

KAZAKH INTELLIGENTSIA AND THE QUEST FOR
EGALITARIANISM, 1917-1927

A Master's Thesis

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EGALITARIANISM, 1917-1927

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I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in International Relations.

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ABSTRACT

KAZAKH INTELLIGENTSIA AND THE QUEST FOR EGALITARIANISM, 1917-1927

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Within its multiethnic empire, Tsarist Russia institutionalized the inequality between Russians and non-Orthodox, non-Russian peoples. At the beginning of the 20th century, the country was undergoing radical political transformations that included the participation of actors from the borderlands. By bringing to the fore the voice from the periphery, this thesis examines the political history of making Soviet Kazakhstan between 1917 and 1927 from the perspective of the local Kazakh politicians. The central question is why Kazakh intellectuals engaged with the Soviet project. Based on the documents of the local elite, the main argument is that the Kazakh political establishment strived to achieve an egalitarian position within Russia, which became an essential determinant for their engagement with the Soviet project. Specifically, the struggle for equality occurred in three dimensions. Firstly, the intelligentsia strove to achieve equal rights for the indigenous population and equal representation within the multiethnic state. This became the determining factor in their acceptance of the Soviet power. The second dimension was an effort to overcome the Tsarist legacy – that is, to

eliminate the historical inequality between dominant and oppressed nations and thereby ensure actual equality. The last dimension focuses on Kazakh statesmen's ideas to transform the Kazakh society in conformity with egalitarian principles. Specifically, the emphasis lies in the spread of education and class restructuring of society, which corresponded to the Soviet project. This latter dimension would also challenge the Central Party's interpretation in the mid-1920s that the local statesmen were either a conservative or nationalist force.

Keywords: Egalitarianism, Inequality, Kazakh intelligentsia, Soviet Kazakhstan, Tsarist legacy

ÖZET

KAZAK ENTELİJENSİYASI VE EŞİTLİK MÜCADELESİ, 1917-1927

Tustikbay, Nurzhan

Yüksek Lisans, Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü

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Çok uluslu imperatorluğun içinde, Rus Çarlığı Ruslarla Rus olmayan ve Ortodoks olmayan halklar arasındaki eşitsizliği kurumsallaştırmıştır. 20.yüzyılın başında ülke, sınır bölgelerinden aktörlerin de katılımını içeren radikal bir dönüşüm geçirmiştir. Bu tez, çevrenin (periphery) etkisini öne çıkararak, Sovyet Kazakistanı'nın 1917-1927 yılları arasında inşasının siyasi tarihini, yerel Kazak siyasetçiler perspektifinden incelemektedir. Esas soru, Kazak entelektüellerin, Sovyet projesine neden ilgi gösterdikleridir. Yerel elitin belgelerine dayanan temel argüman, Kazak siyasi nizamı Rusya içerisinde eşit bir pozisyona ulaşma çabası gösterdiğidir. Bu çaba, onların Sovyet projesine gösterdikleri ilginin belirleyici faktörü olmuştur. Eşitlik mücadelesi bilhassa üç boyutta ortaya çıkmıştır. İlk olarak, entelijensiya, çok uluslu bir devlette yerli halk için eşit haklar ve eşit temsil için mücadele etmiştir. Bu, onların Sovyet gücünü kabul etmelerinin ana faktörü olmuştur. İkinci boyut, Çarlık mirasını aşma, yani baskın ve ezilen milletler arasındaki tarihsel eşitsizliği ortadan kaldırma ve bu sayede hakiki eşitliği sağlama gayretidir. Son boyut, Kazak devlet adamlarının, Kazak toplumunu eşitlikçi ilkelerle uyumlu biçimde dönüştürme fikirlerine odaklanmaktadır. Eğitimin

yaygınlaşması ve toplumun sınıfsal yeniden yapılanmasına özel önem verilmiş, bu da Sovyet çağdaşlık modeliyle örtüşmüştür. Bu boyut ayrıca, Merkezi Parti'nin 1920'lerin ortasında, yerel devlet adamlarının muhafazakar ya da milliyetçi güç olduğun yorumuna da karşı çıkmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Eşitlik, Eşitsizlik, Kazak Entelijensiya, Sovyet Kazakistan, Çarlık mirası

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The interpretations and conclusions that I develop in this thesis are solely my own work and, therefore my responsibility.

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GLOSSARY

<i>ASSR</i>	Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic
<i>auyl</i>	encampment of nomadic Kazakh people
<i>bai</i>	wealthy person in Kazakh nomadic context
<i>bedniak</i>	a poor person in Russian
<i>bii</i>	judge in traditional Kazakh nomadic society
<i>Gosplan</i>	the state agency of the USSR managing the economic planning
<i>inorodtsy</i>	non-Russian and non-Orthodox indigenous people of Siberia, Central Asia, Caucasus and other borderland parts of empire, as well as Jews
<i>Kadet</i>	member of the Russian Constitutional Democratic Party
<i>KazTsIK</i>	Kazakh Central Executive Committee
<i>komsomol</i>	the Communist Party's young branch in the Soviet Union
<i>korenizatsiia</i>	the Soviet national policy aimed to develop the national elite and national language of non-Russian ethnic groups. Literally means "indigenization"
<i>kulak</i>	wealthy peasant in Russian
<i>memleket</i>	state in Kazakh

<i>Narkom Prosveshcheniia</i>	Ministry of Education in the Soviet Union. <i>Prosveshchenie</i> literally means enlightenment
<i>OGPU</i>	Soviet secret police
<i>qalym</i>	bride price
<i>Qazaq</i>	the newspaper of Kazakh intelligentsia published during the pre-Soviet period
<i>rabochie</i>	workers
<i>raion</i>	small territorial unit
<i>rodina</i>	homeland in Russian
<i>RSFSR</i>	The Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic
<i>seredniak</i>	representative of a middle class in Russian
<i>Sovnarkom</i>	The Council of People's Commissars
<i>TsK</i>	Central Committee
<i>TsIK</i>	Central Executive Committee
<i>VTsIK</i>	The All-Russian Central Executive Committee
<i>zemstvo</i>	local government councils in rural areas

INTRODUCTION

Thomas Piketty's book *Capital and Ideology* (2020) studies the history of “inequality regimes”¹ in different parts of the world. The focus of the book is to examine how various “inequality regimes” throughout history were justified and, as a result, structured the political, social, and economic organization of societies. One of the main conclusions is that egalitarianism stood as a driver of human development. In other words, as Piketty claims, “what made economic development and human progress possible was the struggle for equality and education and not the sanctification of property, stability, or inequality.”² Drawing from lessons on the global history of inequality, the author also proposes a pathway for human progress, which he calls “participatory socialism.” It is defined as a “new universalistic egalitarian narrative, a new ideology of equality, social ownership, education, and knowledge and power sharing.”³ In short, the struggle for equality matters in history, and this notion provides the basis for the subject of this master thesis.

The “inequality regime” in Russian Empire existed and evolved in various forms. In a multiethnic context, the monarchy institutionalized the inequality between Russians and non-Orthodox, non-Russian peoples. At the beginning of the 20th century, the whole country was undergoing radical political transformations that included the participation of actors from the borderlands. By bringing to the fore the voice from the periphery, this

¹ inequality regime is “a set of discourses and institutional arrangements intended to justify and structure the economic, social, and political inequalities of a given society.” See Thomas Piketty. *Capital and Ideology*. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer (Harvard University Press, 2020), 2

² Piketty, *Capital and Ideology*, 3

³ Piketty, *Capital and Ideology*, 3

thesis examines the political history of making Soviet Kazakhstan between 1917 and 1927 from the perspective of the local Kazakh politicians. The central question is why Kazakh intellectuals engaged with the Soviet project. Based on the documents of the local elite, the main argument is that the Kazakh political establishment strived to achieve an egalitarian position within Russia, which became an essential determinant for their engagement with the Soviet project. Specifically, the struggle for equality occurred in three dimensions. Firstly, the intelligentsia strove to achieve equal rights for the indigenous population and equal representation within the multiethnic state. This became the determining factor in their acceptance of the Soviet power. The second dimension was an effort to overcome the Tsarist legacy – that is, to eliminate the inequitable gap between historically dominant and oppressed nations and thereby ensure actual equality of nations within the USSR. The last dimension focuses on Kazakh statesmen’s ideas to transform the Kazakh society in conformity with egalitarian principles. Specifically, the emphasis lies in the spread of education and class restructuring of society, which corresponded to the Soviet vision of modernity. In addition, all these dimensions partly characterize the nature of the “inequality regime” in Russia in the first quarter of the 20th century.

The scholarship has emphasized how the Tsarist regime failed to initiate inclusionary policies for its non-Russian and non-Orthodox subjects. Indeed, the monarchy was unsuccessful in reconciling its multiethnic structure and thereby transcend the unequal gap between Russians and *inorodtsy* (aliens).⁴ Furthermore, none of the non-Russian ethnic groups who belonged to *inorodtsy* status had separatist intentions despite the various national awakening processes.⁵ The Tsarist officials and

⁴ *Inorodtsy* literally means ‘aliens.’ According to the Tsarist regime, *inorodtsy* were non-Russian and non-Orthodox indigenous people of Siberia, Central Asia, Caucasus, and other people residing in borderland parts of the empire, as well as Jews. They were subject to special laws that usually carried discriminative character.

On detailed discussion how the Tsarism failed to build a coherent nation given its multiethnic structure and also on the unequal relationship between Russians and non-Russians, see Ronald Grigor Suny, "The Empire Strikes Out: Imperial Russia, 'National' Identity, and Theories of Empire," in *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, eds. Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 23-57.

⁵ Lev Shternberg, “Inorodtsy. Obshii Obzor” in *Formy Natsional'nogo Dvizheniia v Sovremennykh Gosudarstvakh*, ed. A.I. Kastelianskii (Saint-Petersburg: Obshestvennaia Polza, 1910), 532-533, 566

the White forces showed reluctance to grant equal rights and equal status to non-Russians and accommodate their national claims. Apart from institutional discrimination, this was justified based on the idea that non-Russians did not achieve the necessary developmental level. Moreover, those metropole reactionary forces viewed *inorodtsy* with suspicion as if they were in alliance with foreign Central Powers or cherished separatist intentions. As chapter one will show, the Kazakh intelligentsia's political claims would also fall victim to such ideological judgment. Despite this, the local elite persistently sought equal rights and representation from the political regime. This meant the recognition to be regarded as an equal member within Russia in legal terms and, thus, to be institutionally represented in Russian political affairs, most notably on equal foot along with other nations. The claims about nationhood were means to gain equal status.⁶ Not less important was the perception that Russia was envisioned as the homeland for the intelligentsia. With new sources, I will contribute to this narrative and further add that gaining equality played a pivotal role in the Kazakh political establishment's convergence with Bolsheviks during the Civil War.

Over the past two decades, historical scholarship on Soviet nationality policy has provided a thorough and excellent overview of how the Soviet leadership became the “vanguard” of non-Russian nations and advanced their nationhood forms, albeit through Moscow's window.⁷ These historical accounts have been further supplemented with narratives from the periphery, including Soviet Central Asia, that emphasized to a certain extent the transformative role of Central Asian statesmen in Soviet policy-making.⁸ Much of the discussion focused on the subject of nationality. Meanwhile, the

⁶ Pete Rottier, “Creating the Kazak Nation: The Intelligentsia's Quest for Acceptance in the Russian Empire, 1905-1920,” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 2005), https://www.academia.edu/20709654/Creating_the_Kazak_nation_the_intelligencias_quest_for_acceptance_in_the_Russian_empire_1905_1920_?auto=download

⁷ Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001). For the role of ethnographers, see Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005)

⁸ Adeeb Khalid, *Making of Uzbekistan: Nation, Empire, and Revolution in the early USSR* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015). Adrienne Lynn Edgar, *Tribal Nation: the Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004). For the role of Central Asian elites in national-territorial

attempt to forge nations was accompanied by other no less significant policies, which provided the necessary fertile ground for the implementation of nationhood forms.⁹ Specifically, Bolsheviks had to undermine the Russian nation's dominance and “offensive nationalism,”¹⁰ especially at the local level in borderlands of post-empire. The eradication of historical oppression generated by “Great Russian chauvinism” had to ensure the equality of nations at the All-Union level, as argued by key actors of Soviet leadership.¹¹ Put in broader terms, Soviet national policy, when launched in 1923, was not only about granting forms of nationhood but also an attempt to eliminate the historical inegalitarian gap between Russians and non-Russians. Thus, Bolsheviks had to cope with the Tsarist legacy. Before 1923, the Soviet upper echelon discussed how to deal with this massive problem, especially when non-Russians perceived Bolsheviks as the same oppressors as the Tsarist officials, disguised under the different masks.

In line with a scholarship that emphasized the non-passive role of the Central Asian local elite, chapter two will illustrate how the Kazakh political establishment tried to address the issue of the Tsarist legacy. By reflecting on the inegalitarian reality at the local level, they urged Lenin to ensure the conditions for actual equality even though legal equality was obtained after February Revolution. Therefore, before 1923, the Kazakh intellectuals were involved in the ideological origins of the Soviet national policy. By going beyond the topic of the Central Asian local elite’s role in nation-making, my focus is thereby somewhat centered around the idea of equality promotion on the part of the peripheral actor – in this case, Kazakh intellectuals. This constitutes the second dimension of their struggle for equality. Having mentioned this, I do not claim that Kazakh statesmen were sole contributors to the Soviet national program. The goal is rather to explore the participatory role of the particular peripheral actor by showing its concerns and proposals regarding the problem of the Tsarist legacy. This

delimitation, see Haugen, Arne. *The Establishment of National Republics in Soviet Central Asia*. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

¹⁰ These terms: offensive and defensive nationalism, Great Russian chauvinism I borrow from Terry Martin’s book.

¹¹ Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 1-27

would also partly challenge the view that the initiation of this grand-scale policy was a solely top-down initiative.

In the mid-1920s, the Central Party accused the Kazakh political establishment of right-wing deviations. However, the Party's interpretation that indigenous politicians were a conservative and nationalistic-oriented ideological force does not correspond with the reading of the documents of non-party origin. Indeed, the position of Kazakh statesmen on transforming the country did not diverge from the Soviet project.

The final chapter of this thesis will emphasize domestic issues that are related to developmental issues. Apart from the question of nationality, Bolsheviks also aspired to promote modernity. To this end, they tried to overcome pre-revolutionary social backwardness, which was particularly peculiar to the Central Asian region. Apart from promoting universal education, class politics was a fundamental part of modernization, even if the region lacked a proletariat. As documents from Soviet-era Kazakh political figure demonstrate, ideological premises of class division were relevant to the radical restructure of Kazakh society. Beyond strict industrial parameters, Kazakh society, just like other Central Asian societies, also had a wealthy and privileged class. Western scholarship on early Soviet Central Asia had indicated that national projects of local elites and the socialist program of the Bolsheviks have often clashed with each other.¹² As the third chapter examines, this was different in the Kazakh Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic (KazakhASSR), where socialist endeavors such as class-politics and national developmental policies were often intertwined, even mutually reinforcing each other in the formation of Soviet Kazakhstan in the 1920s. In other words, the transformation of the nation was embedded in egalitarian principles. In that sense, it incorporated class analysis of the Soviet project in attempts to modernize the society. As a result, the Kazakh political establishment was eager to create a modern socialist nation. This set of developmental ideas constitute the second dimension of striving for the egalitarian path. This will be shown by comparing Kazakh communist-national, who had ties to the pre-revolutionary, non-Soviet intelligentsia, and Kazakh left-wing figure who joined the Bolshevik camp before the October Revolution. Notwithstanding this

¹² Edgar, *Tribal Nation*; Khalid, *Making of Uzbekistan*

difference, both figures had many commonalities – that is, the development of Kazakhstan was deeply rooted in the notion of achieving socioeconomic equality.

This thesis consists of three chapters. The first chapter partly provides the background to the following two chapters related to the Soviet period. The first one discusses the national project of Kazakh intelligentsia and how it positioned itself vis-a-vis all different political regimes of Russia – the Tsarist monarchy, Provisional Government, the Whites, and the Soviets during the turbulent revolutionary period. This positionality was shaped by the struggle for egalitarianism which became the primary reason that ultimately drove the Kazakh elite's position to the Soviet side during the Civil War. Moreover, I will illustrate the comparison with another regional actor – Uzbek intelligentsia or Jadids, and what explains their convergence with the Soviets. The second chapter examines the participatory role of the Kazakh establishment in the process of Soviet nationality program making. The emphasis lies in their calls to overcome the inequitable historical gap between indigenous and dominant Russian people. This chapter also brings forward how Moscow tried to consolidate its power over the actor in borderland through alleged accusations that the Kazakh statesmen were a reactionary, non-class attentive force that hindered prospects of the Soviet-building at the locality. This will be challenged given the narrative based on documents of non-party origin. The final chapter discusses the developmental ideas of two influential Kazakh figures. Despite their pre-Soviet differences, both articulated egalitarian ideas on how to restructure the traditional society of indigenous people and provide educational and economic developments that reflect the needs of society, especially of those who were disadvantaged.

This study relies primarily on various sources from collection documents. The first chapter will draw upon the first two volumes in a series of *Dvizhenie Alash. Sbornik Dokumentov i Materialov* (Alash Movement. Collection of Documents)¹³ that cover the period between 1900-1920 and elaborate on Kazakh intelligentsia's activities. The same actors will continue to play a role in the Soviet-building process as some members

¹³ E.M. Griбанова and S.O. Smagulova, eds., *Dvizhenie Alash. Sbornik Dokumentov i Materialov. April' 1901 g. - dekabr 1917 g.*, Vol. 1 (Almaty: Alash, 2004); E.M. Griбанова and S.O. Smagulova, eds., *Dvizhenie Alash. Sbornik Dokumentov i Materialov. Tom 2. Dekabr 1917 g. - mai 1920 g.*, Vol. 2 (Almaty: Alash, 2005)

become either non-party nationals or communist-nationals. The second chapter will rely on sources from the third volume¹⁴ of the mentioned *Dvizhenie Alash* series and some other published collection documents related to the 1920-1927 period. The final chapter will be based on collected documents of particular individuals. The types of all documents vary; some are in the form of protocols, party directives, administrative and analytical notes, while others are notes from newspapers and letters left by various political actors. Some of these documents are in the Kazakh language. The origins of given sources are not geographically restricted to Kazakhstan since some documents are registered in Russia's archival institutions.

¹⁴ E.M. Griбанова and S.O. Smaghulova, eds., *Dvizhenie Alash. Sbornik Dokumentov i Materialov. April' 1920 – 1928*, Vol. 3 book 1 (Almaty: Elshezhire, 2007)

CHAPTER 1

INTELLIGENTSIA AND PATH TO SOVIET POWER

The proliferation of nationalism at the beginning of the 20th century, the Bolshevik response towards non-Russian national claims, combined with Kazakh reformists' demand for recognition as an equal within Russia, would lead to the creation of the Kazakh Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic (KazASSR) within the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) on August 26, 1920. This chapter seeks to provide a narrative for the third story and offer a background for the following two chapters. In the minds of Kazakh intellectuals, indigenous people, as other non-Russians, were entitled to equal rights, and Kazakhs, as an imagined nation, had the right to have an equal representation within Russia. These claims defined their positionality vis-à-vis all political regimes: monarchy, the Provisional Government, the Whites, and the Soviets. In existing scholarship, it was argued that Kazakh intelligentsia strived to present Kazakhs and their territory as a nation to achieve equal status within the empire.¹⁵ This chapter builds on this argument by providing a post-revolutionary narrative - the aftermath of October 1917. Hence, it contends that the Bolshevik proposal to ensure equality became a crucial determinant of why Kazakh intelligentsia collaborated with the Soviets. This chapter also situates Kazakh intelligentsia with respect to a range of religious and political forces within Russia, especially by drawing a comparison with another regional actor – the Jadids or Uzbek intelligentsia of Turkestan.

¹⁵ Pete Rottier, “Creating the Kazak Nation”

The Emergence of Kazakh intelligentsia

By the beginning of the 20th century, a new group of Kazakh political intellectuals emerged in the Kazakh steppe, who advocated for a Western-oriented and secular development model to overcome the backwardness of traditional Kazakh society. A not less important goal was to awaken national consciousness among the indigenous nomadic masses, thereby transcending tribal forms of self-identification.

Most of the intelligentsia representatives received education in Russian schools and, following that, in various Russian institutes of higher education.¹⁶ With the attainment of primary education in the mother tongue, intelligentsia encouraged Kazakh youth to attend those schools and institutes to comprehend the Russian language and acquire modern knowledge. Accordingly, such a pathway would help them be attached to culture and progress and develop the "Russian civil consciousness."¹⁷ Besides the production and publication of Kazakh literature, leading figures of the intelligentsia such as Akhmet Baitursynov and Mirzhakyp Dulatov also put efforts into translating Russian writers' works, including Krylov, Tolstoy, Pushkin, Lermontov, from Russian to Kazakh so that to familiarize people with Russian culture.¹⁸

Generally, the intelligentsia wrote a lot on the issue of how to overcome the backwardness of their stagnant society. Perhaps, one of the most severe criticism touched directly upon nomadism which, at that time, was an inseparable part of Kazakh identity and means of living (traditional economic system). In terms of modernization, national figures urged Kazakhs to sedentarize since the nomadic system was ineffective.¹⁹

¹⁶ Gulnar Kendirbay, "The national liberation movement of the Kazakh intelligentsia at the beginning of the 20th century," *Central Asian Survey* 16.4 (1997): 491-492

¹⁷ "Auyl'nye shkoly u kirgiz" (28th October 1911), in *Ālikhan Nūrmūhamedūly Bōkeikhan (1866-1937). Shygharmalarynyng 7 tomdyq tolyq zhinaghy. Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 7 tomakh. III tom*, ed. Sultankhan Zhusip (Astana: Saryarqa BÜ, 2009), 3:353

¹⁸ Ivan Sablin and Alexander Korobeynikov, "Buryat-Mongol and Alash autonomous movements before the Soviets, 1905-1917," *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples* 12.3 (2016): 217

¹⁹ on Alash leaders' insistence that Kazakhs had to transform from nomadic to sedentary lifestyle in order to modernize, see Gulnar Kendirbaeva, "'We are children of Alash...' The Kazakh intelligentsia at the

In 1910, Alikhan Bukeikhanov, who would become the prominent leader of Kazakh intelligentsia, wrote an article for an ethnographic volume that provided an overview of national movements across the Russian empire.²⁰ While admitting that political awakening among the masses was weak, he noted the existence and emergence of two political groups in the Kazakh steppe. By putting religion as primary ideology, one is rallied around national-religious beliefs and aspires to be part of the united Muslim movement; they are called "Turkophiles" or "Pan-Islamists." Another group - "Westernizers" (*zapadniki*), which was "brought up in Russian literature, believed in European culture, and sees the happiness of the homeland in the rightful implementation of the fruits of Western culture and considering religious issues as non-essential." As further remarked, Muslims-Tatar is likely to provide a model for the former. In contrast, the Western-oriented group would approach the Russian oppositionists, especially the party of *Narodnaia Svoboda* (the Party of People's Freedom).²¹

While Bukeikhanov himself belonged to the group of "Westernizers," he also was *Kadet* (member of the Russian Constitutional Democratic Party) between 1905-1917 and even a member of the party's central committee. In most cases, Kazakh intelligentsia found appealing the political ideas of *Kadets*. Their campaign to bring a Western-style parliamentary system and constitution to Russia resonated with the Kazakh elite, who saw it as an excellent opportunity for Russia to become the European-oriented democracy where non-Russian themselves would become citizens and acquire equal rights. Furthermore, *Kadets'* attitudes of viewing Russian people as the ones who needed enlightenment to escape backwardness were attractive to Kazakh intelligentsia, which evaluated their traditional society in the same terms.²²

From a global perspective, Rottier emphasized that intelligentsia aspired imagined the Kazakh nation to be on equal foot with other modern nations. Specifically,

beginning of the 20th century in search of national identity and prospects of the cultural survival of the Kazakh people," *Central Asian Survey* 18.1 (1999): 6-13

²⁰ A. Bukeikhanov, "Kirgizy" (1910), in *Formy Natsional'nogo Dvizheniia v Sovremennykh Gosudarstvakh. Avstro-Vengriia, Rossiia, Germaniia*, ed. A.I. Kastelianskii (Saint-Petersburg: Obshchestvennaia Polza, 1910), 575-600

²¹ Bukeikhanov, "Kirgizy," 597-600

²² Kendirbay, "The national liberation movement," 494

he derives the term *bīrīnshī qatar el* (on a par with advanced countries), sometimes used by Kazakh intellectuals, referring to countries that enjoyed a respected status in the international political system. In other words, intelligentsia strived to advance its society towards that goal of becoming a *bīrīnshī qatar el* – that is, “a modern nation that would enjoy all the rights and obligations in a similar way as other nations within the empire.”²³

It is also worth considering how external actors of that time evaluated the political goals of the intelligentsia. Siberian ethnographer Grigorii Potanin, who was also a colleague to some prominent figures of the intelligentsia, noted the following in 1917:

The Kazakh movement is preoccupied with one unresolved question, with the question of national revival, with as much possible absorption, under given physical conditions, of the benefits of European culture, on the free development of the people's forces in all areas of human creativity.²⁴

Although intellectuals' printing organ put forward the essential task of awakening national consciousness, it usually did not extend to the illiterate masses. Potanin further underlines that intelligentsia's agitational work reached out only to Kazakh society's educated upper layers.²⁵ Another account points out that only a few Kazakhs were aware of issues related to internal politics. Generally, Kazakhs treat all their politicians in a "completely indifferent and apathetic way."²⁶ Since 1913 intelligentsia has been consistently promulgating its ideas through a local newspaper called *Qazaq*. However, the illiteracy rate surpassing 90% among the whole ethnic group²⁷ makes a strong case that the national movement was at an elitist level. Miroslav Hroch designed three stages

²³ Rottier, “Creating Kazakh Nation,” 188, 281

²⁴ G.N. Potanin, “Kirgizy Posle Perevorota” (November 14, 1917), in *Dvizhenie Alash. Sbornik dokumentov i materialov. April' 1901 g. - dekabr' 1917 g.* Vol. 1, eds. E.M. Gribova and S.O. Smagholova (Almaty: Alash, 2004), 1:463

²⁵ Potanin, “Kirgizy Posle Perevorota,” 1:459

²⁶ “Doklad chinovnika osobykh poruchenii pri glavnokomanduiushchem i komanduiushchem voiskami zakaspiskoi obl. verkhovnomu pravitelii i verkhovnomu glavnokomanduiushchemu o polozhenii v stepnom krae” (after August 31, 1918), in *Dvizhenie Alash. Sbornik Dokumentov i Materialov. Tom 2. Dekabr 1917 g. - mai 1920 g.*, eds. Gribova and Smagholova, Vol. 2 (Almaty: Alash, 2005), 2: 238

²⁷ Sarah Cameron, *The Hungry Steppe: Famine, Violence, and the Making of Soviet Kazakhstan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), 8

of nationalism advancement among small nations of Eastern Europe: in the first stage, the educated elite engaged in the study of "folklore and popular culture"; then, in the second stage, this elite would pursue the idea of creating nation-state; in the third stage, with the mobilization of masses around their political leaders, the fully-fledged national movement would emerge.²⁸ Drawing from this, one could deduce that the pre-Soviet national movement driven by Kazakh intelligentsia stood on the second stage.

Pre-revolutionary Quest for Equality

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the intelligentsia has been actively pressuring to gain equality from the Tsarist regime. Kazakhs, like many other non-Russian nationalities, were entitled to the status of *inorodtsy*. Obtaining equality meant, first and foremost, the attainment of equal rights and the end of colonization policies, especially the loss of land to resettled European migrants from mainland Russia. With the arrival of Russian peasants from central parts of Russia, the Kazakh steppe's fertile and grazing lands were open to seizure. Consequently, the economic lifestyle of nomads considerably deteriorated as new migratory routes were not convenient as before.²⁹ Hence, the recognition of equal rights from the monarchical center carried critical importance and as the case of conscription in 1916 illustrate, the way to realize it required radical concessions.

On June 25, 1916, Tsarist rulers issued a decree that obliged military conscription of *inorodtsy* for Russia's WWI front. Kazakh intelligentsia was entirely in favor of the decree. Even months before, the newspaper *Qazaq* discussed whether Kazakh men could serve in infantry or horse cavalry. The issue of whether Kazakhs might have a willingness to be conscripted in the first place was not debated at all. For instance, Bukeikhanov even went to Petrograd to discuss and lobby several officials on prospects of Kazakh men to have training in horse cavalry. Nevertheless, later it would turn out that Central Asian men would be recruited for grunt work such as trench

²⁸ Martin, *The Affirmative Action*, 15

²⁹ "Sud'ba kazakhskogo zemlepol'zovaniia" (3rd November 1911), in *Ālikhan Nūrmūhamedūly Bōkeikhan*, ed. Sultankhan Zhusip, 3:347-350

digging. However, it did not shake the staunch pro-mobilization position of Kazakh intelligentsia, albeit the low-status role assigned to *inorodtsy* on the war front that reflected the unjust hierarchical order of nationalities within the Russian empire. The rationale behind the support of the decree was that contribution to war would free Kazakhs from *inorodtsy* status and provide the status of citizenship, especially if the war ends with victory in Russia's favor. Thus, the incentive to recognize equal rights was the main reason that explains intelligentsia's support of conscription policy.

Even though the decree instigated revolts across Central Asia and subsequent suppression by the Tsarist army resulted in human losses and emigrations, the position of intelligentsia did not change. For Kazakh reformists, the root causes of the rebellion are not tied to the Tsar's decree per se but rather related to the implementation and imposition process at the local level. Specifically, the hastiness of conscription, the unpreparedness of the masses to consciously realize the aims of war and their role in it, and abuse of power by local Tsarist administrators were evaluated as the main reasons that caused the revolt.³⁰ At the same time, Bukeikhanov and his fellows attempted to mitigate those adverse effects. Among the several proposals are the necessity to postpone conscription in some provinces, the partial draft in the first stage by restriction of the age range, exemption rights for particular workers and administrative officials, as well as the provision of adequate medical services and supplies for those who were already in the war front.³¹

Moreover, assuming that Russian officials may have suspicions based on the ground that Kazakhs' disobedience during conscription is the direct result of the outside enemy's influence, intelligentsia tried to refute this view immediately. Apart from outlining general problems associated with the draft process, the telegram addressed to State Duma also emphasized that young Kazakh men's discontent had nothing in common with separatist intentions. As observers of local dynamics, intelligentsia tried to assure that revolt had homegrown character. To be sure, there were no signs that alleged

³⁰ "Iz protokola doprasa," in *Dvizhenie Alash*, eds. Gribanova and Smaghulova, 1:202-203

³¹ "Protokol chatsnogo soveshchiania kazakhskogo naselenia turgaiskoi, ural'skoi, akmolinskoi i semirechenskoi obl. o vystuplenii naselenia protiv mobilizatsii i provdeniia neobkhodimykh meropriiatii po osushchestvleniiu prizyva na tylovye raboty" (August 7, 1916), 1:170-171

agents of foreign powers representing Austro-Hungary, Germany, or Ottoman Turkey could have recruited locals or financially supported them against the Russian state apparatus.³²

The Revolutionary Year

With the onset of the February Revolution and the overthrow of the monarchy, the Provisional Government granted equal rights to non-Russians, thereby eradicating the conventional and legal categorization of *inorodtsy*. It became an elated momentum for Kazakh intelligentsia, who has been pursuing equality within the Russian Empire since 1905. As one letter of correspondence in Kazakh characterized the new power in Petrograd, “New government will rule people based on equality and freedom, with impartial attitude to blood and religion” (*Zhana ùkimet halykty teňgshilik hãm kenshilikpen bilep, qany, dñĩ basqa dep alalamai baqpaq*).³³ While admitting the non-participation of non-Russians in the overthrow of the monarchy, Kazakh intelligentsia expressed its admiration with Russian forces who stood at the forefront of the February Revolution and aspired to transform the country into a European democratic republic. As Bukeikhanov noted, granting freedom and equality to Kazakh people became achievable due to the struggle of Russian progressive and liberal elements.

Similarly, the *Qazaq* newspaper stressed to its audience that equality triumphed as a result of efforts made by enlightened Russian forces - its intellectuals and soldiers.³⁴ One of the opening remarks in the congress in east Kazakhstan started with a description of the Tsarist colonization policy and hardships caused by it and indicated how the Kazakh masses were in a state of corrupted morality. Then, the opening speech continued as "... but the great Russian revolution cut it, tore the chains and fetters. With all our freedom, citizenship, emancipation from slavery, a bright future, [we] are

³² “K istorii vosstaniia kirgiz v 1916 godu,” para. 9 and 10, StudMed, last modified 2007, https://www.studmed.ru/view/k-istorii-vosstaniya-kirgiz-v-1916-godu_cb717803fcb.html?page=2

³³ “Torghai oblysynda qurylghan azamattyq komitettining hattaması” (17 March 1917), in *Dvizhenie Alash*, eds. Gribanova and Smaghulova, 1:220

³⁴ “Eskĩ ùkimettĩng qũlap, azattyq taňgy atqandyghy turasyndaghy Ālikhan, Mirzhaqyp, Mũstafanng “Alash ũlyna” maqalasy” (April 12, 1917), 1:247

indebted to the great Russian revolution. Long live the Russian army, organized working people, revolutionary Russian intelligentsia."³⁵

In order to preserve those progressive rights, intelligentsia staunchly supported the Provisional Government and actively prepared for elections to the all-Russian Constituent Assembly. One crucial way of doing this was the organization of regional and all-Kazakh congresses in 1917. Organized by Kazakh national intellectuals, those congresses discussed and set out foreign and domestic realms policies.

To actively support the Provisional Government, all resolutions issued by Kazakh congresses contained the paragraph on war. All of them favored Russia's continued presence in the war until the "victorious end."³⁶ The newspaper *Qazaq* explained that all Kazakhs' fate depended on the strength of the Provisional Government and, therefore, urged to actively support Russia until a successful outcome at the war front. The message was that defeat from Germany means the potential return of "evil" monarchism under Nicholas.³⁷ In the same manner, regional congress in the southern-eastern part of Kazakhstan - Semirech'e, as part of Turkestan at that time - equated freedom and victory in WWI in correlational terms, noting that "newly gained freedom cannot be fully established unless the outside enemies are defeated."³⁸ With regards to activities related to the war, a paragraph on war by one congress, for instance, urged the following: "help to the cause of the defense of the homeland (*rodiny*) by all possible means and thereby contribute to bringing the war to a victorious end; the increase of the sown area; provide all kinds of assistance to food committees of food rations; regularly deliver livestock for the needs of the army, and make every effort to maintain a peaceful life in the rear area."³⁹

³⁵ "Protokol Semipalatinskogo oblastnogo kirgizskogo s'ezda i ego resolutsii" (April 27 - May 7, 1917), 1:297

³⁶ in *Dvizhenie Alash*, eds. Gribanova and Smaghulova, 1:241-242, 1:250, 1:261

³⁷ "Alash Ūlīna!" (1917) in *Ālikhan Nūrmūhamedūly Bōkeikhan (1866-1937). Shygharmalarynyñ 9 tomдық tolyq zhinaghı. Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 9 tomakh*. Vol. 6, ed. Sūltan Khan Zhusīp (Astana: "Saryarqa" BŪ, 2013), 6: 367

³⁸ "Vernyi qalasynda ötken 1-shī Jetīsu oblystyq s'ezīnīn qararlary" (12-23 April 1917), in *Dvizhenie Alash*, eds. Gribanova and Smaghulova, 1:250

³⁹ "Protokol Turgaiskogo oblastnogo kirgizskogo s'ezda s uchastiem predstavitelei oblastei uralskoi, akmolinskoi, semipalatinskoi, syr-dariinskoi i bukeevskoi ordy" (April 2-8, 1917), 1:241-242

In this statement, interestingly, Russia is referred to as homeland (*rodina*), suggesting that the Kazakhs had a moral obligation to commit to the cause of a broader entity that transcended their attachment to the envisioned national-territorial entity. As Rotter notes, Kazakh reformers used the word *Otan* (homeland) to refer to Russia. At the same time, *ata-meken* (also homeland, literally "grandfather's place") was a reference to the territory of Kazakhstan.⁴⁰ There are some instances when the whole of Russia is defined as *memleket* (country).⁴¹ All these also indicate that intelligentsia was concerned with all Russian affairs. For instance, the summer events such as losses in the war front and consequent weakening of the Provisional Government turned out to be a troubling course of events for the whole country, in the interpretation of intelligentsia. Even in such a situation, the establishment urged to fully support the interim government while favoring proposals such as the continuation of war and the Provisional Government's adequate functioning.⁴² Another interesting case is how intelligentsia negatively viewed some Ukrainians' attempts to opt for territorial self-determination either in the form of autonomy or independence, without delegating those issues to the All-Russian Constituent Assembly.⁴³

The perception of Russia as the homeland (*Otan*) leads to a strong point that Kazakh national reformists did not uphold separatist intentions. This critical detail challenges some works in Kazakhstani scholarship, which argues that the Kazakh national movement was a struggle of the intelligentsia to achieve an independent state from Russia.⁴⁴ According to resolutions of Kazakh congresses, especially at national

⁴⁰ Rottier, "Creating the Kazakh Nation," 267. This is can be observed in collected documents as well. Referring in Kazakh to Russia as "Otan," see *Dvizhenie Alash*, eds. Gribanova and Smaghulova, 1:211; Referring in Russian to whole Russia as "rodina," see *Dvizhenie Alash*, eds. Gribanova and Smaghulova, 1:225

⁴¹ Ä. Bökeikhan, "Memleket Khalī" (June 24, 1917), in *Dvizhenie Alash*, eds. Gribanova and Smaghulova, 1:342. In conclusion of this article, it is also written in Kazakh that the fate of "Alash child" is closely tied to its homeland, namely to Russia.

⁴² "Memleket Khalī," 1:339-342

⁴³ "Memleket Khalī," 1:340

⁴⁴ 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), 157. As one of the prominent Kazakhstani scholars, Koigeldiev also is author of foreword to the first volume of *Dvizhenie Alash. Sbornik dokumentov i materialov*, where, he notes that among the basic

level, there is no sign or implicit hint that the political elite considered the separation from the central government in Petrograd. On the contrary, those congresses expressed the view on what governance form and democratic system Russia should follow. In light of this, the intelligentsia was firmly in favor of a "democratic federative republic."⁴⁵

When it comes to the creation of autonomy, the intelligentsia already had this plan since summer 1917.⁴⁶ However, the process of making autonomy was tentative. Before the December All-Kazakh congress, intelligentsia already worked out an autonomy plan with its final resolve left to the forthcoming All-Russian Constituent Assembly's discretion. Before that, within autumn of 1917, national intellectuals approached Siberian autonomy to discuss the possible attachment of Kazakh provinces to it, with the right to cede from Siberia as autonomy in the future. As a result, Kazakh reformists had the plan to postpone the creation of Kazakh autonomy. As Bukeikhanov explained, the deficit of educated and qualified cadres among Kazakhs hardened the prospects for self-governance in the form of autonomy.⁴⁷ Afterward, the Bolshevik coup and the downfall of the Provisional Government caused uncertainty on the political future of Russia. As the All-Kazakh congress in December urged, the potential lawlessness and eruption of violence across post-imperial space, including that of provinces in the Kazakh steppe, necessitated the establishment of Kazakh autonomy, the constitution of which is expected to be authorized by the Constituent Assembly. Thus, intelligentsia created the own interim government (national council) called *Alash-Orda* to politically speak on behalf of Kazakh territory and its people until All-Russian affairs would return to normality.⁴⁸ Principally, autonomy was a responsive act against the background of political uncertainty in Russia. Whether before the October coup or aftermath, formalities of autonomy and its approval were to take final resolve with the

goals of Alash was to "achieve the proclamation of an independent state." Ironically, documents within the same volume show the opposite. See, *Dvizhenie Alash*, eds. Gribanova and Smaghulova, 1:16

⁴⁵ "“Alash” partiiiasynyng baghdarlamasyng jobasy” (October 21, 1917), in *Dvizhenie Alash*, eds. Gribanova and Smaghulova, 1:438-439

⁴⁶ “Resolutsiia obshchekazakhskogo s’ezda” (21-26 July, 1917), 1:375

⁴⁷ “Priezd Alikhana v Semipalatinsk” (November 13, 1917), 1:463

⁴⁸ “Protokol zasedaniia obshchekirgizskogo s’ezda” (December 5-13, 1917), 1:476-477

authorization of the All-Russian Constituent Assembly. Therefore, the deliberation process of creating autonomy does not anyhow relate to independence.

Before shifting attention to domestic issues, it is worth noting that Bukeikhanov distanced himself from *Kadets*, the political party with which intelligentsia had ties in the beginning. As a document by him indicates, three reasons explain his withdrawal from the *Kadet* party. First, Bukeikhanov objected to *Kadets* that land could be private property and thereby be on sale. Secondly, the right-wing Russian party opposed national autonomy, which went opposite to peripheral intellectuals' plans. Lastly, the intelligentsia leader was against a policy that the state would pay a salary for religious mullahs, meaning that religious clergy had to separate from the state.⁴⁹

In November 1917, Kazakh reformists laid out the first program of development. It touched upon ten issues: government form in Russia, local self-governance, basic rights, religion, court, defense, taxes, workers, science and education, land issue.⁵⁰ In the "local self-governance" part, the paragraph asserts that Kazakh autonomy is part of the Russian Republic, while *zemstvo* (local government council) constitutes the central system of local governance. Additionally, the Alash party's goal (intelligentsia's party) is to assure that critical administrative positions on the local level were entitled to those candidates who demonstrate commitment to people's well-being. Consequently, people chose prospective candidates for *zemstvo* councils and militia themselves rather than through a top-down approach. The Alash party's goal is to lead people towards the "path of progress," which entails such principles as defense of justice, social aid to the poor, and a fight against lawbreakers. Some of the paragraphs have explicit egalitarian features. In "basic rights," for instance, all citizens of the Russian Republic are equal despite religious or national differences. The taxation paragraph established the foundation for progressive taxation since it asserts that "taxes are levied fairly, depending on the wealth and income, the rich pay more, the poor less." Interestingly, such an equitable taxation system is anathema in contemporary Kazakhstan. Even by admitting that there are almost no industrial workers in the steppe,

⁴⁹ Ä. Bökeikhan, "Men Kadet partii asynan nege shyqtym?" (December 23, 1917), 2:46

⁵⁰ "O sozdanii partii Alash" (4 October, 1917), 1:416

intelligentsia adopted the program of Mensheviks in the paragraph on "Workers." Universal education is obligatory for everyone, and education is institutionalized to be accessible without fees, whether in schools or institutes of higher education.⁵¹

Another essential domestic policy is that 10 out of 25 seats in the national council (*Alash-Orda*), which became a ruling organ of the Kazakh temporary government, were obliged to be assigned to non-Kazakh ethnicities who lived in Kazakhstan.⁵² Alongside the policies mentioned above, this is another instance of how intelligentsia was committed to the principle of equality. Specifically, abandoning claims for ethnic nationalism or homogenization within a national entity meant that Kazakh intellectuals ensured full rights to non-Kazakhs even if most of them had settled in Kazakhstan by acting as agents of colonization policy during the Tsarism period. The centuries-long unequal position of Kazakhs vis-a-vis Orthodox Europeans was not supposed to be reiterated under a different format as if Europeans themselves, now, could have been situated in an unequal stance with the onset of Kazakh autonomy. Ethnic-based inequity became an irretrievable matter of the past according to the intelligentsia.

The Quest for Equality during the Civil War

With the onset of the Civil War and chaotic political environment, *Alash-Orda's* (intelligentsia's national council) role was to function as the temporary government on behalf of Kazakh autonomy and its provinces until the establishment of a new All-Russian Constituent Assembly. After Bolsheviks dissolved the Assembly in January 1918, intelligentsia tried to establish contact with them during April and May of 1918. However, negotiations ended at a standstill. Before the spring of 1919, Kazakh reformists allied with Whites forces - Siberian provisional government, Komuch, and even at some moment with Cossacks. Nevertheless, this would also be an impasse.

⁵¹ ““Alash” partiiiasynynḡ baghdarlamasynynḡ jobasy” (October 21, 1917), 1:439-440

⁵² “Pismo predsedatelia pravitel’stva Alash-ordy v komitet chlenov vserossiiskogo uchreditel’nogo sobraniia s pros’boi ob ofitsial’nom zaiavlenii ob otnoshchenii ego k avtonomii Alash” (August 30, 1918), 2:234

Before examining why intelligentsia decided to approach Bolsheviks again, it is essential to examine the nature of the relationship between Whites and Kazakh intellectuals.

During their collaboration with Whites, intelligentsia advocated for the restoration of the legitimate All-Russian Constituent Assembly. Most importantly, they sought recognition, or, put in another way, that Kazakhstan was entitled to the right of equal representation (in the form of autonomy) within the post-imperial state.⁵³ In the summer of 1918, intelligentsia interacted with representatives from the Siberian provisional government. Nevertheless, Siberian officials declined to discuss mutual recognition of autonomies.⁵⁴ Then, in the autumn of 1918, Kazakh reformists collaborated with Ufa Directory - an authoritative body that included Komuch and Siberian provisional governments. Bukeikhanov, as chairman on behalf of Alash Orda, supported the Directory's proposals, among which were annulment of the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty, the assistance to restore the Constituent Assembly and return of separated territorial unities into the Russian federation.⁵⁵ Despite Russia's collapsing condition, intelligentsia continued to be politically tied to Russia during the Civil War.

Later, Russia's self-proclaimed authoritative body of counter-revolutionary Whites issued a decree to abolish both the *Alash-Orda* government and its autonomy, thereby delegating all Kazakh affairs to own authority.⁵⁶ What the Ufa Directory promised instead is that, in the future, a particular ministry will take into account the cultural and economic needs of indigenous populations. Thus, White organizations were reluctant to promote and recognize the provisional status of national-territorial autonomy. One reason for that was Whites' suspicion of separatism.⁵⁷ According to the

⁵³ That being said, intelligentsia expected autonomy to be authorized through the All-Russian Constituent Assembly

⁵⁴ “Kopiiia Zhurnal 29,30 iulia, 2 i 3 avgusta 1918” in *Alash Orda: Sbornik Dokumentov*, ed. N. Martynenko (Alma-ata: Aikhap, 1992), 128

⁵⁵ “Memleket kengesi” (October 4, 1918), in *Dvizhenie Alash*, eds. Gribanova and Smaghulova, 2:252-253

⁵⁶ “Ukaz vremennogo vserossiiskogo pravitel'stva o prekrashchenii deiatel'nosti Alash-Ordya” (October-November, 1918), 2:256-257

⁵⁷ A.I. Dutov “Kratkii istoricheskii ocherk: o Bashkirii, kirgizskoi stepi i orenburgskom krae” (May 26th 1919), 2:330

scholar Uyama, Whites had a presence of conservative and monarchical elements. Practically, Whites had the same condescending attitude to non-Russians as Tsarist officials - that is, *inorodtsy* were at the low stage of development and thereby required protection and preservation of their customs" on the part of "greater nation."⁵⁸ To make matters worse, the Ufa Directory was dissolved in November 1918 by Admiral Kolchak. The Kolchak rule advocated for the restoration of the monarchical Russian Empire while officially abandoning any autonomy claims.⁵⁹ The fact that Whites viewed Kazakh people unequally pushed intelligentsia to seek rapprochement with the Soviet side, which had the "Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia" promising self-determination to non-Russian nationalities.

Despite frustration over Bolsheviks' act of dispersal of the Constituent Assembly, intelligentsia entered into negotiations with the Soviets in March of 1918, directly corresponding with Stalin. However, in April, it became clear that negotiations will not turn into a successful outcome as the Soviets did not respond to proposals concerning the recognition of Kazakh autonomy.⁶⁰ The explanation for this might be a divergence in the representation system. As Stalin's remark in *Pravda* suggests, Bolsheviks were willing to have autonomies on a Soviet basis. Thereby, they rejected proposals of "bourgeoisie-national groups" who advocated for nationality proportion as a representation basis of autonomy.⁶¹ Similarly, for Kazakh intelligentsia, proportionality in terms of nationality was the main premise given their efforts of national awakening.⁶² Yet, the refusal of Bolsheviks to recognize autonomy radically differed from that of

⁵⁸ Uyama Tomokhiko, "Politicheskaia strategiiia Alash-Ordya vo vremia grazhdanskoi voyny: sravnenie s natsional'no-kul'turnoi avtonomieii tyurko-tatar," *Lichnost', obshchestvo i vlast' v istorii Rossii* (2018): 268-269

⁵⁹ Kendirbay, "The national liberation movement," 511

⁶⁰ "Telegramma zamestitelia predsedatelia Alash-Ordya predsedateliu Sovnarkoma, narkomu narkomnatsa o nereshennosti voprosa o kazakhskoi avtonomii" (April 21, 1918), in *Dvizhenie Alash*, eds. Gribanova and Smaghulova, 2:141-142

⁶¹ Stalin, "Oдна iz ocherednykh zadach" (April, 1918) in *I.V. Stalin. Tom 4. Noiabr' 1917-1920* (Moscow: Ogiz, 1947), 4:77

⁶² "Telegramma Alash-Ordya Sovnarkomu RSFSR s predlozheniem ob ob'iaвлении avtonomii Alash" (April 3, 1918), in *Dvizhenie Alash*, eds. Gribanova and Smaghulova, 2:131

Whites, who viewed non-Russians suspiciously and condescendingly, primarily due to separatist intentions or the notion of "lower stage of development."

Baitursynov, one of the leading pioneers of the Kazakh national movement, would be the first to join the Soviets. In 1919, Bolsheviks issued an amnesty to attract Kazakhs on their side, which was valid even for those who actively fought against Reds in the Civil War. With the understanding that the Kazakh population had an anti-Soviet attitude and some feared repression, Bolsheviks actively spread the message of amnesty. In return, Bolsheviks demanded the unconditional recognition of the Soviet power, cessation of all kinds of assistance to White guard Cossacks, and assistance to the Red Army to eliminate antagonistic counter-revolutionary forces.⁶³ Baitursynov himself partly contributed to the release of amnesty, proposing that the Soviets had to openly propagate the preparedness to offer genuine autonomy rather than a "fictitious" one. He also urged the Soviets to act appropriately at the local level so that distrust on the part of the indigenous population will not deepen further.⁶⁴

Later, Baitursynov explained why intelligentsia sided with the Soviets. Accordingly, October Revolution stood in stark contrast to February Revolution - it was incomprehensible to people since the local population did not have class-differentiation and capitalistic arrangement while consumption among nomads was collective. After the Bolsheviks took power, the October revolution became the cause of political chaos in borderlands. The past Tsarist administrators of the Kazakh Steppe suddenly claimed themselves as communists, and these "Bolsheviks" perpetuated injustice over locals, thereby associating Soviet power with disorder and violence. According to Baitursynov, lawlessness led to anti-Soviet sentiments and paved the way for the followed alliance with Whites on the part of Kazakh intelligentsia. The turning point was the arrival of Kolchak, who advocated for the restoration of the Russian monarchy. Admitting the significance of the Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples to Kazakh national question,

⁶³ "Postanovlenie Revvoensoveta Turkfronta o primenenii amnistii v otnoshenii kazakhov, srazhaiushchikhsia protiv sovetskoï vlasti" (November, 1919), 2:358; "Prikaz 1-oi armii o primenenii amnistii v otnoshenii kirgiz, srazhayushchikhsya protiv sovetskoy vlasti. Vypiska iz prikaza 1-oi armii № 387.8 noiabria 1919 goda," in *Alash Orda: Sbornik Dokumentov*, ed. N. Martynenko, 172-173

⁶⁴ O merakh po ob"edineniiu kazakhov" (October 27, 1919), in *Dvizhenie Alash*, eds. Griбанова and Smaghulova, 2:354

Baitursynov made a remark: “I can say from the bottom of my heart and reassure my comrades that, having preferred Soviet power to Kolchakov's, we were not mistaken. What the Bolsheviks do on the borderlands goes in stark contrast to the spirit and goals pursued by the Bolsheviks in the center.”⁶⁵

In addition, Baitursynov pointed out that he did not align with the Soviets due to pragmatic necessity. In the spring of 1919, when he joined the Soviet side, he emphasized that he might have collaborated with Kolchak forces, who were still in powerful shape around territories of north-western Kazakhstan.⁶⁶ Other prominent figures within intelligentsia also claimed that the Soviets' willingness to recognize autonomy became the main reason for convergence with Bolsheviks.⁶⁷ Thus, the proposal of Bolsheviks resonated with intelligentsia since recognition from the metropole meant attainment of equity within Russia – that is, Kazakhs had the right to be equally represented institutionally within the political landscape of Russia. In short, egalitarianism determined the initial engagement of Kazakh intellectuals with the Soviet project.

Islamic Affinities

The quest for equality is also partially a story of how intelligentsia attempted to counter actors driven by political Islam. The Kazakh population followed the Islamic religion and geographically interacted with religious and ethnic counterparts in Tatarstan, Turkestan. Two Kazakh-populated provinces in Southern Kazakhstan - Syrdar'a and Semirech'e - were even parts of Turkestan before joining KazakhASSR in 1924. Comparatively, Kazakh society was less under the influence of Islam than

⁶⁵ Akhmet Baitursynov, “Revolutsiia i Kirgizy (Kazakhi)” (August 3, 1919), in *Obshchestvennaia Mysl' Kazakhstana v 1917-1940 gg.*, ed. M.S. Burabaev (Almaty: Gylm, 1991), 236

⁶⁶ “Zaevlenie Baitursynova s protestom protiv ego isklucheniia iz riadov RKP(b)” (15th November, 1921), in *Dvizhenie Alash. Aprel' 1920 - 1928*. Vol. 3, book 1, eds. E.M. Gribanova and S.O. Smaghulova (Almaty: Elshezhire, 2007), 3:1:101

⁶⁷ “Iz dokladnoi zapiski predstavitelei zapadnogo otdelenia Alash-Ordy Kazrevkomu ob istorii ee obrazovaniia i politicheskikh tseliakh” (December 26, 1919), 2:388

sedentarized Uzbeks or Tatars.⁶⁸ Historically, Islam was unpopular among Kazakh nomadic masses, and its role was inferior relative to indigenous Kazakh customary law. Yet, an ethnographer of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, Lev Shternberg, observed interesting phenomena regarding the impact of Islamic missionary activity on the Kazakh population. He notes that Kazakhs did not know practically much about Islam until missionaries came to the steppe. However, with the onset of active Tsarist colonization accompanied by Russification attempts, including Orthodox Christianization, Kazakhs massively began to recruit Tatar religious teachers to educate their children. Even the restriction on the part of police could not stop Tatars' movement to the steppe as the latter could go under the guise of tradesman. Later, Sternberg adds that as a result of missionary activities, primarily conducted by Tatars, it is not surprising to see the emergence of Muslim union initiatives across the Russian Empire during the revolutionary period.⁶⁹

As earlier mentioned, the intelligentsia was committed to Westernization which in turn prioritized secularism. In 1914, some writers of pro-Islamic tendencies were accusing Bukeikhanov on the grounds of "Russianization" and directing Kazakhs out of "fellow" Muslim people. The intelligentsia's leader himself admitted that Russification attempts from the Tsarism lead Kazakhs to have a "suspicious attitude towards the Western enlightenment and culture."⁷⁰ The growing role of Islamic practices within the cultural life of nomadic Kazakhs might have posed a challenge to the intelligentsia's agenda. In other words, religiously affiliated political movements across the Russian Empire could have potentially won the sympathies of nomads for the sake of their political platform, thereby jeopardizing the already fragile bond between the intelligentsia and their people. A colleague to some prominent figures of the Kazakh elite, Siberian ethnographer Potanin formulated that the position of Kazakh "Westernizers" on Turkestan and generally on Pan-Islamism was as follows:

⁶⁸ Kendirbaeva, "'We are children of Alash...'," 15

⁶⁹ Lev Shternberg, "Inorodtsy. Obshiy Obzor," 542-543

⁷⁰ Bukeikhanov, "Kirgizy," 597

Kazakhs from their western kins, as well as from southern Turkestan, can expect only unhealthy influence. Pan-Islamist ideas are coming to them from Turkestan, distributed in the steppes by mullahs educated in "holy Bukhara" in the city of Constantinople and Cairo. The healthy secular intelligentsia of Kazakhs struggles with these clerical influences. [Kazakh intelligentsia] seeks, based on Kazakh legal traditions, to develop a Kazakh code; the mullahs find such a code completely unnecessary and, instead of the original Kazakh code, they impose Muslim Sharia... in this struggle with steppe clerics, one cannot but sympathize with Kazakh intelligentsia.⁷¹

Noteworthy to illustrate intelligentsia's reluctance to integrate with Turkestan autonomy. At first sight, the southern regional counterpart seems to be close in terms of religion and ethnic affiliations even if Central Asia societies did not identify themselves hitherto through a lens of supra ethnic belonging such as pan-Turkism. Nevertheless, Bukeikhanov's public speech in his home city Semipalatinsk in November 1917 suggests that he strongly rejected the idea of joining with autonomous Turkestan:

Concerning the unification with Turkestan autonomy, for us, it is equivalent to equipping oneself with full of stones and rushing into the Irtysh River and sinking. Because they are ignorant and ten times backward than us. There is nothing to learn from them. For example, the officials of the Tashkent City Duma - *Sarts* - are making the [following] decision: "Since the fight against cholera is contrary to God's command, therefore, there is no need to fight it." Merging with Turkestan is like putting into "autonomy" dray a donkey with a camel, it is doomed to failure. We can say that most of our people in this era, wearing Bukhara glasses, look at life through the eyes of the Sarts. Therefore, it is not difficult for those Tashkent blind officials to recruit many comrades among Kazakhs and keep them in their ranks."⁷²

During revolutionary 1917, intelligentsia encountered pan-Islamic ideological offense driven by Tatars, which endangered their quest for equality across the post-imperial space. In May 1917, Kazakh delegates participated in the All-Russian Muslim congress, and there are some accounts about the position of Kazakh intellectuals on the idea of Muslim unity within Russia. A conflict between the two camps has marked the congress. One side, 'unitarists' lead mainly by Tatars, advocated for Russia's Muslims to

⁷¹ G.N. Potanin "Kirgizy Posle Perevorota," in *Dvizhenie Alash*, eds. Gribanova and Smagholova, 1:465

⁷² "Priezd Alikhana v g. Semipalatinsk," 1:457-458

stand for unitary parliamentary Russia. On the other side, 'federalists' favored democratic federative Russia. Kazakh delegates belonged to the 'federalist' camp. The number of those who voted for Muslim nationalities' right to have own autonomy was 271, whereas 446 delegates voted against it. The denial of territorial autonomy was unjustified; it was rather an attempt by Tatars to preserve their influence over other Muslim-Turkic people of Russia, as Kazakh officials interpreted. As one account of response by Kazakh figure to 'unitarists' show: "You cannot create a Muslim nation based on a non-territorial and centralized autonomy. Are you, by the way, not a pan-Islamist? We know that sometimes there is machination behind pan-Islamism, aiming at the domination of one nationality by another."⁷³

Overall, there are three points concerning political religion. First, the national project of intellectuals had a strictly defined secular model. Secondly, the intelligentsia showed awareness and necessity to limit the political impact of religiously minded factions or clerics on local masses. This due to the perceptiveness of Kazakh masses to Islamization due to the Russification policy. Moreover, shared common ethnic, religious bonds with regional counterparts provided fertile ground for the negative appeal of political Islam. Lastly, intelligentsia resisted pan-Islamic, supra-national proposals since it led to one actor's potential dominance over another, with followed emergence of hierarchical order within the alleged "family" of Muslim nations in Russia. Therefore, the struggle for equality across (post) imperial space also partly occurred through interaction with other borderland actors and their corresponding ideologies.

The Jadids in Comparative Perspective

Adeeb Khalid's work on Jadidism provides a thorough analysis of Turkestani intellectuals' quest for modernity - "cultural reform." The book discusses how Jadids strived to create a modern Turkic Muslim nation through "new method" education. Jadids of Turkestan pursued a specific modernization trajectory. That is, Jadidism was not a unified movement, and the struggle for reform by Turkestani Jadids had local

⁷³ "Jalpy musulman s'ezi ..." 1:325-327; Kendirbay, "The National Liberation Movement ...," 501

specifics.⁷⁴ Weighing in Turkestani Jadids' movement helps us to build a comparison with Kazakh intelligentsia. Both regional actors of Central Asia shared a common goal to modernize their backward societies. Today, post-Soviet Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are proud and praise their indigenous elites - Jadids and Kazakh intelligentsia (often referred to as the Alash movement).

Khalid rightly points out that the conception of Islam among nomadic Kazakhs significantly differed from the settled population of the Turkestan. In terms of cultural gravitation, the scholar specified that "the foci of Qazaq cultural life lay to the north, in Orenburg and even Kazan, rather than to the south in Tashkent or Samarqand." Meanwhile, Jadid activity was absent in nomadic territories.⁷⁵ Certainly, customary law took priority over Islamic practices among nomadic masses. While searching modernity similarly as Kazakh intellectuals, it is worth mentioning that Islam played a crucial role in the national project of Jadids. Hence, according to Uzbek intelligentsia, social progress and Islam were compatible and did not contradict each other. Specifically, Turkestani intellectuals viewed modern knowledge as emancipatory for Muslims. By saving them from backwardness, it would help them to follow the correct path of Islam.

Jadids were not entirely enthusiastic about Russian schools because, in their view, they did not dedicate a sufficient amount of time to the teachings of the Islamic faith. Instead, the nation's future developers should at earlier stages grasp the knowledge of their religion and language first.⁷⁶ Notwithstanding the similar need to comprehend the mother tongue first, Kazakh intelligentsia did not have any remarks on what role religion should play in their education. Bukeikhanov instead encouraged Kazakh youth to study in the Russian language and continue education in Russian institutes. Jadidism underpinned the idea that Islam should reform itself through modernity. On the contrary, Islam was rather exclusionary within the discourse of the Kazakh national project. In short, one envisioned development within Islam, another - without it.

⁷⁴ Adeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 8-9

⁷⁵ Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim*, 17, 241

⁷⁶ Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim*, 12, 218-219

From the transnational perspective, the Jadids of Turkestan and the intelligentsia of the Kazakh steppe significantly differed in their nature of relations with non-regional actors. As the latter, Jadids indeed supported Russia's side in WWI and the 1916 conscription decree. By that, they tried to assure their political voice in the political center of the empire, and June decree was a chance for that. Although "sympathies" of Jadids lay with Ottoman Empire, they understood very well the "political realities," the role of "friendship with Russia," and undesirable outcomes if they would have opposed their own state for the sake of Anatolian co-religionists. The war was pictured as geopolitical rather than religious, whereas Germany provoked Turks to be involved.⁷⁷

However, events started to change dramatically after autumn 1917. The secret treaties dividing the Ottoman Empire changed the attitude of Jadids to Western powers and its "civilization," and particularly to Britain. To be specific, Europe became an enemy and was associated with "enslavement and destruction" carried out against the "Muslim world" and people of the East. Infuriated by Western imperial acts against the Ottoman empire, anti-imperialism became a major driving force. As Khalid outlined:

The utter defeat of the Ottomans in 1918, therefore, came as a big blow. The defeat of Islam seemed complete, and the need for change all the more urgent. This was a turning point for the Jadids, who lost a great deal of their earlier fascination with the liberal civilization of Europe, and turned to a radical anti-colonial critique of the bourgeois order.⁷⁸

This ultimately paved the way for an alliance with Bolsheviks, given their anti-war and anti-imperialist stance.⁷⁹

The anti-imperialism was what undergirded the exchange between the Soviets and Jadids. For the latter, the Ottoman Empire was a central cultural hub in the early 20th century. Bitterness against colonial oppression coupled with a belief in statism pushed Turkestani Jadids into closer cooperation with the Bolsheviks, who stood for anti-imperialism against the West. With the onset of the Civil War, Jadids remained in

⁷⁷ Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim*, 293, 241-242, 238-239

⁷⁸ Adeeb Khalid, "The Fascination of Revolution: Central Asian Intellectuals, 1917–1927," in *Empire, Islam, and Politics in Central Eurasia*, edited by Tomohiko Uyama (Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, 2007), 144

⁷⁹ Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim*, 293

alliance with Bolsheviks without any shifts in alliance-making. On the contrary, during the early revolutionary and the followed Civil War period, Kazakh intelligentsia consistently gravitated to the Provisional Government. Specifically, they staunchly supported the idea of Russia's continued presence in WWI until it is brought to a "victorious end." Unburdened with anti-imperialist sentiments or bearing in mind the fate of the Ottoman Empire, Kazakh intelligentsia allied with White forces and tried to restore the legitimacy of the Constituent Assembly. Essentially they did not recognize the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. However, the Whites' regression to monarchism and their unwillingness to entitle Kazakhs with equal status within Russia prompted intelligentsia to move towards the Bolshevik side. Thus, both Central Asian reformists ultimately moved toward Soviet power but for different reasons: for the Jadids, it was anti-imperialism; for the Alash figures, the recognition as equals. The next chapter will discuss how figures from Kazakh intelligentsia tried to raise the issue of the lack of actual equality at the local level, which considerably hindered the prospects of the Sovietization in the borderland. It will also touch upon Moscow's ideological attack against the local elite in causing underdevelopment.

CHAPTER 2

ACTUAL EQUALITY AND IDEOLOGICAL ASSAULT

“The key question is not the level of inequality but rather its origin and justification.”
- Thomas Piketty.⁸⁰

"We do not see any differences of principle, or even practical disagreements, concerning
internal policies in Kazakhstan."
- Kazakh communists-nationals to Trotsky on the relationship between titular officials
and Bolsheviks.⁸¹

Historical scholarship presents an almost exclusively Moscow-centric perspective on the origins, making, and evolution of Soviet national policy.⁸² This chapter will focus on the participatory role of borderland actor - the Kazakh elite - in forging this grand-scale national program, resolutions of which were officially accepted in 1923. Thereby, I provide a bottom-up perspective on the origins of Soviet national policy to a certain extent. Having mentioned this, I do not claim that Kazakh actors

⁸⁰ Piketty, *Capital and Ideology*, 23

⁸¹ As will be shown in the second section of this chapter, this is excerpt from Trotsky's letter addressed to Sokolnikov. The letter summarized by Trotsky was written after his conversation with Kazakh communists-nationals, who complained that the center unjustifiably accused them of anti-Soviet deviations.

⁸² Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*

stood as single or notable contributors to the making of this policy. Rather, the goal is to show that peripheral actors within the Soviet Union were also engaged in this process. This might signify Lenin's party democratic nature in terms of power sharing with the actors in the borderland.

More importantly, this national policy had two premises: first, it is about advancing forms of nationhood among non-Russians; the second goal was to minimize the oppressive historical role of the Russian nation. The second policy was crucial because it provided fertile ground for the former's implementation and also aimed to accomplish all nations' equality within the Soviet Union. The Kazakh political establishment engaged in both directions.

The Soviet national policy was egalitarian in nature. To clarify, it is true that grand-scale national policy paved the way for the development of nationhood modes among non-Russian ethnic groups. Yet, it was also an attempt to promote Union-level equality of all nations within the USSR. To successfully prepare the ground for this, Bolsheviks set the course to follow two central and interrelated principles: non-neutrality and "greatest-danger-principle" (both of which accompanied other policy - granting "nationhood forms"). The first principle necessitated the protection of the national development of non-Russians against the encroachment of historically powerful Russian nation and culture. The second concept entailed a formal attack against this dominant nation.⁸³ What is the rationale behind this?

In the XII party congress in 1923, Bukharin spoke on behalf of the Russian nation and recommended how to overcome the systemic interethnic gap within the Soviet Union. Specifically, he stated:

we must say that we, as a former great power nation, must go against nationalist aspirations and put ourselves in an unequal position in the sense of even greater concessions to national progressions. Only with such policy, going against our will, only with such a policy, when we artificially put ourselves in a position lower

⁸³ Martin, *The Affirmative Action*, 7, 16-17. Dominance of Russian nation was also defined as "great-power chauvinism" or "Great Russian chauvinism."

than others, only at this price will we be able to buy ourselves the genuine trust of formerly oppressed nations.⁸⁴

By mentioning the issue of gaining trust and defining the position of non-Russians as “oppressed,” Bukharin acknowledged that Bolsheviks had to deal with the Tsarist legacy – that is, with the historical and inequitable gap between Russians and non-Russians. The Kazakh statesmen will participate in this process of defining and solving this burden of the Tsarist legacy. This is the second dimension of their struggle for egalitarianism – to ensure actual equality by overcoming the centuries-long oppression.

The Central Party would incorporate the Kazakh intellectuals into government structures, especially given the dearth of educated cadres in the eastern national republics. The second section of the chapter elaborates how the center viewed the political activism of Kazakh officials, with past non-Soviet background, throughout the 1920s. Ultimately, the party would see Kazakh communist-nationals⁸⁵ as an impediment and threat to Soviet-building in Kazakhstan. The number of party documents traces the evolution of the Kazakh factional struggle, which reveals the specifics of the local elite. In particular, Kazakh communist-nationals would be accused of nationalist deviations in the implementation of indigenization (*korenizatsiia*) policies, anti-Russian discrimination, and resistance to Soviets efforts of transforming the archaic pre-revolutionary social structure of Kazakh society. Subsequently, those charges would suggest that the political activities of the Kazakh elite were inequalitarian. However, I challenge this point based on evidence from the source of non-party origin. The Central Party's denunciation that Kazakh communist-nationals were a reactionary and conservative force, thereby hindering the prospects of the Soviet project, was somewhat falsely constructed by Moscow to justify the subordination and elimination of the local Kazakh elite's influence.

The Making of "Greatest-danger-principle" and Indigenization Policy

⁸⁴ “Dvenadtsati s’ezd RKP(b). 17-25 aprelia 1923 goda. Stenograficheskii otchet,” 613, (Moskva,1968), http://istmat.info/files/uploads/51781/12_sezd.pdf

⁸⁵ By this term, I refer to figures from pre-Soviet Kazakh intelligentsia, who later worked in Soviet government.

Terry Martin provides a brief discussion on the origins of Soviet national policy before its first and official launch in 1923. With the seizure of power in Petrograd, Bolsheviks did not have a consistent and articulated national policy. By sending a message to non-Russian nationalities, Bolsheviks widely publicized the "Declaration of Rights of People of Russia" (November 1917) that promised self-determination. Nevertheless, it was yet abstract and even had a tactical dimension to tilt the sympathies of various ethnic groups to the Soviet side during the Civil War. During turmoil following the revolutionary year of 1917, Bolshevik leadership soon figured out that nationalism in the borderlands was the powerful force that necessitated accommodation. Moreover, the nationalism of non-Russian people was not speaking of itself as such but had anti-Russian nature due to centuries-long oppression and colonialism on the part of Russians. In other words, "nationalism was fueled by historical distrust."⁸⁶

Between 1919 and 1923, the center's leadership has been working out to devise an All-Union national policy by analyzing nationalism. Accordingly, three important notions emerged during the process of making Soviet national policy. First, given the powerful force of nationalism to hide class divisions, Bolsheviks had to ensure that Soviet power must foster the promotion of "nationhood forms" to non-Russian people to demobilize the nationalism of the borderland national bourgeoisie. Second, nationalism was a natural and inevitable stage that had to emerge and develop until the subsequent rise of class divisions, which in turn paved the way for internationalist socialist movements. Thirdly, an essential defining aspect of non-Russian nationalism was its anti-Russian attitude. To be specific, according to Lenin, non-Russian nationalism was justified because it was a response to "Tsarist oppression and was motivated by a historically justifiable distrust of the Great Russians." During the Civil War in borderlands, Bolsheviks relied on ethnic Russians for their cause of expanding and asserting Soviet power. However, the oppressive acts of those "communist" Russians significantly contributed to the perception that Bolshevism was the successor of Tsarist oppression.⁸⁷ Indeed, as Marco Buttino illustrates, the Bolshevik revolution in Turkestan

⁸⁶ Martin, *The Affirmative Action*, 2-3

⁸⁷ Martin, *The Affirmative Action*, 6

carried out by local Russian colonists was rather a revolution of colonial character - the reassertion of Russian colonial power over indigenous inhabitants. It turned out to be the opposite of the center's Bolsheviks promise: the anti-colonization revolution in the East.⁸⁸

Regarding the chauvinistic nature of the Russian people, Lenin further developed this idea by proposing a distinction between "offensive" and "defensive" nationalism. The former was Russian nationalism characterized by the chauvinistic and oppressive attitude to smaller non-Russian nations. The latter fell into the category of "defensive" nationalism. In causal terms, defensive one was a reasonable and logical response to offensive Russian nationalism. In Soviet leadership's understanding, "Great Russian chauvinism" was a deep-seated problem that potentially endangered the Bolsheviks' long-term goal to weaken non-Russian nationalism since the former gave viability to the latter. The outcome was what Martin calls the "greatest-danger principle," where Russian nationalism was a much more sinister force than non-Russian nationalism.⁸⁹ In the 12th party congress in 1923, Bukharin contributed to this notion stating that unless the party counter-acted against Russian chauvinism, it would lead to the emergence of "local chauvinism" in borderlands. As remarked by him: "If we hit the first chain of nationalism, the most important and the most basic one, we will then hit those intermediate chains up to the lowest "local" chauvinism."⁹⁰ Thus, Bolsheviks had to tackle the Tsarist legacy.

The result was the formal attack against "Great Russian chauvinism," which will lead to a point where former Tsarist imperial territories would transform into non-Russian territorial units. Additionally, Russian culture will be depicted as oppressive; ethnic Russians in borderlands would be obliged to learn native languages and legally put in an "unequal" position in terms of occupational status and employment process. Beyond that, anti-Russian discourse based on the "greatest-danger principle" had to be

⁸⁸ Marco Buttino, "Central Asia (1916-1920): A Kaleidoscope of Local Revolutions and the Building of the Bolshevik Order" in *The Empire and Nationalism at War*, et al. Eric Lohr (Slavica Pub, 2014), 109-135.

⁸⁹ Martin, *The Affirmative Action*, 7

⁹⁰ "Dvenadtsatyi s'ezd RKP(b)," 613

followed if the Communist party planned to overcome the perception of being the successor of Tsarism masked under the communist uniform, especially in the eyes of own Soviet non-Russian citizens.⁹¹ In short, Soviet national policy was not only about the policy of advancing "nationhood forms" on behalf of non-Russian nationalities. Not less important was the intended process of undermining the role of oppressive Russian culture and its national claims to tackle historical injustices and thereby assure equality of all within the Soviet Union.

Documents by Kazakh intelligentsia reveal the nature of those unequal structures at the locality. Being the first who recognized the Soviet power from ex-intelligentsia and later becoming a member of VTsIK (The All-Russian Central Executive Committee), Baitursunov sent some reports to Lenin on the state of affairs in Soviet Kazakhstan.⁹² To begin with, he pointed out that the newly established Soviet authority over the Kazakh steppe lacked a coherent national plan apart from an abstract claim on "The Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia" issued back in November 1917. Nevertheless, the most acute problem was distrust between the Bolsheviks and the indigenous population. The historical colonization of Kazakhs was characterized by Baitursynov as follows:

...Russians, with relation to other nationalities, the so-called *inorodtsy*, were allowed everything; on the contrary, *inorodtsy* were not permitted anything ... Russians who committed a crime against the *inorodtsy* were often not prosecuted, if they were persecuted, then, for the sake of visibility; on the contrary, the *inorodtsy* who committed a crime against the Russians were brutally punished. Having recognized this, I think that we must admit as an indisputable fact that for centuries Russian people have been brought up in this spirit, that is, in the spirit of the dominant nation, which considered for itself permissible too many things in relation to *inorodtsy*.⁹³

Kazakh intellectual also added that this historical injustice contributed to the emergence of national consciousness among Kazakhs. Besides, historical repression left

⁹¹ Martin, *The Affirmative Action*, 17-20

⁹² "Pis'mo A. Baitursunova V. I. Leninu o preodolenii nedoveriia sovetskoi vlasti k kazakhskoi intelligentsii" (May 17, 1920), in *Dvizhenie Alash*, eds. Gribanova and Smaghulova, 3:1:59-64

⁹³ "Pis'mo A. Baitursynova V.I. Leninu," 3:1:62

psychological effects on smaller nations, such as animosity, hatred, and deep-seated mistrust.⁹⁴

The situation has not changed much after the Bolshevik revolution. Russians living in borderlands started to identify themselves as "international-communists" but, in fact, acted as "nationalist-imperialists." The followers of communist "ideals" were the same past Tsarist colonialists with the same chauvinistic attitude towards non-Russians. As Kazakh reformist stressed: "Just by renaming yourself to communist-internationalists, Russians cannot bring the trust of a non-Russian nation which has centuries-long familiarity with the cunning politics of Tsarist government." Given this psychological scar, Baitursynov warned that unintended consequences might arise when, for instance, the Soviet institutions would collect substantial taxes and appropriate resources from locals due to financial and industrial collapse. Thus, at the locality, indigenous people think of the Bolsheviks as the same oppressors as the Tsarist officials.⁹⁵

To overcome the inherently distrustful perception that the Russian proletariat is not a successor of the Tsarism, Baitursynov offers Lenin a few proposals. First, he suggests incorporating intelligentsia into Soviet government and party structures,⁹⁶ despite the past alliance with Whites during the Civil War. The second proposal is to eradicate the deep-seated chauvinism of the Russian proletariat by assigning idealist communists to the governance of national republics. Specifically, Baitursynov emphasized the substantial interethnic gap as Soviet organizations functioned on the ground. In reality, local Russian "communists" still showed great reluctance to cooperate and assist to party organization of indigenous people. The former still expressed a chauvinistic attitude to any progressive movements on the part of formerly oppressed nationalities. The Kazakh reformist warned that such inequity would reduce the likelihood of recruitment of natives to the cause of Soviet ideals. The revolution would not fulfill its promises unless previous colonies are free from the Tsarist imperial

⁹⁴ "Pis'mo A. Baitursunova V. I. Leninu," 3:1:62-63, 3:1:60; "Zapiska A. Baitursunova k tezisam po "Natsionalnomu i kolonial'nomu voprosam" V.I. Lenina" (June, 1920), 3:1:71

⁹⁵ "Pis'mo A. Baitursunova V. I. Leninu," 3:1:60-61, 63

⁹⁶ "Pis'mo A. Baitursunova V. I. Leninu," 3:1:61-62

mindset.⁹⁷ In other words, undoing the paternalistic attitude of the leading proletariat was one of the significant prerequisites for the realization of the anti-colonial revolution in the East. Other proposals would touch upon the necessity to involve local indigenous masses in administrative and party organizations.

In short, Baitursynov informed the Soviet leadership that Kazakhs suffered from historical suppression, which took on an ethnicized character, leading to the emergence of "defensive" nationalism (a term articulated by Lenin). Additionally, it caused an atmosphere of distrust to ethnic Russians, including Bolsheviks. When Baitursynov proposed fixing the issue of chauvinism, he did not offer any specific solutions, leaving that likely to the Central Party's discretion. Nonetheless, in general terms, local Kazakh statesmen in 1920 would reflect on the Tsarist legacy and participate in making the "greatest-danger-principle." The struggle for actual equality entailed efforts to diminish the historical dominance of the Russian nation.

As the central tenet of the Soviet national program, indigenization (*korenizatsiia*) entailed the advancement of two "nationhood forms": national elite and national language (or linguistic *korenizatsiia*). To clarify, the former is the "practice of granting preferences to non-Russians in admission, hiring, and promotion in education, industry, and government."⁹⁸ The latter policy necessitated that "the language of the titular nationality was to be established as the official state language." The intended cognitive effect, expected by Bolshevik leaders, is to make Soviet power "native, intimate, popular, comprehensible" in people's perception and thereby eliminate the view that Soviet power represented foreign or Russian ethnic rule over non-Russian nationalities.⁹⁹ In short, *korenizatsiia* was about to make Soviet power perceived as 'ours.'

Documents by the Kazakh establishment reveal that the need for *korenizatsiia* were voiced by borderland actors as well. For instance, the statement by Baitursynov calls for extension of rights for natives so that indigenous people will not only engage in

⁹⁷ "Zapiska A. Baitursunova k tezisam," 3:1:72

⁹⁸ Martin, *The Affirmative Action*, 75, 125

⁹⁹ Martin, *The Affirmative Action*, 10, 12

educational and cultural development but also take part in political-economic governance:

The desire to carry out certain principles of communist development in the eastern borderlands exclusively by the hands of the proletariat of the Great Russian nation ... inevitably entails manifestation ... of Great Russian imperialism. Only by removing any suspicious attitude towards the indigenous poor, [by] massive involvement of them to their country's economic work and assigning them responsibility, will the indigenous person become a practical worker and equal member of the future world communist society.¹⁰⁰

Additionally, those potential changes in eastern republics of the Soviet Union had the potential to become the model of revolutionary agitation in the East. Baiturysnov also recommended that $\frac{2}{3}$ of ruling institutes must be filled with representatives of titular nationality.¹⁰¹ The point here is not about *korenizatsiia* per se but the condition of implementing it. That is, to hold in check the dominance of one for the national development of all.

One telegram by the several Kazakh statesmen, including a few Kazakh leftists, addressed to Lenin and Stalin, proposes Central Party some solutions to overcome colonialism and national repression. Interestingly, the local actors used a moral argument to shed light on the eastern republics' underdevelopment. In particular, the historical dominance of Russian imperialism and its repression resulted in a situation where there is a dearth of qualified cadres among eastern nationalities.¹⁰² Hence, Russian chauvinism did not only provoke "defensive" nationalism on the part of non-Russians but also led to a decline in the industrial development of borderland zones. Beyond that, the central proposal addressed to the Communist Party is to opt for "national-cultural self-determination" as it is the only way to liberate the previously exploited and oppressed smaller non-Russian nationalities. The telegram defined this term as follows:

¹⁰⁰ "Zapiska A. Baitursunova k tezisam," in *Dvizhenie Alash*, eds. Griбанова and Smagholova, 3:1:72-73

¹⁰¹ "Pis'mo A. Baitursunova V. I. Leninu," 3:1:63

¹⁰² "Tezisy partiino-sovetskikh rukovoditelei Kazakhstana po natsional'nomu voprosu" (July 1, 1920), 3:1:75

practical advancement of local population's language as the official one; the promotion of majority representatives of working people among indigenous nations to government bodies; the development of the school network; the broad establishment of a publishing house in local languages; the intensive training of qualified workers from the local population; the organization of the Red Army.¹⁰³

Thus, the Kazakh elite's understanding of what constitutes "national-cultural self-determination" appears to have partly contributed to the official policy of granting "nationhood forms" adopted in 1923 resolutions by the Soviet leadership. More importantly, the necessity to involve the indigenous people in their nation-making process was rationalized as an essential step to overcome the inegalitarian Tsarist legacy. In the All-Union context, forging equality meant providing space for the agency for the indigenous people and thereby preventing the continuation of former colonizers' dominance.

The Unmaking of Local Elite

Factionalism among titular officials with non-Russian national republics was one of the barriers of *korenizatsiia* implementation, especially in eastern republics such as KazakhASSR or Tatar republics.¹⁰⁴ In the East, factionalism accounted for the 'right' and 'left' divide and rivalry. Martin, for instance, brings to attention the case of Tatarstan. Being part of a pre-revolutionary national movement, Tatar 'right' was attracted and committed to *korenizatsiia* with the onset of the Soviet power. Additionally, they were able to work in government and party structures, given the lack of qualified cadres. On the contrary, Tatar 'left' opposed *korenizatsiia* and was deeply devoted to the principle of internationalism and actual class existence. As a consequence of opposing views, 'right' and 'left' were in a state of conflict. As a result, the central party tried to prevent factional divisions within eastern titular republics.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ "Tezisy partiino-sovetskikh," 3:1:74-76

¹⁰⁴ Martin, *The Affirmative Action*, 143

¹⁰⁵ Martin, *The Affirmative Action*, 229 - 232; "Iz pisma KazKraiKoma VKP(b) ko vsem partiinym organizatsiiam Kazakhstana" (2 March 1926), in *Dvizhenie Alash*, eds. Gribanova and Smagholova, 3:1:206

Turning to KazakhASSR, several documents shed light on factionalism and the problems it caused in Soviet-building efforts, including *korenizatsiia*. Secret document of 1922 by the USSR state police and intelligence (OGPU) provides essential details on the specifics of various groups (factions) in KazakhASSR. The report with the title "[About] group and personal characteristics, nature, and activities of Alash-Orda and nationalist Kazakhs, and also in general of Kazakh workers" is the first attempt by the local institutions of the Central Party to delineate the political surface. Divided into two sections: the first one provides group-level analysis portraying defining elements and activities of each group; the second section informs on short biography and the personal traits of prominent leaders in each group.¹⁰⁶ Overall, three main factions existed in Kazakh ASSR.

Some of the previous members of Alash-Orda constituted the first faction.¹⁰⁷ It is defined as "in essence completely disloyal to the Soviet authority," while its actions are considerably obstructing the party's work. The education sector and national newspaper "Ak-Zhol" based in Tashkent serve as instruments to pursue nationalist agenda among the masses. The group's southern branch was preoccupied with the question to attach Kazakh provinces of TurkestanSSR (Syrdaria and Semirech'e) to KazakhASSR.¹⁰⁸

The second faction was the most powerful by the time of report release. Prominent figures such Baitursynov, Sadvakasov,¹⁰⁹ Kenzhin, and others led this group - most of whom were members of KazTsIK (Kazakh Central Executive Committee). Despite the past links with *Alash-Orda*, state service defined it as loyal. Active decolonization efforts and agitation for placement of ethnic Kazakhs to administrative positions are accompanied by accusations of non-Kazakhs on colonialism, sometimes

¹⁰⁶ "Doklad sotrudnikov GPU v KiroblKK RKP (b) "O gruppovoi i personal'noi kharakteristike, sushchnosti i deiatel'nosti Alash-Ordya i natsionalistov kirgiz" (September 23, 1922), in *Istoriia Kazakhstana. Dokumenty i Materialy*, ed. B.A. Dzhabarova (Astana: Shanyraq Media, 2017), 32-42

¹⁰⁷ Bukeikhanov belonged to this group, even though some of Alash-Orda members were classified into the second group. For instance, Baitursynov, who along with Bukeikhanov was the prominent figure of pre-Soviet Kazakh intelligentsia, was one of the leaders of the second faction. See "Doklad sotrudnikov GPU," in *Istoriia Kazakhstana*, 36-37

¹⁰⁸ "Doklad sotrudnikov GPU," 33

¹⁰⁹ See Chapter 3 for a detailed study of Sadvakasov's ideas on developing Soviet Kazakhstan

taking exaggerated form. Moreover, the second group initiates the organization of cultural activities to learn Marxism in the Kazakh language.¹¹⁰ According to other accounts of OGPU, some members within this faction show instability in the sense that their positions often fluctuate between that of first and third groups.¹¹¹

The last faction was the most internationalist one and, in remark of Soviet intelligence, was worthy of trust and support from the Party. However, considerable problems existed with regards to Kazakh 'left.' As OGPU claimed, the group often puts careerism first and takes advantage of the state intelligence apparatus for self-serving goals. Also, it creates false accusations toward the second faction. Besides, Kazakh internationalists were weak when it came to the Soviet-building process due to a lack of social base among the masses.¹¹² This faction was critical of the first two because they denied the class existence in Kazakhstan.¹¹³

Beginning from 1923, relations between the second and third factions would take the antagonistic character. The rivalry between the two dates back even to the pre-revolutionary period. By 1925, one of the 'left' camp figures even raised a warning to Stalin that Kazakh 'right' (presumably first and second groups) took control of the national republic, indicating how some anti-*Alash-Orda* officials were removed from important governmental positions.¹¹⁴ Meanwhile, OGPU noted that this factional struggle caused problems for Soviet-building in Kazakhstan.¹¹⁵

In May 1925, Stalin himself would be involved by issuing directives against the nationalists. It started with the disapproval of the *Ak-Zhol* newspaper issued by

¹¹⁰ "Doklad sotrudnikov GPU," in *Istoriia Kazakhstana*, ed. B.A. Dzhaparova, 33-34

¹¹¹ "Doklad PP OGPU po KASSR v Kirobkom RKP(b) "O sostoianii i deiatel'nosti Alash-Ordy, kirgizskikh natsional'nykh gruppirovok za vremya s 1 Oktiabria 1922 g. po 1 ianvaria 1923 g." (February 1, 1923), in *Dvizhenie Alash*, eds. Gribanova and Smaghulova, 3:1:131-132

¹¹² "Doklad sotrudnikov GPU," in *Istoriia Kazakhstana*, ed. B.A. Dzhaparova, 34; "Doklad PP OGPU," in *Dvizhenie Alash*, eds. Gribanova and Smaghulova, 3:1:136

¹¹³ "Dokladnaia zapiska S. Seifullina I.V. Stalinu o vzaimootshosheiiakh v srede kazakhskikh partino-sovetskikh rabotnikov" (after April 19, 1925), in *Dvizhenie Alash*, eds. Gribanova and Smaghulova, 3:1:190

¹¹⁴ "Dokladnaia zapiska S. Seifullina," 3:1:189, 3:1:191-193

¹¹⁵ "Doklad PP OGPU," 3:1:137

representatives of the first faction, pointing out that its content had commonalities with pre-revolutionary nationalist text. The USSR's leader assured that criticism of communists is an acceptable practice, but what disturbed him about *Ak-Zhol* is that the nature of its criticism was "gloating" and targeted the fundamentals of the Soviet Union. Subsequently, Stalin ordered the party reorganization of the Kazakh journal. Specifically, the command was to remove non-party intelligentsia writers and then transform the newspaper into an organ of communist indoctrination.¹¹⁶ The significance of Stalin's letter is not about his specific attitude to journal content itself, but rather his overall position vis-a-vis Kazakh non-party intelligentsia, in this situation, nationalist first group. As Stalin writes, in his second part of the letter:

I am entirely in favor of recruiting non-party intellectuals to Soviet work. The People's Commissariat of Agriculture [Narkomzem], Sovnarkhoz, cooperatives, and other economic bodies should take full advantage of these people, tacitly sovietizing them. I am also in favor of non-party intellectuals' engagement in the promotion of Kazakh culture. The preparation of textbooks in the Kazakh language is the main cultural area in which these people should be used. But I am strongly against non-party intellectuals' involvement in the cause of the struggle on the political and ideological front. I am opposing the non-party intellectuals who engage in the political and ideological education of Kazakh youth. It was not for this that we took the power to let bourgeois non-party intellectuals promote their political and ideological education of youth. This front should be left entirely to the communists. Otherwise, the victory of the Chokaevs (pre-revolutionary "bourgeoisie") may become inevitable in Kazakhstan. And this equals the ideological and political collapse of communism in Kazakhstan.¹¹⁷

Ten days later, Kazakhstan's party bureau secretary will issue an order to reorganize not only the *Ak-Zhol* magazine but also all national printing organs of the republic, additionally regulating the involvement of intelligentsia in it.¹¹⁸ In April 1925, the newspaper will be subject to reformatting and control. So new editorial staff, for

¹¹⁶ "Pis'mo I. Stalina ko vsem chlenam biuro Kirkraikoma o zhurnale «Ak zhol»" (29 May 1925), in *Istoriia Kazakhstana*, ed. B.A. Dzhaparova, 49

¹¹⁷ "Pis'mo I. Stalina," 49

¹¹⁸ "Postanovlenie biuro KazKraiKoma RKP (b) "Pismo Stalina o gazete "Ak-Zhol"" (10 June 1925), in *Dvizhenie Alash*, eds. Gribanova and Smaghulova, 3:1:195-196

instance, will be constituted from party-affiliated workers,¹¹⁹ suggesting removal of the previous staff.

A year later, the republic's ruling party urged all party structures to counter factionalism among titular statesmen due to the intensification of inter-group conflict. One reason was that those groups were distancing themselves from the main party line.¹²⁰ The situation became so disturbing that factionalism became one of two "diseases" that posed a threat to Soviet-building in Kazakhstan, on an equal level with the problem of ethnic division between Kazakh and Russian party workers. Meanwhile, previous counter-measures were not productive because they put one faction into a more powerful position than another.

The creation of a special commission under the party's directive put forward the task to systematically study ideological nature, origins, and other problems regarding factionalism.¹²¹ Interestingly, this report admits the existence of "Alash ideology" within the factional struggle. Defined in negative terms, these ideas incited the interethnic conflict between Europeans and indigenous people through asserting the privileges for the latter. Furthermore, nationalist ideology sets *korenizatsiia* as an end-goal rather than envisioning it as means for making Soviet power "native, intimate and comprehensible." Protection of the wealthy Kazakh *bai* class is the fourth aspect of this ideology. Lastly, anti-Soviet beliefs of "Alash ideology" caused mistrust towards the Russian proletariat and resisted socialism within Kazakh *auyl*, where most nomads resided.¹²² Following that, the party implicitly claimed that this ideology was the basis or was associated with Kazakh 'right' - namely, with the second group's representatives.

The report further stated that this ideology and its faction become one of the most problematic barriers threatening the Soviet policies in Kazakhstan. There is a change compared to the previous documents. Before, the party tried to expose hazardous

¹¹⁹ "Pismo I. Vareikisa v Kirkraikom RKP(b) o nedopustimykh vyrazheniiakh v publikatsiakh gazety "Ak-Zhol" i smene kadrovogo sostava redaktsii" (7 April 1925), 3:1:185-186

¹²⁰ "Iz pisma KazKraiKoma VKP(b) ko vsem partiinym organizatsiiam Kazakhstana" (2 March 1926), 3:1:206

¹²¹ "Iz doklada KazKraiKK KazKraiKomu VKP(b) o vzaimootnosheniiakh vnutri partiino-sovetskogo rukovodstva respubliki" (after 30 November 1926), 3:1:219 - 239

¹²² "Iz doklada KazKraiKK," 3:1:229

effects intrinsic to all factions without identifying which one was worse than the other. Now, Kazakh 'right' and "Alash ideology" were two sides of the same coin. Specifically, the center saw ex-intelligentsia officials as defenders of Kazakh pre-revolutionary propertied class (*bais*) and the ones who prioritized national concerns over class politics. The party's commission provided a further summary of Kazakh 'right' activities as follows:

1. There is disagreement with the party on the Soviet line of development. Specifically, Kazakh 'right' opposes the transformation of "socio-economic relations" among nomads, thereby standing to conserve the pre-revolutionary social structure.
2. On the issue of *korenizatsiia*, Kazakh 'right' violates the original promises of this policy – that is, to make Soviet power to be perceived as its own in the eyes of the Kazakh population. Instead, the local faction takes advantage of *korenizatsiia* to fulfill the nationalist agenda.
3. The weakening of the party's revolutionary legitimacy.
4. The intentional incitement of conflict between Kazakh-communists and European-communists. Additionally, the role of the latter in the Sovietization of Kazakhstan is dismissed.
5. Paralyzing party's efforts to counter "Alash ideology."
6. Evading obligations directed by the party.¹²³

¹²³ "Iz doklada KazKraiKK," 3:1:235

Consequently, Kazakh intelligentsia, including Kazakh 'right,' would be labeled as the reactionary force allied with the Kazakh wealthy class (*bais*).¹²⁴ Also, in the Central Party's interpretation, those two allied actors would have more influence on local masses than the Soviet state apparatus.¹²⁵

The above-mentioned primary sources on factionalism in Soviet Kazakhstan suggest that the Kazakh 'right' - Kazakh communists with previous ties to the Alash movement – over several years became identified as a significant danger to Soviet-building. Documents show how pressure on this group increased from the mid-20s, finally labeling this group as a carrier of "national-bourgeoisie" ideology. With the onset of the cultural revolution, Moscow isolated all native statesmen from both government and party structures, who had a background of collaborating with non-Soviet forces before 1920. At the end of the 1920s, for instance, Baitursynov faced arrest by the secret police.¹²⁶

Briefly drawing from the content of these primary documents, the Kazakh second group (or communist-nationals) prioritized the non-Soviet way of national development from the Party's perspective. First of all, *korenizatsiia* was imagined as the end goal by the local actor, which in turn posed a risk to exacerbate local nationalism. That is to implement nationality policies for the sake of the triumph of one's own nation. On the contrary, for the Soviets, the end goal of *korenizatsiia* was paving the way for the long-run idea of internationalism. Therefore, after acquiring their own rightful nationhood forms through *korenizatsiia*, all nations would become equal participants of future internationalism "family." In the Soviet realm, it suggested the "Friendship/Brotherhood of Nations." Secondly, this group might have gone too far from what is permissible under the "greatest-danger-principle." That is, deprivation of any legal rights for the Russian ethnicity in non-Russian republics, and often exaggerated accusations based on colonialism; in other words, that went beyond the official policy to counter the dominant spirit of the Russian nationality. Thirdly, appeasement of local

¹²⁴ "Iz otcheta djetysuisikogo gubkoma VKP(b) za period s 1 noiabria 1926 g. po 1 iulia 1927 g v TsK VKP(b), Kraikom VKP(b)" (October, 1927), 3:1:270

¹²⁵ "Iz svodki ob itogakh obsuzhdenia v djetysuisikoi organizatsii VKP (b)" (1927), 3:1:272

¹²⁶ He was later released in 1934 before facing execution in 1937

Kazakh wealthy strata (*bais*) on the part of Kazakh intellectuals. Therefore, not resisting their material affluence in the form of substantial livestock – the wealth that was still enjoyed from the Tsarist period. All these factors would characterize the activities of Kazakh communist-nationals as nationalistic, discriminative, and appeasers of the traditional wealthy class. Thus, the Kazakh intellectuals would be defined as a political actor that advocated inegalitarian ideas.

However, a few primary sources of non-Party origin complicate the overall picture. To be specific, Kazakh communist-nationals, as successors of the pre-revolutionary intelligentsia, did not opt for the national project at the expense of socialist transformation. Although discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, it is worth briefly noting that documents by Sadvakasov – prominent communist-national and leader of the second faction - present an opposite narrative. He served as head of *Narkom Prosveshcheniia* (Ministry of Education) and was involved in the ideological education of Kazakh youth. His 1920s reports addressed to the young generation indicate how inegalitarian Kazakh society was. The sources elaborate on social injustice and poor people's economic dependence on their wealthy upper kins (*bais*) within Kazakh society. Most importantly, Sadvakasov tried to frame social injustices within traditional Kazakh society by class analysis. As discussed in the next chapter, it perfectly fitted into the context of Kazakh traditional society.¹²⁷

Trotsky's letter with the title "National aspects of politics in Kazakhstan" illustrates the range of problems occurring in Kazakhstan by March 1927. This source provides substantial insights, made after Trotsky's discussion with Kazakh communist-nationals.¹²⁸ Several interesting points come up from this letter in the context of Moscow's above-mentioned anti-Soviet remarks on activities of communist-nationals. First, the letter indicates that the party had own interests with regards to factional struggle. As Trotsky noted: "Among the nationals, on the other hand, things are

¹²⁷ See the section on "Societal Transformation and Social Justice" of the next chapter. Additionally, as shown in the first chapter, one of the paragraphs of Alash program on taxes claimed that "taxes are levied fairly, depending on the wealth and income, that is, the rich pay more, the poor less." Although small hint, but it sets precedence of significantly weakening the power of the Kazakh wealthy class.

¹²⁸ Leon Trotsky, "National Aspects of Politics in Kazakhstan" (March 11, 1927), in *Leon Trotsky. The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1926-1927)*. 8th printing, ed. Naomi Allen and George Saunders (Pathfinder Press, 2014), 267-271

bubbling. There are various groupings among them. The existence of these different groupings is supported and even cultivated by the leaders sent from the center. For what purpose? "First, to strengthen their own domination; and second, to use these internal differences to divert attention from the problems connected with the policies of the center." ¹²⁹ Secondly, Kazakh communist-nationals complained that the first-party secretary, along with his collaborators and some members of Kazakh 'left,' falsely accuse them as protectors of the wealthy Kazakh class. Kazakh policymakers explicitly asserted that difficulties arise out of nowhere when in essence, there was consensus between titular statesmen and Moscow on the trajectory of domestic policies in Soviet Kazakhstan. At the end of the letter, Trotsky made his own conclusions, among which is that communists representing Central Party are not adhering to Lenin's principle that necessitated Russian Bolsheviks to act as "helpers" in borderlands. What Trotsky suspected is that those who are accusing others of "pro-kulak" inclinations might be doing so in the interest of careerism - bolstering up their reputation as 'leftists.'¹³⁰

Overall, Trotsky's letter suggests that Moscow took advantage of factionalism, possibly going as far as to prepare it as a ploy or exaggerate it (as anti-Soviet tendency) in order to curb and subordinate the borderland actor. Therefore, this letter reconsiders the earlier notion that the Kazakh establishment hindered the central tenets of Soviet national policy – that is, adjusting *korenizatziia* to nationalist ends or discrimination towards ethnic Russians. In short, ideological attacks against the local establishment on the charges of violation of Soviet principles and obstructing Soviet-building initiatives, especially those that were based on principles of ensuring equity, could be interpreted with skepticism. Given the broader change of Stalin's consolidation of power, this ideological attack and the subsequent isolation of the local elite might be means to establish totalitarian control over the periphery, thus diverging from Lenin's earlier power-sharing orientation with borderland actors.

A Final Word

¹²⁹ Trotsky, "National Aspects," 269

¹³⁰ Trotsky, "National Aspects," 269-271

This chapter sought to provide a peripheral narrative on the origins of the Soviet national policy and how the Central Party tried to reinforce its power over local actors. In the first case, Kazakh statesmen participated in the Party's grand policy rooted in egalitarian promise. Then, they allegedly become identified as troublemakers of the same policy over the following years.

Letters by the Kazakh elite to Lenin raised significant concerns on the Tsarist legacy to the Soviet leadership. To be sure, on the necessity to overcome inter-ethnic disparity caused historically by "Great Russian chauvinism." Even the local people's involvement in the development of their republics was tied to this problem. In a positive sense, Kazakh statesmen acted as intermediaries for Moscow to reflect on local realities. The defining issue was that non-Russians still have been victimized even though February Revolution abandoned the *inorodtsy* status. In other words, the Tsarist legacy became an impediment to achieve actual equality. The Kazakh elite was able to voice these concerns to the party leadership. Given the premises of adopted Soviet national policy in 1923, the struggle for equality by Kazakh intellectuals has proven fruitful. Furthermore, the fact that the Kazakh officials had space to elaborate on trajectories of policy-making indicates that the Leninist establishment showed perceptiveness to voices from the periphery. Thus, Kazakh intellectuals and Moscow found common ground. However, the brief period of Soviet power sharing democracy ends with Stalinist efforts to consolidate power. The Central Party's hard-line organs would falsely accuse communist-nationals based on justification of deviation from Soviet national and socialist goals. The system became rigged, yet not from its beginning.

CHAPTER 3

EGALITARIANISM WITHIN NATION

“Striving for equality is not nationalism ... Whatever happens, it is absolutely vital to strive for equality. It is a natural obligation of the disadvantaged.”

(teᅅgd̄ikke turusy – ūltshyldyq emes ... ne bolsa da teᅅgd̄ikke turusy kerek. Teᅅgd̄ikke turusy - kemsh̄ilikteᅅlerd̄iᅅg tabighi m̄indet̄i)

- *Smaghul Sadvakasov, communist-national of KazakhASSR*¹³¹

This chapter examines the history of development in Kazakhstan during the 1920s through the lens of Kazakh communist-national Smaghul Sadvakasov – a prominent figure in the tradition of pre-Soviet Kazakh national intelligentsia. While the previous chapter emphasized the subject of Soviet nationality policy, this chapter discusses three themes related to development: (1) the radical transformation of traditional Kazakh society; (2) educational and cultural enlightenment (*prosveshchenie*); and (3) the economic development of Kazakh pastoral areas. Beyond the scope of nationality policy, these issues were vital in the making of KazakhASSR. This chapter argues that the development of Soviet Kazakhstan was rooted in the egalitarianism principle. The Soviet ideological emphasis on human development - based on class-based politics - was a significant part of Kazakh reformists' plans to remake the country.

¹³¹ “Qazaqqa ne kerek?” (1922), in *Smaghul Saduaqasūly. Ek̄i tomdyq shygharmalar zhinaghy*, ed. Dikhan Qamzabekūly (Almaty: Alash, 2003), 2:266

Thorough scholarly work on early Soviet Central Asia has elaborated that two modernity projects existed: national, pursued by the indigenous elite, and Soviet project that included class politics. Both undertakings often came into a clash in the early stages of forging Soviet Uzbekistan and Soviet Turkmenistan. For instance, Khalid shows that class-based politics did not play a role in the modernization project of the native Jadid elite, namely in their envisioned national program of making Uzbekistan.¹³² In this debate on the coexistence of national and socialist trajectories in the formation of Central Asian republics, the narrative by Kazakh figure suggests a different picture. Specifically, in the case of Soviet Kazakhstan, the national and socialist reforms were often intertwined and mutually reinforcing rather than being in a state of friction in relation to one another.

This chapter will also draw upon documents of Turar Ryskulov, who was an indigenous leftist of Kazakh origin. Whereas Sadvakasov had an affiliation with Kazakh intelligentsia, Ryskulov came from a different background. Both were perfectly bilingual and served in high-ranking positions during the Soviet period. Sadvakasov identified himself as communist-national, while Ryskulov was a staunch socialist revolutionary. Since the October revolution, the Ryskulov has been on the side of Bolsheviks, a rare instance among native officials. Despite this divergence, as this chapter illustrates, many commonalities existed between them concerning the country's development. For instance, both shared understanding that the restructuring of Kazakh society entailed class-based politics. As a result, both Sadvakasov and Ryskulov articulated the egalitarian developmental ideas that reflected society's needs, especially its socioeconomically disadvantaged strata.

The official documents left by two Kazakh statesmen not only depict the political, economic, and social reality of that time but also have prescriptive character. Accordingly, this chapter extensively relies on documents written by two Kazakh officials. I draw from the following primary sources: three volumes of collected

¹³² Adeeb Khalid, *Making of Uzbekistan: Nation, Empire, and Revolution in the early USSR* (Cornell University Press, 2015). In Soviet Turkmenistan as well, there was clash between national and socialist trajectories, see Adrienne Lynn Edgar, *Tribal nation: the Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton University Press, 2004)

documents on Ryskulov¹³³ and two volumes of collected documents,¹³⁴ plus the third volume in updated series,¹³⁵ on Sadvakasov.

Sadvakasov and Ryskulov

During the tumultuous revolutionary period, Smaghul Sadvakasov was the leader of Alash's young branch organization. Having close links with the Kazakh national movement, he also married Alikhan Bukeikhanov's daughter. With the onset of Soviet power, he becomes a member of the communist party. Between 1922-1925, he served in various administrative positions related to agriculture and economic planning. Following that, he was head of Narkom *Prosveshcheniia* (Ministry of Education) between 1925-1927 and the main editor of the leading republican Kazakh language newspaper. The influence was visible in other organs since he was a member of the national republic's ruling party and part of their presidiums' (highest ruling body). It is well-known that Moscow welcomed the participation of pre-revolutionary national intellectuals in the Soviet-building campaign. In the late 1920s, however, ex-Alash members and Jadids would face prosecution and be ostracized from political affairs. Consequently, Sadvakasov would be sent to study at Moscow Institute of Railway Engineering.

Regarding his political activity, he was one of Kazakhstan's prominent national intellectuals, who served in various governmental posts, especially in the sphere of *prosveshchenie* and youth engagement. Content of collected documents, especially in the Kazakh language, indicate that he led the development of education among Kazakh youth. By opposing nationalism, he identified himself as "communist-national" - the one that followed ideals of communism jointly with the party's national program.¹³⁶ Soviet

¹³³ V. K. Karpykova and K.N. Nurpeisov, eds., *T.R. Ryskulov. Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh. Tom 1. Vol.1.* (Almaty: Qazaqstan, 1997); V.K. Karpykova, ed., *T.R. Ryskulov. Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh. Tom 2. Vol.2* (Almaty: Qazaqstan, 1997); M.-A. Kh. Asylbekov and Ui. I. Romanov, eds., *T.R. Ryskulov. Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh. Tom 3. Vol.3* (Almaty: Qazaqstan, 1998)

¹³⁴ Dikhan Qamzabekūly, ed., *Smaghul Saduaqasūly. Ekī tomdyq shygharmalar zhinaghy*, (Almaty: Alash, 2003)

¹³⁵ first two volumes in these 2013 series are the same as two volumes in 2003 series

¹³⁶ "O natsional'nostiakh i natsionalakh" (1928), in *Smaghul Saduaqasūly*, ed. Qamzabekūly, 2:173-174

secret police (OGPU) depicted him as the instigator of interethnic conflict and as the “student” of Bukeikhanov.¹³⁷ As examined in the second chapter, in 1928, the party would accuse Sadvakasov and his faction based on charges that he led an “anti-Soviet” political activity, allegedly advocating the interests of the Kazakh wealthy class. Further accusations by the party point out that he resisted class politics.¹³⁸

Notwithstanding the party’s suspicious attitude on charges of nationalism, documents by Sadvakasov reveal that he condemned and disapproved slogans such as “Kazakhstan is for Kazakhs” or “100% *korenizatsiia*.”¹³⁹ Instead, his activity was concerned with a deep-seated level of underdevelopment among Kazakh masses and national inequality inherited from the Tsarist legacy. Meanwhile, he sincerely believed in the broader all-Union level idea of “People’s Friendship” (*Druzhiba Narodov*) and hoped for long-established peace between different Soviet ethnic groups. Humorously, he pointed that even the well-known Russian idiom - “v sem'e ne bez uroda” (there is a black sheep in every family) - will not remain valid in the Soviet case.¹⁴⁰

Turar Ryskulov tied his fate with Soviet power even before the October revolution and consistently remained the staunch supporter of the Soviet power. In 1917, a young socialist organized and led the “Alliance of revolutionary Kazakh youth” in the Kazakh province within Turkestan. One of the organization's main tasks was to fight against the Provisional Government's local committees because the same Tsarist officials served in them. He was also an opponent of the local *bai*¹⁴¹ class, which represented the wealthy strata of the indigenous population.¹⁴² During the Civil War, Ryskulov actively worked to forge Soviet power in Turkestan. He took various leading

¹³⁷ “Doklad sotrudnikov GPU v KiroblKK RKP (b) “O gruppovoi i personal'noi kharakteristike, sushchnosti i deiatel'nosti Alash-Ordı i natsionalistov kirgiz” (September 23, 1922), in *Istoriia Kazakhstana. Dokumenty i Materialy*, ed. Dzharparova (Astana: Shanyraq Media, 2017), 40

¹³⁸ “Resolutsiia biuro Kazkraikoma VKP(b) po dokladu KraiKK “V sviazi s delom ob antipartiinom uklone gruppy partiitsev (natsionalov)” (May 16, 1928), in *Dvizhenie Alash*, eds. Gribanova and Smaghulova (Almaty: Elshezhire, 2007), 3:1:279

¹³⁹ “O natsional'nostiakh,” in *Smaghul Saduaqasuly*, ed. Qamzabekuly, 2:170, 2:175

¹⁴⁰ “O natsional'nostiakh,” 2:170

¹⁴² “Soiuz revoliutsionnoi kirgizskoi molodezhi (Aulie-atinskii uezd)” (1917), in *T.R. Ryskulov. Sobranie Sochinenii*, eds. Karpykova and Nurpeisov, 1:64-65

high-ranking positions, such as Chairman of TsIK (Central Executive Committee) and head of Sovnarkom (Council of People's Commissars) of TurkestanASSR (1922-1924), deputy of People's Commissars on RSFSR's affairs on nationalities, and was representative of Comintern in Mongolia. Then he reached an influential position as deputy chairman of Sovnarkom of RSFSR (1926-1937). While in that position, Ryskulov governed the construction of the *Turksib* (Turkestani-Siberian) railway between 1926-1930.¹⁴³ In stark contrast to Sadvakasov, Kazakh leftist was critical of Kazakh intelligentsia or Alash national movement. Besides, Ryskulov noted that Alash had a negligible effect on the masses,¹⁴⁴ signifying that national consciousness among people was at the rudimentary stage. A tolerant attitude to Kazakh propertied class¹⁴⁵ and alliance of intelligentsia with Russian bourgeoisie-democratic party (*Kadets*) were among the many reasons for criticism by him. Despite an anti-monarchical stance, Ryskulov condemned intelligentsia's position on endorsing the Tsarist 1916 conscription decree and, later, alliance with White forces.¹⁴⁶

Prosveshchenie

To implement any developmental projects, workers should possess the necessary modern knowledge to become qualified cadres. Therefore, “development also had to include education.”¹⁴⁷ Indeed, the road to finding one's place in the modern world was the initiative full of hardships as the republic's elite faced deep structural problems even in promoting elementary educational necessities - another burden inherited from the Tsarist era.

¹⁴³ in *T.R. Ryskulov. Sobranie Sochinenii*, eds. Asylbekov and Romanov, 3:433

¹⁴⁴ “K Kirgizskoi intelligentsii,” in *T.R. Ryskulov. Sobranie Sochinenii*, eds. Karpykova and Nurpeisov, 1:107-108

¹⁴⁵ For instance, Ryskulov claims that representatives of privileged class took part in congresses organized by Alash members

¹⁴⁶ “Obshchaia kharakteristika sotsial'nogo sostava povstantsev 1916 goda” (1927), in *T.R. Ryskulov. Sobranie Sochinenii*, ed. Karpykova, 2:189-191

¹⁴⁷ Artemy M. Kalinovsky, *Laboratory of Socialist Development: Cold War Politics and Decolonization in Soviet Tajikistan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), 4

Tsarist plans to create and promote schools in Central Asia and Kazakhstan essentially had the long-run goal of imposing Russification. Additionally, even if children of Russian officials usually entered accepted those schools, the money collected for their construction was extracted from all residents.¹⁴⁸ Initially fascinated by Russian culture, the Kazakh teacher Altynsarin was first to introduce a Cyrillic script for the Kazakh writing system in the second half of the 19th century. However, he later distanced himself from all his Russian colleagues. Only towards the end of life, he realized that Russian schools' missionary purpose was not well-intent. Before death, Altynsarin renounced all his Russian friends, including the closest ones, and left testament, wishing to see in his funeral none except “99 mullahs.”¹⁴⁹ On the other hand, missionary schools were not the only means to attain education before the revolution. It was religious education that arrived first in the steppe. Yet, mullahs from Uzbekistan, Tatarstan, and Bashkiria taught only the religious dogmas about the afterlife.¹⁵⁰

As the revolution occurred, the masses did not comprehend the ideals of Soviet power. People continued to uphold the conservative way of life, and practically no proletariat among the indigenous population existed.¹⁵¹ The reason for backwardness is partly interpreted through the notion of morality: centuries-long Tsarist repression was one of the main reasons for underdevelopment.¹⁵² Regularly, Sadvakasov conducted agitational work addressed to Kazakh youth through his speeches and articles. Meanwhile, he had to counter conservative views that resisted progress. The aspiration was that the young generation was a tipping point that would radically break with the past. Sadvakasov strongly encouraged the youth to not restrict themselves only with school education but also to organize and engage in cultural activities, learn art and

¹⁴⁸ “G. Deiatel’nost’ tsarisma po linii administratsii, suda i prosveshcheniia” (1927), in *T.R. Ryskulov. Sobranie Sochinenii*, ed. Karpykova, 2:180

¹⁴⁹ “O znachenii vuza dlia Kazakhstana,” in *Smaghul Saduaqasūly*, ed. Qamzabekūly, 1:331

¹⁵⁰ “Voprosy narodnogo prosveshcheniia v Kazakhstane” (1927), in *Smaghul Saduaqasūly. Ush tomdyq shygharmalar zhinaghy* (Astana: Nūr-Astana, 2013), 3:152-153

¹⁵¹ “VII Chrezvychainyi s’ezd sovetov. Rech’ t. Ryskulova v preniakh po ekonomicheskoi politike” (March, 1919), in *T.R. Ryskulov. Sobranie Sochinenii*, eds. Karpykova and Nurpeisov, 1:141.

¹⁵² “Deistvitel’no ser’eznyi vopros” (September, 1923) in *Smaghul Saduaqasūly*, ed. Qamzabekūly, 2:287

theater, and become an active part of *komsomol*.¹⁵³ As he warns, a non-educated person will not see the fruits of own work no matter how good intentions can be. This person will have an inadequate understanding of the modern world and endure vulnerability in the face of appeals coming from manipulators and “demagogues.” On a much broader level, a non-educated nation will lack convictions.¹⁵⁴

Even though the slogan “Cherez prosveshchenie k stroitelstvu” (Through enlightenment to [Soviet] building)¹⁵⁵ illustrate the immense role of education, and even if 30% of the republican and local level budget was devoted to expenditures in that sector, several acute problems existed. The devastating situation of the economy as in the whole USSR imposed material constraints such as lack of resources.¹⁵⁶ By 1926, access to school in some regions for children was between 10-15%, while in Central Russia, this number stood no less than 60%.¹⁵⁷ Besides, problems in education jeopardized the fulfillment of *korenizatsiia*. In Soviet eastern nationalities, the policy to advance non-Russian ethnic groups into administrative positions in political-economic sectors was more critical than linguistic *korenizatsiia*. The reason for that is the lack of either trained or qualified people among eastern nationalities. Moreover, the only way to elevate titular language into official status lay through the massive buildup and entrance of native cadres into state institutions.¹⁵⁸

KazakhASSR, like other nationalities in the East, suffered from a drastic lack of qualified cadres. Naturally, the problem was the result of structural underdevelopment in education. The literacy rate among Kazakhs was just 7.1%, according to 1926 data¹⁵⁹ - this is almost twice as low as the average level of literacy among eastern nationalities

¹⁵³ Most of the Sadvakasov’s Kazakh language documents are addressed to youth and overwhelmingly assert the vital role of education and necessity to acquire tenets of modern culture.

¹⁵⁴ “Nuzhdy aula (ocherki kirgizskoi zhizni)” (April and May, 1919), in *Smaghul Saduaqasūly*, ed. Qamzabekūly, 1:12-13

¹⁵⁵ “Qazaqqa ne kerek?” (1922), in *Smaghul Saduaqasūly*, ed. Qamzabekūly, 2:286

¹⁵⁶ “O znachenii vuza dlia Kazakhstana,” in *Smaghul Saduaqasūly*, ed. Qamzabekūly, 1: 329

¹⁵⁷ “O znachenii vuza dlia Kazakhstana,” 1:330

¹⁵⁸ Martin, *The Affirmative Action*, 177, 24, 134

¹⁵⁹ Martin, *The Affirmative Action*, 127

(13.3%) and 7.5 times lower than the average rate among western nationalities of the USSR (55%). Such a disturbing situation led Stalin to recruit national intelligentsia, even though they were not considered communists.¹⁶⁰ In 1921, Baitursynov, as the head of the Commissariat of Education (*Narkom Prosvetchsheniia*), explicitly stressed to the party that the development of education and culture had no positive signs. To be sure, agitational and educational work was hindered by the fact that there were no books in the Kazakh language. Furthermore, the Kazakh language did not have a standardized form because it did not go through the detailed study of language's laws and grammar.¹⁶¹

After the mid-20s, the situation remained still troubling. The 1927 report by Sadvakasov, delivered to the first congress of Kazakhstan's teachers, lays out the problems in the educational sphere. Such occasions when pupils wrote on their knees due to the absence of school tables were only part of a broader problem. Among the acute issues in the promotion of *prosveshchenie* was the inequality of ethnicized character. Firstly, education in the Kazakh language faced the difficulty of finding authors for textbooks. Subsequently, beginner schools had only a few Kazakh instructed textbooks while middle and higher schools had almost none.¹⁶² For instance, only one book on grammar and one on arithmetic in the Kazakh language existed in 1919.¹⁶³ Meanwhile, as children grew or finished the particular educational stage, they needed further development. That might explain why Sadvakasov claimed that education in the Russian language in Kazakh schools was a "forced measure." It was also a response for those teachers who suspected teaching in Russian as the manifestation of the Tsarist missionary policy of Russification. Communist-national cautioned that this would not be a permanent policy and gave an example of a city in southern Kazakhstan where Kazakh

¹⁶⁰ Stalin, "Politika Sovetskoi vlasti po natsional'nomu voprosu v Rosii" (10 October, 1920) in *Stalin. Sochineniia. Tom 4. Noiabr' 1917-1920. Vol.4* (Moscow, 1947), 360-361

¹⁶¹ A. Baitursynov, "Zaiavlenie A. Baitursynova s protestom protiv ego iskliucheniia iz riadov partii RKP(b)" (November 15, 1921), in *Dvizhenie Alash*, eds. Grihanova and Smaghulova, 3:1:99-100

¹⁶² in *Smaghul Saduaqasūly*, ed. Qamzabekūly, 3:158-159

¹⁶³ "Kirgizskaia literatura" (1919), in *Smaghul Saduaqasūly*, ed. Qamzabekūly, 1:246

was the predominant language of instruction to prove that policy resulted from constraint and was not an extension of colonialism.¹⁶⁴

The second problem is that half of the beginner schools lasted only one year instead of four. It was the result of a deficit of cadres and low-quality education among the existing teachers.¹⁶⁵ To make matters worse in ethnicized terms, in Kazakh nomadic *auyl*, one-year school practically functioned only 95 days per year compared to 130 days in settled areas.¹⁶⁶ Practically, the duration of beginner schools among native pastoralists lasted three months. According to estimations, tens of thousands of cadres were required for the beginner school stage, whereas the number stood only around four thousand by 1927. Opened in 1926, the first Kazakh university was pedagogical (*PEDVUZ*), reflecting the republic's urgent needs for qualified teachers.

Despite language *korenizatsiia*, the Russian continued to play a crucial role. In his speech to celebrate the opening of the first university in Kazakhstan in 1926, Sadvakasov emphasized the importance of the *prosveshchenie* among young people. During his statements, he highlighted the significance of the Russian language. Namely, the comprehension of the Russian language was a necessary condition for the youth since it functioned as the “only bridge” to attain modernity. Besides, Russian was a “forced measure” because there were not enough educational books in the Kazakh language.¹⁶⁷ Meanwhile, Sadvokasov claimed how the role of the Russian language changed in comparison to the Tsarist period. Specifically, “if in old times orthodoxy missionaries [Tsarist schools and pedagogues] taught the Russian language so that Kazakh [person] would permanently forget own native language, now we are in favor of the Russian language; by mastering it, we can use it for the benefit of worker masses in Kazakhstan.”¹⁶⁸ In other words, the Russian language was envisioned positively during

¹⁶⁴ “Voprosy narodnogo prosveshcheniia v Kazakhstane” (1927), in *Smaghul Saduaqasūly*, ed. Qamzabekūly, 3:161

¹⁶⁵ That may have been because those teachers had not further education apart from basic four-year in a beginner school.

¹⁶⁶ in *Smaghul Saduaqasūly*, ed. Qamzabekūly, 3:164-165

¹⁶⁷ “O znachenii vuza dlia Kazakhstana,” in *Smaghul Saduaqasūly*, ed. Qamzabekūly, 1:336

¹⁶⁸ “O znachenii vuza dlia Kazakhstana,” 1:336

the early Soviet era, as opposed to what ends it served during Tsarism. Besides, Russian has become a means to temporarily fill the educational underdevelopment gap due to the lack of Kazakh language materials.

The educational backwardness negatively impacted economic development - namely, it hardened the prospects of Kazakhstan's animal husbandry sector to take the industrial course. The increase in livestock productivity required various specialists such as zootechnicians and know-how in fields as veterinary medicine. All of these, in turn, required the presence of technical educational institutes.¹⁶⁹ It is also worth noting that Sadvakasov was critical of *korenizatsia*'s practice to assign natives to administrative positions since it was detrimental to the preparation of industry-related specialists. Most of the students in technical schools, for instance, claim: "rather than to suffer in a *technikum* for two or three years, and then get a hundred rubles at most in a modest job, it is better to get a lucrative position [managerial] while they are in urgent need."¹⁷⁰ Such inclinations were possible as long as there was a policy of promoting natives cadres to leadership positions. In short, to some extent, the policy of *korenizatsiia* posed a negative effect on the development of the local industry.

Societal Transformation and Social Justice

Nomadic Kazakh society had unequal social strata. As accounts suggest, poor (*bedniak*) and middle (*seredniak*) constituted 80% of the ethnic Kazakh population.¹⁷¹ In Turkestan, 75% of the population belonged to poor strata. Most of them were laborers who worked for Cossacks, (Russian) peasantry, and *bai* households in nomadic and semi-nomadic areas.¹⁷² One western scholarly work has shown that the traditional structure of Kazakh society had a positive role in the stable functioning of society.

¹⁶⁹ "Voprosy narodnogo prosveshcheniia v Kazakhstane" (1927), in *Smaghul Saduaqasūly*, ed. Qamzabekūly, 3:172

¹⁷⁰ "Voprosy narodnogo prosveshcheniia v Kazakhstane" (1927), 3:174

¹⁷¹ Saduaqasūly, "Razgovor s molodezhiiu" (1925), in *Smaghul Saduaqasūly*, ed. Qamzabekūly, 3:132

¹⁷² "Obshchaia kharakteristika sotsial'nogo sostava povstantsev 1916 goda" (1927), in *T.R. Ryskulov. Sobranie Sochinenii*, ed. Karpykova, 2:185

Precisely, kinship-based forms of social organization among Kazakhs corresponded to that of a “communal way.” Mutual assistance was a defining aspect of this communal feature life as kin pastoralists could rely on each other during the crises.¹⁷³ However, documents by Kazakh figures suggest a different narrative. In the understanding of Sadvakasov and Ryskulov, one of the imperative tasks in the Soviet period was eradicating injustices existing in traditional Kazakh society. Interestingly, class analysis was a tool to frame those injustices and, as shown in this section, perfectly reflected the reality of local social structure. The goal was the radical transformation towards a much more egalitarian trajectory.

How would class analysis play out in a non-proletarian traditional Kazakh society? In one of the sections of the article “Zhastargha - zhangā zhol” (To Kazakh youth - new path), Sadvakasov attempts to explain, in a simplified manner, the nature of inequity within Kazakh society. The author illustrates the life story of one poor Kazakh person. The story begins with the boy who was born into a low-income family. When children of wealthy *bai* went to school, this boy could not afford to do similarly as his parents lacked the necessary means. It was not too late in the teenage years to get an education, but his father becomes older and exhausted in his service to *bai*. Then poor teenager begins to do what his father did before. Taking care of *bai*'s cattle becomes most of the time-spending activity in his youth. Life is worsened by the fact that no one can bring some positive things to his life. Parents are telling, “obey the bai ... he will not say [something] wrong,” while *bai* himself always shouts, “move on, fool. You do not work for me, but for my wealth”¹⁷⁴ As the poor man got in his thirties, his parents become weak due to aging and require more care. The marriage is impossible as the male must pay *qaly*m (bride price). Meanwhile, the sons of *bai* who were once, old childhood fellows - have two wives and many children: all except the poor have cultural and material well-being. The central point is that sons of *bai* do not work at all as their material comfort is created by poor workers who serve them and *bai*. Sadvakasov summarizes the poor's internal state of mind as follows:

¹⁷³ Cameron, *The Hungry Steppe*, 74-75

¹⁷⁴ “Qazaq zhastarynyng būryngghy tūrmysy” in “Zhastargha - zhangā zhol” (1921), in *Smaghul Saduagasyly*, ed. Qamzabekūly, 2:17-18

You are unhappy, nobody needs you, nobody loves you, does not want to know [you], does not feel sorry. And you do not want to know anyone, you do not feel sorry. Your heart has hardened. The eyes are dim, and they look gloomily from under the eyebrows. The once delicate ruddy cheeks turned black in the sun, dried up. You cry secretly, ask heaven for mercy. And God had mercy. You have found "grace" in darkness, in silence.¹⁷⁵

Ryskulov's pre-revolutionary background is also the best illustration reflecting social injustices within Kazakh society. In stark contrast to Kazakh intelligentsia, who had a wealthy background and could financially afford education in Russian schools or specialized institutes, Ryskulov emerged from the poor class. As he informs, hunger was a regular phenomenon in the early ages, and he sometimes had to eat only diluted flour with water. His family was a constant target of suppression on the part of *bai* and the local administrator, two of whom collaborated in local affairs governance. Once Ryskulov's father was unjustly arrested and was supposed to be sent to Sakhalin for ten years. The father took young Ryskulov with him as his life was under threat from an antagonistic *bai*. Before exile to Siberia, both were in local prison where young Turar also started to attain literacy. The father died one year later due to illnesses that he got in jail. Later, Kazakh communist received an education in a Russian-Kazakh school under a different surname. During this time in the summer periods, he was serving as a shepherd to *bais*. As underlined, he "suffered beatings from them," while his uncle could barely live because powerful *bais* forced him to return debts with much higher percentages.¹⁷⁶ After the end of another specialized school, he applied to an agricultural college in Samara. Nevertheless, he was rejected due to his ethnic identity of being *inorodtsy*, although he passed exams. Later, in 1915, he received rejection during the application to a pedagogical institute in Tashkent; again, due to *inorodtsy* status, because Institute accepted only Orthodox faith holders.¹⁷⁷ In the 1930s, Ruskulov wrote to Stalin and Kaganovich marking that his "bitterness against Tsarism and hatred against *bais*

¹⁷⁵ in *Smaghul Saduaqasūly*, ed. Qamzabekūly, 3:57

¹⁷⁶ "Kratkaia avtobiografia" (December, 1921), in *T.R. Ryskulov. Sobranie Sochinenii*, eds. Asylbekov and Romanov, 3:197-199

¹⁷⁷ in *Dvizhenie Alash*, eds. Gribanova and Smaghulova, 3:2:189

reached extremes,” thereby shaping his political outlook.¹⁷⁸ Thus, his early personal experience might explain why he joined the radical left party before the October revolution.

The local indigenous masses experienced despotism from Tsarist European officials and Russian settlers, and once again, colonization continued as they massively joined the Soviet side to uphold their privileged position.¹⁷⁹ However, worthwhile to mention that the nature of repression has not taken solely ethnicized character. Both Ryskulov and Sadvakasov define the repression during the Tsarist era and years aftermath as double repression.¹⁸⁰ In other words, both Russian officials¹⁸¹ and the indigenous *bai* class, often working in collaboration, have been the main perpetrators of oppression. In prevailing fashion, the power of *bai* extended to political, economic, and religious spheres. *Bais* usually served as administrators of *auyl*. Their authoritative power also captured religious mullahs. When something goes wrong, such as epidemics or hunger, mullahs spread the message that it is God's will. The ownership of *bai* over everything in *auyl* is also justified similarly. When it comes to the destitution of poor people, mullahs claim that “God was unpleasant with their ancestors.” Such discourse paralyzed the masses, resulting in acceptance of their fate as normal and natural.¹⁸²

On the issue of whether clan identity or socio-economic motives determined social relations among Kazakh pastoralists, Ruskylov gave a Marxist answer: socio-

¹⁷⁸ “Pismo T.R. Ryskulova I.V. Stalinu i L.M. Kaganovichu “O peregibakh v sviazi s chistkoi partorganizatsii i Srednei Azii” (December 1934), in *Dvizhenie Alash*, eds. Gribanova and Smagholova, 3:2:189. Only after petition, ministry of education permitted Ryskulov to study in Tashkent

¹⁷⁹ More on that see Marco Buttino, “Central Asia (1916-1920): A Kaleidoscope of Local Revolutions and the Building of the Bolshevik Order.” in *The empire and nationalism at war*, eds. by Eric Lohr, Vera Tolz, Alexander Semyonov, and Mark von Hagen.(2014): 109-135

¹⁸⁰ “Natsionalnyi vopros v kirgizii” (November, 1923), in *Smaghul Saduaqasuly*, ed. Qamzabekuly, 2:288; “Iazvy provintsial’noi zhizni” (August, 1919), in *T.R. Ryskulov. Sobranie Sochinenii*, eds. Karpykova and Nurpeisov, 1:238-239

¹⁸¹ Most unqualified officials of Russian imperil served in Turkestan. They were particularly inclined to extract profit from local masses. The indigenous people even developed the view that the official who could not get wealthy within one year after his appointment was seen as “low-skilled administrator”. See “G. Deiatel’nost’ tsarisma po linii administratsii, suda i prosveshcheniia” (1927), in *T.R. Ryskulov. Sobranie Sochinenii*, ed. Karpykova, 2:177

¹⁸² “Qazaq zhastarynyng bürynggy türmysy” in “Zhastargha - zhang’a zhol” (1921), in *Smaghul Saduaqasuly*, ed. Qamzabekuly, 2:21

economic motivations played a primary role, not clan identity. Nevertheless, he admitted that clan relation or clan way of life still has shaped pastoralists' behavior because it was an instrument in the hands of *bai* class to justify exploitation against poor masses. Nevertheless, clan identity was unnecessarily exaggerated in the policy-making process within Kazakh rural areas, notes Ryskulov.¹⁸³

Another part of the injustice that paralyzed the poor was the court system. Traditional Kazakh judges (*bi*) operated under the tradition of Kazakh customary law rather than sharia which was valid for the settled populations of Central Asia (Uzbeks, Tajiks). Ryskulov notes that, in reality, courts proceeded on the formula of “who will give more.” Therefore, *biis* usually ruled in favor of *bai*. If two wealthy individuals clashed at court, then the judge would rule in favor of the one who ultimately offered more money. Within years after the revolution, the traditional courts continued their functioning. If the pre-revolutionary *biis* were isolated, their close relatives took the position, thereby continuing the conventional course. *Bedniak* (poor) knew all these machinations and, therefore, usually did not seek justice.¹⁸⁴ Regarding the gender aspect, impoverished women of the poor class were forced to accept the marriage with *bai* or someone from his wealthy circle due to material constraints. Moreover, marriage went against her own will due to the practice of bride price (*qalym*).¹⁸⁵

Traditionally established gap between poor and rich also hardened prospects of economic development for the former, notes Sadvakasov in his 1925 book “Zhastarmen ängıme” (Conversation with Youth).¹⁸⁶ First, the lack of necessary agriculture equipment (such as a mower) put the poor in an inferior position because, comparatively, *bais* produced numerous times more by the possession of necessary tools and inventory. Secondly, in logistical terms, *bai* could sell their own products (usually meat, wool) at a higher price because he might afford to cover expenses and have horses

¹⁸³ “Otvēt na pis’mp gruppy molodeji v gazete “Sovetskaia Step’... ” (June, 1926), in *T.R. Ryskulov. Sobranie Sochinenii*, eds. Asylbekov and Romanov, 3:267

¹⁸⁴ “Stenograficheskaia zapis’ vystupleniia ...” (March, 1919), 3:145-146; in *T.R. Ryskulov. Sobranie Sochinenii*, ed. Karpykova, 2:179

¹⁸⁵ Additionally, the practice of buying the bride (*qalym*) was continuing although Party officially made it illegal in 1921.

¹⁸⁶ ““Zhastarmen ängıme” (1925), in *Smaghul Saduaqasūly*, ed. Qamzabekūly, 2:115-116

for personal transportation to the city. On the opposite, the absence of any means forced the poor to give away own wool for nothing to intermediate traders. Generally, the full realization of agricultural potential requires basic knowledge in the domain of the rural sector industry. This is what many farmers of Australia or the US had possessed, which was the key to their productivity. The skills in zootechnics and agronomy enabled the increase in production by hundred times per unit in the processing of land and livestock. The knowledge, in turn, requires at least literacy gained from school before the specialized education; all of these were a practically non-achievable path for Kazakh *bedniak* masses given their lifelong dependence on their traditional landlords. Unless socio-economic relations are subject to change in Kazakh auyl, the economic development would be, as Sadvakosov described, in a state of “stifling competition.”¹⁸⁷ Overall, *bais* owned capital in the form of land and livestock, whereas the poor had none since their birth. Secondly, exploitation defined the nature of kinship ties. It forced the latter to work for the rich, thereby contributing to keep and widen their wealth. The kin loyalty to *bai* forced the poor to accept the status quo unconsciously.

Ryskulov proposed eradicating class injustice of traditional society - namely, the dependency of the poor on the rich. In other words, the party had to prioritize the promotion of social provisions to the lower class. Therefore, the poor were meant to acquire preferential rights in land distribution and access to education. Only with economic well-being could Turkestan citizens mobilize for the cause of socialism and become “pillars” of the Soviet power, as argued by Ryskulov.¹⁸⁸ During the Soviet period, both Kazakh officials adhered to class principles, which might have complicated the conduct of nationality policy since *korenizatsiia* suggested the entitlement of preferential rights to titular nationalities. When it came to the admission of children to schools, Sadvakasov endorsed the policy of prioritizing acceptance of children from a poor background¹⁸⁹ while supporting *korenizatsiia* in general.

¹⁸⁷ ““Zhastarmen āngīme” (1925), 2:115-116

¹⁸⁸ “Tsentral’noi komissii po bor’be s golodom” (March, 1919), in *T.R. Ryskulov. Sobranie Sochinenii*, eds. Karykova and Nurpeisov, 1:148; *Ibid.*, 1:162

¹⁸⁹ “Voprosy narodnogo prosveshcheniia v Kazakhstane” (1927), in *Smaghul Saduaqasūly*, ed. Qamzabekūly , 3:166

As the Civil War and famine struck Turkestan inhabitants, Ryskulov organized a special committee specifically designed to mitigate the adverse effects of hunger. At the beginning of 1919, half of the population was starving. In his report on famine to the Central Executive Committee (TsIK) of Turkestan, he emphasized the indifference of the wealthy propertied class to the anti-famine campaign. In an attempt to tackle it, Ryskulov proposed a decree to extract all necessary provisions such as clothes and food from the propertied class.¹⁹⁰ According to Ryskulov, the campaign of wealth expropriation from the wealthy and following government aid saved the lives of approximately one million people.¹⁹¹ In the following years, land reforms took place in Semirech'e province. Redistribution of land had the following lines: first, to empower the poor by giving them land and simultaneously reduce the economic power of *bais*; secondly, destruction of tribal loyalties. Soon, Ryskulov was critical of reforms as the level of appropriated land from the wealthy (Cossacks, settled Slav peasants, and indigenous *bais*) did not reach the desired numbers. In early 1923, only 10,000 family households received land during the first phase of redistribution while the plan was 80,000. The Kazakh communist perceived this not only as damage to the poor but also as a negligible power decline of the propertied class.¹⁹²

The KazakhASSR party meetings touched upon the issue of confiscation campaign against wealthy indigenous *bais*. One scholarly work notes that Sadvakasov resisted the *bai* confiscation campaign.¹⁹³ Nevertheless, his speech at Kazakhstan's sixth party congress in 1927 suggests a contrary viewpoint. At that congress, Sadvakasov did not disagree with Goloshchekin (first party secretary of Kazakhstan from 1925) over the confiscation campaign per se. Instead, the campaign had to avoid undermining the

¹⁹⁰ "Kratkaia avtobiografia" (December, 1921), in *T.R. Ryskulov. Sobranie Sochinenii*, eds. Asylbekov and Romanov, 3:203-205; "Bor'ba s golodom," in *T.R. Ryskulov. Sobranie Sochinenii*, eds. Karpykova and Nurpeisov, 1:104-105, 110; *Ibid.*, 1:127

¹⁹¹ "Pis'mo predsedateliu Srezazbuiro TsK RKP(b) Ia.E. Rudzutaku" (January, 1924), in *T.R. Ryskulov. Sobranie Sochinenii*, eds. Asylbekov and Romanov, 3:254-255

¹⁹² "Dzhetysuiskie voprosy" (1923), in *T.R. Ryskulov. Sobranie Sochinenii*, ed. Karpykova, 2:12, 2:20

¹⁹³ Cameron, *Hungry Steppe*, 81-82. Author relies on the following document: "Smagul Sadvakasov, "Ja ne soglasen s zaiavleniiami tovarishcha Goloshchekina. Vystuplenie S. Sadvakasova na VI konferentsii Kazkraikoma (1927 god. 15-23 noiabria)," in *Izbrannoe*, 66." Since I rely on similar document, nevertheless, I show that Sadvakasov had disagreement not over confiscation campaign itself but rather on implementation of it.

middle strata's position by falsely labeling them as representatives of wealthy strata. Besides, Sadvakasov urged to target the Russian *kulaks* along with Kazakh *bais*. Additionally, in several provinces, mistakes occurred during the land distribution policy as policymakers did not consider the rights of *seredniak* (middle). The reason was that the party acted based on simplified binary differentiation - wealthy and poor – thereby excluding middle strata. Due to non-accurate policy, *seredniak's* land area significantly shrank. In his speech, Sadvakasov criticized this marginalization of middle strata and instead encouraged party officials to opt for consolidation of power between *seredniak* and *bedniak*.¹⁹⁴ The additional problem was that campaign did not touch upon local Russians, while comparatively, the same was not true in RSFSR. In one instance, Sadvakasov even opposed the option of “voluntarily tax” vis-a-vis wealthy because, in reality, no *bai* or kulak would impose high taxes on themselves.¹⁹⁵ Thus Sadvakasov acted as fixer rather than as oppositionist to the confiscation policy against the wealthy class.

Ryskulov's class line was not only confined to the state or regional level. What notably differentiated him from Uzbekistan's Jadids is the perception of Turkestan as an interconnected part of the global communist revolution. Turkestan played a crucial role in the center's revolutionary vision given Turkestan's geographical location and ethnic composition. That is, the occurrence of political and economic changes would potentially impact general Soviet Russia's line in the East. In other words, the revolutionary mood at the time suggested that Turkestan was the first Soviet entity in the East and likely would serve as a converging force between Soviet Russia and the whole East. Ryskulov's position did not diverge from this view.¹⁹⁶ The scholarly work has emphasized that the nation was “a fundamental category” for Turkestani Communists such as Ryskulov. It has to do with how Ryskulov and his fellows perceived revolution: the struggle against anticolonialism was mainly about eradicating “inequity and

¹⁹⁴ “Ja ne soglasen s zaiavleniami tovarishcha Goloshcheekina,” in *Smaghul Saduaqasūly*, ed. Qamzabekūly, 3:237-240

¹⁹⁵ “Ja ne soglasen s,” 3:241-242

¹⁹⁶ “Natsional'nyi vopros v osveshchenii programmy RKP. ...” (autumn, 1919), in *T.R. Ryskulov. Sobranie Sochinenii*, eds. Asylbekov and Romanov, 3:154

exploitation” caused by European colonialists. The revolution was interpreted as the undoing of suppression of one ethnic group (colonists Russians) over the other (colonized indigenous people). In that sense, “colonial difference overrode class” or “revolution made sense only as a national enterprise.”

Nevertheless, the struggle against the dominant ethnic group was only part of Ryskulov’s revolutionary mindset. For him, Turkestan was a component of a much broader and ambitious goal - world revolution, the defining feature of most communists at that time. Statement by Kazakh communist in the fourth congress of Communist Party of Turkestan sets forth particularly the following:

Every communist knows that the social revolution, wherever it originated, puts at the forefront of its activity not the interests of a particular country or nation, but pursues the interests of a worldwide revolution. The national and religious division of humankind, the violence of one nation against another, and the division into classes can be destroyed only on a global scale. For this reason, in all its actions, the Russian Federal Republic pursues, first and foremost, the interests of an international cause, and each of its constituent units must fulfill, first of all, federal and world tasks. This is the solid foundation of our program, the foundation of the World Social Revolution. In this regard, as a unit of the Russian Soviet Federation, the Turkestan Republic cannot be put into a different position: it must also, first of all, set federal tasks and fulfill the requirements of the Third Communist International unquestionably.¹⁹⁷

On the whole, the world revolution trumped the national interests of Turkestan, according to Ryskulov. On the other hand, Jadids interpreted revolution as the opportunity to implement a national project within Turkestan, especially given the opposition of conservative forces at that time.

Economy

This section will firstly outline mini- and then macrolevel economic proposals put forward by two Kazakh figures. In that attempt, it will show how both articulated different versions of economic equity. On the local level, Sadvakasov emphasized the essential role of cooperatives in the economic development of Kazakhstan. To begin

¹⁹⁷ “Natsional’nyi vopros,” 3:153

with, the essential question he puts is, “what type of cooperation is the most suitable under Kazakhstan’s conditions?” The republic had three economic zones: agriculture-based north, agriculture and pastoralism mixed middle, and pastoralism-oriented south. The problem in the south and other livestock breeding territories is the difficulty of developing the consumption economy in the same way as in the agricultural peasantry. As the author refers, nomadic *auyl* residences have considerable distances from each other, not to mention Kazakhs' seasonal migrations. Therefore, transportation costs outweigh the benefits of a potential trade, and lower strata of *auyl* does not even have horses. As a result, “consumer cooperation” is not possible in Kazakhstan. The consumption cooperative is the dominant form of organization in England, whereas Germany and Russia have credit and agricultural cooperatives, respectively. Sadvokasov proposed adopting a type cooperative called *kontora* for Kazakhstan.¹⁹⁸ On these grounds, he emphasized that “every form of economic organization is born out of life [conditions], not reverse.”¹⁹⁹ Here, Sadvokasov is likely to assert that top-down economic reorganization, which dismisses local conditions, might lead to undesirable outcomes.

The plan of cooperative *kontora* was supposed to play out as follows. Based on population, Kazakhstan is supposed to have small and big *raions* (territorial units) where every center of *raion* would have own cooperative *kontora*. *Kontora* by itself would fulfill economic functions such as trading, procurement supply, and sales of products, with the regular conduct of fairs. Interestingly, economic *kontora* played a significant role in terms of the reorganization of indigenous society. Sadvokasov urged the party to establish a network of *kontora* in Kazakh-populated *auyl* rather than within Russian peasantry villages. This facilitates the launch of a sedentarization process and might become a launching pad for social development since *kontora* had the settled infrastructure involving various cultural activities (libraries, cultural centers). In terms of who gets a profit, *kontora* had collective ownership. The revenues were anticipated to be spent on such expenditures as credit issuance to the poor and cultural educational

¹⁹⁸ German originated word referring to commercial bureau

¹⁹⁹ “Kirgizskaia Kooperatsiia (v poriadke predlozheniia)” (December, 1922), in *Smaghul Saduaqasūly*, ed. Qamzabekūly, 2:282-284

activities.²⁰⁰ Thus, the economic proposal reflected indigenous society's needs: how to sedentarize and ensure the cultural progress for nomadic Kazakhs. To add, the possibility of credit attainment by the poor reduced their dependence on *bai* landlords. In terms of methods, *kontora* was undoubtedly a gradual approach - which, with hindsight, stood in stark contrast to the center's radical approach of forced collectivization at the end of the 1920s.

On the macro-level, with the approaching of the first five-year plan, Sadvakasov disagreed with influential representatives of the party on the economic development of the republic's industry. Specifically, he argued for the necessity of proximity between sources of raw materials and the processing industry itself. That implied that Central Asia, for instance, was supposed to ship not only cotton but also processed textile. Moscow's representatives, such as Zelenskii, head of Central Asian Bureau of TsK, and Goloshchekin, first secretary of Kazakhstan, had different views. Both did not regard full-scale industrialization in Kazakhstan and Central Asia as the right course of action since the region lacked basic infrastructure, labor, and energy-extraction technology. Moreover, they described such a proposal as a "confined economic entity" (*zamknutoe khoziaistvo*). Rykov supported them and defined it as a "big mistake" when "industrialization meant the development of industry at all costs in every administrative unit."²⁰¹

Kazakh communist-national had an opposite point of view. According to Sadvakasov, the continued underdevelopment of industry in borderlands violated tenets of XII Congress - namely, one of the principles of resolution on national policy. In his view, it stated that one of the causes of nationality inequality, which is subject to elimination in the Soviet period, was a tendency by imperial Tsarism to make borderlands a target of exploitation - that is, source of raw materials for industrialized zones of central Russia.²⁰² Indeed, the seventh paragraph of the resolution on national policy, adopted in April 1923 by the Central Party, sets out two problems born out of the

²⁰⁰ in *Smaghul Saduaqasūly*, ed. Qamzabekūly, 2:285

²⁰¹ "O natsional'nostiakh i natsionalakh" (January, 1928), in *Smaghul Saduaqasūly*, ed. Qamzabekūly, 2:164-167

²⁰² in *Smaghul Saduaqasūly*, ed. Qamzabekūly, 2:162, 167

Tsarist era: Russian chauvinism, cultural and economic inequalities among USSR's nationalities. To clarify, "the reasons for this actual inequality lies not only in the history of these peoples but also in the policy of Tsarism and the Russian bourgeoisie, who sought to transform borderlands into exclusive raw material regions, exploited by industrially developed central regions." The resolutions also mentioned that the Russian proletariat must provide "help" to backward nationalities to raise their "cultural and economic level."²⁰³ However, no specific information on how exactly economic inequality between mainland Russia and the periphery is supposed to be corrected.

In 1927, Sadvakasov offered the one option - namely, he believed that industrialization had to be developed in the national periphery if the region had the potential for that. In that aspect, Kazakhstan was suitable as the country possessed enormous amounts of gas, oil, and mineral resources.²⁰⁴ Thus, Kazakh communist-national presented the need for industrialization in the context of the Soviet national policy recommendations. Within Stalin's industrialization program, he saw evasion from directives of Soviet national policy. To Sadvakasov, the industrialization of borderlands was the way of overcoming Tsarist colonialism and escaping the trap of being the permanent base for the extraction of raw materials. If Sadvakasov prioritized industrialization within borderlands, Ryskulov, on the other hand, regarded Kazakhstan and Central Asia as the interconnected parts of the whole USSR. In other words, for the Kazakh communist, the interests of the Union overrode the economic interests of the national entity, as Ryskulov's working on the construction of the *Turksib* (Turkestan-Siberian) railroad indicate.

In 1913, USSR's textile consumption per capita fell behind Western industrial states by four and three times. On the eve of a first five-year plan, the country still lagged behind the pre-war level.²⁰⁵ With plans for all-Union industrialization, Central Asia, with its cotton abundance, played a crucial role. Between 1927-1930, Ryskulov

²⁰³ "Po natsionalnomu voprosu," in *Dvenadtsati s"ezd RKP (b). 17-25 apreliia 1923 goda. Stenograficheskiĭ otchet* (Moskva:1968), 693-694 http://istmat.info/files/uploads/51781/12_sezd.pdf

²⁰⁴ in *Smaghul Saduaqasūly*, ed. Qamzabekūly, 2:164

²⁰⁵ "Stat'ia "Turkestan-Sibirskaiia ..." (1929), in *T.R. Ryskulov. Sobranie Sochinenii*, eds. Asylbekov and Romanov, 3:85

was the head of the committee for assistance in constructing the *Turksib* railroad under the *Sovnarkom* (Council of People's Commissars) of the RSFSR.²⁰⁶ Economic zones of the *Turksib* railroad were as follows: Central Asia with cotton specialization; western Siberia with grain specialization; Kazakhstan along with northern Kirghiz ASSR having mixed economies (grain, industrial crops, and pastoralism).²⁰⁷ Initially, construction of the railway was planned during the Tsarist period. However, a set of events such as WWI and the Civil War postponed the industrial project. What was the ultimate significance of this ambitious industrial project? In the *Gosplan* session, Ryskulov laid out the broader economic goals of the *Turksib* railroad in his speech. Specifically, as the following points suggest, Central Asia and Kazakhstan were regarded as an interconnected part of the whole economic Union:²⁰⁸

- development of the cotton industry in Central Asia and thereby reduction of cotton import from abroad. The overall contribution to USSR's positive balance trade as Soviet textile would rely on own cotton from Central Asia.
- reorienting the significant share of grain and wood products of Western Russia for export purposes, which until *Turksib* were delivered to Central Asia.
- advance of the Siberian economy as Central Asia becomes a new rising consumption place for its grain
- development of economic zones of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan

Apart, *Turksib* was intended to positively impact the local population as it would assist in the rise of the general cultural level by involving the masses in Soviet-building construction projects.²⁰⁹ What is notable about Ryskulov's position on *Turksib* is that his economic views on Central Asia substantially changed during the Soviet period

²⁰⁶ in *T.R. Ryskulov. Sobranie Sochinenii*,, 3:433

²⁰⁷ "Stat'ia "K Otkrytiiu Turksiba" " (May, 1930), 3:138

²⁰⁸ "Stenogramma rechi na zasedanii ..." (November, 1926), 3:9-10; "Stat'ia "Turkestano-Sibirskaiia ..." (1929), 3:83

²⁰⁹ "Informatsiia gazety "V Kraikome VKP(b)..." (July, 1928), 3:76; "Stat'ia "K Otkrytiiu Turksiba" " (May, 1930), 3:133

compared to the pre-revolutionary situation. Ryskulov fully endorsed the idea of the region becoming the center of cotton production, and he even issues proposals on how to reduce grain fields there.²¹⁰ Thus, all-Union planning and adjustment of Central Asia to federative level plans is the effective developmental path. On the contrary, Ryskulov's view on the Tsarist Turkestani economy was the opposite. The pre-revolutionary period documents reveal that the Kazakh communist was critical of Turkestani's economic independence loss as it became a cotton exporter. From 1905, Turkestan was drastically reoriented to cotton production, which caused the reduction of irrigated lands for cereal crops. Over time, the region became totally dependant on mainland Russia for the supply of grain and could not exist without it. At a similar time, Ryskulov criticized the local rich because they had coerced the local population to give up on the production and cultivation of own cereal crops for the sake of profitable cotton industry. Besides, economic reorientation and followed Turkestan's dependence on bread from empires' central regions substantially increased the severity of famine in 1918.²¹¹ Unfortunately, documents by Ryskulov do not provide any specific information on why Central Asia had to abandon economic independence and specialize solely in cotton production during the Soviet period. One could speculate, but given Ryskulov's accounts on how he was critical of newly forming capitalism in Turkestan around cotton during the late Tsarist era, he might have thought that economic independence is out of the question when the economy operates in an anti-capitalist trajectory.

Beyond that, one can observe divergence by comparing the views of Ryskulov and Sadvakasov. For the former, the USSR's federative level interests were imperative, suggesting that economic dependency with mono-specialization was the right course as long as it served the broader cause. On the contrary, as Sadvakasov conceived, the USSR's main task was to tie economic development with obligations promulgated in promises of 1923 resolutions. Namely, the elimination of the underdevelopment in national borderlands through industrialization within the same territories.

²¹⁰ "Stat'ia "K Otkrytiiu Turksiba" " (May, 1930), 3:136

²¹¹ "Tsentral'noi komissii po bor'be s golodom" (March, 1919), in *T.R. Ryskulov. Sobranie Sochinenii*, eds. Karykova and Nurpeisov, 1:143-145

Between 1931-1934, Kazakhstan experienced famine which became probably the darkest episode of its history. Western scholarly works have provided a thorough narrative on the Kazakh famine, particularly comparing it with the Ukrainian case and how famine itself was intertwined with the Party's national-building attempts.²¹² Due to forced collectivization, accompanied by unbearable meat and grain procurements imposed on nomads, the famine had erupted, which ultimately took the lives of 1.5 million people in KazakhASSR. Still living as nomads by the end of the 1920s, Kazakhs had to meet unendurable grain procurements as if they cultivated grain. In contrast, cattle breeding served as the main product either for nutrition or small-scale trading. The pastoral nomadism was mainly a self-sufficient economy. Collectivization almost destroyed the pastoral economy. By 1927, 90% of Kazakhs conducted nomadic lifestyles with its central traditional economic component of livestock breeding. It promoted $\frac{3}{4}$ of national well-being.²¹³ By the second half of 1933, over 90% of livestock disappeared.²¹⁴

Before these catastrophic results, Ryskulov imagined that Kazakhstan's pastoral-oriented economy would take a different course. That is meat and wool-producing economic center within USSR competing with Argentina and Australia on the world level. In reality, Moscow and Goloshchekin, first-party secretary of KazakhASSR, also planned Kazakhstan to be a "meatpacking center to rival Chicago"²¹⁵ Nevertheless, the central issue was how to implement it and whether animal husbandry remained a priority above land farming. In 1930, the Kazakh leftist encouraged to continue the use of pastoral lands, yet in a more rationalized way, while keeping cattle fodder as complementary. Ryskulov emphasized that Kazakhstan had to orient to countries such as Argentine, Australia, and the US, where pastures play a crucial role in the development of livestock economy, as opposed to Denmark or Germany where the livestock is kept in stabling fed mainly by use of fodder. Contrary to this proposal, party secretary Goloshchekin suggested "livestock farming based on fodder reserves, on grass growing,

²¹² Cameron, *Hungry Steppe*, Introduction

²¹³ Cameron, *Hungry Steppe*, 2,5; "Dokladnaia zapiska v TsK VKP(b) I.V. Stalinu ..." (March, 1933), in T.R. Ryskulov. *Sobranie Sochinenii*, eds. Asylbekov and Romanov, 3:330

²¹⁴ Cameron, *Hungry Steppe*, 3

²¹⁵ This term is borrowed from Cameron's book

on concentrated fodder,” accompanied with farming agriculture. On the other hand, Ryskulov objected, noting that sedentarization among nomads had to proceed near pastures and with the primary prioritization of cattle breeding.²¹⁶ In the end, as results of forced collectivization indicate, the Central Party’s policy trumped.

Overall, Sadvakasov and Ryskulov had a common economic approach: locally receptive economic restructuring in contrast to top-down Moscow’s approach. As in the whole USSR, the tragedy of collectivization in Kazakhstan illustrates how peripheral voices were marginalized. The Stalinist period illustrates that indigenous officials did not have agency on economic matters, whether this agency stood as an indigenous socialist voice or driven by locality knowledge on the ground. The Central Party isolated most of the communist-nationals from governance. Sadvakasov was sent to Moscow for higher educational purposes. Later, he died from sickness in 1933. Ryskulov was able to continue to work in a governmental position, as opposed to the fate of others. Later, he became the victim of the Great Terror in 1938.

A Final Word

Although Sadvakasov and Ryskulov had their differences, they bode well within this chapter since they took a similar stance over most of the fundamental issues at hand. Both aimed at restructuring traditional Kazakh society with emphasis that responds to the needs of the socioeconomically disadvantaged. Looking at many social injustices, they both alluded to a conflict between the powerful and the powerless. The necessity to emancipate poor Kazakhs from the dependency of traditional *bais* was part of the development - the radical transformation towards equity, which essentially corresponded to Soviet ideals of class politics. The reality and followed by prescriptions were mutually reinforcing because the kinship-based Kazakh society was the polar opposite of what defines egalitarian society. The presence of morality also played a role, as underdevelopment was related to the colonialism of the previous Tsarist rule.

²¹⁶ “Dokladnaia zapiska v TsK VKP(b) I.V. Stalinu” (September, 1932), in *T.R. Ryskulov. Sobranie Sochinenii*, eds. Asylbekov and Romanov, 3:314, 3:312

The absence of *prosveshchenie* among indigenous masses posited a national group in a highly unequal position compared to their European counterparts. To a certain extent, the Russian language provided a necessary prescription to fill this gap. In the economic realm, for Ryskulov, development served All-Union federative purposes as plans of *Turksib* suggest. Sadvakasov saw development primarily in the national framework, rooted in the political thinking of overcoming the Tsarist legacy of center-periphery exploitation. Nevertheless, both shared the view that the republic's economic transformation had to conform with egalitarian standards and take into account specifics of locality. Sadvakasov proposed local-level economic self-organization, which incorporated the plans on how to sedentarize, achieve cultural development, and socially mobilize the poor class. This reflected human needs. The story of Soviet Kazakhstan shows that the general Soviet ideals can match with the national projects. The engagement with the Soviet project was driven by the goal to create a socialist nation. Nevertheless, the Soviet leadership can diverge from its ideals of initial revolutionary promise. In the late 1920s, dictations on collectivization initiated negative changes, where the ultimate beneficiary became not powerless at the bottom but actors at the top.

CONCLUSION

In the early 20th century, Kazakh intellectuals undertook policies on behalf of their people, who had a weak sense of national consciousness and predominantly lived as nomads keeping their tribal-kinship ties as the primary bond of self-identification. The national claims among non-Russians were already originating and evolving during the Tsarist period. The Soviet national policy accommodated nationhood and adopted a set of grand-scale policies for its further development. Indeed, those changes laid the foundation for the emergence of independent post-Soviet states in Central Asia. Beyond nation-making narration, there was also a place for another struggle in the first quarter of the 20th century in multiethnic Russia. Specifically, how to overcome the injustices that emanated from colonial practices of monarchy, including the structural inequality that occurred between nationalities and within a particular nation. As the case of the Kazakh political establishment has illustrated, this was a bi-fold attempt in two directions: outward, to seek equality for indigenous people within Russia/USSR, and inward, which entailed a striving for equality within the nation. This ultimately led Kazakh intelligentsia to engage with the Soviet project.

Adeeb Khalid rightly emphasized that it is essential to go beyond “binary struggle,” in which there is rigid dichotomous interpretation as center versus periphery or Moscow versus non-Russian nations.²¹⁷ Indeed, the engagement of Kazakh

²¹⁷ Khalid, “Nationalizing the Revolution in Central Asia,” in *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, eds., Suny, Ronald Grigor, and Terry Martin (Oxford University Press, 2001): 145-146

For instance, one of the popular myths related to “binary struggle” in this context is that Moscow drew territories of Central Asian national republics. On fallaciousness of this point, see Alexander Morrison, “Stalin’s Giant Pencil: Debunking a Myth About Central Asia’s Borders,” *Eurasianet*, Feb 13, 2017, <https://eurasianet.org/stalins-giant-pencil-debunking-a-myth-about-central-asias-borders>

intellectuals with the Soviet project reveals the complexity of political dynamics in the early Soviet period and cannot be simplified into the dichotomy of the Kazakh political establishment versus Bolsheviks; or local nationalist elite versus socialist Soviet center. As the thesis has illustrated, Kazakh intellectuals were preoccupied with the goal to ensure the egalitarian position in Russia, which was interrelated and no less important issue than nation-making. Egalitarianism was defining issue in light of ideological prejudices of the Tsarism and the White regimes, and also for the implementation of actual equality to counter legacies of the monarchy. As a result, the universal ideas of solidarity and equality of nations embedded within the Soviet project resonated with Kazakh intelligentsia.

In the domestic realm, it is worth mentioning that idea of making the socialist nation came gradually. In the Tsarist period, there was a place for close affiliation with conservative *Kadets*. However, the 1920s ended with such a radical shift as Kazakh intellectuals incorporated class-based principles to restructure indigenous society. There was a gradual change towards that point. Despite decades of land grabbing and other forms of oppression driven by the Tsarist forces, ethnic Russians were attributed to equal rights within national autonomy, as stipulated by the Alash party's program in 1917. The Kazakh intelligentsia went further by assigning 40% (10 out of 25) of seats in the national council (highest ruling organ of Kazakh autonomy) to non-Kazakh nationalities. This suggests that the nation-making process did not necessitate the homogenization of people within national territorial boundaries, such as the assimilation or expulsion of ethnic minorities. Thus, designs of nation-building went beyond the conventional practice of ethnic nationalism that to a certain extent occurred in other parts of the world. Moreover, the clause on taxation yielded an avenue for progressive taxation, which was the launching pad for weakening the power of the traditional wealthy class. This occurred even if most of the intelligentsia members came from the wealthy strata. The transformation of society leaned to an even more leftist dimension during the Soviet period, as sources by Sadvakasov indicate. His works addressed to Kazakh youth incorporated class analysis to interpret defining challenges of society. The future generation was meant to aspire for modernity (*bīrīnshī qatar el*) by acknowledging and acting upon the principles of egalitarianism.

Sadvakasov's policy recommendations in the 1920s also shed light on one crucial feature. That is, the transformation towards egalitarian society had, to some extent, homegrown roots because, at that time, Soviet institutions were weak at the local level. His political work and vision about socialist nation signify that quest for parity was not just only confined on an inter-ethnic level. Apart from eliminating the dominance of "Great Russian chauvinism," there was also the necessity to counter another legacy, the unjustified privileged position of wealthy indigenous strata.

It is worth mentioning that the Soviet project was not itself rigid and stable. Kazakh intelligentsia engaged with it at the initial phase due to its egalitarian promise. The following course of events in decades suggests the restructuring of the Soviet project. Stalinism had shaped it significantly, even as far as to cause the Great Retreat. By examining Kazakh children's experience in the pre-WWII period, the recent work shows that nationalist discourse outlived socialist ideas. The latter was limited to such a degree that being Soviet among Kazakhstani citizens was not associated with a Marxist ideology or its defining principles. In the 1930s, the Soviet regime did not resist the discourse of "primordial nationalism" in Kazakhstan, and conservative family values, such as patriarchy, for instance, were relevant in the consciousness of local masses.²¹⁸ This was certainly a retreat from the revolutionary promises of the Soviet project. The discussion of whether egalitarian ideas were channeled into mass consciousness during the seventy years of the Soviet period and to what extent are the subjects of another research. I might speculate, but despite the considerable nostalgia for the Soviet past, citizens of post-Kazakhstan do not show emotional or intellectual attachment to ideals that created the Soviet Union in the first place. In other words, ideas of solidarity among the oppressed or struggle for equality do not determine this nostalgia. Drawing upon the notion that current developments do not speak for themselves and rather the product of historical constructs, one could assume that there was hardly any socialist discourse within the public consciousness of people in Soviet Kazakhstan.

In today's independent Kazakhstan, the Kazakh intelligentsia (referred to as the Alash party or *alashordintsy* in Russian) is considered national heroes. But

²¹⁸ Mehmet Volkan Kasikci, "Growing Up Soviet in the Periphery: Imagining, Experiencing and Remembering Childhood in Kazakhstan, 1928-1953," (PhD diss., Arizona State University, 2020), chapter 1, https://repository.asu.edu/attachments/236374/content/Kasikci_asu_0010E_20496.pdf

contemporary public discourse falls into the binary trap and erroneous interpretation because intellectuals are viewed primarily as the ones who fought against the Soviet Union in their pursuit of “independence.” Notwithstanding this distorted nationalistic discourse in post-Soviet Kazakhstan, there are more troubling issues. The Kazakh intellectuals’ emphasis on egalitarianism and condemnation of conservative stability do not constitute contemporary public thought on their political activities. This, in turn, to a certain extent, paralyzes the people’s intellectual and ideological capacity to battle against reactionary and kleptocratic/crony capitalism forces in Kazakhstan. Like many other post-Soviet states, the country fell into hypercapitalism. The upper-business elite and government officials are usually the same actors. Due to the unconstrained seizure of public assets in the 1990s, there is enormous economic inequality nowadays. In 2018, 162 individuals, who make up 0.001% of the 18.5 million population, own 50% of the total capital.²¹⁹ This is far from the egalitarian vision of 20th-century Kazakh intellectuals about what the future of the country should be.

²¹⁹ Each of this individual has the wealth of \$50 million or more. KPMG, “Private equity market in Kazakhstan,” page 23, May 2019, <https://assets.kpmg/content/dam/kpmg/kz/pdf/2019/09/KPMG-Private-Equity-Market-in-Kazakhstan-ENG-2019.pdf>

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