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## TRAGIC PAGES OF KAZAKH HISTORY: FAMINE AND REPRESSION

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Stalinist repressions in Kazakhstan represented large-scale political purges similar to those occurring in other regions of the Soviet Union. This period was characterized by mass arrests, deportations, and executions of various segments of the population, including intelligentsia, party and government officials, as well as ordinary citizens. As a result of these repressions, millions of Kazakh citizens were arrested or exiled to GULAG camps, leading to significant human losses and the destruction of the social and cultural fabric of society.

It is estimated that over 5 million people were deported from Kazakhstan. Among them are notable ethnic groups: about 800 thousand Germans, 102 thousand Poles, 19 thousand Korean families, and approximately 507 thousand peoples from the North Caucasus. These mass relocations were driven by political motives and the Soviet leadership's desire for assimilation or elimination of potential opposition elements.

The Holodomor of 1932-1933 was one of the most tragic events of this period. It was caused by the deliberate policies of the Soviet government aimed at destroying the wealthy Kazakh class - the Bais - through confiscation of livestock, grain, and other food products. This artificial famine led to the death of millions of Kazakhs and was part of broader policies of collectivization and repression that affected the entire Soviet Union. As a result of these measures, Kazakh society suffered enormous losses: cultural values were destroyed, traditional way of life was lost or significantly altered, and many Kazakhs were forced to leave their lands or were deported. These relocations were motivated by political reasons: authorities feared possible manifestations of nationalism or cooperation with foreign states.

Deportations were accompanied by brutal conditions: people were sent to camps or forced labor in remote regions of the country. Many did not survive until the end of their sentences or died en route due to poor transportation conditions.

Kazakh people became some of the main victims of Stalin's repressions. In the 1930s, many Kazakh leaders, intelligentsia, clergy, and ordinary peasants were arrested or executed on charges of "anti-Soviet activity." These measures led to the destruction of traditional Kazakh culture, loss of spiritual values, and ruin of households.

It is also worth noting that these repressions had long-term effects on Kazakhstan's development: they resulted in the loss of a significant part of national intellect and spiritual values and created an atmosphere of fear and distrust within society. In subsequent years, these events remained a taboo subject for discussion in official history.

The famine in Kazakhstan from 1929-1933, known as Asharshylyq (the Great Famine), was caused by official policies aimed at "eliminating the kulaks (wealthy peasants) as a class," as well as processes related to collectivization, increased grain procurement plans by central authorities, and mass confiscation of livestock. In 1929, with the announcement of the first five-year plan and beginning collectivization, Stalin set out to transform Kazakhstan into an agricultural and livestock base that would supply food for the entire country. A year before collectivization began, Soviet

authorities carried out large-scale requisitions of livestock from local Bais to weaken traditional power structures and strengthen control over the population. Scientific circles actively promoted materials about “the absolute inefficiency” of nomadic pastoralism.

Starting in 1928 as a result of “de-kulakization”- a process aimed at weakening nomadic herders - and spreading after most Kazakh households were destroyed, the famine reached catastrophic proportions by 1931. By 1932 it became widespread: dead or dying Kazakhs could be seen everywhere - on city streets, train stations, and steppe roads. Those trying to escape starvation were called “kochevshchiki” (those who left their herds) and perceived as class enemies. Researcher Sarah Cameron provides testimonies about how starving people were forcibly relocated away from cities and collective farms - effectively left to die in the steppe [1].

In search for any available food sources, people resorted to desperate measures: they ate any accessible vegetation as well as leather from horses and cattle; there are documented cases of cannibalism when starving individuals killed each other or even ate raw meat. Some tried to trade their children’s meat hoping to exchange it for bread. According to various estimates, between 1931-1933 up to 3.2 million people died from starvation. About one million Kazakhs were forced to migrate to neighboring republics or beyond - China, Mongolia, Iran, and Afghanistan.

Professor K.M. Abzhanov believes that “the famine claimed no less than 4 million lives among Kazakhs. One-sixth part of the indigenous population permanently left their homeland. Out of 6.5 million Kazakhs in 1911 - who made up 82% of the region’s population - only 2.3 million remained by 1939; their share in the republic’s population decreased to 38%” [2].

“The relative loss from famine during 1932 -1933 was highest in Kazakhstan - 22.42%, compared with Ukraine’s 12.926% and Russia’s only 3.17%” [3].

Millions of Kazakhs perished from starvation which led to a significant reduction in labor force in Kazakhstan. This negatively affected industrial development since population decline reduced the country’s productive potential. The famine also caused mass destruction of livestock which undermined Kazakhstan’s agricultural base and negatively impacted related industries such as leather processing and textiles. The shortage of labor force and hunger led to decreased production across all sectors including mining, manufacturing, and construction industries.

Besides economic consequences, Asharshylyq became a huge trauma for spiritual development among Kazakh people: it resulted in loss of millions lives and destruction of traditional lifestyle. Hunger along with accompanying repression contributed to losing many cultural and spiritual values - language, traditions, and customs - among Kazakhs. As a result these tragic events led to destruction at fundamental levels within Kazakh culture.

Genetically speaking, negative effects due to malnutrition especially affected women during pregnancy and child-rearing periods; this could influence health outcomes for future generations leaving long-lasting marks on national genetic memory.

A man-made famine caused by forced collectivization policies led to millions dying from starvation. It was particularly devastating among nomadic Kazakhs who resisted collectivization.

Both famine-mortality (Holodomor) and repression involved violence and terror which deeply traumatized physical, spiritual, and mental state of indigenous populations in Kazakhstan. These events became part of broader policies implemented by Stalin’s regime and had serious socio-economic and human consequences. They resulted in enormous human losses, suffering, and breakdown of family and social ties; significantly impacting social structure and regional demography.

The period from 1927 to 1930 marked the beginning of large-scale repressions against the national intelligentsia, which reached its peak in 1937. These repressions not only destroyed a significant part of the Kazakh elite but also inflicted severe damage on the cultural heritage of the people, with long-term consequences for the development of Kazakh society [4].

«Alaş-Orda» is a political movement and government formed in 1917-1920 that aimed for Kazakh autonomy or independence. Its leaders sought to modernize Kazakh society, preserve culture, and establish a Kazakh state. After Soviet consolidation, many leaders associated with this

movement were labeled "enemies of the people," leading to arrests, executions, or exile. Their efforts to promote Kazakh national identity were viewed as threats by the Soviet authorities.

For a long time, Kazakh intellectuals were not recognized or understood; they were considered nationalists. They were under constant control by the NKVD authorities, and from the mid-1920s, an organized and loud campaign of persecution against «Alaş-Orda» figures began, conducted through the press, meetings, and plenums. At the same time, Bolsheviks skillfully contrasted them with the younger generation of Soviet Kazakh intelligentsia, attempting to create an image of discord within the national movement.

As Stalin's repressive machinery strengthened, Soviet policies against leaders and participants of «Alaş-Orda» became increasingly harsh. Persecutions of their leaders intensified with the arrival of Philipp Goloshchekin at the head of KazRaiKom. By the late 1920s, movement leaders were declared «enemies of the people», and their arrests and repressions were carried out on fabricated charges by the NKVD. These brutal persecutions also affected their families: even young children suffered.

The period known as the Great Purge saw hundreds of thousands executed across the USSR. In Kazakhstan, this included not only political leaders but also writers, scientists, teachers, and ordinary citizens.

Thousands of people were declared «enemies of the people», subjected to torture and executions without trial or investigation. In a short period, many outstanding representatives of Kazakh society - such as Alikhan Bokeikhanov, Akhmet Baitursynov, Saken Seyfullin, Ilyas Zhansugurov, and many others - were eliminated. These tragic events inflicted heavy damage on the Kazakh elite and cultural heritage, leaving a deep mark in the country's history.

One of the first victims in Stalin's prisons was Alikhan Bokeikhanov - the ideological inspirer and organizer of the party and Alaş-Orda government. A highly educated person and talented educator, he was found by Stalin's machinery of repression in Moscow and was destroyed.

The ideologist of «Alaş-Orda», Akhmet Baitursynov - whose father (and his brothers) was exiled to penal servitude by Tsarist authorities - was repeatedly prosecuted and constantly monitored by Tsarist gendarmes as an unreliable person. Nevertheless, Baitursynov was among those who laid the foundations for Kazakh statehood and a new writing system. In pursuit of these goals, he sided with the Bolsheviks but was also repressed in the 1930s.

Other representatives of Kazakh intelligentsia - educated and progressive members of society - can be listed: Mukhammad Tynyshpaev, Khalel Dosmukhammedov, Amangeldy Munaitpasov, Zhanbosyn Dosmukhammedov, Kasym Kemengerov, Mukhammad Buralykiev, Zhumabek Kuderin, Niyaz Kozhamkulov, Amangeldy Akpaev, Saken Kadyrbaev, Zhanbocyn Akpaev, Tolegen Zhumagaliev, Mukhammad Murzin, Amangeldy Umbetbaev, Amangeldy Omarov, Amangeldy Ermekov, Mukhammad Auezov, Uali Omarov, Beisen Suleimenov, Dirmukhamed Iskakov [6-8].

Research shows that during the repressions in Kazakhstan about 100,000 people were convicted on political charges; approximately 25,000 were executed.

There were 11 GULAG camps located in Kazakhstan [5].

One such camp was Alzhir (an acronym for «Akmolinsk Camp for Wives of Traitors to Motherland»), situated just a few dozen kilometers from modern-day capital city Nur-Sultan (formerly Astana). About 8 thousand unjustly convicted women served sentences there. Among them were wives of prominent figures such as TurarRyskulov, SultanbekKozhanov, TemirbekJurgenev, BeimbetMaiylin, and SanjarAsfendiyarov. These tragic pages in history left a deep mark on the fate of Kazakh people and its cultural heritage.

Political repressions affected not only Kazakhs but also more than 60 other ethnic groups held in GULAG camps. In Alzhir - the camp for wives of traitors to Motherland - many years (1937-1954), bodies of those killed during Stalin's terror were secretly buried; exact numbers are unknown but it is known that between 8 to 10 thousand women prisoners were held there at different times.

Besides Alzhir there were three other women's camps: Temlyakovsky (located 40 km from Gorky), Jangar (100 km from Frunze), and Temnikov (in Poland). Women often became involuntary prisoners when special judicial collegiums («troikas») branded them as «wives of traitors to Motherland» based on fabricated accusations.

In 1937-1938 alone, prisoner numbers in camps reached nearly 45 thousand people. Before the closure of GULAG system in 1960s approximately 1.5 million prisoners passed through these camps - including tens of thousands of women. These tragic pages highlight both the scale of Soviet repression policies and the heavy fates endured by victims [9-11].

The history of Kazakh people in the 20th century is both tragic and heroic - a deep imprint on national memory. The famine of 1932-1933 (known as Holodomor) was one of the most terrible trials for Kazakhs: millions died from hunger while survivors endured harsh conditions due to repression, deportations - and destruction of cultural values. These events led not only to significant loss of human lives but also to destruction of traditional culture, economy, and social structures among Kazakhs.

Repressions under Stalin's regime affected all layers: intelligentsia, peasants, kazakhs Cossacks - and ordinary citizens alike - many arrested, sent into exile or executed without trial or investigation. This had a destructive impact on development of Kazakh nation and its spiritual, cultural identity. As a result, much of Kazakh elite was practically destroyed, hindering development of national identity and self-awareness [12-13].

Despite all these tragedies, the Kazakh people showed incredible resilience and strength of spirit. They preserved their culture, language, and traditions despite attempts at assimilation and cultural erasure. In postwar years, recovery of national identity began, and after gaining independence in 1991, Kazakhstan entered a new stage of reflecting on its history and remembering its victims. Memory of famine and repression is an important element of national identity and historical responsibility. It serves as a reminder of what can happen when power is misused and human rights ignored. In modern Kazakhstan, a proactive effort is underway to commemorate victims - memorials are being built, research conducted, and eyewitness accounts published. In general, the tragedies of XX century had a profound influence on shaping modern Kazakh society. They taught the people to value free domin dependence, and peaceful coexistence. It is important to remember lessons from the past to prevent similar suffering in future. And only through preserving historical truth can we ensure prosperity and stability for our country, respect for our culture, and dignity for every individual.

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