

DINA A. AMANZHOLOVA:
*The Soviet project in Kazakhstan.
 The power and ethnicity, 1920–1930*

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The book by the famous Kazakhstani historian Dina Amanzholova is devoted to one of the key periods in the history of Kazakhstan — the first decades of Soviet power. The study centers on the interaction of the communist regime with ethnic and social structures of Kazakh society in the process of building socialism.

The book consists of 10 chapters and is a detailed study of the early Soviet period in Kazakhstan, focusing on key aspects: the formation of power, national policy, administrative reforms and the struggle of elites. The structure of the work reflects the logic of the historical process — from the collapse of traditional society to the establishment of the Soviet system of governance.

Analyzing chapters and key theses

1. Kazakhstan at the beginning of the 20th century

The author provides a detailed analysis of the socio-economic, demographic and political situation in Kazakhstan at the turn of the 20th century and in the first years of Soviet power. The author operates with extensive statistical data, illustrating the complexity and multilevel nature of Kazakh society at that time.

For example, the author mentions that during the imperial period the territory of Kazakhstan was governed from different centers: Omsk (Akmola and Semipalatinsk regions), Orenburg (Turgay and Ural regions), Tashkent (Semirechenskaya and Syr-Darya regions) and Astrakhan (Bukeevskaya Orda). According to the 1897 census, about 5 million people lived in the region, of whom 3.4 million were Kazakhs. Another 1.9 million Kazakhs lived in Turkestan. An important feature of the work is the focus on the ethnic and social composition of the population, as well as the very low levels of urbanization and literacy among the indigenous population. The data on the number of Kazakhs and other nationalities, infrastructure

development, education and health care clearly show how acute the issues of modernization and integration of the region into the Russian state were. A particular interest is the analysis of the transformation of the traditional ethno-social structure: attention is paid to changes in the hierarchy of Kazakh society, the gradual shift of power from 'ak suyek' to 'kara suyek', the emergence of new layers of officialdom and the influence of the Russian-speaking population. The role of the educated Kazakh elite, its participation in political processes, and the formation of ethnic identity against the backdrop of increasing contacts with imperial and Russian culture are examined in detail.

Special attention should be paid to the processes of political consolidation and the activities of Kazakh representatives in all-Russian parties, as well as the emergence of the national movement and its evolution from attempts to integrate into the Russian political system to autonomist and ethnocentric projects. The chapter convincingly shows that by the beginning of the Soviet era, Kazakh society was in a state of transition from traditionalism to modernity, while the potential for the formation of a new political and managerial elite was extremely limited. The author emphasizes the complexity and contradictory nature of the processes of Soviet modernization, the need to find and educate national personnel to implement Bolshevik principles and build a new system of power.

In general, the work is distinguished by a high saturation of factual material, a comprehensive and objective view of the prerequisites and peculiarities of modernization of Kazakh society in the context of Russian and Soviet statehood.

2. 'It is necessary in Kyrgyzstan to create an honest Soviet bureaucracy'.

Kyrgyz Military-Revolutionary Committee (KyrMRC) on the eve of the proclamation of the Kazakh ASSR

This chapter offers several levels of analysis: historiographical, political science and narrative. The chapter presents a detailed study of the formation of the Soviet ethno-political elite in Kyrgyzstan on the eve of the proclamation of the Kazakh ASSR, focusing on the dynamics within the KyrMRC (Kyrgyz Revolutionary Committee) and the conflicts and contradictions of early Soviet governance.

The strength of the work is the careful and meticulous recreation of the institutional landscape of the era - the author clearly shows how pre-revolutionary, provisional and new Soviet authorities not only coexisted but also competed, fracturing loyalties and managerial practices. What becomes important here is that the national elites, including representatives of the Alash movement, were not monolithic. On the contrary, their internal fragmentation, struggle for influence, maneuvering between the Bolsheviks and other centers of power clearly demonstrates the complexity of the birth of a new bureaucracy under conditions of civil war and political polycentricity. The author convincingly shows that the Soviet system was forced to integrate the national intellectuals despite its ambiguous reputation and previous experience of co-operation with Tsarist or anti-Bolshevik governments. Specific episodes are cited — for example, the arrest of M. Tunganchin, Pestkovsky's attempts to obtain resources to create an 'honest Soviet bureaucracy', constant denunciations, mutual accusations of 'counter-revolutionary', which turned the committee into an arena of intrigue and distrust.

The chapter is a detailed analysis of the early stages of the formation of Soviet power and national autonomy in Kazakhstan in 1920, based on correspondence, reports and memoirs of key participants in the process. The author carefully reconstructs the atmosphere of organizational chaos, personnel shortages and mutual distrust between the Bolsheviks sent from the center and the local Kazakh elite. Much of the attention is paid to internal conflicts within the KyrMRC, contradictions between Russian and Kazakh representatives, as well as attempts by the center to mobilize Alashordins and other intellectuals to work in the Soviet committees. The problem of ‘paper’ communism, when former Tsarist Officials and Traditional Local Administrators quickly repainted themselves and assumed Soviet positions, but in essence continued the old practices of power and corruption, is particularly revealing.

The author demonstrates that the proclaimed principles of autonomy and self-determination often faced the reality of lack of qualified personnel, unclear competences between the center and local bodies, and resistance of both old and new elites. Baitursynov’s ideas about the need for an alliance between ideological communists and nationalists are an important motif, but at the same time the center’s unwillingness to entrust the center of the nation entirely to local forces is emphasized.

Special attention is paid to the preparations for the First All-Kirghiz (All-Kazakh) Congress of Soviets held in Orenburg in 1920. The author notes that the organizers faced fundamental questions: is there a real demand among the Kazakh (Kyrgyz) masses for national unification, or is it artificially supported by the intellectuals? Does the intellectuals have support among the people, or does it rely only on bourgeois and kulak circles? How pronounced was the class stratification within society and was the population ready to accept the Soviet class policy? These questions, in the author’s opinion, determined the essence of the whole process of Bolshevikization and Sovietization in the region. It is also interesting to analyze the personnel changes in the leadership of the autonomy and the preservation of continuity in the authorities. The author draws attention to the fact that both organizational forms and behavioral stereotypes of the new elite, formed at the preparatory stage, were transferred to the new Soviet institutions of power.

The author avoids unambiguous assessments, showing the complexity and ambiguity of the formation of Soviet statehood in Kazakhstan. The use of direct quotations allows us to hear the ‘voices of the time’ — Avdeev, Pestkovsky, Baitursynov, Sedelnikov, which gives the chapter credibility and depth.

Among the disadvantages is some excessive detailing — the large number of names and events makes it difficult to perceive the general course of the narrative, especially for the unprepared reader. Nevertheless, this is an inevitable cost for the author’s endeavor to present the most complete and accurate view of the dynamics of nation-building in Kazakhstan in the early 1920s.

Overall, the chapter is of considerable interest to historians, political scientists and all those interested in the issues of post-imperial organization, national policy and inter-ethnic relations in the Soviet Union. It allows not only to understand the real difficulties of the creation of the KASSR, but also to reflect on the contemporary challenges of statehood in the post-Soviet space.

3. Problems of border registration and attempts to 'Kyrgyzify' Orenburg

This chapter provides an in-depth and detailed analysis of the process of formation of Soviet statehood in Kazakhstan through the prism of administrative-territorial, ethno-political and socio-cultural transformations of 1917–1920. The author reveals in detail how the choice of the capital, border disputes and the complex relationship between the central government and the local elite reflected not only tactical but also strategic dilemmas in the formation of the new republic. One of the main strengths of the work is its attention to inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic tensions, which often remain in the background in traditional historical studies. The described debates between representatives of the center, local Kazakh intellectuals and neighboring peoples illustrate how difficult it was to find a balance between the model of socialist statehood set from above and the real interests, fears and aspirations of regional elites. It is especially valuable that the author does not reduce the issue of the capital solely to administrative or logistical aspects. Symbolic, cultural, political and even psychological motives are considered — for example, the question of Orenburg's 'alien' status for the Kazakh masses and its role as an instrument of control over the national elite. This helps to see that Soviet construction in the Kazakh lands was not a linear process, but was accompanied by sharp conflicts, compromises and complex negotiations.

Also noteworthy is the use of rich documentary material: minutes of meetings, letters, congress decisions, and opinions of key figures. This gives the chapter credibility and allows the reader to follow the logic of the development of events in real time, rather than in retrospective interpretation. However, in some places the narrative may seem overloaded with details, making it difficult to understand the main line of argumentation. Lengthy excerpts from documents are often quoted, which loses the momentum of the narrative. For the reader who is not immersed in the context, additional attention to detail and patience will be required to grasp the nuances of the issues under discussion. The author is well immersed in the material: who can feel that she is not just recounting the minutes of meetings, but is trying to grasp the essence of the clash of national and state interests, to show how the ideals of the world revolution clashed with the reality of the multinational periphery.

The main advantage of this work is that it honestly shows that the Bolshevik policy of 'self-determination' was a forced, not an organic line of the party. The author does not idealize either side: both the center and the national figures are shown with their weaknesses and fears. Much space is given to details: we see how the borders were drawn up, how they tried to find a suitable administrative center, how the real power was distributed. It is especially valuable that the author quotes participants in the discussions, giving us a sense of the atmosphere of those years — anxious, full of uncertainty. Special attention is paid to the figure of Orenburg as the first center of autonomy. The author does not limit herself to a formal enumeration of the city's 'pros and cons', but shows how the capital became an arena of confrontation between different groups of influence, how its status was perceived in society — from irritation to attempts to 'Kyrgyzify' the Russian city. Lively quotations and everyday details are illustrative: bread queues, lack of sewerage, overcrowding of institutions. This gives not only a political but also a social cross-section of the era.

An important merit of the work is the demonstration that Orenburg, being the capital of the KASSR, remained a controversial symbol and an arena of intersection of interests of Kazakh, Bashkir, Russian and Cossack communities. Through the prism of debates over the status of the city, the author shows that the formal existence of autonomy did not mean a real solution to the national question and integration of elites - on the contrary, it created new fault lines. On the whole, the work gives the impression of a serious, conscientious study. It does not give unambiguous answers - and rightly so: there were no easy solutions in the history of nation-building in the Soviet era. As a result: this is a thorough, honest and caring look at a very complex historical moment. The author has managed to show that the creation of the Kazakh autonomy was not just an administrative act, but a dramatic process — with a struggle of interests, fears and hopes, compromises and conflicts that largely determined the future fate of the republic.

4. Administrative-territorial organization and structure of government and administration

In this chapter, the author analyses the administrative and territorial formation of the Kazakh ASSR in the 1920s-1930s, emphasizing that boundary changes and ethnic mapping were instruments of Soviet national policy and administration. The author shows that these processes were accompanied by contradictions between ethnic and economic interests, instability and alienation of local elites. The author concludes that the formal creation of a national republic outpaced its actual economic and social unification, and that administrative reforms, along with integration, gave rise to internal contradictions.

The author convincingly shows that frequent reforms and changes of boundaries not only failed to improve governability, but, on the contrary, increased bureaucratization, disorganization and chaos in the system of power. Particular attention is paid to the conflict between traditional forms of self-organization of Kazakh society and Soviet administrative policies, which led to the fictitious nature of local self-governance and reduced the effectiveness of government. The text relies on archival sources, documents and the opinions of contemporaries, which adds to its analytical depth. Overall, the work demonstrates the complexity and contradictory nature of Soviet modernization processes in the national regions and their long-term negative effects on governance and society.

It is also a detailed analysis of the process of formation and transformation of administrative structures in Kazakhstan in 1919-1925. The author reveals in detail the dynamics of changes in the party and state bodies, paying special attention to the quantitative and national composition of managerial personnel, their functions and internal contradictions. The work well traces how the vertical of power was formed, as well as the role of party institutions in the selection and distribution of personnel. Difficulties related to the shortage of qualified workers, as well as the specifics of double (or triple) subordination of the Commissars are separately noted. It is distinguished by the richness of factual material and demonstrates a comprehensive approach to the problem of Soviet state-building in the national peripheries. At the same time, the abundance of details requires the reader to have a good knowledge of the context of the era. The author consistently describes the establishment of key state and party institutions, the specifics of their structure, their quantitative and national composition, and the difficulties associated with bureaucratization and centralization of administration. Particular attention is

paid to the interaction between republican, union and local bodies, the role of trade unions, the Komsomol and cooperative organizations. At the same time, the material is saturated with details, which complicates the perception of the main conclusions. In general, the work is valuable for the study of the history of state building in Kazakhstan, but could benefit from clearer structuring and emphasizing key issues. The author characterizes in detail the national composition of the leadership and the Communist Party of Kazakhstan, illustrating the gradual involvement of Kazakhs in management structures, but at the same time emphasizing their relative small number in the overall power structure. The author does not ignore the problem of literacy among party members, which also points to serious staffing and educational challenges.

In sum, this fragment is a good example of a scientific and analytical approach to the study of Soviet state-building, with an emphasis on the specifics of the Kazakh experience in the 1930s.

5. Collisions of Bolshevization of the national elite

This chapter examines in detail the formation of the Kazakh national elite under Soviet autonomy, as well as the complex relations between the 'Europeans' (Moscow Bolshevik appointees) and the 'locals' — representatives of the old intellectuals and national movements (e.g. Alashordins). The author shows how the Bolshevization of the elite became not only an administrative, but also a deeply psychological and value problem: the Soviet authorities had to involve representatives of national elites in governance, despite the mutual distrust and often forced loyalty of the latter. Particular attention is paid to the contradictions between different elite groups, their motivation, the role of personal qualities and professionalism, and the impossibility of fully merging national and Soviet interests by administrative methods alone. The chapter is distinguished by an in-depth analysis of sources and vividly reveals the drama of the Kazakh intelligentsia in the first years of Soviet power, its attempts to adapt and maintain its influence in the new conditions.

It also examines the complexities of the formation and functioning of the party and administrative elite in Kazakhstan and neighboring autonomies in the first years of Soviet power (1920-1925). The author describes in detail the personnel policy, internal conflicts, and contradictions between local intellectuals, national elites and appointees from the center. Particular attention is paid to the problem of the lack of trained personnel, the alienation of the upper intellectuals (especially Alash) from Soviet power, and the constant attempts of the center to strengthen control through party committees, frequent personnel reshuffles and the strengthening of Bolshevik influence. This part is full of examples from correspondence and reports of party functionaries, which allows us to see the real difficulties of governance, weak integration of local national cadres and formalism in leadership. It also describes the opposition of regional elites to the center and their fears about the strengthening of 'Great Russian domination' after the creation of the USSR. This work examines in detail the center's policy towards national autonomies during the formation of the USSR, with a particular focus on the Kazakh and other Turkic republics. The author shows the contradictions between the regional elites' desire for autonomy and Moscow's fears of undermining the unity of the country. Particular attention is paid to the internal struggle of the elites, the complexity of Bolshevization and Koreni-

zation (indigenization) of local authorities, as well as to the problems of personnel policy and the low level of managerial culture. Overall, the work vividly illustrates the complexity and contradictions of the processes of nation-building and integration in the early years of Soviet power, as well as the difficulties of interaction between the ‘Europeans’ — the appointees of the center — and the local elites.

The author shows how staff shortages, poor discipline and lack of clear procedures initially forced local authorities to form their own systems of accounting and distribution of senior officials. From 1923, following the decisions of the Central Committee’s Organization Bureau, a strict nomenclature system was introduced: lists of positions, centralized control over appointments, and unification of promotion criteria. Kazakhstan is an example of a region where personnel difficulties were particularly acute due to the lack of educated specialists and complex inter-ethnic relations. The author convincingly shows that standardization and centralization of personnel work, despite formal streamlining, could not overcome all local difficulties and contradictions, and the party management system itself remained vulnerable to internal conflicts and formalism. An important merit is the emphasis on the internal contradictory nature of the processes: despite the formal control of the party, the real influence on the masses and economic life remained limited, and the growth of the bureaucracy was accompanied by disconnection from the population and low efficiency.

The author covers in detail the manifestations of bureaucracy, corruption, formalism and alienation of the leadership from the rank-and-file member and the population, as well as attempts to combat these ‘painful phenomena’. Particularly noted is the imperfection of personnel policy, low level of education and qualifications, as well as the influence of ethnic and social stereotypes, which led to the formation of persistent vicious practices in management.

The author convincingly demonstrates that the pursuit of loyalty and discipline led not to increased management efficiency, but to increased fear, conflict and formalism. Against the background of rigid centralization and repressive campaigns, the tragedy of human destinies, the alienation and loss of professional personnel, and the difficult adaptation of new managers, often unprepared for real challenges are traced. The work illustrates well the paradoxes of Soviet politics: the formal expansion of national representation was combined with distrust, purges and the continued dominance of the center. Overall, the text impresses with its depth of analysis and wealth of factual material, allowing a better understanding of the logic and consequences of Stalin’s personnel policy in the national republics of the USSR. Specific figures, facts and biographies are given, illustrating how unstable and dangerous the path of a party functionary was in the face of constant purges, suspicion and pressure from the center. Special attention is paid to the combination of ethnic, clan and career factors in the formation of the new elite, as well as to the poor general cultural training of officials, which is explained by extremely rapid social mobility.

6. National Binding» and the fight against factions

The chapter is an analytical study of the formation and evolution of bureaucracy and power in the KASSR in the 1920s, through the prism of ethnic, clan and socio-political contradictions. The work convincingly shows that intra-elite and inter-ethnic conflicts were not only the result of active competition between national and ‘European’ personnels, but also the result of a pro-

found failure to integrate traditional and new administrative practices. Particular attention is paid to how power struggles, careerism, clan ties and ideological differences influenced decision-making on the most acute issues of nation-building — from land reform to the distribution of powers. The author is also credited with analyzing the mechanisms of adaptation of pre-revolutionary models of power to Soviet realities and Moscow's attempts to strengthen the vertical of power through appointees and centralized measures. The author reveals in detail the internal contradictions, the struggle for People's Commissar posts, the role of the Alashordins in cultural life and the influence of clan ties on political processes. Through numerous examples of internal conflicts, denunciations, manipulation and careerism, it demonstrates how the struggle for power and influence was combined with ideological demands and an unpredictable political environment. It also illustrates well how new elites were formed, how old ones survived and how party attitudes were put into practice in the specific conditions of the national region.

The author shows that the real situation in the KASSR was determined not only by the confrontation between 'Europeans' and 'nationals', but also by tangled personal, regional, clan and ideological conflicts between key figures (Ryskulov, Mendeshev, Khodzhanov, Sadvokasov, etc.). The central authorities tried to smooth over these contradictions, but their measures were often limited to formal appeals for unity and 'business work' without addressing the underlying causes of the conflicts. Particular attention is paid to the role of interpersonal relations, 'clan psychology', power struggles and the influence of former Alashordins. The chapter clearly illustrates that issues of national policy and personnel building in early Soviet Kazakhstan were closely intertwined with personal ambitions, regional interests and historical legacy. The author shows that national and class fault lines were superimposed on the old social hierarchies, and the entry of former Alashordians into the leadership raised fears among the 'old' Bolsheviks. Mutual denunciations, purges, behind-the-scenes alliances and personnel rotations not only failed to stabilize the situation, but also entrenched an atmosphere of distrust and constant power struggles. Particular attention is paid to the divide-and-conquer tactics used by the leadership: removing and appointing leaders, artificially maintaining the balance between factions to prevent any of them from becoming dominant. The methods of struggle are described - from political accusations to organizational purges and manipulation of elections. The work shows that the struggle was complex and multilayered: ideological differences, careerism, traditional social structures and attempts at centralized management were intertwined. The result was increased repression, a change of emphasis in party policy, and the gradual building of a new bureaucratic elite. The author concludes that subjectivism and conflicts were inevitable under conditions of rapid modernization and ethnic consolidation, highlighting the ambivalence of Soviet ethno-politics and the complex dynamics of Kazakh political culture formation during this period.

7. *'To lay down the Kirghiz centre proper'.*

National-territorial delimitation and the capital of Kazakhstan

This is an in-depth historical analysis of the political, ethnic and administrative processes that accompanied the national delimitation in Central Asia in the early twentieth century. The author details the complex relationships between the different zhuzes¹ and clans of Kazakh society, showing how traditional forms of self-identification and regional differences influenced the formation of new elites and political consolidation. Particular attention is paid to the struggle to determine the administrative center, the debate over the status of Tashkent, as well as internal conflicts and the search for compromise between the desire for autonomy and the need for unity. The complex process of choosing the capital of the Kazakh ASSR in the 1920s is covered in detail.

The author shows how acute were the issues of territorial delimitation, national composition of cities, economic and political interests of different groups. The main attention is paid to the debates between the supporters of different cities (Chimkent, Ak-Mechet, Orenburg, Perovsk), the arguments of the participants and the intertwining of national and economic motives are given. The chapter demonstrates that the decision to relocate the capital was made not only under the influence of pragmatic factors, but also in the context of acute political disputes and inter-ethnic tensions. The theme of confrontation between central and local authorities, as well as the attempts of certain groups to maintain or strengthen their positions in the new conditions, is particularly emphasized. The author convincingly reveals the drama and multi-layered nature of the state-building process in Kazakhstan, drawing attention to the difficulty of finding a balance between the interests of different ethnic, social and party groups.

This chapter also describes in detail the process of moving the capital of the Kazakh ASSR from Orenburg to Kzyl-Orda and then to Alma-Ata, focusing on the difficulties faced by the authorities and the inhabitants: a catastrophic shortage of housing and infrastructure, domestic inconveniences, problems with the provision of water, fuel, food, transport and social institutions. The author provides vivid quotes from contemporaries illustrating the real state of affairs, bureaucratic delays, and attempts to shift responsibility for failures between the leaders of the republic and the central authorities. The transfer of the capital is shown as a complex and largely spontaneous process accompanied by social and economic crises. In general, the reviewed material provides a very lively, detailed and critical picture of the formation of new administrative centers of Kazakhstan in the 1920s.

8. *From percentage to function*

This chapter presents a detailed analysis of the policy of indigenization in Kazakhstan in the 1920s and 1930s. The author quite fully reveals the essence of the Bolshevik course on the formation of national personnel and changes in the ethnic composition of government bodies. The evolution of views and methods is clearly traced: from percentage quotas to the functional inclusion of Kazakhs in the administrative apparatus, and the real difficulties of implement-

¹ Zhuz is the common name of three tribal associations of the Kazakh people. Traditional Kazakh society consists of three zhuzes: the Elder, Middle and Small. There is still no consensus among scientists about the time of the zhuzes' emergence, the reasons for their emergence and their internal content.

ing this policy are reflected — personnel shortage, formal approach, contradictions between ethnic groups.

The author appropriately uses statistics, archival data and quotations from party documents, which enhances the reliability of the analysis. It notes that indigenization was not only an integration tool, but also a way to maintain the center's control over the regions. It is especially valuable that the internal contradictions of the process are revealed: tendencies toward local nationalism, tensions between "Europeans" and Kazakhs, as well as the consequences for the real democratization of governance.

The author examines in detail the processes of filling positions with Kazakh personnel, the difficulties of introducing the Kazakh language into office work, as well as the social and interethnic contradictions that arose in connection with these transformations. The document provides specific statistical data, quotes directives and decisions of party bodies, which gives the work a documentary basis. The author notes institutional and human problems: a shortage of qualified Kazakh specialists, a formal approach to the nationalization of personnel, resistance and pessimism on the part of "European" employees. The work emphasizes that a mechanical increase in the number of representatives of the titular nation did not always lead to a real rapprochement between the authorities and the population and an increase in work efficiency. Particular attention is paid to the reform of the writing system: the change from Arabic script to Latin, and then to Cyrillic, was considered an instrument of modernization and political control, but in practice it caused resistance from part of the intellectuals and complicated the work of managers. It also demonstrates that the Soviet policy of indigenization led to the formation of a new, mosaic elite with a heterogeneous identity, and that the reforms of the writing system were accompanied not only by technical but also by deep cultural and political conflicts. Despite the efforts of the authorities, the introduction of new alphabets was slow due to low literacy and resistance from the traditional intellectuals, which once again underlines the complexity and contradictions of social transformations in Soviet Kazakhstan. The work is distinguished by its detail, an abundance of references to primary sources, and demonstrates an understanding of the complex relationship between language, power, and identity in Soviet society.

9. For a "command position with a responsible rate". Training of management personnel

The chapter presents a detailed account of the formation and development of the system of training management and party personnel in Kazakhstan in the first years after the formation of the KASSR. The author reveals how acute the problem of a shortage of qualified specialists was, and how the state tried to solve this problem through accelerated educational and political enlightenment work among representatives of the local population. Particular attention is paid to the problems of material and personnel support of educational institutions, the low level of training of students, as well as the rotation and movement of workers between regions. The author does not ignore the issues of language, national and social policy in the field of education, which allows for a deeper understanding of the complexity and scale of the tasks facing the authorities.

The author, using archival data and party documents, shows that the process of indigenization was accompanied by many difficulties: a shortage of qualified workers, a low level of education, weak motivation to study, and poor living conditions. Particular attention is paid to the problem of studying the Kazakh language by Europeans and organizing a system of training personnel through various courses, Soviet party schools, and universities. The gap between the plans of the center and actual practice, as well as the ineffectiveness of many measures due to objective and subjective reasons, is noted. Particular attention is paid to the fact that the formation of the national bureaucracy took place in the context of forced industrialization and required not only special courses and benefits, but also systemic modernization of education and the economy. The work is based on specific statistical data, decisions of party bodies, and real examples of career trajectories. In general, the chapter well illustrates the complexity and contradictions of the personnel policy of the early Soviet period in the national republics, where political loyalty often had more weight than professional competence.

10. This apparatus is too expensive for the meager budget of Kazakhstan»

The final chapter provides a detailed analysis of the social and everyday life and motivation of the Soviet nomenclature in Kazakhstan in the early 1920s. The author consistently reveals how material incentives and administrative resources determined the career aspirations and everyday life of officials in conditions of shortages, hunger, underdeveloped markets and general devastation. Numerous specific examples are given: from the organization of supplies and the introduction of special rations for “active” workers to a description of exhausting work and everyday hardships at the local level. Particular attention is paid to the contradiction between the privileges of the elite and general poverty, the bureaucratic burden and physical exhaustion of activists. The chapter well illustrates the complexity of the motivation and everyday life of managers in the Soviet system, showing that even limited privileges in conditions of shortages became the most important factor in the social hierarchy.

The author draws on numerous reports, statistics, decrees and contemporary testimonies to show how difficult and contradictory this period was for the lower and middle levels of the bureaucracy, workers, and representatives of national personnels. Particular attention is paid to the imbalance between wages and the cost of living: the growth of prices for essential goods significantly outpaced the growth of income, due to which even relatively high salaries for those times did not provide a decent standard of living. Specific examples are given — how much bread, soap, shoes cost in different years, what percentage of the budget went to food, what was the average salary of various categories of specialists. The author notes that the state tried to establish order and standardize wages by introducing wage scales, party maximums, and standards for the maintenance of the administrative apparatus, but these measures often led to only formal “improvements” accompanied by violations, overspending, and bureaucratic tricks. An important detail is that most of the regional budget was spent on maintaining the administrative apparatus, which even drew criticism from the officials themselves. The author also touches on social problems: housing shortages, difficult working conditions in rural areas, mass unemployment among employees, low qualifications of personnel, the tradition of bride money, and the unequal distribution of responsibilities between men and women.

The extreme manifestations of social inequality and the privileges of the party nomenclature, for whom there were special supplies and benefits, are separately shown.

The author uses numerous examples to show how the privileges of the nomenclature were formed and changed: salary increases, organization of special supplies, provision of housing, transportation, medical care, sanatorium vacations, and even literary rations. The dependence of officials on the position they held is emphasized separately - almost all benefits were state-owned and were lost upon the loss of the post, which made the apparatchiks (officeholder) maximally controllable. The distortions of the system are also highlighted: mass abuse of supplies, bureaucratic excesses, and acute inequality between the elite and the rest of the population. The author notes that, despite formally modest personal property, the ruling nomenclature enjoyed unofficial bonuses, privileges, and opportunities for personal enrichment. The author convincingly refutes the stereotype about the “external” nature of Soviet power for the national republics, emphasizing the important role of the Kazakh elite in the implementation of Soviet nation-building.

The work is written at a high scientific level, with extensive use of statistics and references to archival sources. It allows us to see the Soviet project in Kazakhstan as a complex process of integration and adaptation, filled with contradictions, improvisations and constant adjustment of management mechanisms. The work is distinguished by analytical depth, systematicity and attention to detail, which makes it a significant contribution to the study of the history of Soviet Kazakhstan.