

OGPU Eliminates the Alash Intelligentsia

Having removed almost all opponents from among the republic's leadership, Goloshchekin essentially continued on the direct route to his cherished goal. Now he could turn his attentions and tackle headlong the Alash Orda intelligentsia who were so despised by him and by Moscow.

In October 1927 inside an OGPU torture chamber in Kzyl-Orda one of the active figures in the Alash Orda, Eldes Omarov, was subjected to intensive interrogation. The reason for his arrest, to all appearances, was the fact that he had invited the movement's leader, Alikhan Bukeikhanov to a retreat on the Buzanov farm, located in the Chelyabinsk district of the Russian Federation, where there were more than 30 Kazakh households.

Judging from the text of the interrogation reports of E. Omarov, it can be surmised that the OGPU investigators were interested first and foremost in:

1. Alash Orda members' position on the question of land;
2. Their position on the Trotskyist opposition and their possible ties to them;
3. Their level of political organization. [1]

Omarov's interrogation, however, did not yield the desired results.

No serious arguments were discovered that could be used to justify repressive measures.

The transition to such measures against the Alash Orda intelligentsia began at about the same time as the confiscation of property from the major bais, which was authorized by a decree of the Central Executive Committee of the Kazakh ASSR dated August 27, 1928. The authorities, perceiving the Alash Orda as a potential catalyst for opposition and organizer of a popular movement, preferred to keep its members imprisoned. On October 16, 1928, in the city of Semipalatinsk agents from the GPU arrested Khalel Gabbasov, a member of the Board of Gosplan of the republic and a former member of the Alash Orda government. He was charged with "activity, the purpose of which is to counteract and disrupt the campaign of confiscating bai property, authorized by decree of the Central Executive Committee of the Kazakh ASSR of 27/VIII of this year, that is, of a crime envisaged under Article 58/13 of the Criminal Code (1926 ed.)." At the end of the document, in Gabbasov hand, is written: "This decree has proclaimed to me. I do not acknowledge any guilt on my part. [Signature]" [2]

It should be noted that the materials on Gabbasov's interrogation also could not serve as grounds for carrying out mass arrests of Alash members. Such a chance would only come with the arrest of Dinmukhamed Adilev, drama theatre director and former Alash movement activist. In the course of his interrogation, which began in December 1928, the OGPU investigators got Adilev to give evidence that could be used as a basis to fabricate a case of counter-revolutionary activity by the Alash Orda in Soviet times. The case is built on suspect and contradictory evidence of the existence of underground counter-revolutionary organizations comprised of former Alash Orda members in 1921. This completely groundless evidence given by Adilev served as the basis for imprisoning 44 people, chiefly leaders and activists of the Alash movement. These included such well-known figures in the fields of science and culture as A. Baitursunov, M. Dulatov, Kh. Gabbasov, Zh. Aimautov, M. Zhuma-baev, M. Ispulov and others.

There were two stages to the investigation in which these 44 were named. During the first stage, from October 1928 to July 1929, the investigation was based in Kzyl-Orda and Almaty, while at the second stage, from July 1929 onwards, it was carried out in Moscow. With the exception of Adilev, all 43 under investigation were sent Butyrka prison to under tight security. Regarding Adilev, in an accompanying letter it is written, "We are not sending you the accused Adilev as we

consider his evidence to be comprehensive." [3] It was the organizers' intention that the process of transferring the Alash Orda cases to Moscow would create the appearance of objectivity of the proceedings. However, the proceedings in Almaty and in Moscow were both of a pronounced political character.

What is more, flagrant violations of the Criminal Procedure Code were committed in the course of proceedings: the investigation had been launched without a corresponding decree being issued on institution of criminal proceedings and it had been carried out with an incriminatory bias. All of the accused had been arrested without sufficient grounds and without any authorization from a public prosecutor. And most importantly, the investigation never proved that any counter-revolutionary organization existed among the Alash Orda intelligentsia, and no information was provided about its platform, regulations, objectives or the actions to achieve them. Upon completion of the investigation the accused were never given the opportunity to examine the materials and were deprived of the right to a defense. The case, such as it was and without any pronouncement by anyone of any formal indictment, was passed on to a non-judicial body that handed down a "sentence in absentia." [4]

By decree of the collegium of the OGPU of the USSR dated April 4, 1930, 13 of the 44 on trial were sentenced to be executed by shooting, seven received death sentences that were commuted to ten years in a concentration camp, another seven received a ten-year sentence in a concentration camp, and fifteen—imprisonment for terms ranging from three to six years. Two of the accused died during the course of the investigation. [5]

In January 1931 the OGPU collegium revisited its decree of April 4, 1930, and found that the accused's sentences could be "mitigated." As a result, 28 of them were exonerated. The sentence that four of them be shot (Baitursunov, Dulatov, Ispolov and Beremzhanov) was commuted to a ten-year term of imprisonment in a concentration camp. To date the circumstances surrounding the pronouncement of death sentence to Zh. Aimautov, A. Baidildin, D. Adilev and A. Yusupov remain unclear.

Having "successfully" dealt with the first group of Alash Orda, Goloshchekin instructs the relevant authorities to press on without delay to finally crush the Alash movement. In September and October 1930 the OGPU carries out a second wave of repressive measures against Alash Orda activists. By November 20 of the same year the cells of the OGPU's Almaty prison were filled with about 40 people being held in case No. 2370 against Kazakh nationalists. Among these were M. Tynyshpaev, Kh. Dosmukhamedov, Zh. Dosmukhamedov, A. Ermekov, M. Auezov, Zh. Akpaev, K. Kemengerov and other well-known figures. The charges brought against them were more or less the same as those against the previous group. The bill of indictment attributes to them "activity, the purpose of which is to misrepresent and disrupt Soviet campaigns and measures in Kazakhstan relating to land regulation, confiscation of bai property, agricultural collectivization, state purchases of livestock and meat; aspiring to make use of senior Soviet officials to this end; and pre-paring an armed uprising against the Soviet government with the intention of overthrowing it." [6]

Unlike the first group, the investigation in case No. 2370 on Kazakh nationalists was conducted in Almaty from start to finish, and the involvement of OGPU headquarters in Moscow was limited to determining the final penalties to be imposed on the persons on trial. Yet again, however, the interrogation of the accused was both contemptuous and prejudicial. The accused were left to languish in OGPU prison cells for months without being interrogated or any specific charges being brought. Finally, having spent just under a year in detention, 20 of them were released and the investigation into them was closed "due to insufficiency of evidence collected in the case."

The indictment against the remaining twenty named was passed on to a Troika [7] under the OGPU's authorized representative in Kazakhstan. In its turn, the Troika by its decree dated April 20, 1932, sentenced 15 of them to five years in a concentration camp, commuted to deportation to the Central Chernozem (Black-Earth) Oblast for the same term. These included M. Tynyshpaev, Kh. Dosmukhamedov, M. Murzin, Zh. Akpaev, S. Kadyrbaev, Zh. Dosmukhamedov, K. Kemengerov, Zh. Kuderin, Zh. Tleulin and others. A. Ermekov and M. Auezov were given suspended sentences of three years in a concentration camp. The remaining three (B. Suleev, B. Omarov and D. Iskakov) were released in light of the time they had already spent in detention prior to trial.

It should be noted that a draft of this decree had been sent earlier for approval to the collegium of the OGPU of the USSR. The groundlessness of the charges against the accused described therein was so obvious that even all-powerful Moscow could not approve the proposal of the OGPU authorized representative in Kazakhstan. The authorized representative OGPU prosecutor Katanian, in official correspondence addressed to prosecutor Stolbova, who oversaw the OGPU authorized representative in the Kazakh ASSR, wrote: ". . . scrutiny of the case demonstrates that, despite the fact the investigation lasted one and a half years, it cannot be heard on its merits by the collegium for the following reasons:

1. The organizational and guiding role of the accused in political ban ditism in Kazakhstan has not been proven, just as no link has been established between the accused, as the main counter-revolutionary organization, and the bandit parties themselves;
2. The charges are principally based on the accused's counter-revolutionary past in 1918-1922, whereas the case material relating to recent years gives no suggestion of any revival of their past counter-revolutionary activities and rather may be seen as only evidencing nationalistic views." [9]

This was essentially an instruction to close the case owing to the absence of corpus delicti. However, Goloshchekin and the OGPU's authorized representative in Kazakhstan Karutskii were not satisfied with Moscow's position, sensing in it the beginnings of a political scandal. In an express telegram dated April 4, 1932, to deputy chairman Akulov of the all-Union OGPU, which was signed by Karutskii's deputies, Fel'dman and Mironov, they advanced the following counter-arguments:

"Further investigation in the case of the nationalists will not yield any real results. Their release will give momentum to the counter-revolutionary nationalist element, give rise to a new wave of attacks on the Krai leadership and OGPU structures. Based on this and on the political situation in the Krai at this time, we request authorization to consider the case at an assize of the OGPU collegium with the purpose of deporting the accused from Kazakhstan for various periods.

We await your response with urgency. No. 1145." [10]

Moscow was accommodating. The assize of the OGPU collegium, the members of which were Sol'ts, Fel'dman and Goloshchekin, "with due consideration for the political situation in the Krai and the harmfulness of indiscriminately releasing all the arrested parties in the case of the nationalists," upheld the aforementioned decree passed by the Troika under the OGPU's authorized representative in Kazakhstan. The authorities may have been new, but their methods were recognizable as the same. Moscow endorsed this decision of the OGPU's Kazakh branch, behind which stood Goloshchekin. The telegram sent in response from Moscow states: ". . . the measures intended to be taken in relation to the arrested parties are agreed. The destination for the deported shall be the Central Chernozem Oblast." The decision had to be implemented as quickly as possible.

And here is a detail that is crucial in order to fully understand the organizers' intentions. Karutskii's telegram to Moscow regarding the punitive measures to be taken with respect to the accused includes the following: ". . . Third: release Alimkhan Ermekov and Mukhtar Auezov, having imposed a conditional sentence in concentration camp and with consideration for their having declared their ideological disarmament, admitted their guilt and undertaken the commitment to work honestly." Goloshchekin pressed for "ideological disarmament" of the leaders of the entire liberation movement. Soon open letters of repentance by A. Ermekov and M. Auezov would appear in the Kazkraikom newspaper Sovetskaia Step'.

The accused, having read the indictment, maintained their innocence. Only A. Ermekov, M. Tynyshpaev and Kh. Dosmukhamedov confessed to being partly guilty as charged. On May 3, 1932, all fifteen of the deportees arrived in Voronezh to serve their punishment. Such were the chief results of the second wave of repression of the non-party Alash Orda intelligentsia.

And so the repression in the 1920s and the early 1930s affected almost all leaders and active participants of the national liberation movement. A. Bukeikhanov was the only one not to be taken into custody. One may speculate as to the reasons for this approach by the OGPU. Most likely in this way the organizers of this large-scale campaign tried to conceal their intentions. For all intents and purposes it constituted not just repression of non-party intelligentsia, but a definitive rout of the national liberation movement to an extent the Tsarist colonizers could not even have dreamt. The practically indiscriminate slaughter of Alash Orda intelligentsia in the late 1920s and early 1930s was a logical result of this dirty policy of ideologues in the senior Bolshevik ranks.

Mambet Koigeldiev Empire, Islam, and Politics in Central Eurasia

References:

1. Arkhiv Komiteta Natsional'noi Bezopasnosti Respubliki Kazakhstan (Arkhiv KNB RK), d. no. 78754, arkh. no. 124, t. 2, ll. 1-4, 7-7ob.
2. Ibid., l. 329.
3. Ibid., t. 3, l. 130
4. See the protest of the Prosecutor's Office of the Kazakh SSR no. 13/ 54zh-88 of October 19, 1988. Ibid, t. 2, ll. 118-125
5. Arkhiv KNB RK, d. no. 78754, arkh. no. 124, t. 6, ll. 242-278, 285-285ob
6. Ibid., d. no. 2370, arkh. no. 6610, t. 4, ll. 185-226
7. A non-judicial commission consisting of three members used to deal with anti-Soviet elements (translator's note).
8. Arkhiv KNB RK, d. no. 2370, arkh. no. 6610, t. 4, ll. 263-263ob
9. Ibid., ll. 266-266ob
10. Ibid., l. 320.