</sup> All-Russian Congress of Soviets. She was in charge of registering delegates whose last names began with G and D, and she vaguely noted that this commissar with a strange name was some kind of important person in far off Kirgiziia. "It was clear that he liked me. He especially liked my braids. He said that their girls have the same kind of braids. He spoke with

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<sup>561</sup> Ivan D. Ochak, *Internatsional'nyi otriad: K istorii ekspeditsii A. Dzhangil'dina* (Alma-Ata: Kazakhstan, 1974), 18-19.

<sup>562</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-30.

<sup>563</sup> *Ibid.*, 33-34, 36, 55.

an accent, but in Russian,” she later remembered.<sup>564</sup> Over the course of the conference, Dzhangil’din spoke with her during his free time and gave her his rations to take home to her mother and brother. When Dzhangil’din was returning to Moscow for the 9<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in March 1920, he happened to share a train compartment with the daughter of Elena’s neighbors and, having thus discovered her address, he started visiting every day without invitation, and then began asking Elena’s widowed mother for her daughter’s hand. At the end of July, Elena agreed to move to Orenburg to work for Kirrevkom, leaving Moscow in August with her mother and brother.<sup>565</sup> At the beginning of September she was officially appointed Dzhangil’din’s personal secretary, and he would pass the evenings at her family apartment, sometimes with some of his Red Army comrades, discussing the origins of the Kazakhs and his familial connections to Kazakh history.

On September 11, Dzhangil’din arrived at the Drobiazgin apartment and, instructing Elena to take her documents, said they had business to attend to:

We went down Soviet Street, not at all in the direction of Kirrevkom. But I thought that he must know better. The cab driver stopped at a large building with a sign that read “SOVDEP” and something else marked in smaller letters below. We entered the lobby, and Aleke<sup>566</sup> whispered that I should wait for him, he even gave me a chair. I stayed in the anteroom, and he entered through a door that said “Department Head.” Twenty or 30 minutes passed. I grew tired of waiting. Suddenly the door opened and A.D. came out, followed by an old man in glasses; he looked at me attentively, as if evaluating me, and then he shook my hand and said ‘I’m very happy for you, congratulations.’ How horrible... he seemed to be congratulating me on a legal marriage. And Aleke coolly handed me back my documents, took me by the arm and affectionately said, “well, my obstinate wifey, let’s go home.”<sup>567</sup>

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<sup>564</sup> APRK f.811 op.6 d.176 l.4.

<sup>565</sup> APRK f.811 op.6 d.176 l.4-5.

<sup>566</sup> A respectful and affectionate Kazakh derivation of Alibi.

<sup>567</sup> Dzhangil’din, *Alibi Dzhangil’din: Dokumenty i materialy*, 182-183.

In effect, Dzhangil'din had carried out what could be termed a Soviet adaptation of the Kazakh tradition of bridenapping. "I sobbed like a lunatic," Elena recounted, but ultimately she reconciled herself to her new status as the wife of a Kazakh revolutionary. "At first I was shy of him, the marriage was not to my liking. But later, when I had been with him everywhere, had seen his bravery and courage, I 'like Desdemona fell in love with Othello.' He loved me very much."<sup>568</sup>

In her memoirs, Elena describes a cultured household with a Kazakh twist. "Aleke always strove to enrich his knowledge," Elena remembered. "We organized literary evenings at home. On these occasions I recited Pushkin, Gor'kii, and other classics, but my husband especially liked reading Korolenko. There were very few books at that time, publishing was limited; and every time we received a book it brought us great joy. Once by chance I was able to buy the journal *Niva* from 1914 at a used bookstore. We read this journal with great pleasure, but Aleke especially liked it when I read to him out loud."<sup>569</sup>

"My husband liked to sing. He had a weak but pleasant voice. He played the dombra, but everyone was especially happy when he played the lezginka with two fingers on the piano, and with a shout everyone in the house began to dance the lezginka," Elena wrote.<sup>570</sup> "He sang predominantly Kazakh songs, and he taught me to sing the songs of the Kazakh people. His favorite song was 'Slavnoe more, sviashchennyi Baikal.' He would sing this song as a duet with

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<sup>568</sup> APRK f.811 op.6 d.176 l.5.

<sup>569</sup> *Ibid.*, l.22.

<sup>570</sup> APRK f.811 op.6 d.252 l.12.

my mother,” Elena recalled.<sup>571</sup> “Aleke loved the sound of the dombra and he played it wonderfully. We sang songs and I learned to sing ‘Qara-turgai’ and other songs, but now after 30 years I have forgotten everything.”<sup>572</sup> Indeed, Dzhangil’din’s dombra was sent as part of Kazakhstan’s exhibition to the 1923 All-Russian Agricultural Exhibition.<sup>573</sup> Despite the personal animosity between the two men, Akhmet Baitursynov’s songs were among those Dzhangil’din sang at home.<sup>574</sup>

Their first son, who died in infancy, was named Enver, after Enver Pasha, whom Dzhangil’din had met as Kazakhstan’s representative at the Congress of the Peoples of the East in Baku.<sup>575</sup> Their second son was given a common Turkic name, Tamerlan. “In May 1925 our third son, Tangirbergen, was born. We had some trouble because of his name,” Elena recalled:

His enemies wanted to discredit Aleke in any way possible and during the Party purge (the head of the committee was comrade Bogdanov) they accused Aleke of giving his son a religious name (Tangirbergen means given by God). I was there during the purge, and everyone in attendance had the right to speak. After this accusation was made against Aleke, I requested to speak and I said that I did not attach any religious significance to the name, that I had named my son Tangirbergen in honor of his warrior grandfather, Tangirbergen Dzhangil’dy. And if the committee permitted it, I would change my son’s name, and the chairman of the committee Bogdanov would change his last name (the translation of my son’s name is Bogdan, and the chairman of the committee was called Bogdanov). The

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<sup>571</sup> APRK f.811 op.6 d.252 l.12.

<sup>572</sup> APRK f.811 op.6 d.176 l.22.

<sup>573</sup> TsGARK f.1023 op.1 d.4 l.71.

<sup>574</sup> K.B. Baiqadamova, “Tarikhi tülghalar,” in *Baiqadamovtar äuleti: Derekti khikayat*, ed. K.B. Baiqadamova (Almaty: Bilim, 2009), 148.

<sup>575</sup> Ch. A. Dzhangil’din, “O nashei sem’e,” in *Alibi Dzhangil’din: Dokumenty i materialy*, ed. Ch.A. Dzhangil’din, 202.

whole room clapped, and all the Kazakhs in attendance were very pleased by my resourcefulness.<sup>576</sup>

While scholars have argued that intermarriage with Russian women was perceived as a Russifying and therefore “civilizing” force for Central Asian men in the early Soviet period, in this case it seemed to have an opposite effect, with Elena adopting elements of Kazakh culture. Already during the civil war she learned to eat with her hands, developing a taste for lamb ears and brains, as well as the Kazakh horse sausage qazy.<sup>577</sup> “I very much loved my Aleke’s nation and I wanted to learn the language of the Kazakhs. They say that I learned to speak Kazakh pretty well. When I was already married, I studied reading and writing, even in ‘Arabic,’ with Akhmet Baitursynovich Baitrsynov in Orenburg, but now I have forgotten everything. And I was Baitursynov’s best student. Now I remember only individual words and phrases,” she recalled in 1957.<sup>578</sup> Because she wanted her children to speak Kazakh, the family took in an orphan girl from an *aul* outside of Kzyl Orda.<sup>579</sup> In her memoirs and later writings, Elena refers to herself as Dzhangil’din’s *zhengei*, or bride, and *baibishe*, or elder wife. In a text written in 1960 for the 40<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>576</sup> APRK f.811 op.6 d.176 ll.26-27.

<sup>577</sup> APRK f.811 op.6 d.176 l.21; Dzhangil’din, ed., *Alibi Dzhangil’din: Dokumenty i materialy*, 186-187. On interethnic marriage in the Soviet Union, see Adrienne Edgar and Saule Ualiyeva, “The ‘Laboratory of Peoples’ Friendship’: People of Mixed Descent in Kazakhstan from the Soviet Era to the Present,” in *Global Mixed Race*, ed. Miri Song et al. (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 68-90 and Adrienne Edgar, “Marriage, Modernity and the ‘Friendship of Nations’: Interethnic Intimacy in Postwar Soviet Central Asia in Comparative Perspective,” *Central Asian Survey* 26, no. 4 (2007): 581-600.

<sup>578</sup> APRK f.811 op.6 d.176 l.23.

<sup>579</sup> *Ibid.*, l.29.

anniversary of the Kazakh republic, Elena explicitly numbers herself among the “Kazakh nation.”<sup>580</sup>

In the summer of 1931, some unspecified “unpleasantness” spurred Elena to move to Moscow with her mother and her children. Dzhangil’din travelled to Moscow in the winter of 1932 to be treated for appendicitis, and Ryskulov told him where his family was living. Elena reconciled with her husband and returned to Alma-Ata, but left again for Moscow in 1935, moving back to Alma-Ata only after Dzhangil’din’s death.<sup>581</sup> Nevertheless, Dzhangil’din continued providing Elena with financial and other support, and they continued to exchange holiday greetings.<sup>582</sup>

Dzhangil’din was an ardent internationalist not only in his personal life. “In terms of his general political orientation, Comrade Dzhangil’din was a true internationalist, ably defending his views against manifestations of nationalist chauvinism, on the part of both Kazakh and Russian Party workers,” V.A. Ratus-Zenkovich recalled in 1957.<sup>583</sup> From the very beginning of Soviet power in the Kazakh steppe, Dzhangil’din argued for the establishment of general Soviet organs uniting all of the region’s nationalities. The Kazakhs should be united “not as a nation, pursuing its special interests, but as an international union of all the laboring classes of the [Kazakh] Steppe,” he wrote to Lenin in 1918.<sup>584</sup> A nationally-determined military commissariat,

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<sup>580</sup> TsGARK f.269 op.3 d.79.

<sup>581</sup> APRK f.811 op.6 d.176 ll.32-33.

<sup>582</sup> See, e.g., APRK f.811 op.6 d.247 l.51; d.252 l.2.

<sup>583</sup> APRK f.811 op.6 d.252 l.1.

<sup>584</sup> “Pis’mo chrezvychainogo komissara SNK RSFSR i voenkoma Stepnogo kraia A.T. Dzhangil’dina V.I. Leninu o politike v Stepnom krae,” in *Rossii i Tsentral’naia Aziia, 1905-1925 gg.: Sbornik dokumentov*, 126.

he argued in 1919, would be in line with the interests of the Kazakh “upper classes,” but not with those of Kazakh and Russian proletarians in the region.<sup>585</sup> In 1922, Dzhangil’din recommended that local Party officials should be selected from among the “best, tested, ideological Communists,” regardless of whether they were Russian or Kazakh. Additionally, he advocated that Party officials be rotated geographically at regular regardless of origin.<sup>586</sup>

Ironically, Dzhangil’din’s class-oriented, internationalist view was a source of great frustration for him in the early years of Bolshevik rule, when questions of nationalities policy were at the forefront of Party thought. The process of establishing Soviet power in Kazakhstan, with which Dzhangil’din was intimately involved, was highly contentious. Indeed, on at least one occasion, a meeting of the Revolutionary Committee responsible for administering Kazakh territories in the early days of Soviet rule literally came to blows.<sup>587</sup> One typical report from Petropavlovsk details the internal strife within the local Party organization, recounting mutual accusations of drunkenness and “autocratic” management.<sup>588</sup> In many cases, animosities were expressed in explicitly ethnic terms. For instance, in 1920 Kazakh officials from the village of Chelkar complained about the “lack of trust” towards them exhibited by ethnic Russian Party functionaries.<sup>589</sup>

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<sup>585</sup> “Doklad chrezvychainogo komissara Stepnogo Kirgizskogo kraia i voenkoma Turgaiskoi gubernii A.T. Dzhangil’dina v TsK RKP(b) ob izmenenii polozheniia o Kirgizskom voenkomate, utverzhdenom 3 apreliia 1919 g.,” in *Rossiiia i Tsentral’naia Aziia, 1905-1925 gg.: Sbornik dokumentov*, 158-161.

<sup>586</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.498 l.90.

<sup>587</sup> TsGARK f.14 op.3 d.19 l.21, 31.

<sup>588</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.29 l.1-4.

<sup>589</sup> TsGARK f.14 op.3 d.28 l.29-30.

Although there were divisions between Kazakh and “European” Bolsheviks, Kazakh Communists did not form a unified and uniform faction within the Party. Indeed, factionalism among the Kazakhs was a salient issue for central Party authorities. In 1919, the chairman of the Kazakh Revolutionary Committee S.S. Pestkovskii reported to Lenin on the problems posed by intra-Kazakh divisions within the Party. In Pestkovskii’s estimation, one grouping centered around the self-interested and ostensibly nationalist Mukhamed’iar Tunganchin and Akhmet Baitursynov, concerned primarily with securing their own influence. Another formed around Dzhangil’din and Bakhytzhan Karataev, a former Kadet who joined the Party in 1919. “They are both political careerists, but they have bound their careers to the establishment of Soviet power, while Tunganchin and Baitursynov can always go over to the side of the White Guards,” Pestkovskii wrote.<sup>590</sup> The third faction centered around Seitgali Mendeshev (In Pestkovskii’s estimation, “a personally honest man, but not very intelligent and poorly versed in this challenging environment... A true supporter of Soviet power”).<sup>591</sup> As discussed in Chapter Four, factionalism among ethnic Kazakhs remained an enduring concern for Kazakhstan’s Party apparatus.

For Dzhangil’din, one of the greatest sources of frustration was the Party’s pragmatic accommodation of the pre-revolutionary Kazakh intelligentsia. As outlined in Chapter Three, some prominent Alash figures cooperated closely with the Party in the 1920s, even though they had led armed resistance to the establishment of Bolshevik rule. This political conversion was pragmatically motivated for both sides. Alash Orda’s intellectuals supplied the invaluable local

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<sup>590</sup> “Doklad predsedatelia KirVRK S.S. Pestkovskogo v TsK RKP(b) V.I. Leninu o vzaimootnosheniakh s natsional’noi intelligentsiei,” in *Rossiiia i Tsentral’naia Aziia, 1905-1925 gg.: Sbornik dokumentov*, 181.

<sup>591</sup> *Ibid.*

knowledge which Bolshevik leaders lacked. Because the Bolsheviks' nationalities policy of the 1920s was centered on the delineation and differentiation of nations and languages, their interests partly coincided with those of nationalist movements such as Alash. Moreover, the unparalleled expertise of the Alash intellectuals meant that they continued to be heavily engaged in shaping the contours of the Kazakh nation, both politically and intellectually, something they had been acutely concerned with before the revolution. Although they were alternately embraced and mistrusted, and ultimately purged, members of the Alash intelligentsia were able to continue their political activity, pursuing many of the goals they had laid out before the revolution, in the early years of Soviet rule.

While the attitudes of ethnic Russian Party officials towards former Alash Orda functionaries fluctuated, Dzhangil'din was consistently antagonistic towards members of the defunct Kazakh nationalist party. Some of this may have been a question of personal animosity fueled by the chaotic years of the civil war. Indeed, Dzhangil'din's political differences with Alash Orda's leadership predated the revolution. Dzhangil'din was actively involved in the 1916 Central Asian Revolt, while Alash leaders such as Alikhan Bukeikhanov and Akhmet Baitursynov supported conscription, believing that it would lead to greater integration of Kazakhs into Russian imperial society. With the advent of the revolution, their disputes became increasingly concrete. In March 1917, Bukeikhanov had Dzhangil'din arrested in Turgai, leaving him to spend two months in prison.<sup>592</sup> In December of that year, Dzhangil'din was appointed by the Bolsheviks as Commissar of Turgai Oblast, replacing Bukeikhanov.<sup>593</sup> When the Bolsheviks

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<sup>592</sup> Dzhangil'din, "Moi Put'," 48.

<sup>593</sup> "Udostverenie," 14 December 1917, in *Alibi Dzhangil'din: Dokumenty i materialy*, ed. T.E. Eleuova and P.M. Pakhmurny (Alma-Ata: Kazakhskoe gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1961), 78-79.

entered Orenburg in March 1918, Dzhangil'din closed down the Alash Orda newspaper *Qazaq*, spurring criticism from Alash-aligned Kazakh intellectuals. "He long ago ceased to be a Kazakh. He has even ceased to be a Muslim because he has renounced Islam and become a Christian. He wandered around using the assumed name Stepnov. After the revolution, he appeared in the steppe, announced that he had once again taken up Islam and is now propagating Bolshevik views," another Alash Orda publication, the Semipalatinsk-based *Sary arka*, reported.<sup>594</sup> Amangeldy Imanov, Dzhandil'din's childhood friend and revolutionary co-conspirator, was killed by Alash Orda forces in 1919, something Dzhangil'din never forgot. Indeed, V.A. Radus-Zenkovich, who served as Kazakhstan's Party secretary in 1920-22, wrote of Dzhangil'din's "open hatred" of Bukeikhanov.<sup>595</sup>

In addition to Dzhangil'din's tense personal relations with Alash leaders, it seems that there were social factors at play. Based on a sample of Kazakh intellectuals operating before 1917, Tomohiko Uyama argues that, although Alash included people from various backgrounds, its opponents were largely from outside of the Arghyn tribe, which dominated the Alash leadership, and of which Dzhangil'din was not a member.<sup>596</sup> A 1923 report submitted to Kazakhstan's highest Party and state authorities outlines enduring animosity between the Arghyn and Dzhangil'din's Kipchak tribe as a source of continuing tensions in Turgai.<sup>597</sup> As discussed in Chapter One and Chapter Four, clan structures are a problematic category of analysis when dealing with Soviet sources. Perhaps unsurprisingly, in Dzhangil'din's writings, class is a much

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<sup>594</sup> APRK f.811 op.23 d.193 l.34.

<sup>595</sup> APRK f.811 op.2 d.24 l.191ob.

<sup>596</sup> Uyama, "The Geography of Civilizations," 85.

<sup>597</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.776 l. 9-12.

more salient feature than tribal affiliation. Throughout his memoirs, Dzhangil'din was acutely aware of his background. In the pre-revolutionary period, his education granted him special prestige on his few return visits to his village because, as Dzhangil'din later explained, "literate people were rare among the Kazakhs at that time, and almost all of them came from wealthy backgrounds," not from poor families such as his.<sup>598</sup> In his interactions with central Party authorities, Dzhangil'din presented himself as in touch with the Kazakh masses, unlike his competitors from the national intelligentsia.<sup>599</sup> He repeatedly warned against the dangers of "bourgeois counterrevolutionary elements" infiltrating the Party or influencing young Kazakh Communists.<sup>600</sup>

"Alibi Togzhanovich [Dzhangil'din] hated hypocrites, opportunists, and careerists," a former Party colleague remembered after his death. "'There, look at him,' he said, indicating one of the former Alash Orda members (I think it was Baitursynov). 'Not long ago he was writing that by virtue of their very nature the Kazakhs cannot be Communists, and now he himself is clinging to the Party.'"<sup>601</sup> In the first years of the Kazakh ASSR, Kazakh commissars would meet separately before sessions of the Council of People's Commissars, he recalled. "Dzhangil'din was against such meetings, organized at the initiative of nationalist elements who

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<sup>598</sup> Dzhangil'din, "Moi Put'," 14.

<sup>599</sup> "Doklad chrezvychainogo komissara Stepnogo Kirgizskogo kraia i voenkoma Turgaiskoi gubernii A.T. Dzhangil'dina v TsK RKP(b) ob izmenenii polozheniia o Kirgizskom voenkomate, utverzhdenom 3 apreliia 1919 g.," in *Rossiiia i Tsentral'naia Aziia, 1905-1925 gg.: Sbornik dokumentov*, 158-161.

<sup>600</sup> "Telegramma Narodnomu Komissaru po delam natsional'nostei I.V. Stalinu," February 22, 1918, in *Alibi Dzhangil'din: Dokumenty i Materialy*, ed. T.E. Eleuova and P.M. Pakhmurny, 79-80; APRK f.139 op.1 d.498 l.91.

<sup>601</sup> APRK f.811 op.6 d.195 l.6.

at the time enjoyed some influence on the republic's Soviet apparatus. 'We will soon overcome this,' he said apologetically when leaving for such a meeting, and upon returning he tried to acquaint us with what had happened at the meeting. For their part the Alash Orda people tried to discredit this wonderful son of the Kazakh nation in our eyes, telling all sorts of stories about him, but they did not succeed."<sup>602</sup>

Dzhangil'din described himself as "a Kazakh worker originating from the bottom of society and working not out of fear but out of conscience from the very beginning of the revolution in the avant-garde of the Kazakh proletariat."<sup>603</sup> His status as the first Kazakh Bolshevik did not ensure his political position, however. Indeed, his anti-Alash stance, informed by his class-oriented and internationalist outlook, was a source of serious frustrations for Dzhangil'din, especially in light of the Party's pragmatic accommodation of former Alash Orda leaders in the early 1920s. Dzhangil'din wrote repeated complaints to central Party authorities outlining his objections to developments within Kazakhstan and treatment of him within the Party. Already in 1923, in a letter to Stalin and Molotov, he explained his displeasure with other Kazakh Party leaders and requested that he be reassigned to the Commissariat for International Affairs for work with other Eastern nationalities: "I consider my further presence [in Kazakhstan] not only useless, but criminal, as an old Communist, observing all of the above [abnormalities]."<sup>604</sup>

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<sup>602</sup> APRK f.811 op.6 d.195 l.6.

<sup>603</sup> "Pis'mo A.T. Dzhangil'dina I.V. Stalinu o nesogalsii s pozitsiei rukovodstva KASSR v kardovykh voprosakh i otnoshenii k byvshim deiateliam dvizheniia 'Alash,'" in *Rossiiia i Tsentral'naia Aziiia, 1905-1925 gg.: Sbornik dokumentov*, 415.

<sup>604</sup> APRK f.718 op.1 d.210 l.120ob.

Complaints to central Party authorities became a common trope for Dzhnagil'din, and he addressed numerous letters to Stalin and other Party leaders outlining his displeasure with the situation in Kazakhstan across three decades. In a 1925 letter to Stalin protesting the Kazakhstani Party apparatus's cadre policies, Dzhangil'din complained, "sincere Kazakh Communists [or perhaps one particular Communist], not tainted in anyway by their past, having worked in Soviet institutions and Party organizations from the very beginning of the revolution, are falling under the despotism of the Alash-Orda nationalists, whom they defeated already in 1919, and these old revolutionaries are being thrown overboard as unnecessary elements because of the myopia and unilateralism of the Kraikom."<sup>605</sup> Former Alash Orda members were taking advantage of the situation to engage in nepotism and favoritism, Dzhangil'din claimed. "Proponents of Alash Orda still exploit the poor as they used to. There are many facts confirming that among the Kazakhs, mutual aid societies, cooperatives, credit unions, and other places are led by the sons of bais."<sup>606</sup>

Dzhangil'din consistently described feeling marginalized and disrespected within Kazakhstan's Party leadership, frequently alluding to his status as the first Kazakh Bolshevik, his civil war experience, and his close acquaintance with the realities of Kazakhstan—factors that he felt should have garnered him more respect and authority within the republic. "As you know, 14 years ago, under your leadership, I was the first to raise the banner of the Soviets in Kazakhstan. From that time I have worked in many posts. Perhaps poorly, perhaps well, but my work has resulted in the organization of Soviet power in the various parts of the vast Kazakh steppe," he

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<sup>605</sup> "Pis'mo A.T. Dzhangil'dina I.V. Stalinu o nesoglasii s pozitsiei rukovodstva KASSR v kadrovyykh voprosakh i otnoshenii k byvshim deiateliam dvizheniia 'Alash,'" April 24, 1925, in *Rossiia i Tsentral'naia Aziia, 1905-1925 gg.: Sbornik dokumentov*, 419.

<sup>606</sup> Ibid.

wrote to Stalin in 1931, complaining of a lack of support within the Kazakhstani Party apparatus. “As is my right, I consider myself one of the pioneers of a genuine proletarian movement among the Kazakhs, and I cannot imagine that my active role as an old worker is no longer beneficial to socialist construction. I cannot accept the idea that it is time for old men in Kazakhstan to ‘retire.’ Only as a hint towards that can I understand my comrades’ recent behavior towards me.”<sup>607</sup>

Dzhangil’din was unique among the Kazakh Party elite because of the length of his Party tenure. Although this accorded him a kind of special status, it also isolated him politically. At the All-Union level, pre-revolutionary political experience and military service in the civil war were key elements of elite identity, but Dzhangil’din did not share these experiences with anyone else among the Kazakh Communists. Mawdsley and White have argued that the Soviet Union’s Central Committee elite was characterized by a “cohesion of life experience”—not only were they roughly the same age, they had similar pre-revolutionary backgrounds and shared experiences of the revolution and the civil war. Mawdsley and White argue that this was a defining element of Soviet politics before the Purges, given that “the majority of Central Committee members in the 1920s and 1930s had been active participants of the civil war, working as commissars in the Red Army or organizing the civilian rear.”<sup>608</sup> Similarly, in his analysis of regional elites in the 1920s and ‘30s, Gerald Easter argues that “their claim on elite status was based on their records of service to the party in the underground and the civil war,” supplemented by contributions to state-building in the post-revolutionary period.<sup>609</sup> Easter posits

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<sup>607</sup> APRK f.811 op.6 d.242 l.14.

<sup>608</sup> Mawdsley and White, *The Soviet Elite from Lenin to Gorbachev*, 54, 85.

<sup>609</sup> Easter, *Reconstructing the State*, 48.

that elite Bolsheviks “touted their war records and battle scars from the civil war. Their perception of themselves as a distinctive status group among the postrevolutionary state elite derived mainly from their service in the civil war”<sup>610</sup> For Dzhangil’din, however, his pre-revolutionary Party career served to isolate him within the Kazakhstani Party apparatus.

Despite his pretensions to special status, Party authorities had a generally low estimation of Dzhangil’din as a political actor. A 1920 report to Lenin on the situation in Kazakhstan describes the “convert” Stepnov-Dzhangil’din as a “strange ‘fruit’” [*opredelennoi marki ‘frukt’*].<sup>611</sup> A September 1922 GPU report to Kazakhstan’s Party Control Commission expressed a characteristically mixed view: “He comes from a poor family and as a child converted to Orthodoxy, for which he is resented. In the Party from 1915, fought earnestly against Alash Orda and helped the Red Army in its most difficult moments with a delivery of supplies and ammunition. From early 1918 he was the Extraordinary Commissar of Turgai Oblast, organizer of Red divisions. Credulity and weakness of character is a disadvantage in his revolutionary activity. He enjoys great trust and respect among the workers and peasants.”<sup>612</sup> In September 1923, Kazakhstan’s Party Secretary included qualified praise for Dzhangil’din: “For all his minuses, comrade Dzhangil’din is undoubtedly a faithful Party worker and he enjoys a certain popularity in the regions of Kazakhstan.”<sup>613</sup> For all their preoccupation with intra-Kazakh factionalism, Party authorities did not generally consider Dzhangil’din an important player in these internecine machinations. A March 1924 secret report from the Party Secretary to the

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<sup>610</sup> Easter, *Reconstructing the State*, 48.

<sup>611</sup> APRK f.811 op.20 d.568 l.122.

<sup>612</sup> APRK f.719 op. 1 d.114a l.6.

<sup>613</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.769a l.30ob.

Central Committee limits Dzhangil'din's role in the factional struggle to that of political pawn, positing that Sadvokasov, Toktabaev, and Alibekov wanted to replace Mendeshev as the Chairman of the Central Executive Committee with Dzhangil'din because "they will be able to command behind his back however they like because of his limitations."<sup>614</sup>

Dzhangil'din was nevertheless highly preoccupied with his perceived position within the Party. Indeed, his participation in Party conferences and meetings is notable for his fierce reactions to perceived slights. In 1921, he was tasked by Kazakhstan's Central Executive Committee and Council of People's Commissars to deliver a welcoming address at the oblast Komsomol conference. Offended that he was slated to speak after the representative of the Party organization, Dzhangil'din lodged a protest with the conference presidium and left, leaving them to scramble to find a replacement speaker.<sup>615</sup> At Kazakhstan's Third Party Conference in 1923 he complained that the Party secretary failed to consult him on regional matters.<sup>616</sup> His other remarks at that event were tied to criticism of his leadership of the Red Caravan, a fact-finding expedition that he led through the steppe in 1922. One of his colleagues noted that although Dzhangil'din emphasized the importance of increased attention to work among the poor, he himself always stayed with mullahs and bais during his trip through the steppe, presumably in order to enjoy the material comforts of their hospitality.<sup>617</sup> Dzhangil'din angrily (and somewhat unconvincingly) replied that this was merely a form of exploiting the rich.<sup>618</sup>

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<sup>614</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.820 l.6.

<sup>615</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.9 ll.8-8ob.

<sup>616</sup> APRK f.139 op.1 d.541 l.69.

<sup>617</sup> *Ibid.*, l.164.

<sup>618</sup> *Ibid.*, l.174.

Indeed, Dzhagil'din was very sensitive to perceived slights, and even his medical history reflects his tendency to call on allies, real or imagined, outside of Kazakhstan to combat enemies within the republic's Party apparatus. In 1928, Dzhangil'din was sent to Moscow for treatment of a liver ailment. He had previously been treated at the Kremlin hospital, where he shared a room with M.V. Frunze immediately before the latter's death in 1925. This time around, Dzhangil'din and his wife were shocked that no one from the Kazakh representative office in Moscow met them at the train station, although KazTsIK officials had promised to send word ahead of their arrival. Elena, and presumably her husband, attributed this slight to unnamed enemies within Kazakhstan. Elena got them a room in a hotel and called the Kazakh office, which, after apparently unconvincing apologies, sent a secretary with a voucher for treatment not at the Kremlin hospital, but at the Botkin hospital. Appalled by the conditions she found there, Elena took her husband back to their hotel and headed to M.I. Kalinin's office. "He knew me from Orenburg. I went in not through the official entrance, but through the side door, where the secretary's office was. At that time M.I.'s secretary was Natal'ia Dmitrievna Sveshnikova, our good friend. I got through to her without any difficulty (I was very forward). She immediately went to M.I., spoke with him, M.I. called for me to come in and I explained everything to him. 'Go quickly to the old man, I'll arrange everything,' he said."<sup>619</sup> As Elena later remembered, she hardly had time to return to the hotel before a car arrived for Dzhangil'din from the Kremlin hospital, where he was promptly operated on and received two visits from Kalinin.<sup>620</sup> The

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<sup>619</sup> APRK f.811 op.6 d.176 l.30.

<sup>620</sup> Ibid., l.31.

Dzhangil'dins later hosted Kalinin in their home during both of his trips to Alma-Ata in the mid-1930s.<sup>621</sup>

His sanatorium assignments, too, were perceived by Dzhangil'din as personal slights against him. In 1936, Dzhangil'din was sent for treatment to Karlovy Vary in Czechoslovakia. He hoped to return the following year, but was instead assigned to a domestic sanatorium, prompting a series of angry letters to Stalin and the Central Committee. This was repeated just over a decade later, in 1949. Two years previously, the Central Committee had sent him to a sanatorium in Karlovy Vary, where he was very successfully treated. The doctors there recommended that he take the cure a second time, and the resort committee of Kazakhstan's Council of People's Commissars and officials at the Kremlin polyclinic concurred. "Knowing well the methods of those people who harbor hatred towards me because of my long years of uncompromising struggle against enemies of the Party and their willingness to defame me with every possible slander, I assume that the refusal to send me for treatment to Karlovy Vary is the result of some slander by these people against me. Being firm in my sincere devotion to the general line of the Party and to you, as its general Leader, I ask you, dear Joseph Vissarionovich, to reject the slanderous attacks against me and to give instructions that I be sent for repeat treatment at Karlovy Vary [...]"<sup>622</sup>

Just as he was highly sensitive to anything he perceived as an insult to himself, Dzhangil'din was not at all shy about criticizing his colleagues. During the Terror, Dzhangil'din wrote to the Central Committee and to Stalin personally with a detailed overview of whom he

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<sup>621</sup> APRK f.811 op.6 d.252 l.10.

<sup>622</sup> APRK f.811 op.6 d.242 l.57.

had denounced to Party authorities and when, beginning with 1920.<sup>623</sup> But although he expressed highly negative opinions of many of his Party colleagues, Dzhangil'din is also illustrative of the enduring, multi-generational relationships among the Kazakh elite based on regional connections and personal friendships rather than on politics. Dzhangil'din demonstrates the importance of personal relationships, perhaps informed to some extent by clan ties but more strongly rooted in regionally based cooperation and friendship, among the Kazakh political leadership. Dzhangil'din went out of his way to render assistance to such friends, even when doing so was politically inexpedient, and their families remain intertwined a century later.

One such ally for Dzhangil'din was Asfendiar Kenzhin, a Kazakh from Ural'sk who was active in Turgai during the civil war and who played a key role in bringing the western division of Alash Orda into the Bolshevik fold in 1919. Although he served in a range of prominent positions including Commissar of Education (1921-1922), Commissar of Trade (1924-1928), and Chairman of the Central Economic Council (1929), Kenzhin's political past posed problems for him throughout the 1920s and '30s. Already in 1922, the presidium of the Party's Kazakh Oblast Committee questioned Kenzhin about his revolutionary activities and his ties to Alash Orda. Although others present argued that the matter should be referred to the Party Control Committee, Dzhangil'din disagreed: "Comrade Dzhangil'din says that he does not understand the question. In 1920 and in 1921 Comrade Kenzhin worked in the government, he held responsible positions a member of KirTsIK and was even [KirTsIK Chairman] Mendeshev's deputy, and no one considered him an Alash Ordinst, and only in 1922 am I hearing, says Comrade Dzhangil'din, that Comrade Kenzhin is an Alash Ordinst."<sup>624</sup> The matter was ultimately

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<sup>623</sup> APRK f.811 op.6 d.241 ll.16-19; d.242 ll.15-22.

<sup>624</sup> APRK f.811 op.20 d.567 l.78.

referred to the Central Control Commission in Moscow, which resolved to annul the case.<sup>625</sup> Kenzhin was expelled from the Party in 1933 but was readmitted that same year before being expelled again and arrested in December 1936.<sup>626</sup> Kenzhin's grandson—Dzhangil'din's son Chingiz Alibievich—recalled that when he gained access to his grandfather's NKVD file in the 1990s, “among the denunciations and slander I found only one normal and honest opinion,” that submitted by his Alibi Dzhangil'din.<sup>627</sup>

In a July 30, 1937 report to Stalin on the arrest of members of a supposed “national-fascist organization” in Kazakhstan, the republic's Party secretary L.I. Mirzoian named Kenzhin as one of the major figures in this alleged grouping.<sup>628</sup> After Kenzhin was executed in 1938, his widow, Zhannat Ramazanovna, was sent to the Akmolinsk Camp for Women Traitors to the Motherland, and most of their children found shelter with a paternal uncle in Turkmenistan. Kenzhin's oldest child, Sofia, a daughter from his first marriage, turned to her father's old friend Alibi Dzhangil'din for assistance, and the two were soon married.<sup>629</sup> “In our family, as in many

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<sup>625</sup> APRK f.719 op.1 d.1432.

<sup>626</sup> Zhakupov, *Narkomy Kazakhstana*, 186-187.

<sup>627</sup> Ch.A. Dzhangil'din, “Prigovor istorii: ne vinovny,” *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, March 19, 1997.

<sup>628</sup> “Soobshchenie sekretaria TsK KP(b)K L.I. Mirzoiana I.V. Stalinu o razoblachennykh i arestovannykh deiateliakh ‘natsional-fashistskoi organizatsii,’” in *Politicheskie represii v Kazakhstane v 1937-1938 gg.: Sbornik dokumentov*, ed. I.N. Bukhonova et al. (Almaty: Qazaqstan, 1998), 85-87.

<sup>629</sup> Several visits by Sofia to Dzhangil'din's dacha were reported to the Committee for Party Control after her father's arrest. APRK f.725 op.2 d.887 l.5. This was presumably a common law marriage—in her petition to Kazakhstan's Supreme Soviet for a pension in 1956, Elena Afanas'evna notes that she and Dzhangil'din never divorced. APRK f.811 op.6 d.252 l.2.

other families after the revolution, everything was heavily intertwined: both ‘red’ and ‘white,’” Dzhangil’din’s son later recalled.<sup>630</sup>

Another figure close to Dzhangil’din was Baikadam Karaldin, who worked for the imperial administration in Turgai before the revolution and went on to assist Dzhangil’din in establishing Soviet power in the region as the chairman of the local revolutionary committee. Born in 1877 in Turgai uezd, Karaldin was wealthy and respected, receiving two state awards for his service to the Russian Empire, one in 1905 and one in 1913.<sup>631</sup> Like Dzhangil’din, he was a Kipchak, and the two were distantly related.<sup>632</sup> Karaldin and his wife Urzipa were both educated and multilingual. According to her children’s memoirs, Urzipa was a graduate of the Bestuzhev Courses in St Petersburg and was fluent in both Russian and French.<sup>633</sup> They sent their children to Russian-language schools in Turgai, where they also learned German. “After the revolution our family tried to avoid aristocratic manners, we tried to Kazakhify ourselves,” his daughter Danabike Baikadamova-Karaldina recalled in a letter in 1966.<sup>634</sup>

On the surface, Karaldin seems like a strange ally for a self-proclaimed internationalist revolutionary like Dzhangil’din. Their decades-long cooperation is illustrative of other such relationships across ideological lines, during and after the chaotic years of the civil war. Dzhangil’din’s first wife Elena Afanasev’na relates that Karaldin had helped Dzhangil’din evade

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<sup>630</sup> Dzhangil’din, “O nashei sem’e,” 205.

<sup>631</sup> APRK f.811 op.23 d.211, l.6.

<sup>632</sup> *Ibid.*, l.12.

<sup>633</sup> Baikadam Qaraldin and Ürzipa Tülebaeva, “Alashtyng bīr bozdaghy,” in *Baiqadamovtar äuletī*, 8-9.

<sup>634</sup> TsGARK f. 269 op.3 d.56 l.25.

tsarist authorities before the revolution.<sup>635</sup> During the civil war, the family hosted both White officers and Cheka officials, including Urzipa's brother, Amirali Irzhanov, who with his colleagues helped Karaldin's children study.<sup>636</sup> According to family lore, Urzipa would play preferans with Ataman Dutov while he was in Turgai, and one such card game took place while the family was hiding Dzhangil'din in their basement.<sup>637</sup>

After the establishment of Soviet power, Dzhangil'din reciprocated by providing Karaldin and his family with various forms of assistance. Karaldin was deprived of his voting rights in 1922, but had them restored by the political division of Dzhangil'din's Red Caravan later that year before they were once again taken away.<sup>638</sup> Dzhangil'din gave Karaldin's eldest son a job in 1923.<sup>639</sup> In 1928, Karaldin became a target of the anti-*bai* confiscation campaign. His daughter later remembered the meeting at which he was denounced as deeply disturbing to her father. "Someone said that he was a former [tsarist] official, someone else that he was a revolutionary, someone said that he was a *bai*, another than he was a Soviet *bai*," she recounted.<sup>640</sup> The realities of the 1920s meant that these categories were not mutually exclusive—Karaldin was in fact a former tsarist official and a wealthy man who worked towards the establishment of Soviet power.

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<sup>635</sup> APRK f.811 op.6 d.176 l.9.

<sup>636</sup> TsGARK f.269 op.3 d.56 l.25.

<sup>637</sup> Dzhangil'din, "O nashei sem'e," 206; Baiqadamova, "Tarikhi tülghalar," 145-146.

<sup>638</sup> APRK f.811 op.23 d.211 l.14.

<sup>639</sup> TsGARK f. 269 op.3 d.56 l.26.

<sup>640</sup> *Ibid.*, l.28.

Karaldin went to Kzyl Orda to protest the confiscation and call upon Dzhangil'din's support. According to his daughter, his cause was thwarted by personal enmity between Dzhangil'din and Party secretary F.I. Goloshchekin. Karaldin set out for Moscow, but was arrested at Cheliabinsk and sentenced to five years in prison as a bai.<sup>641</sup> He was executed in May 1930. With their property confiscated, Karaldin's wife and children turned to a complex network of friends and relatives to ensure their survival, obtaining help from Dzhangil'din on more than one occasion.<sup>642</sup> In 1933 the family moved to Alma-Ata, where again they were assisted by Dzhangil'din. That same year Danabike began working for Kazakhstan's Council of People's Commissars, where she was selected to fill out passport forms because of her nice handwriting. "Without giving it much thought, I wrote out passports for myself, my brother, and my mother without the required documents. Without passports we would have had to leave the city and I would be left jobless, what could I do, I found a solution!" When it became apparent that three passport forms were missing and that Danabike had taken them, she turned to Dzhangil'din for assistance and the matter was dropped following his intervention.<sup>643</sup> These were apparently not the only instances of Dzhangil'din rendering help to the families of those who had found themselves in political trouble. In May 1938, Gabit Musrepov, a Kazakh writer who also served as the head of the Kazakhstani Party's department of political and educational work, complained to the republic's Central Committee that Dzhangil'din had pressured him to hire "dozens of

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<sup>641</sup> TsGARK f. 269 op.3 d.56 l.28.

<sup>642</sup> Ibid., l.29, 37; Askar Alimzhan, "Rasstrel v predposlednii den' vesny," in *Baiqadamovtar äulei*, 216.

<sup>643</sup> TsGARK f.269 op.3 d.56 l.38.

wives of enemies of the people. So I was forced to hire as theater extras several wives and relatives of enemies of the people.”<sup>644</sup>

Karaldin’s children are illustrative of the enduring nature of the Kazakh elite. After they established themselves in Alma-Ata with Dzhangil’din’s assistance, they went on to prestigious and successful careers, despite their enduring status as children of an “enemy of the people.”<sup>645</sup> Although her husband, a Komsomol official in Alma-Ata, was executed in 1938, Danabike went on to have a highly successful career as a Kazakh-language stenographer, working for the editorial board of *Sotsialistik Qazaqstan* and with Mukhtar Auezov, Kazakhstan’s leading Soviet-era writer, on his magnum opus, *The Path of Abai*. Her oldest surviving brother became a highly recognized composer, marrying the daughter of General I.V. Panfilov, and her sister became a decorated opera singer. The family maintained a close relationship with Dzhangil’din and his children, and their descendants remain closely connected.<sup>646</sup>

In 1938, already in his mid-50s, Dzhangil’din ended his tenure as Deputy Chairman of the Central Executive Committee and was put in charge of Kazakhstan’s administration for nature reserves and historical monuments, a position he found highly unsatisfactory. In the early 1940s, Dzhangil’din wrote repeatedly to the Central Committee and to Stalin that his removal from political work was unbecoming to his status as an Old Bolshevik who had devoted himself to the Party over the course of 25 years, presenting himself as someone who still had much to offer

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<sup>644</sup> APRK f.708 op.1 d.113 l.5.

<sup>645</sup> Their extensive efforts to have their father rehabilitated in the 1960s were rejected. See APRK f.811 op.23 d.211.

<sup>646</sup> Ch.A. Dzhangil’din, “Prigovor istorii: ne vinovny,” *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, March 19, 1997.

because of his experience and his close knowledge of Kazakhstan.<sup>647</sup> Dzhangil'din was not the only one to express surprise at his new assignment. In his book *Khranitel' drevnostei* writer Iurii Dombrovskii describes meeting Dzhangil'din in Alma-Ata in the late 1930s. "This man had a strange fame—at once loud and silent. Or rather, more precisely, not silent, but muted." Dzhangil'din showed him his travel book and recounted his civil war-era adventures. "I looked at him and I thought: what is this irrepressible person doing in this quiet little institution for the protection of nature reserves, into which they had shoved him? Is he plastering clay shrines? Approving reports from forest rangers?"<sup>648</sup>

In typical fashion, Dzhangil'din ascribed his decreased political clout to nationalist forces working against him in Kazakhstan. "Being one of the few [Party] workers in Kazakhstan who has dedicated his life to the cause of the Party of Lenin and Stalin and the fight against its enemies, especially against Kazakh nationalists, I cannot but expect attempts at revenge on their part in one form or another," he wrote to Stalin in 1941.<sup>649</sup> Dzhangil'din's dissatisfaction with his position and what he deemed an insufficient level of respect accorded to him within Kazakhstan was a constant cause for complaint. "As an old man, I want to be remembered," he wrote to Stalin in January 1945. "I appeal to you, Joseph Vissarionovich, if the road I have travelled as Extraordinary Military Commissar, as the commander of a range of partisan units, as the first organizer of Soviet power in Kazakhstan, is worthy of attention, then I ask you to

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<sup>647</sup> APRK f.811 op.6 d.241 l.14; d.242 ll.23, 29, 54.

<sup>648</sup> Iu,O. Dombrovskii, *Khranitel' drevnostei* (Moscow: Sov. Rossiia, 1966), 143-144. On Dombrovskii's work in Alma-Ata, see Peter Doyle, "Iurii Dombrovskii's Exile in Alma-Ata," *Slavonica* 2, no.1 (1995), 71-90.

<sup>649</sup> APRK f.811 op.6 d.241 l.14.

recognize it. This will be a great joy to me in my old age, as what I have done for the Party and the government will not be forgotten.”<sup>650</sup>

Alibi Dzhangil'din's trajectory into and within the Communist Party in the years preceding and immediately after the Russian Revolution demonstrates the importance of personal experience in understanding the political dynamics of the early Soviet period. In some significant ways, Dzhangil'din was not a typical Kazakh Bolshevik. He was older than other notable Kazakh Communists like Saken Seifullin, Turar Ryskulov, or Oraz Dzhandosov, and, unlike them, he was radicalized before the revolution and outside of Kazakhstan. Indeed, Dzhangil'din was very much a product of the Russian Empire. With the advent of Bolshevik rule, he found himself in the awkward position of an internationalist who felt marginalized in ostensibly internationalist state. Ironically, many early Bolshevik policies in Kazakhstan were more in line with Alash Orda's pre-revolutionary platform than with Dzhangil'din's revolutionary views.

Dzhangil'din's career demonstrates the enduring importance of personal relationships for Kazakhstan's political landscape. To some extent informed by clan affiliations, these friendships and animosities were grounded primarily in pre-revolutionary and revolutionary experience. Although he believed it should confer certain privileges on him, Dzhangil'din's status as the first Kazakh Bolshevik in fact proved detrimental to his standing within the republic because it originated outside of Kazakh networks. Dzhangil'din was the only Kazakh sent to Kazakhstan by central Party authorities during the revolution, and his primary connections were regional rather than to any of the pre-revolutionary Kazakh political groupings. His lack of constituency within

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<sup>650</sup> TsGARK f.1363 op.1 d.14 l.38

the Party proved to be a defining factor for his career and his role within Kazakhstan up until his death in 1953.

## CHAPTER SIX

### **“Worthy of the Memory of Your Fathers”: Repression, Rehabilitation, and Historical Memory in Soviet Kazakhstan**

“I, the mother of six children, am the innocent victim of my homeland. My homeland is the Soviet Union.”<sup>651</sup> These are the words with which Fatima Gabitova described her circumstances in a diary entry in 1951, 14 years after she had been branded as a “wife of an enemy of the people.” Gabitova’s experience of Stalinism was a contradictory one, involving both privilege and persecution, condemnation and recognition. Her life spanned most of the Soviet period, and she bore witness to both the promise and the tragedy of the USSR’s first decades. Soviet rule gave her unprecedented opportunities, but it also exacted a heavy price—she lost two husbands to state repression and a son to the Great Patriotic War, spending a decade in internal exile with her surviving children. This chapter examines the contradictions inherent in Gabitova’s life trajectory—she was a Tatar woman who championed Kazakh literature, a victim of repression who won official recognition from the Soviet state—and the way she wrote about her own life in order to illuminate the nature of Stalinism in Kazakhstan. Both in the way she lived her life and in the way she wrote about it, Gabitova exhibits a complicated ambivalence towards the reality of Soviet rule, neither fully embracing nor fully rejecting the Soviet project. Although she was shaped by her circumstances, her writings were not determined by purely Soviet parameters. As such, her texts demonstrate both the reach and the limits of the USSR’s transformative project in Stalin-era Kazakhstan, as well as the inherently contradictory relationship between the Stalinist state and its subjects.

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<sup>651</sup> Maira Zhanuzakova, ed., *Fatima: Dnevnik, vospominaniia, stikhi, stat'i, interv'iu* (Almaty: Zhibek Zholy, 2010), 64.



**Figure 6: Fatima Gabitova as a young woman in the 1920s. Family collection.**

Fatima Gabitova's writings do not fit easily into the framework outlined by previous scholarship on Soviet autobiographical practices, which has described the parameters of selfhood in the Stalin period—whether at the level of pragmatic self-representation and participation in public discourse or within the inner confines of the soul—as fully determined by the Soviet system.<sup>652</sup> Others have argued that even criticism of the regime was “determined by the Stalinist language” and that even dissent was defined by Soviet norms.<sup>653</sup> Gabitova's autobiographical texts cannot be easily situated within what Sheila Fitzpatrick has described as a pervasive binary of support or opposition: “one is either pro-Soviet or anti-Soviet; indifference or agnosticism is not an option.”<sup>654</sup> Examining women writing about (but not necessarily during) the pre-war Soviet period, Fitzpatrick describes her autobiographers as consciously self-fashioning themselves as Soviet citizens, something that often involved denying a non- or anti-Soviet self,

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<sup>652</sup> On self-representation and public discourse, see: Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Tear Off the Masks! Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-Century Russia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). On the inner dimensions of Soviet selfhood, see: Igal Halfin and Jochen Hellbeck, “Rethinking the Stalinist Subject: Stephen Kotkin's ‘Magnetic Mountain’ and the State of Soviet Historical Studies,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 44, no. 3 (1996): 456-463; Jochen Hellbeck, “Working, Struggling, Becoming: Stalin-Era Autobiographical Texts,” *Russian Review* 60, no. 3 (2001): 340–359; Igal Halfin, “From Darkness to Light: Student Communist Autobiography During NEP,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 45, no. 2 (1997): 210-236; *Ibid.*, *Terror in My Soul: Communist Autobiographies on Trial* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>653</sup> Halfin and Hellbeck, “Rethinking the Stalinist Subject: Stephen Kotkin's ‘Magnetic Mountain’ and the State of Soviet Historical Studies,” 459; Juliane Fürst, “Prisoners of the Soviet Self?: Political Youth Opposition in Late Stalinism,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 54, no. 3 (2002): 353-375.

<sup>654</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Lives and Times,” in *In the Shadow of Revolution: Life Stories of Russian Women From 1917 to the Second World War*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick and Yuri Slezkine (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 14.

positing that the ultimate purpose of autobiography in the Soviet context is to discover a “usable self.”<sup>655</sup>

Although she differentiates herself from scholars of Soviet subjectivity such as Jochen Hellbeck, Fitzpatrick fundamentally agrees with them in her reading of ideology as so pervasive as to determine the very contours of autobiographic selfhood. In his examinations of Stalin-era diaries, Hellbeck has argued that these intimate writing were a key means for ordinary people to write themselves into the collective project of building Soviet society, a tool of self-perfection and Soviet self-fashioning. “To a large extent revolutionary politics centered on creating revolutionary selves, on making Soviet citizens think of themselves and act as conscious historical subjects,” he writes.<sup>656</sup> Hellbeck describes an “urge to write oneself into the Soviet revolutionary trajectory” even on the part of those who should have felt most alienated and victimized by the Stalinist state.<sup>657</sup>

Read against this model—one based primarily on the writings of ethnic Russians in the Soviet center—the writings of Fatima Gabitova clearly stand out. Gabitova is highly conscious of herself as a historical actor, but hers is not a ‘revolutionary subjectivity’ as framed by Hellbeck.<sup>658</sup> Her personal writings are not a source of self-perfection, but rather focus on preserving and promoting a sense of self and a particular legacy that exist apart from the Soviet

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<sup>655</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Tear Off the Masks!*, 152.

<sup>656</sup> Hellbeck, “Working, Struggling, Becoming: Stalin-Era Autobiographical Texts,” 341.

<sup>657</sup> *Ibid.*, 350.

<sup>658</sup> For discussion of a very different case from Kazakhstan that also deviates from Hellbeck’s model, see Julia Herzberg, “Telling Life, Writing War: The Diary of Maria Bruss,” *Avtobiografija* 4 (2015): 271-278. For an examination of a Central Asian woman’s self-narration in the mold of Soviet autobiographical conventions and how she subsequently retold and reinterpreted her own history, see Marianne Kamp, “Three Lives of Saodat: Communist, Uzbek, Survivor,” *The Oral History Review* 28, no. 2 (2001): 21-58.

collective project. Moreover, her texts cannot be categorized within a simple binary of support or opposition. Reading her personal papers, we see that civilization was not necessarily coterminous with Stalinism and the self was not inherently Soviet. Gabitova was highly aware of the cultural and historical role she could play for Kazakh literature, even after her second husband, poet Il'ias Dzhasugurov, was arrested in 1937. She dedicated the last three decades of her life to securing his memory, saving his archive, preserving and propagating his legacy, and—equally important in her eyes—raising and educating his descendants, her children. In addition to carefully preserving her husbands' letters and papers, Gabitova left behind an abundant body of her own work. Her autobiographical writings, written almost exclusively in Kazakh and spanning five decades, encompass a diversity of forms—letters, journals, poetry, essays, and articles, some typed and some hand-written, some obviously intended for dissemination or publication, some addressed to her children, and some directed to herself.<sup>659</sup> Whether through journal entries jotted down in notebooks strewn with household accounting or in neatly typed memoiristic essays, Gabitova's writings offer a highly nuanced picture of the lived experience of Stalinism in Kazakhstan.

Gabitova's experience was hardly typical of women in the region and cannot be taken as representative, but it is nevertheless highly illuminating, not least because she was self-consciously exceptional. As Isaac Scarborough has argued, the Stalinist state had a contradictory relationship to its subjects. Even for those who bore the brunt of Stalinist repressions, victimization did not immediately translate to alienation, and victimhood could be combined

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<sup>659</sup> Fatima Gabitova's personal papers were transferred by her children to Kazakhstan's Central State Archive in Almaty as TsGARK f.1012. I am deeply grateful to Il'fa Dzhasugurova-Dzhandosova for granting me access to this *fond*. Selections of Fatima's writings have been published in Kazakh (Fatima Gabitova, *Alyptar taghdyry: Kündelik дәптarden* (Almaty: Zhazushy, 1995); *Ibid.*, *Örtende öngen güil: Ölender, proza, estelikter, kündelikter, khattar, pikirler, oilar* (Almaty: Atamura, 1998)) and in Russian translation (Zhanuzakova, *op. cit.*).

with entitlement.<sup>660</sup> In Gabitova's case, her emphasis on exceptionalism is emblematic of the broader contradictions of Stalinism as a system that was at once repressive and participatory. Although she herself was Tatar, Gabitova was recognized as an authority on Kazakh literature and on Kazakh language pedagogy. Highly educated for a Central Asian woman of her time, she pursued a successful career as a pedagogue, teaching Kazakh language and literature to everyone from school children to Party officials and working as an editor for the state publishing house. Throughout her life, she was professionally, personally, and romantically linked to some of Soviet Kazakhstan's most significant literary figures, and she engaged in rich self-reflection that touches on key moments of the Stalin period.

Historians have argued that because autobiography held a special place in Soviet society, and writing and re-writing the narrative of one's life constituted an essential element of participating in Soviet public life, Soviet discourse "composed and supplied categories" for crafting autobiographical narratives.<sup>661</sup> Nevertheless, although the basic parameters of Gabitova's biography were determined by the realities of the Stalinist system, the Soviet project was not a pervasive element of her internal life as expressed in her autobiographical writings. The self Gabitova presents in her journals, letters, and essays was defined by personal relationships rather than by Soviet categories, and in discussing her own work and that of her husbands, she privileges exceptionalism and service to Kazakh literature and the Kazakh nation specifically. She situates personal relationships as source of her exceptionalism, and as such they

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<sup>660</sup> Isaac Scarborough, "An Unwanted Dependence: Chechen and Ingush Deportees and the Development of State-Citizen Relations in Late-Stalinist Kazakhstan (1944-1953)," *Central Asian Survey* 36, no. 1 (2017): 93-112.

<sup>661</sup> Anna Krylova, "In Their Own Words? Soviet Women Writers and the Search For the Self," in *A History of Women's Writing in Russia*, ed. Adele Marie Barker and Jehanne M Gheith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 246.

figure as both the cause of repression and a means of survival. Gabitova practiced writing as a response to repression, a means of preserving what she had lost to Stalinist terror and of actively shaping historical memory. In doing so, she neither fully rejected nor fully embraced Sovietness. Examining the life and writings of Fatima Gabitova gives us insight into one mode of Stalinism as an individuating system, in which exceptionalism was at the root of both repression and survival.

### **Biographical overview**

Educated and relatively prosperous, Fatima Gabitova's family was typical of the Tatar presence in the territories that would become Kazakhstan. She was born in 1903 in Kapal, a town that is today in Southeastern Kazakhstan and was at the time an uezd center of Semirech'e Oblast. Her parents were the descendants of Kazan Tatars who had migrated to Semirech'e in order to avoid conscription. Her father, Zainulla Gabitov, was a successful merchant who died when Fatima, the youngest of three daughters, was only six months old, supposedly poisoned at a party.<sup>662</sup> Left a widow at age 24, Fatima's mother Gainizhamal Zhil'kibaeva educated her daughters and other local children in her home, later sending Fatima and her sisters to the Russian girls' school in Kapal during the week and the Tatar girls' school on Sundays. Fatima went on to attend the Iakobie madrasa, graduating in 1917.<sup>663</sup> The tsarist state had long relied on Tatars as a "civilizing" force in the steppe, and they were prominent as both mullahs and educators. Fatima herself was profoundly shaped by her education, and she remained a prolific pedagogue for most of her adult life.

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<sup>662</sup> TsGARK f.1012, op.1 d.1 ll.4-5; d.6 l.3.

<sup>663</sup> TsGARK f.1012 op.1 d.74 l.1.

Gabitova's upbringing was unusually cosmopolitan for a girl born in the Russian Empire's Muslim periphery. In addition to their formal schooling, Gainizhamal was meticulous in ensuring her daughters' education outside of school. With the outbreak of World War I in 1914, many Germans and Czechs from larger cities in Russian Central Asia were sent to Kapal because of the tsarist government's suspicion regarding their loyalties. As a result, the family of Karl Kaiser, a bank director from Samarkand, lived in the Gabitov household for three years. Kaiser's wife, Ida Karlovna, had studied at university in Frankfurt, and Gainizhamal enlisted her to teach Fatima and her older sister Marziia French and German.<sup>664</sup> "I got an Eastern education with my mother's milk. I got a Western education from Ida Karlovna, and I lived my whole life steeped in both Eastern and Western culture," Gabitova later recalled. The sisters also took music lessons from an exiled Czech, who taught them to play the zither and the mandolin.<sup>665</sup>

Gabitova embarked on an independent professional and personal life at a young age. She began her pedagogical career in 1918 at the age of 15, working at the Tatar school in Kapal. In 1919 she married Bilial Suleev, a fellow teacher and the chairman of the local Committee of Poor Peasants (*komitet bednoty*), which had been organized by a group of Communists in Vernyi. Himself a Kazakh, Suleev was an educated man, fluent in Kazakh, Russian, and Tatar. He was born not far from Kapal in 1893 and, like Gabitova, he received his initial education at home, as—unlike the vast majority of Kazakhs at the time—his father and grandfather were both literate. In 1911, at the age of 18, Suleev began studying at Esengul Mamanov's Mamtaniia madrassa in Karagash, an institution whose teachers included Russians as well as Kazakhs educated in Egypt and Turkey. From there, Suleev was sent by Mamanov to study at the Galiia

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<sup>664</sup> TsGARK f.1012 op.1 d.6 l.3.

<sup>665</sup> TsGARK f.1012 op.1 d.1 ll.53-55.

madrassa in Ufa, but soon left for the teachers' seminary in Orenburg, from which he graduated in 1916. In Orenburg, Suleev was active as a member of the editorial board of the Kazakh-language journal *Qazaq*, publishing articles and poems in that paper as well as in the Tatar journals *Shura* and *Uaqyt*. He spent some time as a laborer at the front after the introduction of conscription for Central Asians in 1916, returning to Semirech'e in time to begin teaching at the Tatar school in Kapal in the 1917-1918 school year.<sup>666</sup>

From 1920 to 1929, Gabitova's husband worked as the head of the Semirech'e Oblast Board of Education, opening schools throughout the region. Gabitova also continued her pedagogical career, teaching Kazakh language and literature in a number of schools. In the evenings Fatima and Bilial would discuss politics as they played with their children, apparently to the extent that Austen Chamberlain became the primary villain when their son Dzhanibek played at being a Red Army soldier.<sup>667</sup> The family lived in Dzharkent and later in Alma-Ata and Kzyl Orda, before moving to Aktiubinsk in 1929 and relocating to Semipalatinsk the following year after Bilial was appointed rector of that city's pedagogical institute. Fatima and Bilial had three children, the oldest of whom, a daughter named Farida, died in 1930 at age 10.<sup>668</sup>

Suleev's frequent job relocations and resulting long absences put a strain on the marriage. In her letters, Gabitova chastised him for not sending sufficient money to support the family and for not writing often enough. "As soon as you leave, you completely forget about your family," she complained soon after they had relocated to Aktiubinsk. "Your leave us for nine months, you

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<sup>666</sup> TsGARK f.1012 op.1 d.6 ll.3-4; Gabitova, *Alyptar taghdyry: Kündelik дәптarden*, 129-131.

<sup>667</sup> TsGARK f.1012 op.1 d.9 ll.4-5.

<sup>668</sup> TsGARK f.1012 op.1 d.6 ll.3-4.

return for 10-15 days, and then you leave us again.”<sup>669</sup> Gabitova had been happy in Alma-Ata and was sad to leave the city. She found Aktiubinsk and Semipalatinsk cold and isolating. After their daughter died, Gabitova was left alone with her grief while Suleev travelled between Aktiubinsk, Orenburg, Ural’sk, Tashkent, and Semipalatinsk on official business.<sup>670</sup> In 1930, shortly after the birth of their second son and death of their first daughter, Suleev was arrested during a work trip to Alma-Ata for supposedly taking part in an underground nationalist organization, falling victim to the first major state repression campaign against Kazakh intellectuals within the Party. Freed in 1932, he went to Moscow, where he continued to work in education.<sup>671</sup> He imagined that Gabitova would follow him with their children, but she was unwilling to move. Their divorce was finalized by the Semipalatinsk authorities in September 1932, by which point Gabitova had already entered into a common-law marriage with Suleev’s old friend and colleague, poet Il’ias Dzhansugurov.<sup>672</sup>

Fatima Gabitova’s second husband was also an educator, Party member, and intellectual. It was Suleev who had first introduced Gabitova to Dzhansugurov in 1919, a few months after Fatima and Bilial were married, when Il’ias was serving as Bilial’s secretary in the Committee of Poor Peasants. It was shortly thereafter that Dzhansugurov began dedicating poetry to Gabitova, and he continued to do so for the rest of his life. Dzhansugurov was born in Aksu uezd, not far from Kapal, in 1894. Like Suleev, he learned to read at home and then studied at the jadid-

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<sup>669</sup> Zhanuzakova, *Fatima*, 93-94.

<sup>670</sup> TsGARK f.1012, op.1 d.10 l.16.

<sup>671</sup> In 1934 he was sent to Nukus to work in the Karakalpak National Commissariat for Education. In 1937, he was once more arrested by the NKVD and executed (Gabitova, *Alyptar taghdry: Kündelik дәптarden*, 129-131).

<sup>672</sup> TsGARK f.1012 op.1 d.1 l.10.

influenced Mamaniia madrassa, graduating in 1917. From 1920 to 1921 he studied at special pedagogical courses organized in Tashkent for Kazakh and Kyrgyz youth, after which he worked as a teacher and educational administrator. Beginning in 1925, he spent three years in Moscow studying journalism. He then returned to Kazakhstan, where he worked for the newspaper *Engbekshī qazaq* in Kzyl Orda, and went on to serve as the head of the Writers' Union of Kazakhstan from 1932 to 1935. From 1936 until his arrest in August 1937, Dzhanugurov worked as the Kazakh poetry editor for the state publishing house.<sup>673</sup>

Although they were both married to other people at the time, both Fatima and Il'ias remembered being immediately drawn to each other from their first meeting. Fatima later wrote that he charmed her with his tellings of traditional Kazakh stories and riddles. She had only just learned Kazakh, and she would sometimes invite him to her home to hear him speak and sing. Not long after they met, in the fall of 1919, Fatima and Il'ias were walking with some friends along the Aksu river. "Someone enthusiastically exclaimed, 'Is our Batish<sup>674</sup> not the leading beauty of Aksu?' Others softly retorted: 'She does not look like a Kazakh, so it does not make sense to compare her to Kazakh beauties,'" Fatima recalled. "The majority concluded, 'Let some lovely features of our Batish differ from the natural beauty of Kazakh girls, she is nevertheless delightfully beautiful.'" It was at that moment, Fatima writes, that Il'ias penned the first of many verses that he would dedicate to her over the course of the next eighteen years, composing a poem in praise of her beauty and reading it for their friends.<sup>675</sup>

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<sup>673</sup> TsGARK f.1012 op.1 d.10 ll.2-3; d.23 l.19.

<sup>674</sup> An affectionate, Kazakh derivative of Fatima. As Kazakh does not use the letter "f," it is usually replaced by "b" or "p."

<sup>675</sup> TsGARK f.1012 op.1 d.10 ll.3-4.

Il'ias was not alone in his admiration of Fatima—as Fatima would later tell another giant of Soviet Kazakh literature, Mukhtar Auezov, even Akhmet Baitursynov, the leading Kazakh intellectual of the pre- and immediate post-revolutionary period, wrote verses expressing his admiration of her beauty.<sup>676</sup> Il'ias was so taken with Fatima that after the end of his first marriage, it was supposedly his admiration for his friend and colleague Bilial's wife that spurred him to marry a girl who shared her name. After their initial acquaintance in Aksu in 1919, Fatima and Il'ias passed in and out of each other's lives, but they remained in touch. They corresponded regularly, encouraging each other's literary work, and Il'ias became increasingly open about his love and admiration for Fatima, writing her long letters in verse and providing her with emotional support after her daughter Farida's death and Bilial's arrest. In the months leading up to her husband's release, Fatima and Il'ias gradually began planning a new life together. In the summer of 1932, Il'ias wrote to Fatima that his own marriage was effectively over. "Be brave, my dear, happiness is in our hands! Stretch out your hand, let me kiss it!" he wrote.<sup>677</sup>

Although their marriage lasted for only five years, it coincided with an extremely productive period for both Gabitova and Dzhanisugurov. He produced some of his most important poetry, began work on a three-volume novel centered on the revolution in Kazakhstan, and completed a translation of Evgenii Onegin into Kazakh, while she worked as a teacher and Kazakh language fiction editor for the national publishing house. She published articles about Kazakh language pedagogy, gave interviews to the local press, and was nominated as a candidate

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<sup>676</sup> Zhanuzakova, *Fatima*, 198.

<sup>677</sup> Gabitova, *Örtende öngen gül: Ölender, proza, estelikter, kündelikter, khattar, pikirler, oilar*, 172.

for people's deputy.<sup>678</sup> Gabitova was also active in editing and supporting Dzhansugurov's work.<sup>679</sup> She accompanied him on official trips to places like Moscow and Kazan, and encouraged him to pursue active contacts with writers from other parts of the Soviet Union.<sup>680</sup> Il'ias was an enthusiastic father, writing long letters to Fatima and the children whenever he was away, regularly expressing his desire to return to them, and dedicating verses to his daughters from their earliest days. In addition to Gabitova's two sons from her marriage to Suleev and Dzhansugurov's son Saiat, who also lived with them, the couple had three children, two daughters and a son, the latter of whom Dzhansugurov would meet only once, while he was already imprisoned. In August 1937, while the family was away at the dacha, Dzhansugurov received a call from the Writers' Union urgently calling him back to Alma-Ata. He was arrested later that same day.

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<sup>678</sup> See, e.g.: TsGARK f.1012 op.1 d.1 l.25.

<sup>679</sup> See, e.g., Zhanuzakova, *Fatima*, 8.

<sup>680</sup> TsGARK f.1012 op.1 d.23 l.10.



**Figure 7: The last photograph taken of Il'ias Dzhansugurov with his family before his arrest (May 1937). Family collection.**

After Dzhansugurov's arrest, Gabitova was informed by the NKVD that she would have to spend two years in internal exile without the right to return to Alma-Ata (a fate less harsh than that met by the many women who were sent to ALZHIR, the Akmolinsk Camp for Wives of Traitors to the Motherland). Presented with a choice as to where she would move, she chose Semipalatinsk, given that it was a city she was somewhat familiar with and large enough that she hoped to find a job. She stayed in Semipalatinsk until 1940, working as a teacher at the Russian pedagogical school and renting a house in the Tatar district of the city. She distributed her children among various relatives out of fear that they would otherwise be sent to orphanages, dispatching her daughters to Kapal shortly after Dzhansugurov's arrest and sending her older

sons to their father's relatives, taking with her only the infant Bulat. Despite the nature of her parting from Suleev, Gabitova received support from his relatives while she was living in Semipalatinsk. In 1940, Gabitova was allowed to return to Alma-Ata, where she reunited with her children. Although she was able to get a job at the Institute of Marxism-Leninism and the republic technical college of physical culture, the family found life in the capital difficult. Their apartment was searched by the NKVD several times, and the remnants of Dzhansugurov's library were confiscated. In 1942, Gabitova was informed that she would once more have to leave Alma-Ata. The city was taking in an increasing number of war evacuees, placing a strain on the housing stock. Because of their status as the wife and children of an enemy of the people, Gabitova and her family would no longer be allowed to stay in Alma-Ata. "I lived with your father for five years, and I suffered for him for 20," Gabitova would later tell her children.

Gabitova's third lover and the father of her youngest child was Mukhtar Auezov, a prominent Kazakh writer. Auezov had been a close friend to both Dzhansugurov and Suleev, and had been imprisoned with the latter in 1930-1932. After they were forced to leave Alma-Ata in 1942, Gabitova and her children moved to Merke, a village in southern Kazakhstan, where they lived for a time with Auezov's relatives before renting a room from an Uzbek family. Gabitova continued her work as a teacher. Although he remained married to his third wife, a Russian woman he had met while studying in Leningrad in the mid-1920s, Auezov had a son with Gabitova, Murat, born in January 1943. Auezov would continue to provide material support to Gabitova and her family until he died in 1961. Gabitova's children would later credit Auezov's assistance as the decisive factor in keeping them fed during their exile in Merke. When the family was allowed to return to Alma-Ata in 1949, Auezov purchased a house for them, and he regularly provided money in Alma-Ata and checked up on Gabitova's oldest son Azat Suleev

while he was studying in Moscow. Although he never left his wife, Auezov openly acknowledged Murat as his son, and he maintained his correspondence and his friendship with Gabitova until his death. Gabitova retired from teaching soon after her return to Alma-Ata, and she dedicated most of her remaining years to preserving and propagating Il'ias Dzhansugurov's literary legacy. She died in 1968 at the age of 64.

### **Ambivalence, lived and written**

Unlike many of her contemporaries, Fatima Gabitova undertook a conscious effort to save her husbands' works and memory—most notably those of Dzhansugurov—during and after the Terror. Whereas many other families burned personal papers out of fear, Gabitova collected all that remained after Dzhansugurov's arrest, including manuscripts and correspondence.<sup>681</sup> When NKVD agents came to arrest him, they had taken only what was on his desk. The bulk of Dzhansugurov's papers, however, were kept in a yellow cupboard on the veranda, which was not searched. Gabitova took her husband's writings and entrusted them to a cousin who himself worked for the NKVD. He kept the papers hidden in a shed until Gabitova returned to Alma-Ata in 1949, after which she worked on organizing the archive and, as soon as Il'ias was rehabilitated in 1957, getting as much of his work published as possible. "I was always amazed at how she could predict the future, how she knew that a time would come when everything could be reclaimed that had seemingly been lost forever," her daughter Il'fa later reflected.<sup>682</sup>

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<sup>681</sup> Gul'bakhram Batyrbekova, the wife of Saken Seifullin, describes the aftermath of her husband's arrest and her destruction of his papers in L.P. Lukina and E.A. Satybaldiev, eds., *O chem ne govoriли: Dokumental'nye rasskazy i ocherki* (Alma-Ata: Zhalyyn, 1990), 66-83.

<sup>682</sup> TsGARK f.1012 op.1 d.79b ll.16-17.

In this sense, Gabitova ostensibly fits the archetype of the Russian “literary widow” described by scholars such as Carl Proffer and Beth Holmgren: “she had collected the papers and saved the books, she had the archive.”<sup>683</sup> Examining his interactions with Russian literary widows such as Nadezhda Mandelstam, Lyubov Belozerskaya, Elena Bulgakova, and Lily Brik, Proffer describes a binary of support or opposition much like that outlined by Fitzpatrick in her discussion of Russian women’s autobiographical writings. Similarly, Holmgren argues that for women like Nadezhda Mandelstam “even personal and textual survival were construed as forms of political dissidence,” and that writing was understood as a moral duty that could not be separated from political resistance.<sup>684</sup> Gabitova’s activities both as a writer and as a conservator cannot be simply labeled as either opposition or support, however. Rather, both in how she lived her life and how she wrote about it, she demonstrated an ambivalence that complicates our understanding of Soviet selfhood, the experience of Stalinism, and the legacy of Stalinist repression.

From her youth, Gabitova was ostensibly a perfect embodiment of the new, “liberated” Soviet woman, as she exemplified everything that Bolshevik women’s activists had dreamed of achieving in Central Asia beginning in the heady days of the 1920s. As Adrienne Edgar has argued, unlike Western colonial powers in the Muslim world, the Soviet government genuinely intended to enact social change in Central Asia by mobilizing, educating, and “emancipating” women.<sup>685</sup> This was a major goal for the Stalinist state in Central Asia, and significant resources

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<sup>683</sup> Carl Proffer, *The Widows of Russia and Other Writings* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 2002), 70.

<sup>684</sup> Beth Holmgren, *Women’s Works in Stalin’s Time: On Lidiia Chukovskaia and Nadezhda Mandelstam* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1993), 12, 25.

<sup>685</sup> Adrienne Edgar, “Bolshevism, Patriarchy, and the Nation: The Soviet ‘Emancipation’ of Muslim Women in Pan-Islamic Perspective,” *Slavic Review* 65, no. 2 (2006): 257-258.

were devoted to efforts aimed at promoting education and increased social equality. As outlined by Douglas Northrop, Soviet measures of cultural and political progress among Central Asian women were centered on their personal lives.<sup>686</sup> In that regard, Gabitova should be a Soviet success story—She was not religious, she wore the latest European-style fashions, and she initiated divorce proceedings against her first husband when she was no longer satisfied with their union. She was educated, professionally active, and socially engaged. Nevertheless, Gabitova does not write about Soviet power as a liberating force. Although Soviet rule unquestionably provided her with opportunities for professional and educational development, it was not the source of her emancipation, as she was working and living away from home well before Soviet power was established in what would become Kazakhstan.

Indeed, Gabitova did not understand the Soviet Union within an unequivocal narrative of progress. When she visited her native Kapal in 1963, Gabitova was unpleasantly surprised by the changes the town had undergone since the revolution. In her diary, she reminisced about Kapal as it had existed in her childhood. “In those years the city truly was as beautiful as expensive silk, covered in the green of orchards and the bright colors of flowers,” she wrote, describing a vibrant educational, cultural, and commercial center. “In short, up until 1914 Kapal was a bustling town of merchants and soldiers, full of life,” Gabitova remembered. “Having left it in the first years of the revolution [...] I returned many years later and gazed in wonder at the familiar buildings, now dilapidated, and the unhappy faces of the people—it seems that Kapal is slowly dying.”<sup>687</sup>

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<sup>686</sup> Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia*.

<sup>687</sup> Gabitova, *Örtende öngen gül: Ölender, proza, estelikter, kündelikter, khattar, pikirler, oilar*, 155.

Nevertheless, even after she had been branded as a “wife of an enemy of the people,” Gabitova continued to embody Soviet ideals of Central Asian womanhood, garnering official recognition for her work and her role as a mother. Gabitova was a prolific pedagogue of Kazakh language and literature, working as a teacher almost constantly between 1919 and 1951. In the 1930s she published articles about Kazakh language teaching methodology, and she continued to be seen as an expert on the subject even after 1937. In 1941, for instance, she formulated a curriculum to teach the new Cyrillic alphabet to employees of Kazakhstan’s branch of the Institute of Marxism Leninism and the national publishing house, leading special 15-day courses on the subject. Even during her exile in Merke, she was called to present at oblast pedagogical conferences to discuss her professional experience and the methodology of teaching Kazakh language and literature and served as chairman of the raion committee of the teachers’ union. In 1946, she received two state awards, one for her services to the war effort and one for motherhood.<sup>688</sup>

Just as she won recognition despite her status as a “wife of an enemy of the people,” Gabitova accepted Soviet metrics of success. She believed in the value of Soviet education, and she was very proud of her children’s achievements within the Soviet system. The fact that all five of her surviving children earned university degrees, two of them at Moscow State University, and went on to have highly successful, prestigious careers was a source of great maternal satisfaction. Her oldest surviving son, Azat, a Moscow-educated Turkic philologist, became a prominent translator from Kazakh into Russian. Daughters Umut and Il’fa worked as a doctor and a German language instructor, respectively. Bulat studied geology and went on to become a recognized filmmaker, while Murat studied Chinese philology in Moscow and pursued

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<sup>688</sup> TsGARK f.1012 op.1 d.1 l.35; d.6 l.6.

a distinguished academic and political career. Their achievements are a testament to Gabitova's parental efforts, but also to a permanency among the Kazakh elite, even under very precarious circumstances. Their fathers had been among the tiny minority of Kazakhs literate in Russian at the time of the revolution, a factor that provided the basis for their professional and political careers and, ultimately, for their children's position within Soviet society despite the repressions of the late 1930s.<sup>689</sup>

The degree to which Gabitova accepted Soviet standards of success is also evident in her family's linguistic landscape and the pronounced generational shift away from Kazakh and towards Russian. Whereas for Gabitova it was knowledge of Kazakh that provided an avenue for professional advancement, for her children it was Russian that opened doors to academic and professional success. Although she herself was Tatar, the preponderance of Gabitova's letters, diaries, and published works were written in Kazakh. She corresponded with her mother and, to a lesser degree, with her aunt, in Tatar, and wrote occasional letters in Russian, but the vast majority of her writings were in Kazakh, with the occasional Tatar flourishes. Her children, whose Kazakhness was unquestionable by any Kazakh or Soviet standard, were much less comfortable with their native tongue. "In our family there was a cult of reading—not of books, but specifically of reading. We read everything, and we had many books, but unfortunately we did not read in Kazakh," Il'fa Dzhanugurova later remembered. "We were always told: '*Kitap*

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<sup>689</sup> Yuri Slezkine has noted a similar phenomenon among the elite in Moscow: "Most of the children of government officials, including 'family members of the traitors to the motherland,' graduated from prestigious colleges and (re)joined the postwar Soviet cultural and professional elite (known to both members and nonmembers as the 'intelligentsia')." Slezkine, *The House of Government*, 946. On the endurance of the elite in Tajikistan into the postwar period, see Roberts, "Old Elites Under Communism."

*oqyndar—adam bolasyndar.*” [Lit., “Read books—be people.”]<sup>690</sup> This blurred linguistic identity extended beyond reading. Gabitova’s oldest daughter Umut was often called Nadia by both family and friends, a direct translation of her name from Kazakh into Russian, as *ümit* and *nadezhda* both mean ‘hope’. As an adult, Umut recalled that Auezov had asked Gabitova’s aunt, who lived with the family, to speak with the children more in Kazakh, especially with his son Murat.<sup>691</sup>

Although she wrote extensively about the value of Kazakh literature, Gabitova likely played an important role in the development of her children’s linguistic preferences, as she clearly prized Russian-language education. While she herself spent most of her pedagogical career in Kazakh schools, Gabitova’s children, beginning with the eldest, Farida, were educated in Russian schools. When they wrote poems for their mother, they were in Russian, not in Kazakh, and Russian was the primary language of their correspondence.<sup>692</sup> Gabitova believed that one of her first husband Bilial Suleev’s greatest achievements was opening schools in which the primary language of instruction was Russian in all subjects except national literature, something that she saw as enabling local students to study at universities anywhere in the Soviet Union. She emphasized the importance of knowing Russian both in her role as a teacher and as a mother. “In order not to miss any of the peculiarities of the new orthography and to master them perfectly, it is important not only to know our own grammar, but to have a good knowledge of Russian grammar,” she wrote in an article on the introduction of the new, Cyrillic alphabet for Kazakh in 1941. “He who masters the new orthography will have an easy time understanding

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<sup>690</sup> TsGARK f.1012 op.1 d.79b l.22.

<sup>691</sup> Zhanuzakova, *Fatima*, 236.

<sup>692</sup> See, e.g., TsGARK f.1012 op.1 d.41 l.1.

Russian grammar, and those who know Russian grammar will have an easy time understanding Kazakh grammar. That is one of the major merits of our new orthography.”<sup>693</sup> When her son Azat Suleev began studying at MGU, Gabitova emphasized the role of Russian among what she considered to be the necessary elements of a good university education: “If you can enter the Farsi division, do. But I would say: It is necessary to know the Russian language and Russian grammar well. Additionally, it is necessary to become well acquainted with contemporary Russian literature. Secondly, it is necessary to know Marxism-Leninism very well,” she wrote in September 1949.<sup>694</sup>

This maternal advice exemplifies Gabitova’s ambivalent—and indeed pragmatic—stance towards Soviet authorities and Soviet society. On the one hand, Gabitova seems to have wholeheartedly embraced Soviet avenues for mobility. On the other hand, in doing so, she was following a path well worn by Kazakh intellectuals since the turn of the twentieth century, when reformers associated with the Alash Orda movement emphasized the need for Russian education as a gateway to social progress and modernization. She benefited from the post-1917 transformation of Kazakhstan, but she did not credit the Soviet Union with her emancipation as a Central Asian woman, and she did not understand the post-revolutionary period within an unequivocal narrative of progress. Although she explicitly conveyed her sense of victimization at the hands of Soviet authorities, she did not reject advancement within the Soviet system.

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<sup>693</sup> TsGARK f.1012 op.1 d.17 l.2.

<sup>694</sup> TsGARK f.1012 op.1 d.32 l.42.

### **Fashioning autobiographical exceptionality**

Throughout her diaries, Gabitova is highly aware of herself as a unique individual. “I have read many books describing the fates of women, the lives of teachers. But not one of them resembles my own life,” Gabitova wrote in 1955.<sup>695</sup> Because her sense of self was so firmly rooted in her personal relationships, she recognized that in a way she had been quite fortunate, despite her frequent reflections on the sufferings inflicted upon her by the Soviet state. Throughout her writings, Gabitova’s autobiographical self is that of wife and mother, rather than Soviet citizen. Her professional identity as a pedagogue is framed in terms of service to Kazakhstan and the Kazakh nation rather than as a contribution to a broader Soviet project. In this sense, she departs significantly from the framework outlined by previous scholarship on autobiographical practices in the Stalin period, one that minimized or omitted personal information and emphasized the individual’s life story as part of the broader historical moment.<sup>696</sup> Fitzpatrick describes a tendency among women autobiographers to write about themselves as representative, and to present their representativeness as the factor that gave their stories importance and meaning.<sup>697</sup> Examining different types of autobiographical writing from the Soviet period, Catriona Kelly and Marianne Liljeström describe a similar de-personalization of Russian women’s personal narratives.<sup>698</sup> Kelly and Liljeström both argue that even remarkability and exceptionality are used to underscore representativeness in terms dedication to

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<sup>695</sup> Gabitova, *Alyptar taghdyry: Kündelik дәптarden*, 92.

<sup>696</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Tear Off the Masks!*, 136, 149.

<sup>697</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>698</sup> Marianne Liljeström, Arja Rosenholm, and Irina Savkina, eds., *Models of Self: Russian Women’s Autobiographical Texts* (Helsinki: Kikimora, 2000), 73, 82, 94.

“the Cause and the Struggle.”<sup>699</sup> Gabitova, meanwhile, is unabashedly self-confident in her exceptionality, and her autobiographical self is deeply personal. The self she elaborates in her writings is not defined by Sovietness, and she is not trying to write herself into a larger Soviet collective narrative, privileging instead the personal and the exceptional.

This emphasis on the personal and the exceptional is evident even in Gabitova’s “file-self,” the account of her self and her personal history contained in bureaucratic documents such as the narrative autobiography that formed an integral part of Soviet personnel files.<sup>700</sup> Such documents are generally understood as having served a justification of one’s ideological standing as a “Soviet citizen.”<sup>701</sup> In one such autobiography, dated 1945, Gabitova briefly outlines her personal and professional life. As is often typical of such documents, she downplays her social background, stating that her father was a peasant of average means and her mother was a dressmaker. Writing in Russian, she briefly details her education and her marriages, noting that Dzhangisugurov was arrested in 1937. Even here, however, she privileges her motherhood and her professional service to Kazakhstan specifically, rather than construing herself as a Soviet citizen. “I have given my entire life for national education in Kazakhstan,” she writes, adding that she was full of strength and desire to continue working for the benefit of her homeland. “At the

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<sup>699</sup> Liljeström, Rosenholm, and Savkina, eds., *Models of Self: Russian Women’s Autobiographical Texts*, 96, 77.

<sup>700</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Tear Off the Masks!*, 14-15.

<sup>701</sup> Liljeström, Rosenholm, and Savkina, eds., *Models of Self: Russian Women’s Autobiographical Texts*, 7; Halfin, “From Darkness to Light: Student Communist Autobiography During NEP,” 211; Krylova, “In Their Own Words? Soviet Women Writers and the Search For the Self,” 245-246.

present time I live for my children,” she states, noting that her eldest son Dzhanibek had been killed at the front and her remaining five children were in school.<sup>702</sup>

Gabitova’s relationships with Suleev, Dzhanugurov, and Auezov were a central element of how she wrote about herself, especially in the years after they were taken out of her life, in Auezov’s case by a heart operation rather than by the NKVD. Throughout the second half of her life, Gabitova emphasized her role as a mother. Whereas in her earlier years she used her diaries to reflect on the everyday pleasures of parenthood and the emotional aspects of her relationship with her children, after her life was upended by state repression, her attitude shifted towards one focused on her duties as a mother and her children’s duties as the descendants of important men. Both in public and in private, she emphasized her parental responsibilities as a key aspect of her identity. “I have given all of my life to the education of the Kazakh youth and the flourishing of Kazakh literature. I am a teacher, a woman of letters, and also the mother of seven children. My children are the descendants of three outstanding, famous sons of the Kazakh nation,” Gabitova reflected in 1967, shortly before she died.<sup>703</sup> Jochen Hellbeck has noted the “remarkable scarcity of non-Soviet models of self-realization” in Stalin-era diaries.<sup>704</sup> Gabitova, however, saw herself as a unique, historical figure, largely because of her role as wife and mother. Although she does not ignore Soviet categories of identity in her writings, they do not strongly inform the sense she conveys of herself as a historical actor.

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<sup>702</sup> TsGARK f.1012 op.1 d.1 l.46.

<sup>703</sup> Gabitova, *Örtende öngen gül: Ölender, proza, estelikter, kündelikter, khattar, pikirler, oilar*, 126.

<sup>704</sup> Hellbeck, “Working, Struggling, Becoming,” 345.

Gabitova's writings do include some of the typical tropes of Soviet autobiographical writing.<sup>705</sup> Employing a common mechanism of writerly legitimation, she describes meetings with Gorky and, in a specifically Kazakh iteration of the same phenomenon, Zhambyl.<sup>706</sup> Nevertheless, both in terms of her presentation of own professional work and in terms of her discussions of Suleev, Dzhansugurov, and Auezov, the source of significance is not contribution to a broader Soviet project, but rather service to Kazakh pedagogy and to Kazakh literature specifically. Although she reflected on her own good fortune, Gabitova was also acutely aware of the wrongs that had been done to her by the Soviet state. "Where is equality? Where is freedom? No one dares answer me. What did I ever do to the Soviet Union, what am I guilty of?!" she reflected in 1951.<sup>707</sup> "My husband was an intelligent, brave, respected, extraordinary Kazakh educator who loved his people. The Soviet authorities spuriously classified him as a 'nationalist' and destroyed him. Weeping bitterly, I was left alone with two sons," she wrote in her diary. "I married a second time. My second husband was also guilty of nothing, but he was also shot by the NKVD. He was a talented, extraordinary poet who had no equal. Once again I was left alone, with five children," she lamented. "All my property was confiscated; my children and I were driven into exile."<sup>708</sup>

Yet, shaping her "exceptional biography" seems to have been a source of legitimacy and strength for Gabitova even in the face of great suffering. "Now, in my sunset years, I draw

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<sup>705</sup> On such conventions, see Liljeström, Rosenholm, and Savkina, eds., *Models of Self: Russian Women's Autobiographical Texts*, 66.

<sup>706</sup> See, e.g., Gabitova, *Alyptar taghdyry: Kündelik дәптәрден*, 42-48, 64; *Ibid.*, *Örtende öngen gül: Ölender, proza, estelikter, kündelikter, khattar, pikirler, oilar*, 82-84.

<sup>707</sup> Gabitova, *Alyptar taghdyry: Kündelik дәптәрден*, 66.

<sup>708</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

strength from the life I have lived. For I know—my fate has been rich and eventful,’ she reflected in 1964:

In the right compartment of my desk, there is a thick file of papers and letters. In it are the poems dedicated to me and the fiery messages written to me over the course of 18 years by the incomparable, extraordinary poet of his era and of his nation, Il’ias Dzhangugurov. In the drawer on the left are letters addressed to me, full of beautiful, precious words, from the celebrated Soviet writer, the giant of Kazakh prose, Mukhtar Auezov, which he wrote to me over the course of 34 years. Both of these eminent spokesmen for the soul and the talent of their people loved me and honored me all their lives. Today, reading the letters of these people who were dear to me, it is as if I were conversing with them themselves. And the past passes before my eyes like a magical film reel. I distinguish myself among the women of my era, I consider my life happy and elevated. My love inspired great people. Their closeness to me filled their souls, it opened the road to the maturation of their creative talent. I am incredibly fortunate!<sup>709</sup>

In writing about herself, Gabitova emphasized the personal and the exceptional. In doing so, she privileged a personal—rather than Soviet—agenda, one that elevated her by elevating those close to her and emphasized service to a specifically Kazakh—rather than Soviet—cause.

### **Shaping historical memory**

Although Gabitova had a clear sense of herself as someone who had been deeply wronged, her anger was primarily directed at specific individuals rather than at the Soviet state or Soviet ideology. Igal Halfin has posited that Stalinist terror was an individuating experience for those Party members who fell victim to the purges.<sup>710</sup> For Gabitova, too, repression was a personal and individual experience. She wrote about her own personal suffering, but also about the specific individuals who had inflicted it upon her. While Gabitova expressed trepidation about being too outspoken before Dzhangugurov’s rehabilitation in 1957, she did not hold back

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<sup>709</sup> Gabitova, *Alyptar taghdyry: Kündelik дәптәрден*, 134.

<sup>710</sup> Halfin, “From Darkness to Light: Student Communist Autobiography During NEP.”

in her private judgments of those she felt had wronged her—other Kazakh writers who had informed on Dzhansugurov, plagiarized his writings after his arrest, turned her and her children out of their apartment, and had her teaching license revoked. Before 1957, this is something she wrote about in her diary, penning poems with titles like “I will never forgive.”<sup>711</sup>

“I have long wondered how to take revenge on these scoundrels,” she wrote in her diary in the fall of 1954:

I want to make them suffer the most terrible pangs of conscience. But they do have a single drop of conscience. How can I get at them? My sons are grown—perhaps I should just send them to beat up the villains? But corporal wounds heal quickly and are easily forgotten. And these scoundrels should be punished in a way that they will remember until they die. And I myself should be there when they are punished, to remind them of their despicable acts and to declare for what sins retribution is being exacted.

Her sister Raziia suggested that she should lure the offenders to her home under false pretenses, perhaps pretending to sell some of Dzhansugurov’s manuscripts, and then have her sons physically restrain them while she verbally abused them and detailed their wrongdoings. Gabitova reflected that this was perhaps a reasonable course of action.<sup>712</sup>

Her ire was not just directed at Dzhansugurov’s former colleagues. After Dzhansugurov was rehabilitated, it came out that the son of his cousin had been surveilling the family for the KGB. Gabitova was unsympathetic to this nephew’s appeals for understanding, barring him from her house and refusing to invite him and his mother to the celebration of Dzhansugurov’s 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary. “He won’t give me any peace. It’s always ‘forgive’ and ‘forgive,’” she complained

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<sup>711</sup> Zhanuzakova, *Fatima*, 18.

<sup>712</sup> Gabitova, *Alyptar taghdyry: Kündelik дәптәрден*, 74-75.

in a diary entry in April 1965. “And what if I were to forgive? How will he go on with his life—will he expel his shame from his memory?!”<sup>713</sup>

For Gabitova, remembrance was a central part of retribution, and forgiving amounted to forgetting. Proper remembrance was the key to righting the injustices of the past—Dzhansugurov should be remembered as a literary giant, and those who harmed him and his family should remember their misdeeds. She set about reminding them as soon as she felt safe doing so in public. At the 1957 Writers’ Union meeting celebrating the rehabilitation of Dzhansugurov, Saken Seifullin, and Beimbet Mailin, Gabitova openly criticized those whom she saw as having wronged her and her husband. She took up this subject again at an open Party meeting at the Union of Writers in 1962. “I consider it my duty to name those who wronged me,” she said.<sup>714</sup> Despite their shock value, her words ultimately had little effect on the careers of the men she singled out. Nevertheless, she felt forcing them to confront the past in public—to remember—served the cause of justice for herself and her husband.

Indeed, Gabitova was very conscious of herself as a historical actor and as someone who could shape historical memory, and she believed that this role imbued her with great responsibility. “In telling subsequent generations about the lives of the departed, about their personalities, characters, and actions, any author should recognize his huge responsibility,” she wrote in an article about musical adaptations of Il’ias’s poetry published in 1964. “Because their descendants unquestioningly accept initially expressed judgments, especially if they do not know the friends and comrades, if they have not read the memoirs of those close to those who left us in those harsh years. That is why expressing opinions that mislead subsequent generations in an

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<sup>713</sup> Gabitova, *Alyptar taghdyry: Kündelik дәптarden*, 128-129.

<sup>714</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

unpardonable offense; we cannot forget, that this does irreparable harm to the memory of those whose lives we are describing.”<sup>715</sup>

She expressed similar sentiments in her journal in 1967. “In researching the lives of the departed, their descendants focus on the earliest written documentation,” she wrote. “And if those who are first to pick up the pen describe something inaccurately, without concern for their responsibility, then their error will establish itself in the minds of subsequent generations. That is why the first researchers should leave open the points that they themselves do not know, rather than inventing things on their own.”<sup>716</sup>

Gabitova was very active in carrying out what she saw as her responsibility to establish the definitive narrative about Dzhansugurov. After he was rehabilitated in 1957, she very carefully oversaw the organization of commemorative events and the writing of commemorative articles and memoirs about her husband. She wrote to relatives soliciting written recollections and inquiring whether they had any personal objects relevant to Dzhansugurov. In at least one case, she wrote the memoir herself, sending her sister Marziia a completed draft of “her” memories about Dzhansugurov in the spring of 1964. “You did a wonderful job writing it,” Marziia wrote from Dushanbe. “I would not have been able to do it so well. But reading it I cried, remembering him.”<sup>717</sup> Condemned as a wife, Gabitova survived as a mother. In the wake of rehabilitation, she reclaimed the status of wife and her own agency in shaping the historical narrative about her husband.

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<sup>715</sup> Zhanuzakova, *Fatima*, 304

<sup>716</sup> Gabitova, *Alyptar taghdyry: Kündelik дәптarden*, 135-136

<sup>717</sup> TsGARK f.1012 d.37 l.138.

## Conclusion

During her final illness, Gabitova wrote several wills and various instructions for her children, directing them not only how to divide her property, but also how to live their lives and how to remember her and their fathers:

My beloved children! Do not forget! Bilial, Il'ias, Mukhtar—these three precious souls were inseparable friends, colleagues, and like-minded people. In all three of them I saw the embodiment of one soul, as the qualities of one could be seen in the others. All three of them only wanted good for mankind. All three of them gave all their strength so that their nation might join the ranks of the world's leading nations.<sup>718</sup>

Thanks to Bilial's pedagogical efforts, Kazakh youths were able to study at universities throughout the Soviet Union, she explained. 'Il'ias raised Kazakh poetry to heights it had never before reached. Mukhtar, through his Kazakh prose, made the Kazakh nation known to the whole world. You are the descendants of these precious souls. Do not forget that!'<sup>719</sup>

Her intimate and familial relationships remained a defining factor for how Gabitova conceived of herself until the end of her life. In her will, Gabitova instructed that, rather than commemorating the anniversary of her death, her children should observe her birthday, remembering her by remembering her second husband. "Every year on the 14<sup>th</sup> of October, gather at someone's house and read Il'ias's poetry, taking into account articles published about him," she wrote. "It would be very good if you invited those who have contributed their labor to Il'ias's cause to attend these meetings."<sup>720</sup> Commemorating Suleev, too, was subsumed into commemorating Dzhanisugurov: "Bilial Suleev, my first husband, was a beacon for Il'ias. In his

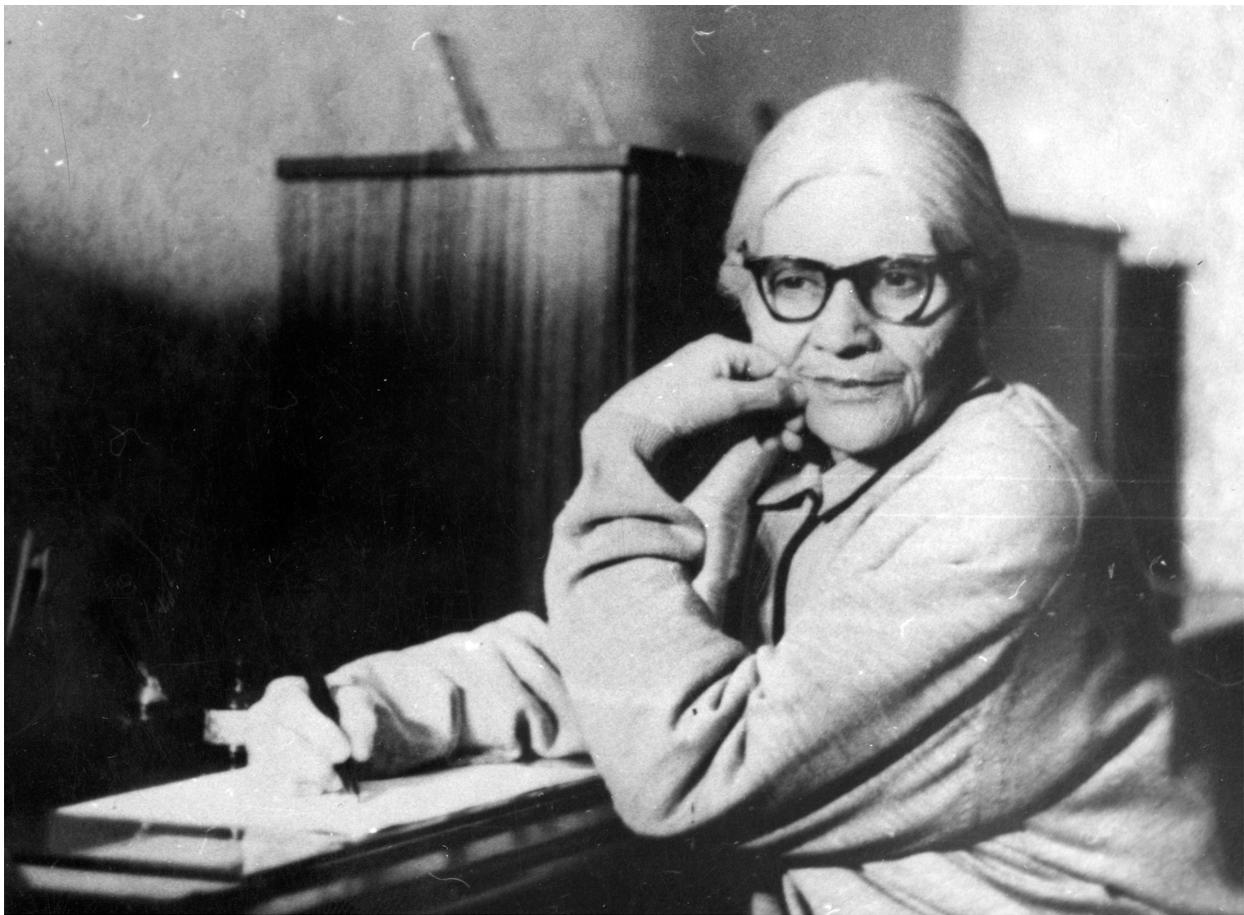
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<sup>718</sup> TsGARK f.1012 op.1 d.1 l.63.

<sup>719</sup> *Ibid.*, l.64.

<sup>720</sup> *Ibid.*, l.62ob.

satire and his humor, Il'ias wrote in Bilial's footsteps. You should also become acquainted with Bilial's works," Gabitova wrote.<sup>721</sup> "The laws of nature are inexorable, and sooner or later it comes time to say farewell. My life's path is drawing to a close," she wrote in one of her final missives. "I do not fear that time, and I do not regret the life I have lived. That life was devoted to you, my children, and I wanted to raise you as proper people, worthy of the memory of your fathers."<sup>722</sup>



**Figure 8: Fatima Gabitova (1967). Family collection.**

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<sup>721</sup> TsGARK f.1012 op.1 d.1 ll.62ob-63.

<sup>722</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.66.

Fatima Gabitova's life spanned most of the Soviet period, and she bore witness to the profound transformation carried out in Central Asia between the revolution and the post-Stalin Thaw. Her seemingly contradictory treatment by the Stalinist state—stigmatization coupled with recognition—was mirrored by her own attitude towards Soviet power and the fact that she neither fully subscribed to nor fully rejected the Soviet project. Condemned as a wife, she was celebrated as a mother, and she used her role as wife and mother to reclaim agency in the wake of post-Stalin rehabilitation. Gabitova's personal papers demonstrate the value of bringing autobiographical writings composed in a non-Russian context at a far geographical remove from the Soviet center into the conversation on autobiography and selfhood in the Stalin period, not only as a safeguard against “essentializing the Soviet self” but also as a means of moving beyond “the study of subjects when they were trying to be Soviet.”<sup>723</sup> Her writings reveal a highly articulated sense of self that was informed and influenced by the realities of life under Stalinism, but was ultimately not determined by Soviet categories. Her autobiographical texts do not reflect an all-pervasive internalization of Soviet discourse, but she could nevertheless survive—and indeed succeed—despite being a victim of state repression. Gabitova's emphasis on exceptionality reflects the nature of Stalinism as an individuating system. She articulates her experience of repression as an individual facing unjust state violence as a result of personal relationships. But it was also those personal relationships that formed the basis for her self-presentation as an exceptional figure and for her survival, both textual and physical. Reading the works of Fatima Gabitova, we see that one could both benefit from the Stalinist system and suffer at its hands without ultimately being defined by it.

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<sup>723</sup> Choi Chatterjee and Karen Petrone, “Models of Selfhood and Subjectivity: The Soviet Case in Historical Perspective,” *Slavic Review* 67, no. 4 (2008): 985; Eric Naiman, “On Soviet Subjects and the Scholars Who Make Them,” *The Russian Review* 60, no. 3 (2001): 312.

## EPILOGUE

The summer and fall of 1957, in the midst of Khrushchev's Thaw, brought a sense of change and possibility to Alma-Ata. Gradually, some of the major Kazakh cultural and political figures who had been executed in 1937 and 1938 were rehabilitated. The social stigma that had been imposed on their families was lifted, and these wives and children of "enemies of the people" were released from camps or allowed to return from internal exile. That summer, a youth festival was held in Alma-Ata in advance of the World Festival of Youth and Students in Moscow, bringing young people from all over Kazakhstan to the republic's capital. "Everywhere there were crowds of decked out people, songs, banners. On Lenin Square young poets recited their poems," one young woman remembered.<sup>724</sup> As more and more returnees made their way to the Kazakhstani capital, "the families of the rehabilitated returned to Alma-Ata, they sought out their old friends, they met, they cried."<sup>725</sup>

Fatima Gabitova, who had been able to return to Alma-Ata with her family already in 1949 thanks to help from Mukhtar Auezov, grew especially close to the widows of Saken Seifullin and Baimbet Mailin, who were rehabilitated together with Il'ias Dzhansugurov in the spring of 1957 as some of the first major Kazakh figures to be formally cleared of their supposed crimes. Gabitova's daughter Il'fa Dzhansugurova had just begun to work as a teacher of German

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<sup>724</sup> Il'fa Dzhansugurova-Dzhandosova, "On proshel surovuiu zhiznennuiu shkolu!" in *Sandzhar Dzhandosov: Vospominaniia, dokumenty, ocherki, stikhi*, ed. Il'fa Dzhansugurova-Dzhandosova (Almaty: Erkin Kömek, 2000), 105.

<sup>725</sup> Ibid.

after graduating from the Foreign Languages Institute in Alma-Ata.<sup>726</sup> “I met the new year of 1958 in anticipation of new events in my life,” she would later write. “And I was not mistaken.”<sup>727</sup>

In January 1958, Gabitova asked her daughter to accompany her to a gathering at Gul’bakhram Seifullina’s apartment. Among the guests was Mari’am Togzhanova, the widow of Kazakh writer and political figure Gabbas Togzhanov, who had recently returned to Alma-Ata upon her release from Karlag, and who, like Fatima Gabitova, was Tatar. “Why aren’t you marrying your daughter off,” Togzhanova asked Gabitova. “Well, there’s no one that she likes,” Il’fa’s mother replied. Mar’iam turned to Il’fa and asked her what kind of man she wanted. “I don’t know,” Il’fa joked, “as long as he’s tall and knows how to drive.”<sup>728</sup> Togzhanova turned to Gabitova. “Fatima, you remember the Dzhandosovs,” she said. “She, Fatima Dzhandosova, has a son. He’s the one you need. Shall I introduce you?”<sup>729</sup>

Following Oraz Dzhandosov’s execution in 1938, his wife was arrested and imprisoned for several months. She miscarried while in prison. After her release, she and her three sons were forced to leave Alma-Ata and settled in Kokand in the Uzbek SSR, where she worked first as a librarian and later as the secretary of the factory trade union committee of the Kokand cotton plant, receiving assistance from her extended family. Fatima Dzhandosova, née Sutiushcheva, was born in Tashkent in 1900 into the family of a wealthy Tatar merchant. She studied at the

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<sup>726</sup> Il’fa Il’iasova Dzhangugurova-Dzhandosova, interview recorded by Asya Tulesova, Almaty, Kazakhstan, July 18, 2018.

<sup>727</sup> Dzhangugurova-Dzhandosova, “On proshel surovuiu zhiznennuiu shkolu!” 105.

<sup>728</sup> Ibid., 106; Il’fa Il’iasova Dzhangugurova-Dzhandosova, interview recorded by Asya Tulesova, Almaty, Kazakhstan, July 18, 2018.

<sup>729</sup> Dzhangugurova-Dzhandosova, “On proshel surovuiu zhiznennuiu shkolu!” 106.

Tashkent girls' gymnasium and, after the revolution, completed one year of studies at the philological department of Turkestan State University, where she attended lectures by renowned Turkologist Vasilii Bartol'd, before marrying Oraz Dzhandosov in 1921. After her marriage, she worked for the editorial board of the newspaper *Engbekshī qazaq*, and later for the state publishing house. After Fatima's eldest son Edge was killed in an industrial accident, his younger brother Sandzhar became the head of the family. While the Dzhandosovs were in exile, Sandzhar graduated from the Kokand petroleum technical school, and in 1948 the family moved to Gur'ev, where Sandzhar was sent to work as an engineer at a thermal power station. Shortly after Oraz Dzhandosov's rehabilitation, the family relocated to Alma-Ata, where Sandzhar worked as an engineer for Kazakhstan's Gosplan while continuing his studies at the university in Tashkent by correspondence.<sup>730</sup>

When Mar'iam Togzhanova suggested Sandzhar Dzhandosov as a potential match in January 1958, Il'fa Dzhanugurova was intrigued. In need of a pretext, Il'fa decided to celebrate her birthday (which was in fact in late May) a few months early: "I declared February 15 my birthday, and I thoroughly prepared for it. The entire household baked, roasted, and cooked. I bought ten kilograms of mandarins at the nearest store. The guests gathered at the appointed time, but Sandzhar was late."<sup>731</sup> When Il'fa went down to the kitchen to check on a batch of *pel'meni*, she was surprised by a tall young man in a long coat and a cap, his unfashionably wide pants tucked into a pair of galoshes, handing her a bouquet of lilacs. "He was not at all like the

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<sup>730</sup> Dzhanugurova-Dzhandosova, *Sandzhar Dzhandosov*, 9-10, 103; Ergali Akhmet, "Toghysqan taghdyrlar," in *Ibid.*, 128-130. Sandzhar Dzhandosov went on to complete graduate school at the Academy of Social Sciences in Moscow, later serving in a range of positions including Secretary of the Alma-Ata Party *gorkom* and, in the final years of the USSR, Chairman of Kazakhstan's State Committee on Labor and Social Questions. He was killed in a car accident in 1992.

<sup>731</sup> Dzhanugurova-Dzhandosova, "On proshel surovuiu zhiznennuiu shkolu!" 107

young people I knew. He was completely different,” she recalled of their first meeting. Il’fa’s social circle consisted of Alma-Ata’s *stiliagi*, young people who wore stylish clothes and listened to bootleg Elvis Presley records etched into discarded x-rays. But Sandzhar impressed her with his openness, his liveliness, and the ease with which he interacted with her friends. “We liked each other right away,” Il’fa later recalled. “There was clearly something that drew us to one another, and that was the fate of our fathers, the fate of our mothers.”<sup>732</sup>

Shortly after their first meeting, Sandzhar dedicated to Il’fa the first of what would be many poems:

Ильфе

Есть домик на улице Мира,  
Невзрачен и мал он на вид,  
Но в окнах его столько света,  
Как будто там солнце горит...

Случайно иль не случайно  
Я в дом тот заветный вошел  
И сердце свое там оставил  
И счастье свое там нашел...

To Il'fa

There is a house on Mira Street,  
It looks insignificant and small,  
But there is so much light in the windows,  
As if the sun shone from within...

By chance, or not by chance  
I entered that coveted house  
And there I left my heart  
And there I found my happiness...<sup>733</sup>

They were married a month and a half after their first meeting, on March 29, 1958. “He wanted our wedding to be on April 22, Lenin’s birthday, but I was not so devoted to the Bolshevik Party as to subordinate my life to Lenin,” Il’fa later recalled.<sup>734</sup> A week later, on April

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<sup>732</sup> Il’fa Il’iasova Dzhangugurova-Dzhandosova, interview recorded by Asya Tulesova, Almaty, Kazakhstan, July 18, 2018.

<sup>733</sup> Sandzhar Dzhandosov, “Il’fe,” in *Sandzhar Dzhandosov*, 107.

<sup>734</sup> Dzhangugurova-Dzhandosova, “On proshel surovuiu zhiznennuiu shkolu!” 106.

5, they celebrated their wedding at the home of Il'fa's relatives the Sarbasovs.<sup>735</sup> "We had such a wedding by the standards of those times," the bride remembered. "Everyone saw it as so remarkable that the descendants of two such important families in Kazakhstan had found each other and joined together."<sup>736</sup> The guests included a large number of relatives from both sides, as well as many family members of prominent Kazakh "enemies of the people," recently returned to Alma-Ata and reunited with friends and acquaintances for the first time in two decades. In this context, the newlyweds were hardly the main attraction. "It seemed that they completely forgot about us," Il'fa later remembered.<sup>737</sup> Nevertheless, even when the young couple snuck out for a walk, they could not escape the symbolic importance of their union. "Two older Kazakhs came up to us and asked, 'Is it true that somewhere around here Il'ias's daughter and Oraz's son are getting married?'"<sup>738</sup>

Reflecting on her wedding decades later, Il'fa summed up its significance for the descendants of Kazakhstan's early Soviet elite: "This was a rebirth of the dear names of the past, a revival of that which had seemingly been expelled, shot, had disappeared into exile or into orphanages. But we survived."<sup>739</sup>

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<sup>735</sup> Kazakh weddings comprise several different ceremonies, which are usually held on different days and involve different constellations of participants. The main celebration, with the largest number of guests, is often held after the couple have already formalized their civil marriage.

<sup>736</sup> Il'fa Il'iasova Dzhansugurova-Dzhandosova, interview recorded by Asya Tulesova, Almaty, Kazakhstan, July 18, 2018.

<sup>737</sup> Dzhansugurova-Dzhandosova, "On proshel surovuiu zhiznennuiu shkoluu!" 106.

<sup>738</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>739</sup> *Ibid.*



**Figure 9: Sandzhar Dzhandosov and Il'fa Dzhangugurova-Dzhandosova with their daughter Azhar. Family collection.**

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Arkhiv Prezidenta Respubliki Kazakhstan (APRK)

- f.139: Kirgizskii (Kazakhskii) oblastnoi Komitet Rossiiskoi Kommunisticheskoi partii (bol'shevikov)
- f.141: Kazakhskii Kraevoi Komitet Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi partii (bol'shevikov)
- f.708: Tsentral'nyi Komitet Kommunisticheskoi partii Kazakhstana
- f.718: Kirgizskaia (Kazakhskaia) oblastnaia kontrol'naia komissiiia Rossiiskoi Kommunisticheskoi partii (bol'shevikov)
- f.719: Kazakhskaia Kraevaia Kontrol'naia Komissiiia Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi partii (bol'shevikov) – Narodnyi komissariat Raboche-krest'ianskoi instpektsii KASSR
- f.725: Upolnomochennyi Komissii partiinogo kontrol'ia pri Tsentral'nom Komitete Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi partii (bol'shevikov) po Kazakhstanu
- f.811: Institut politicheskikh issledovaniï Tsentral'nogo Komiteta Kommunisticheskoi partii Kazakhstana

Tsentrāl'nyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Respubliki Kazakhstan (TsGARK)

- f.5: Tsentrāl'nyi ispolnitel'nyi komitet Kirgizskoi (Kazakhskoi) ASSR
- f.30: Sovet narodnykh komissarov Kazakhskoi ASSR
- f.269: Dokumenty uchastnikov stroitel'stva sotsializma v Kazakhstane
- f.1012: Gabitova, Fatima Zeinullinovna
- f.1023: Dzhangil'din, Alibi Togzhanovich
- f.1363: Vospominaniia i lichnye dokumenty uchastnikov Velikoi Oktiabr'skoi Sotsialisiticheskoi Revoliutsii i grazhdanskoi voiny v Kazakhstane

Russian Federation:

Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF)

- f.130: Sovet narodnykh komissarov RSFSR
- f.1235: Vserossiiskii tsentrāl'nyi ispolnitel'nyi komitet RSFSR
- f.3316: Tsentrāl'nyi ispolnitel'nyi komitet SSSR
- f.5446: Sovet ministrov SSSR

Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no-Politicheskoi Istorii (RGASPI)

- f.17: Tsentrāl'nyi Komitet VKP(b)
- f.62: Sredneaziatskoe biuro TsK VKP(b)

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