



Protest sentiments and survival strategies of the kazakh population in the 1929-1930s: behavioral motives and forms of resistance

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Abstract. This article examines the forms of social and political reaction of the Kazakh population to the policy of the Soviet government in the 1929-1930s. During this period, mass collectivization, dispossession of kulaks, forced settlement of nomads and strict tax policy were carried out, which led to significant changes in the traditional way of life of the Kazakhs. As a result of increasing State pressure, many families were forced to leave their native lands and move to neighboring regions or abroad, mainly to China, Mongolia and Central Asia. These mass migrations became the most vivid expression of passive, yet desperate, resistance. The concept of "otkochevka," traditionally used in Soviet terminology to denote seasonal movements of the nomadic population, was, in the period under study, employed to replace the notions of "flight" or "forced migration." This semantic substitution helped conceal the true scale of violence and the humanitarian catastrophe that accompanied the forced modernization and destruction of the traditional Kazakh way of life. The article analyzes the main reasons for the counterstand of the population, including the economic ruin of the population, mass starvation, and forced confiscation of property and violation of the rights of traditional society. The aim of the article is to research the behavioral motives of refugees are also considered, including the desire to protect the life and socio-cultural identity in conditions of strict state control. The state authorities interpreted the mass exodus of the population not just as a natural phenomenon, but as the result of inciting by the kulaks, the bas and counterrevolutionary elements. This served as the basis for strengthening punitive measures against the migrants. Based on archival data and historiographical analysis, the scale of migrations as a form of passive resistance, their socio-demographic consequences and impact on the further development of Kazakh society are investigated. The authors emphasize that mass migrations were a forced phenomenon caused not by class struggle, as claimed by Soviet propaganda, but by the desire of the population to survive in conditions of state terror. The disruption of the traditional way of life and state pressure in the form of forced sedentarization, collectivization, dekulakization, and grain procurement policies pushed the population to the brink of hunger and despair, forcing many to seek refuge beyond the borders of the Republic. The results obtained allow for a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of society's adaptation to crisis situations and a revision of traditional approaches to the study of the socio-political history of Kazakhstan in the first half of the 20th century.

Keywords: collectivization; repression; Semipalatinsk district; USPA (United State Political Administration); exaction; migration; escape; behavioral motives; adaptation

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Протестные настроения и стратегии выживания казахского населения в 1929-1930-е годы: поведенческие мотивы и формы сопротивления

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Аннотация. В данной статье рассматриваются формы социальной и политической реакции казахского населения на репрессивную политику советской власти в 1929–1930-е годы. В этот период осуществлялись массовая коллективизация, раскулачивание, принудительное оседание кочевников и жесткая налоговая политика, что привело к значительным изменениям в традиционном укладе жизни казахов. В результате усиливающегося давления государства многие семьи были вынуждены покинуть родные земли и переселиться в соседние регионы или за границу, преимущественно в Китай, Монголию и Среднюю Азию. Эти массовые откочёвки стали наиболее ярким проявлением пассивного, но отчаянного сопротивления. Понятие «откочёвки», использовавшееся в советской терминологии, традиционно обозначало сезонные перемещения кочевого населения, однако в рассматриваемый период оно применялось для замены понятий «бегство» или «вынужденная миграция», что позволяло скрыть реальные масштабы насилия и гуманитарной катастрофы, сопровождавших насильственную модернизацию и разрушение традиционного образа жизни казахов. В статье анализируются основные причины сопротивления населения, среди которых – экономическое разорение населения, массовый голод, насильственная конфискация имущества и нарушение прав традиционного общества. Целью статьи является исследование поведенческих мотивов беженцев, включая стремление к сохранению жизни и социально-культурной идентичности в условиях жесткого государственного контроля. При этом власть рассматривала массовые миграции как выражение антисоветской активности, усматривая в них кулацко-байское влияние и действие контрреволюционных сил, что становилось поводом для ужесточения репрессий в отношении беженцев. На основе архивных данных и историографического анализа исследуются масштабы откочёвок как формы пассивного сопротивления, их социально-демографические последствия и влияние на дальнейшее развитие казахского общества. Авторы подчеркивают, что массовые миграции были вынужденным явлением, вызванным не классовой борьбой, как утверждала советская пропаганда, а стремлением населения выжить в условиях государственного террора. Нарушение привычного жизненного уклада и давление со стороны государства в виде насильственной оседлости, коллективизации, раскулачивания и заготовок поставили население на грань голода и отчаяния, вынудив многих искать спасение за пределами Республики. Полученные результаты позволяют глубже понять механизмы адаптации общества к кризисным ситуациям и пересмотреть традиционные подходы к изучению социально-политической истории Казахстана в первой половине XX века.

Ключевые слова: коллективизация; репрессии; Семипалатинский округ; ОГПУ; изъятие; миграция; откочёвки; поведенческие мотивы; адаптация

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Финансирование. Статья подготовлена в рамках реализации научно-исследовательского проекта по гранту Министерства науки и высшего образования Республики Казахстан ИРН АР23485479 – Вооруженные выступления в Семипалатинском округе в документах: история и судьбы участников (1929-1931 гг.)

Қазақ тұрғындардың 1929-1930 жылдардағы наразылық көңіл күйлері және аман қалу стратегиясы: қарсыласуларының себептері және түрлері

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Аңдатпа. Мақалада 1929-1930 жылдардағы Кеңес үкіметінің саясатына қазақ халқының әлеуметтік-саяси қарсылық түрлері қарастырылады. Сол кезеңде жаппай ұжымдастыру, жерден айыру, көшпелілерді күштеп отырықшыландыру және қатаң салық саясаты жүргізіліп, қазақтардың дәстүрлі тұрмыс-тіршілігіне айтарлықтай өзгерістеренгізілді. Мемлекет тарапынан қысымының күшеюі нәтижесінде көптеген отбасылар туған жерлерін тастап, көрші облыстарға немесе шетелдерге, негізінен Қытай, Моңғолия, Орта Азияға қоныс аударуға мәжбүр болды. Бұл мақалада халық қарсылығының негізгі себептері, оның ішінде халықтың экономикалық күйреуі, жаппай ашаршылық, мүлікті күштеп тәркілеу және дәстүрлі қоғам құқығының бұзылуы талданады. Сондай-ақ босқындардың мінез-құлық уәждері, соның ішінде олардың қатаң мемлекеттік бақылау жағдайында өмірді және әлеуметтік-мәдени бірегейлікті сақтауға ұмтылуы қарастырылады. Билік өз кезегінде адамдардың жаппай көшіп-қонуының себебін босқындарға қарсы қуғын-сүргіннің күшеюіне әкеліп соқтырған бай-кулак элементтерімен және контрреволюциялық топтармен байланысты антисоветтік әрекеттің көрінісі ретінде түсіндірді. Архив деректері мен тарихнамалық талдаулар негізінде белсенді емес қарсылықтың бір түрі ретіндегі көші-қон ауқымы, олардың әлеуметтік-демографиялық салдары мен қазақ қоғамының одан әрі дамуына тигізетін әсері зерттеледі. Авторлар жаппай көші-қон кеңестік үгіт-насихат айтқандай таптық күрестен емес, халықтың мемлекеттік террор жағдайында аман қалуға ұмтылуынан туындаған мәжбүрлі құбылыс екенін атап көрсетеді. Алынған нәтижелер қоғамның дағдарыстық жағдайларға бейімделу тетіктерін жақсырақ түсінуге және XX ғасырдың бірінші жартысындағы Қазақстанның әлеуметтік-саяси тарихын зерттеудегі дәстүрлі көзқарастарды қайта қарауға мүмкіндік береді.

Түйін сөздер: ұжымдастыру; қуғын-сүргін; Семей округі; БМСБ; тәркілеу; көші-қон; мінез-құлық уәждері, бейімделу

Introduction

The repressive policy of the government in 1929-1930 was associated with economic and political campaigns for cattle and grain, the liquidation of kulak and bai farms, collectivization and settlement. The transformations carried out by the most stringent administrative methods have caused an aggravation of the socio-economic situation and a high mortality rate of the local population. The behavioral motives of the population were diverse: armed demonstrations, migration both within the territory of Kazakhstan and outside the country. Kazakh historian J.B. Abylkhozhin notes that the purpose of economic transformations was to create, instead of the previous "traditional personal structures with horizontal ties, a structure with vertical ties that would allow the System to subordinate Kazakh villages to totalitarian control" (Abylkhozhin 1991: 229).

The purpose of the article is to study and analyze the behavioral motives of the population in the context of the repressive government policy during the period of forceful modernization of traditional Kazakh society.

In archive materials and literature of the Soviet and later periods, the terms are used to refer to people trying to escape from the negative consequences of collectivization and the repressive policy of the authorities, and the process itself is called "migrations". The unjustified use of such formulations creates a false impression of the voluntary, legal migration of Kazakhs within the republic and beyond its borders.

To form an objective view, it is necessary to compare the information obtained with previously published studies and documents.

Methods and Materials

The article is based on the principles of historicism and a systematic approach, which allows a comprehensive understanding of the migration processes that took place among the Kazakh population in the 1929-1930s, considering them in the context of broad socio-political transformations, as well as tracing their origins, features and consequences.

The main research method is historical and documentary analysis based on the study of archival sources, including materials from the USPA, the Kazterritory committee of the CPSU(b), statistical reports, resolutions and government regulations. This allows us to reconstruct the picture of the population's flight and analyze the state's attitude to this process. Socio-cultural analysis makes it possible to identify the behavioral motives of people in the context of repressive government policy. Methods of content analysis of journalistic and historiographical sources are also used to identify the evolution of scientific approaches to the study of this problem.

The complex application of these methods makes it possible to comprehensively study the forms of social adaptation of the Kazakh population in conditions of severe political and economic transformation.

The article is based on materials from the Archives of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan (AP RK), Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RSASPH), and the Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGSACH).

The research draws on materials from the Archive of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, specifically from the Soviet period. These include documents from Fund 141 –

the Kazakh Regional Committee of the CPSU(b), and Fund 719 – the Kazakh Regional Control Commission of the CPSU(b) – the People's Commissariat of Workers' and Peasants' Inspection of the KASSR. Covering the 1930s–1940s, these documents provide information on the mass migrations of the population to China, their causes, the conditions of economic resettlement for returnees, measures taken to combat the migrants and counterrevolutionary uprisings in certain regions, as well as actions by the authorities aimed at returning the nomads.

The materials of secret-political and information departments of empowered and authorized representation of the USPA (AR USPA) in Kazakhstan are used (F. 719). In cases No. 84, 126, 719, which were signed in the Soviet period as top-secret information and were not issued to researchers, are contained important, informative, significant documents, among which are special reports, summary, internal reports and correspondence about the migration of the Kazakh population to China; in these documents are discussed main causes, peculiarities and consequences of mass migration in 1930s, identified data, given the names of people settling to China, given the number of refugees; information about the settlement of the Kazakh population and the holding of events on the returning of refugees.

In the article, it was used top secret documents, applications and other documents addressed to F. Goloshchekin. Operational data are provided from the territory of China (Section 30 – Urdzharsky, Lepsinsky, Alakulsky districts; Section 50 – Zaisansky, Katon-Karagaysky, Tarbagataysky districts and others.) about banditry [so that it is in the case – *authors*]: the number of people, their weapons, the number of organizers, their activity¹.

Of scientific interest is a collection of archival documents on the history of forced refugees in Kazakhstan in the 1920s and 1930s, identified in domestic and foreign archives, as well as in special archives of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the release of which was one of the results of the work of the State Commission for the Full Rehabilitation of Victims of Political Repression ([Materials](#) 2022). The collection presents for the first time documents and materials on refugees from the territory of Kazakhstan in the 1920s and 1930s. The archive documents published in the collection provide an opportunity to examine the history and essence of the "refugee issue" in the context of the functioning of the mechanisms of the repressive policy of punitive authorities.

The growing tension and protest sentiments of the Kazakh village, socio-demographic changes during the period of collectivization, recorded in documents of that time, are reflected in the collection *Asharshylyk. Famine. 1928-1934* ([Asharshylyk](#) 2023).

The application of theoretical and methodological approaches in modern historical science has made it possible to rethink the documentary sources of the Soviet period as narratives formed within the framework of specific socio-cultural and political contexts. This approach allows us to consider these materials not only as carriers of real information, but also as a reflection of the interaction of government with society, which significantly affects their content and interpretation.

Literature Review

The formation of new theoretical and methodological approaches in the study of the problem, the beginning of a conceptual reset of historical consciousness on issues of collectivization in Kazakhstan was initiated by an article of M. Kozybayev, J. Abylkhozhin, M. Tatimov ([Kozybayev](#)

et al. 1989). For the first time, the ideological component of collectivization was accompanied by preliminary statistical data, historically reliable facts about the tragedy of the Kazakh people in the 1930s.

It should be noted the monograph by M. Malysheva and V. Poznansky "Kazakhs-refugees from famine in Western Siberia. 1931-1934", which examines in detail the causes, process and consequences of mass migration of Kazakhs both outside the country and within the republic; the monograph analyzes the situation of Kazakhs who were forced to leave their native places and move to Siberia due to difficult conditions (Malysheva, Poznansky 1999). The authors note that Kazakhs-refugees have received significant support and assistance from the local population of Siberia.

The 2000s marked a new stage in the study of the history of collectivization. At that time Russian researchers gained access to new collections of archives. Professor T.O. Omarbekov gives an assessment of the human victims of the period of famine and mass migration (Omarbekov 2003). The authors of the joint monograph are B.G. Ayagan, J.U. Kydyralina and others, based on the analysis of a wide range of sources, they tried to rethink and comprehensively explore the years of collectivization and its tragic consequences in Kazakhstan (Ayagan et al. 2012).

A team of authors (Zhanbossinova et al. 2020) investigated the historical memory of the modernization of the Kazakh village in Soviet narratives through a comparative study of theoretical concepts of modern historical science. The authors of the article "Social adaptation of Kazakh nomads in the period of forced collectivization" have shown that «in the context of forced collectivization, the authorities have directed their efforts to eliminate socio-patrimonial communicative indicators at both the central and regional levels. It is noted that the methods of forced collectivization, which led to failures in the political and economic systems, influenced the content of the behavioral motives of the population» (Zhirindinova et al. 2019: 164).

A.S. Zhanbossinova analyzes two behavioral levels of the population in the context of the implementation of the socio-economic modernization program of the Kazakh village: the first: flight and migration, and the second: adaptation, resulting from economic coercion and the destruction of the social stratum of the "former" (Zhanbossinova 2021).

A.I. Kudaibergenova examines the dynamics of popular protests in 1928-1932 through the prism of modern conceptual approaches. Considering migration as a way of resisting military modernization, the researcher identifies insurgent-migration movements and refugee migration (Kudaibergenova 2023: 282).

In the article of Smagulova S.O., Sailaubay E.E., Maslov H.B. the migration of population out of Kazakhstan is considered as one of the views of adaptive practices of Kazakhs in the period of collectivization and its consequences (Smagulova et al. 2023).

Researchers Baisarina K., Karibayev M., Turlybayev M. explore the political and socio-economic factors that underpinned the resistance of the rural population, which was driven by the deepening social crisis and the destruction of the traditional way of life of Kazakh nomadic and semi-nomadic households (Baisarina et al. 2025).

Certain aspects of this issue have been examined in the works of foreign researchers (Ohayon 2009, Cameron 2020, Payne 2011, Kindler 2017, Pianciola 2004).

A brief historiographical overview of this topic proves its relevance and underlines the need for further scientific research, especially taking into account the declassification of archival documents. Many aspects of the problem remain insufficiently studied both due to the state

of the documentary base, including issues of statistics and demographic losses, and due to the limited access of researchers to materials from a number of departmental archives, as well as archives of foreign countries.

Results

Socialist modernization, accompanied by repressive policy, affected Kazakh society, leading to the destruction of the traditional nomadic society, the disintegration of family communication and the formation of a new type of Soviet personality. The state's invasion of private property, disruption of the usual way of life, agrarian reforms and constant fines have led to various forms of protests, from forced migrations to armed demonstrations.

As part of the nomads' adaptation strategies, attempts were made to avoid open conflict: one of the characteristic forms of such resistance was a demonstrative and mass exodus outside the country, in particular to China. This tactical strategy was a traditional way for the Kazakh nomadic mentality to respond to external pressure, protesting through migration and refusal to submit to hostile authorities. According to A.S. Zhanbossinova, "migration was one of the most popular behavioral reactions of Kazakhs during this period. On the one hand, their flight allowed them to escape Soviet repression, and on the other hand, to avoid open confrontation. The Kazakh population was fleeing not only from the constant violence that was destroying their familiar world. The first wave were refugees fleeing for their lives from USPD pursuit, who were engaged in the liquidation of villages after the uprisings. The second wave consisted of refugees hoping to escape from famine" ([Zhanbossinova 2021: 56](#)).

Migrations to China were also facilitated by the position of some local authorities, who, during the confiscation of livestock, stated "hide or not hide the cattle, they will leave 2 sheep anyway," which reinforced the "refugee" sentiments. According to archival documents, mass migrations during this period covered the Tarbagatai, Stalinsky and Markakol districts of the Semipalatinsk district. In 1928 about 423 farms moved from these areas to China, taking with them about 22,000 head of livestock. The flight to China increased in proportion to the growing pressure from the party and Soviet authorities: if in March 1928 there were isolated cases of border crossing, then in July and early August they became widespread and uncontrollable. According to the evidence of the Kazakhs themselves, who fled to China, life began to be bad on the territory of the Union: they take heavy taxes, mobilize young people, imprison, take away cattle"².

The authorities demanded explanations about the mass exodus of Kazakhs from their villages. Officials quickly found an answer to this question: "The first migrations mainly concerned the bais and kulaks, who forcibly took cattle and left the (Steppe) region" ([Mendikulova 2006: 92](#)). "In social terms, migrants included not only bais but also middle- and low- class members, as confirmed by statistical data recorded by PP OGPU. As an example, as many as ten kolkhoz families (one middle-class family and nine low-class ones) migrated to China through the Maykapchagay outpost on the night of 11 July 1930" ([Zhirindinova et al. 2019: 170](#)). In the Special Report of the secret political department of the USPA «On emigration from Kazakhstan to China," it is noted that "among the nomads, a very significant percentage are the middle and the poor peasants. The percentage of the poor, middle peasants and collective farmers in the total mass of nomads in 1931 reached 80%, while among the nomads in 1930, a significant part were bais and other anti-Soviet elements" ([Asharshylyk 2023: 166](#)).

Archival documents contain appeals disseminated by bai leaders aimed at encouraging the population to flee across the border: "Life has become impossibly difficult. The Soviets have started to plunder all of us, the bais. We should cross the border into China; We regret a lot having been uninformed about Soviet campaigns such as grain procurements and confiscations, i.e. robbing people of their possessions, otherwise we would have sold our cattle and gone to China; The Soviets wants to definitely ruin the population. Grain procurements, self-taxation, credits and other campaigns make life unbearable. Migration abroad is the only escape from the Soviets. Sometimes, bais directly accused the Soviet regime: The Soviet rule and communists hiding behind their plans ruined us by taking our bread and cattle. Soon it will be your turn, the poor. We would better leave the kolkhoz and migrate to China. Violence and dissatisfaction with the authorities are the economic and political rationales for Kazakh migration. The reason for ...my migration to China is that I could not take it any longer and remain in the USSR because I do not like actions being taken by the Party and the Soviet regime, and I was planning to live in China and to practice agriculture as before. The collective decision was as follows: So we decided to migrate to China with other citizens of the Akchaulinski Aul Council because life is unbearable here, for the Soviets ruined people and keep putting forward plans that we cannot implement. So it is better to migrate to China and to transport our cattle there" (Zhirindinova et al. 2019: 171).

Archival documents show that the largest number of refugees in Xinjiang was observed in 1930-1931. For example, over 32,000 people moved to Ili district in 1930. The main flows of migrants from Kazakhstan to Xinjiang were directed to the Tarbagatai, Altai and Kashgar districts. The party documents indicate that during the years 1931-1932 "from a number of districts of AlmaAta, South Kazakhstan and East Kazakhstan regions, a significant number of farms migrated to Western China and Afghanistan (about 83 thousand farms emigrated abroad)"³. The USPA PP reported on the measures taken to prevent people from leaving the border in its special report on the results of migrations across the Kazakh SSR in 1930: "No harsh measures taken by border guards against those crossing the border have produced real results in terms of reducing the flow of refugees. The fighting was the most ruthless during the year, more than 1, 000 people were killed along the border with the Ili district, ntending to illegally cross into Chinese territory. Moreover, in addition to men, women and children were killed"⁴.

The flight of the nomads caused enormous damage to Kazakh society, affecting many spheres of life: it led to a reduction in the population, the destruction of the traditional economic structure, and the weakening of the social structure of society. The mass outflow from Kazakhstan began in 1928, and according to other sources, since 1929. M.K. Kozybayev, J.B. Abylkhozhin, K.S. Aldazhumanov in their work "Collectivization in Kazakhstan: the tragedy of the peasantry" believe «that the resettlement of Kazakhs to Russia, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Karakalpakstan, China, Iran, Afghanistan is estimated at 1million 30 thousand» (Kozybaev et al. 1992: 30)

According to the data extracted from the archives by Professor G.M. Mendikulova, it is possible to judge how officials at different levels tried to explain the reasons for migrations from Kazakhstan, saying that: "In the first migrations there were mainly Bay-Kulak elements who arbitrarily took cattle and left the (Steppe) region (Mendikulova 1997: 92). It can be noted that the official explanations of the reasons for the migrations were formulated within the framework of Soviet ideology, attributed exclusively to class struggle, although in reality the mass exodus of Kazakhs was a forced reaction to the destruction of the traditional way of life.

Previously secret documents include a special checking on the migrations of the Kazakh population in Kazakhstan based on the materials of the Authorized Representative Office, the United State Political Administration (PP USPA) for the KSSR on 24.11.1930⁵, the case of the commission of the Kazterritory committee of the CPSU(b) with materials on the investigation of the causes of population migration to China and the course of the economic and political campaign in the Tarbagatai region⁶ and others.

The economic and political campaigns conducted in Kazakhstan in 1931-1932, including grain and cattle harvesting, measures to strengthen collective farms, eliminate kulaks and bais as part of continuous collectivization, as well as the forced settlement of nomadic and semi-nomadic populations, provoked opposition from the population. This resistance in a number of regions of the region found its expression in the form of armed struggle, the organization of gangs, the robbery of collective farms and state farms and the organization of migrations of the nomadic and settled Kazakh population.

The «materials of the USPA PP indicate the following main reasons for migration of the border population to China: "the agitation of the Bay-Kulak element for migration due to tax pressure and pressure on grain procurement, sheer bureaucracy by local workers in carrying out the most important government measures, excesses against the middle and poor farmers, etc. A feature of the mass migrations of the last period was called the fact that "migrations occur under the cover of armed gangs, both of local and non-local origin, and partly with the explicit assistance of the Chinese authorities to the migrants". During the period under study, it was advantageous for the party authorities to blame everything on the agitation of the "Bay-Kulak element", instead of explaining the reasons for the flight of the population by the difficult economic situation and, consequently, material difficulties» ([Atantaeva 2008: 30](#)).

It is noted in the archive files that the main slogans of the leadership during the agitation were: "The Soviet government wants to completely ruin the population. Grain procurement, self-taxation, loans and other campaigns are not making a living. Migration abroad is the only saving from the Soviet government"⁷.

The USPD materials reflect the facts of the formation and escort of armed groups of Kazakhs who left the territory of the USSR, as well as cases of migration that took place with the assistance or protection of both local and foreign armed groups, including episodes of open interference by the Chinese authorities.

The following facts are given in confirmation: "The village of Tustukbayev of the 1st village council of the Zaisansky district of the Semipalatinsk district migrated to China under the protection of those who arrived from China: 12 Chinese Kazakhs armed with three-line rifles. 388 cattle were captured during the crossing. In the Oktyabrsky district of the Alma-Ata region, the bay of Sarbel village, Rakhatov Srabil, traveled illegally to China, where he agreed with the Chinese governor, Mukoy Azhibekov, to relocate seven Bay families to China. Azhibekov offered armed Chinese Kazakhs to help to cross the border⁸ ... In Tokmak Alma-Ata district, 600 families of Dungans, Kazakhs and Uigurs are migrating to China. The nomads have moved in the direction of the Ili Valley and intend to cross the border in the area of the Koljai outpost. China is organizing assistance to the migrants in the form of an armed gang of 400 people, who, under the leadership of Dara Sadykov, will cover the border crossing"⁹.

Official documents claimed that the migrations in some cases took place under the cover of armed gangs crossing from abroad, and the nomads themselves began to create independent

formations to resist the border troops. According to official data for 1930, "On August 6, in the Semipalatinsk region, 2 migrations, numbering 700 people, with 95 rifles and 50 hunting rifles, moved towards China. On the same day, on August 6, 250 people armed with 30 rifles moved out in the Kokpektinsky district. At the same time, a second migration of 400 people was organized, with 25-30 rifles. In the Dzharzen district, two migrations of 70 and 40 farms were detained. During the arrest, the nomads made resistance and engaged in a shootout with the detaining troop. On August 9, in the Karakol region, a local gang organized the migration of the entire population of Tabyn village. On August 13, a group of 500 farms was detained in the Dzharzen district, trying to cross the border. The migrants put up armed resistance. On August 19, 66 farms from the collective farm "Lenin's Path" migrated from Urzharsky district under the cover of armed horsemen.

On August 20, a gang arrived in Kurchum district from behind the cordon, which organized the migration of 500 farms in two villages. Local party's chapters joined the migration. On August 22, 150 people crossed into China in the area of the Uryl outpost, who offered armed resistance to the border guards who tried to detain them. On August 24, 500 people tried to migrate to China under armed cover in the Urjar and Ayaguz districts" (Asharshylyk 2023: 169). Such statements reflect the position of the authorities characteristic of that time, according to which the nomads were portrayed not as victims of repressive policy during the collectivization period, but as a destructive force associated with banditry and anti-Soviet elements.

On May 19, 1931, the Bureau of the Tarbagatai district adopted a resolution "On measures to prevent increased emigration among the population," which outlined the reasons for the migration of the population. One of the main reasons was the close ancestral and kinship ties with Kazakhs abroad. The authorities noted that relatives spread various ridiculous rumors about the "benefits" expected in China: in particular, it was said that land had already been allocated to migrants in China that the migrants would receive all the benefits and would be able to lead a habitual life style, etc. This explanation reflects the official point of view of the authorities. In fact, the reasons for the flight of the local population were the consequences of socio-political transformations in Kazakhstan in the 1929-1930s., pressure from the authorities, which prompted people to seek salvation in flight.

In addition to the Bay agitation, the distortion and perversion of the party's cattle-harvesting policy (very high rates of plans for poor and middle-class farms and collective farmers) had a certain impact, which made it possible to set the working masses against the measures carried out by the party.

The archival materials of the RSASPH provided data for 1930 on the meat procurement plan in Kazakhstan (Table 1). An analysis of the submitted documents indicates the mass and forced removal of livestock, which inevitably led to various forms of resistance from the population.

Table 1. Meat procurement plan for the 4th quarter of 1930¹⁰

| district | total | contracting | State collection |
|---------------|--------|-------------|------------------|
| Cattle | | | |
| Semipalatinsk | 90 000 | 47 500 | 42 500 |
| Pavlodar | 59 800 | 23 800 | 36 000 |

| | | | |
|------------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Karkaralinsk | 20 000 | 10 200 | 9 800 |
| small livestock | | | |
| Semipalatinsk | 59 900 | 16 100 | 43 800 |
| Pavlodar | 7 400 | 1 800 | 5 600 |
| Karkaralinsk | 54 100 | 3 300 | 50 800 |

In the report of the Tarbagatai district dated May 19, 1931 on mass migration to China, it was also noted that in all borders there were counter revolutionary Bay chapters (that's what these groups were called in the USPA materials), which set themselves the task of organizing a mass departure of the population to China, and their work proceeded entirely under the leadership of «off-site nationalist figures in face of the Kazakh okurdai (*Okurday is the thousandth chief of Chinese Kazakhs in China, similar to the former volost governor*). "Communication with the off-site group was carried out through messengers sent by the chapters, with whom they transmitted information (including written information) about the state of border protection, the types of procurement and the political state of the villages (the names of the messengers are in the file). Some agents established constant surveillance of outposts, village councils, etc., for which they recruited people from villages and the information received from them was forwarded through a "counter revolutionary chapter."

The content of the agitation included provocations that the Soviet government was taking away all livestock, sending men between the ages of 18 and 40 to forced labor on the railway, etc. In addition, it was said that lands had been prepared for nomads in China and, finally, a threat was used against those who did not want to migrate, they were scared that armed coercion would be used against them¹¹.

The Chinese authorities not only did not counteract, but helped the mass migration of the population of the border regions to China, sending armed groups that clashed with the border guards to cover the migration; appearing on the territory of the region to organize mass migrations, foreign gangs simultaneously engaged in looting collective farms and terrorized the activists.

In total, there were up to 10 such gangs in the border strip on the Chinese territory bordering Kazakhstan, with which there were 25 armed clashes between January and August 1930, during the same period 4,216 people migrated to China, they stole 11,109 cattle (the figures are not accurate, in the direction of their under estimation). The Chinese authorities did not take any measures to all requests for the extradition of defectors¹².

Thus, the population, on the one hand, intimidated by gangster and members of various organizations and, on the other hand, believing propaganda about well-being abroad, spontaneously rose up in whole villages and hurriedly moved to China under the leadership of organizers and under the cover of armed gangs.

From the materials of the questioning of the accused Olzhas Zhakiyanov, who testified during the interrogation: "When we left the gang, we received a specific task: to organize the migration of that part of the population of the 1st and 3rd village councils that inhabit the valley of "Kuste" and "Kzyl Kesek". Kossaeв Chokolai and Ibraev Zhumagul, who had a connection with the Abylkas gang even earlier, were given the task of organizing the migration of the population of 3rd village councils inhabiting the Kzyl-Kain and Kanai tracts (which are 15 versts north west

of Pokrovka), but they did not receive the task of organizing the migration according to tribes. The gang led by Abylka instructed us to conduct agitation against the measures of the Soviet government - that the Soviet government would ruin them, take away their children, etc., that life was good in China, that land had already been allocated there. Along with this, they were given instructions to organize the migration so that no one would stay, and for those who did not want to go, they were instructed to take away their cattle and tie them up and take them away with them. In relation to workers of the Soviet government who can prevent migration, it is ordered to bind, in relation to those who are particularly harmful to emigration, to kill..."¹³.

Along with campaigning, the distortion of party attitudes by the procurement commissioners played an equally important role in the migration. For example, until March 20, 1931, about 70 farms migrated from 4 villages to China. The reason for this was the improper actions of District Executive Committee (DEC) Commissioner Yesekeyev in conducting a cattle campaign.

...When he sent authorized activists to the villages, he ordered them to distribute the plan among the farms, as long as the plan was fulfilled, and the commissioners dispersed to the villages and agreed with the elders- they distributed the plan without taking into account the financial condition. They distributed the plan to the poor having one horse and two horses, forcing them to sell the last cattle...¹⁴. Further in the case, the lists of the organizers of the migrations in the auls are given.

The preparations for the migration were organized by the district coordination center, which mainly included non-party member responsible district workers, as well as one Komsomol member. This group held several meetings and set as its task the organization of migrations to China through agitation and the use of individual difficulties, conducted by the party and the Soviet government economic and political campaigns.

The organizers of migrations in the villages maintained contacts with foreign structures, including previously emigrated Bais and Chinese Kazakhs. These contacts were carried out through smugglers who traveled to China for tea and manufactory, as well as through specially targeted people. The Bays who were abroad provided assistance to the nomads with people and weapons, sending armed groups to villages to provide security and cover when crossing the border¹⁵.

As can be seen from the data shown in table 2, the number of farms wishing to migrate to China was growing. But not everyone who wanted to migrate was able to do so. Of the farms that migrated, about 650 farms with about 3,000 people were detained. There are 511 poor farms with 2,255 people, 111 middle-class farms (467 people) and 33 well-off farms (176 people)¹⁶.

In total, 450 farms left for China in Tarbagatai district from 01.01.1930 to 01.01.1931, 50 farms from 01.01.1930 to 05.01.1931, and the number of those who left from 05.01.1931 to 06.01.1931 is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The number of farms in the Tarbagatai region that rose to migrate to China from 01.05. to 01.06.1931.

| Aul number | Amount of farms | Collective farms |
|------------|-----------------|------------------|
| № 6 | 194 | 155 |
| № 1 | 82 | 1 |

| | | |
|-------|-----|-----|
| № 3 | 129 | 65 |
| № 4 | 37 | 24 |
| № 5 | 265 | 161 |
| Total | 697 | 436 |

Archival materials show the critical and emergency nature of the situation. In this context, the materials cited by historian J.U. Kydyralina from the archive documents are valuable. In the memorandum "On the migration of Kazakh farms to China" it is noted that "the instructions on the migration of the population to China, both before the confiscation of Kazakh farms and in connection with the confiscation, came from Kazakh nationalists, who considered this measure as one of the methods of protecting cattle breeding farms from the ruin that, in their opinion, the policy of the Soviet government is bringing to the steppe.

The migrations of entire groups of the population and individuals occurred due to the panic that swept the population under the influence of provocative rumors and fear of being subjected to confiscation and eviction" (Kydyralina 2013: 78). In an information letter to the Central Committee of the CPSU(b) dated July 5, 1932, it was reported about the reasons for the migration of the Kazakh population to China in 1931-1932 in the Chiliksky and Kokpektinsky districts, where similar examples of agitation by the bays for migrations were given, using short comings in economic development and political work, as well as examples of armed cover for migrators, assistance from beyond the cordon, the names of agitators and the number of farms that migrated were mentioned¹⁷.

One of the consequences of the migration was a decrease in the number of farms in the region by about 25%. In the 102 registered districts, the number of livestock decreased by 39.5% in 1931. The reduction in livestock, along with other reasons, was undoubtedly significantly influenced by migrations, since nomads, in addition to their livestock, in some cases took livestock along the way, taking it outside Kazakhstan, with simultaneous destructive extermination¹⁸.

The main reason for the mass migration to China in the 1930 s was crop failure and famine caused by the harsh policy of collectivization. In the USPA special report dated 07.09.1932, it is noted that the East Kazakhstan, Karaganda, and Aktobe regions are covered by the migration movement as the most affected by the crop failure of previous years (mainly cattle-breeding areas). In 1931, a major crop failure in the region, which captured the vast majority of the regions of Kazakhstan, in particular, almost all regions of Northern and Western Kazakhstan and partly Eastern Kazakhstan, caused severe food difficulties¹⁹.

The Kazterritory comitee of the CPSU(b) came to the following conclusions about the reasons for the migration of Kazakhs to China in the 1930s, which were the result of: major mistakes made in the practice of planning and managing the economy of the district; excesses in conducting economic and political campaigns; weakness of the struggle for revolutionary legality in the village and the presence of arbitrariness on the part of the village organizations and individual district employees; the weakness of village organizations, as a rule, which administer decisively in all branches of work and the lack of any mass explanatory work; poor supply of manufactured goods to villages; Bay provocation and influence based on ancestral ties existing between villages and Kazakhclans that migrated to China earlier²⁰.

Thus, the supreme party body of the republic identified the main causes of migrations in the 1930s, blaming all responsibility for mass migrations on administrative errors, local excesses,

and the influence of "hostile elements," but archival documents and modern research show that migration was a necessary measure to save lives.

The party bodies tried to prevent the migration of poor and middle peasant farms. Thus, among the measures to stop migrations and encourage the return of migrants to China, it was proposed through the consumer cooperation to provide "the maximum degree of supply of manufactured goods to border cooperatives, primarily the poor population, such as tea, shoes, kerosene, manufactory, salt, etc. Cooperatives 22 kilometers from the border strip were required to have grain funds to provide for farm hands, the poor and especially nomadic villages. It was also proposed to establish agricultural tax benefits for the poor and middle peasants of the border strip²¹.

The new executive secretary of the Kazterritory committee of the CPSU(b), L.I. Mirzoyan, who replaced F.I. Goloshchekin in this post, believed that the best option for the cause of the "nomads", at least until the harvest years, was to stay in the places where they had come and where they were currently. After all, there is no food in KASSR, even for the remaining population, and the returning hungry people will worsen the situation.

Mass migrations in the 1930s had a pronounced ethnic character. The Kazakh population, with its traditional cattle farming, turned out to be the most vulnerable to the consequences of collectivization, forced removal of livestock and the destruction of a habitual way of life. Significant migration flows among the Russian peasantry were practically absent. This is evidenced by official data from the authorities: "For example, we can take two adjacent and intertwining border regions that are now united—Urdzharsky and Makanchinsky. The first of these former districts is inhabited by Russians. There are only 5% Kazakhs in it. And there is no emigration movement in this area; there are no migrations from this area. The neighboring Makanchinsky district is Kazakh. There are a lot of migrations here. Here we have cases of migrations of even collective farmers, even collective farms as a whole, headed by their chairmen. It's not just the Bay elements that are migrating. Poor and middle peasants, farm labourers and collective farmers migrate with him" (Asharshylyk 2023: 177). This indicates that the migrations were not the result of social stratification and class struggle, as the Soviet government claimed, but were massive and forced, primarily for the Kazakh population.

Discussions

The process of forced collectivization and the coerced sedentarization of the nomadic population triggered a large-scale socio-cultural and economic crisis in Kazakh society. Analysis of archival materials and scholarly works reveals that protest sentiments among Kazakhs manifested in a wide range of forms — from overt resistance to covert, adaptive survival strategies. One of the most significant responses to this crisis was the mass migration of families and entire clans beyond the borders of Kazakhstan.

These migrations, or *otkochevki*, can be viewed not only as spontaneous movements driven by fear of famine and repression, but also as a conscious choice motivated by the desire to preserve a traditional way of life and clan ties. In a context of social collapse, livestock loss, and the breakdown of nomadic mobility, *otkochevka* became a means of safeguarding both physical survival and cultural identity.

The research established that the behavioral motives behind these migrations were both utilitarian and value-driven. On one hand, fleeing offered protection from confiscations and

repression; on the other, it served as a silent yet resolute rejection of the Soviet government's imposed policies. The protest practices of the Kazakh population during this period should be seen not merely as reactions to repression, but as a form of active social self-preservation, in which cultural identity and traditional institutions played a key role in shaping behavioral patterns.

Conclusion

The analysis showed that the Kazakh population, not wanting to enter into direct confrontation with the authority, chose a peaceful form of protest – resettlement to neighboring territories. The flight was the result of the rapid collapse of the traditional structure of Kazakh society. The local population, crushed by poverty, hunger, and colonial oppression, was completely unprepared for the "innovations" of the socialist type. The drastic breakdown of the traditionally established way of life, forced settlement, forced collectivization, dispossession and confiscation, and the state policy of harvesting in agriculture pushed people who were on the verge of starvation to migrate outside the republic.

According to archival and documentary sources, among the reasons for the defection movement in the 1930s, the party authorities noted "class struggle and anti-Soviet activities. "In our opinion, these are only external manifestations of the process, the true causes of which lie in the socio-economic situation of the population, which was in difficult conditions due to the policy of collectivization and the subsequent famine. The materials studied prove this thesis, although famine was not recognized by the authorities as one of the main causes of the migration movement. The increased discontentment has become an important factor influencing the formation of behavioral attitudes of the Kazakh population in the context of increasing state pressure.

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Notes

1. Summaries, Memos, and Other Correspondence of the Plenipotentiary Representative of the OGPU Regarding the Migrations. Archives of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan (hereinafter referred to as AP RK), f.141, op.17, c.465a, sh.16-31.
2. Resolutions of the Politburo, the Organizational Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPSU(b) and materials on the violation of party directives and laws of the Soviet government in the former Semipalatinsk province during campaigns to collect agricultural taxes, grain procurements, self-taxation and eviction of farmers, land and water reform, and the development of a plan for the economic development of Kazakhstan. Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (hereinafter referred to as RGSACH), f. 3, op. 61, c.165, sh. 13-14.
3. Information dated June 5, 1932, on the Mass Exodus of the Kazakh Population Beyond the Borders of the Kazakh ASSR. AP RK, f.719, op.4, c.84, sh.6.
4. Summaries, Memos, and Other Correspondence of the Plenipotentiary Representative of the OGPU Regarding the Migrations. AP RK, f.141, op.17, c. 465a, sh.60.

5. Special Report of the Plenipotentiary Representative of the OGPU in the Kazakh ASSR dated November 24, 1930, on the Migrations of the Kazakh People within Kazakhstan and Beyond — to Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and China. AP RK, f.719, op.2, c.126, sh. 179-182.
6. Case of the Commission of the Kazakh Regional Committee of the CPSU(b) with Materials on the Investigation of the Causes of Population Migrations to China and the Progress of Economic and Political Campaigns in the Tarbagatai District (January 1930 – September 1930). f.141, op.1, c.5056, sh. 10-89.
7. Special Report of the Plenipotentiary Representative of the OGPU in the Kazakh ASSR dated November 24, 1930, on the Migrations of the Kazakh People within Kazakhstan and Beyond — to Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and China. AP RK, f.719, op.2, c.126, sh.180.
8. Special Report of the Plenipotentiary Representative of the OGPU in the Kazakh ASSR dated November 24, 1930, on the Migrations of the Kazakh People within Kazakhstan and Beyond — to Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and China. AP RK, f.719, op.2, c.126, sh.180.
9. Special Report of the Plenipotentiary Representative of the OGPU in the Kazakh ASSR dated November 24, 1930, on the Migrations of the Kazakh People within Kazakhstan and Beyond — to Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and China. AP RK, f.719, op.2, c.126, sh.182.
10. Minutes of the Meetings of the Secretariat of the Kazakh Regional Committee of the CPSU (b) with Materials (June 4, 1930 – September 2, 1930). Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RSASPH), f.17. op.25. c.54. sh.89
11. Case of the Commission of the Kazakh Regional Committee of the CPSU(b) with Materials on the Investigation of the Causes of Population Migrations to China and the Progress of Economic and Political Campaigns in the Tarbagatai District (January 1930 – September 1930). AP RK, f.141, op.1, c.5056, sh.45.
12. Case of the Commission of the Kazraikom of the VKP(b) with Materials on the Investigation of the Causes of the Population's Exodus to China and the Progress of Economic and Political Campaigns in the Tarbagatai District (May 31, 1931 – June 10, 1931). AP RK, f.141, op.1, c.5061, sh.10.
13. Case of the Commission of the Kazakh Regional Committee of the CPSU(b) with Materials on the Investigation of the Causes of Population Migrations to China and the Progress of Economic and Political Campaigns in the Tarbagatai District (January 1930 – September 1930). AP RK, f.141, op.1, c.5056, sh.45.
14. Case of the Commission of the Kazakh Regional Committee of the CPSU(b) with Materials on the Investigation of the Causes of Population Migrations to China and the Progress of Economic and Political Campaigns in the Tarbagatai District (January 1930 – September 1930). AP RK, f.141, op.1, c.5056, sh.48.
15. Case of the Commission of the Kazakh Regional Committee of the CPSU(b) with Materials on the Investigation of the Causes of Population Migrations to China and the Progress of Economic and Political Campaigns in the Tarbagatai District (January 1930 – September 1930). AP RK, f.141, op.1, c.5056, sh.82.
16. Case of the Commission of the Kazakh Regional Committee of the CPSU(b) with Materials on the Investigation of the Causes of Population Migrations to China and the Progress of Economic and Political Campaigns in the Tarbagatai District (January 1930 – September 1930). AP RK, f.141, op.1, c.5056, sh.89.
17. Information dated June 5, 1932, on the Mass Migrations of the Kazakh Population Beyond the Borders of the Kazakh ASSR. AP RK, f.719, op.4, c.84, sh.4-7.

18. Information dated June 5, 1932, on the Mass Migrations of the Kazakh Population Beyond the Borders of the Kazakh ASSR. AP RK, f.719, op.4, c.84, sh.8.
19. Information dated June 5, 1932, on the Mass Migrations of the Kazakh Population Beyond the Borders of the Kazakh ASSR. AP RK, f.719, op.4, c.84, sh.4.
20. Material on the Migrants to China and the Reasons for Their Exodus. October 30, 1931. AP RK, f.141, op.1, c.5057, sh.1-2.
21. Memorandum on the Mass Migrations of the Kazakh Population from the Zharkent, Karatass, Mangystau, and Oktyabr Districts Beyond the Borders of Kazakhstan. February 26 – March 1931. AP RK, f.719, op.3, c.200, sh.4-7.

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Atantayeva B.Zh. developed the overall research concept, defined its aims and objectives, conducted a theoretical and methodological analysis of the problem, prepared the main text of the article, and formulated the conclusions and generalizations.

Akhmetova R.D. analyzed archival documents, participated in the collection and interpretation of empirical data, and made necessary revisions and additions in accordance with the aims and objectives of the article.

Shcheglova T.K. provided scientific editing of the text, prepared the abstract and the structure of the article, and summarized the key analytical findings.

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