

## ABOUT THE ETHNO-POLITICAL HISTORY OF KAZAKHSTAN



**Dina Amanzholova. *Na izlome: Alash v etnopoliticheskoj istorii Kazakhstana*. Almaty: Taimas, 2009. 412 pp. In Russian.**

The origin, development, and death of the Alash Orda movement in Kazakhstan is undoubtedly a burning issue of historical importance – and there is a reason for this. The attitude of the Soviets toward intellectuals was finally defined in the 1920s. The Soviets, having identified the Alash movement as a threat, started implementing tough socio-economic reforms in Kazakhstan that resulted in repressions of Kazakh intellectuals in 1926–1927.

According to the OGPU (*Ob"edinennoe gosudarstvennoe politicheskoe upravlenie* – State Political Directorate), on April 4, 1930, more than 40 Alash activists including

A. Baytursynov and M. Dulatov were arrested, exiled and put into jail for different prison terms. Following the OGPU's decision, M. Tynyshpaev, K. Dosmukhamedov, and more than 20 other representatives of the Kazakh intelligentsia were expelled for a period of five years to the Voronezh region of Russia on April 20, 1932. Imposed by the OGPU, Zhumabaev, Auezov, and Ermekov were forced to make official statements saying that they rejected the ideology of the Alash party. As a result of the trials, a number of other Alash representatives (Aymauytov, Adilov, Baydildin, and Yusupov among them) were sentenced to death, while the others died in prisons and labour camps.

The names and activities of the organisers and leaders of the Alash Orda were forgotten for years, yet their image of 'ardent nationalists', 'reactionary bourgeois politicians', etc., remained.

Researchers have many questions to answer as to how the Kazakh intelligentsia was formed and what the main factors were. Was the national Kazakh intelligentsia monolithic and unanimous in their views on the future of the Kazakh people? Why did the Soviet government so strongly repress the ideologists of the Alash Orda? Why were their works hidden for a century? And finally, why were their ideas so popular among the people, and how real are they today?

The referenced monograph of Dina Amanzholova has answers not only to these questions but also to some others. In the introduction to her work, the author immediately states her position. In the history of national movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the author sees the moral and political importance of the revolution and the Civil War. She quite fairly says that only a profound and objective knowledge of history will provide the patriotic view that fully identifies and consolidates the society and people, social optimism, and successful solution to the burning political, social, economic, and cultural challenges (p. 5). The author very carefully analyses each and every work of those related to the history of Alash. Her aim is to restore the main content of the key development stages as extensively as possible, to define the nature of the ideological and political orientation and the social base, to disclose the relationships with the political

forces and parties in the Russian pre-revolutionary period in 1917, in the context of the Civil War, to show the reasons for the defeat of the Alash Orda and its importance in the history of the Kazakh people. The main focus, as the author writes, is laid on the least-researched period of the Civil War (pp. 35–36). Thus, we can see that the author is puzzled by such difficult tasks.

D. Amanzholova shows the formation of the Kazakh national intelligentsia and its leaders in the chapter titled *The Birth of the Kazakh Opposition Movement*. Based on the examples of Russia and some other European countries provided by the experts, she comes to the conclusion that the Alash Orda followed the laws of the national movement objectively (p. 91). The author also pays attention to the position of the leaders of the national intelligentsia during the difficult period of 1916. The author believes that the integration of new territories into a common political and administrative territorial system was done differently as compared to the Russian policy, where the focus was laid on uniting the strategically important regions (p. 111). It is important to understand the content of the headquarters meeting materials dated 22 August 1916. Given the meeting's importance, the author provides its content in full (pp. 127–140). In addition, readers will find the answer to another important question: Where were the origins of the pacifist position of Alash activists during the events of 1916?

D. Amanzholova also discusses another aspect in the history of the Alash: Was the Alash Orda a party? In response to this question, having analysed plenty of material, the author comes to a very important conclusion. First, she states that the Alash party cannot be viewed as such in the classic sense of the word. Information about the Alash party's central committee and its constitution is not available yet. The draft of the party programme was not discussed or adopted. However, some local party bodies had gradually established themselves in the biggest administrative centres (pp. 183–184). It seems that the Alash had not developed as a party, says the author (p. 350).

The part of the monograph titled *Alash Movement and the Bolsheviks: From Compromise to Confrontation* has evoked the greatest interest among researchers (pp. 188–208). What is the essence of the conflict, we ask. The author answers it very clearly. Relations between the Bolsheviks and the Alash characterised the fundamental differences in the development of society, the incompatibility of the goals and methods of the parties, as well as dominance of an uncompromising approach in the political culture of Russian society (p. 188). Analysing the difficult relationship between the Alash and the Soviets, the author comes to another important conclusion: “the Bolsheviks’ approach to the principles of establishing a federation and authority in autonomous regions was different” (pp. 197–198).

As to the chapter titled *Alash in Civil Confrontation*, the author reconstructs the Alash's activities in the local self-managed institutions. This story is quite justified, given the attention that was paid to those institutions in Kazakh newspapers. A large part of the work was devoted to the formation of Alash regiments. And the author is fair here. She notes that regiments were under the Siberian army commander's control, and were initially established as self-defence units (p. 223). The author describes the complexity of the issue and the people's attitude toward those regiments. The study also clearly shows that by December 1919 the manoeuvring and stand-by tactics that the leaders of the western branch of the Alash Orda used had proved ineffective.

Thus, we have developed a complete picture, full of drama, illustrating the complexities of difficult development stages of the Alash. Analysing the monograph, the reader can realise how difficult it was to make those decisions, how difficult was the path to achieve perfection, and how tragic was the fate of the Kazakh intelligentsia. One also understands how cynical and at the same time true Stalin's address to E. Stasova, secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, on Akhmet Baitursynov, one of the leaders of the Alash Orda, as well as on the Alash movement as a whole, sounds: "I did not and do not consider him a revolutionary communist or a sympathiser thereof, yet we need his participation in the Revolutionary Committee" (p. 367).

When making this reference and analysing the material, it is difficult to do without emotions, and not to feel sorry for the Alash leaders.

Of course, one can finish the reference quite academically. In general, Dina Amanzholova's book is a fundamental monograph devoted to the fate of the Alash Orda, and could be of interest both to professionals and to those interested in the history of Kazakhstan. But at the same time it is unfair in regard to the author to view it only as such.

How can one evaluate the enormous hard work, relentless search for evidence in the archives, and maintenance of the material? After reading this monograph, you realise how truly and professionally it is written, and that you must have a big heart and plenty of courage to write the truth about the role and place of the Alash in the history of the Kazakh and other nations.

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