

Tragic Consequences

Most terrible was not the fact that the prerevolutionary national elite was destroyed, both in the literal sense and in terms of what they stood for, by the very government in which a long-suffering nation had placed its hopes. The real weight of the consequences of this tragedy lay elsewhere. The younger generation of Kazakhs that came after the Alash Orda saw clearly how the leadership in Moscow dealt with the generally acknowledged leaders of the liberation movement, how all the political experience they gained through the difficult circumstances of the Tsarist period was crushed and wiped out. The emerging generation of national elite in the Soviet Union sensed immediately the Damoclean sword of repression hanging above them, and understood that in order to work in Soviet state structures or the party administration they had to learn well the rules of the game. Those who did not resign themselves to this but rather stood up for national interests would be subjected to political execution and accusations of having "nationalist leanings" or being "pan-Turkic" or "pan-Islamist." The party's ideological apparatus, on one hand crudely, with its intrinsic revolutionary enthusiasm, but also methodically and consistently implemented a policy of undermining all morally important and valuable gains made by that active first generation of the national intelligentsia. Thus the natural but fragile bond between generations was broken. And it was done to draw the nation's growing generation to the new Communist religion, a religion in which there was no place for national values.

The elimination of the Alash Orda intelligentsia allowed Moscow and Goloshchekin to carry out their wide-scale "experiments" in Kazakhstan unhindered. As is stated in the Findings of the Commission of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated December 7, 1992, "here a criminal attempt was made to realize the orthodox Marxist theorem regarding the 'possibility of transitioning backward peoples to socialism, bypassing capitalism,' when resulted in destruction of the traditional systems supporting Kazakhstan's ethnic groups, ultimately leading to a catastrophe unprecedented in history.

The scale of the tragedy was indeed so monstrous, we may label it with all due moral responsibility an attempt at genocide." Further in the Findings it is noted that this "statement derives from the strict rules of international law as set out in the international convention 'On the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide'." [1]

As a result of the confiscation of the farmsteads of major bais (some 696), campaigns for state purchases of agricultural products and heavyhanded tax policies, reprisals against the peasants, the arbitrary and violent policy of forcing nomadic and semi-nomadic livestock farmers to settle, and forced collectivization, Kazakhstan experienced a terrible famine in 1932-1933. Starvation, associated epidemics and a perpetually high rate of natural mortality resulted in the nation's population shrinking by 2.2 million people, i.e., roughly 49 percent of the total population. [2]

As was the case throughout the Soviet Union, the people in Kazakhstan had openly demonstrated their dissatisfaction, spilling over in a number of incidences to armed insurrections. In 1929-1931 there were 372 uprisings in Kazakhstan involving about 80,000 people. From the beginning of 1930 to the middle of 1931 alone some 1.13 million people left the country, 676,000 of whom never returned, while 454,000 eventually resettled in Kazakhstan. The regular military and OGPU structures carried out reprisals against the rebellious populace. In 1923-1931 some 5,551 people were convicted by the OGPU alone for taking part in major uprisings and unrest, 883 of whom were shot.

These brutal measures were also taken against those who in any way resisted, or were suspected of resisting, the policy of dispossessing the kulaks and bais. Although the information is incomplete, over the five years from 1929 to 1933 some 9,805 cases went before the Troika

under the OGPU's authorized representative in the Kazakh ASSR, resulting in 22,933 individuals being sentenced, of which 3,386 people were shot and 13,151 were sent to concentration camps for three to ten years. The decisions taken by the Troikas were confirmed by the krai and provincial party committees. [3]

Thus, the Communist Party Krai Committee, supported by Moscow, implemented policies of repression of the people in Kazakhstan during the period in question. In clashing with the dissenting national intelligentsia, the committee used the punitive measures available to state authorities to the fullest possible extent.

The systematic "battering" and purging of the national ranks—particularly the mass reprisals directed against the more sophisticated and active of them in 1937-1938—led to degeneration of the ruling elite, and in the postwar period a real "new Soviet generation" of leaders finally did emerge in Kazakhstan.

Thanks to their efforts, of all the Soviet republics Kazakhstan was considered the most reliable and loyal to Moscow, and in the post-Stalin period its leaders were particularly trusted in the Kremlin. When D. A. Kunaev was elected to the Central Committee Politburo of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, economic potential and the personal qualities of this distinguished man were primary considerations. But no less important was the faithful allegiance of the republic's ruling elite "to the ideas of socialism and internationalism."

The long years spent by several generations under the weight of the totalitarian regime extinguished or warped many inimitable features of the national elite. What is more, perennial treatment as apprentices led to an atrophied sense of self-esteem and fostered such qualities as the tendency to blindly follow others' experience, the inclination to take the well-trodden path and so forth.

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References:

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2. Ibid
3. Ibid.