

THE ALASH PARTY ON THE KAZAKH STATEHOOD

**Alima Auanassova, Kamilla Auanassova,
Bolat Zhumagulov, Gani Karasayev**
**Institute of the State History of the Ministry of Education and
Science of Kazakhstan, Kazakhstan**
Miras University, Kazakhstan
Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University, Kazakhstan

Abstract: *This article analyzes the principles of the Alash Party, the advocates of the national movement, and the background of the formation of Alash Orda, the Kazakh national independent government that was created in 1917. The Alash Party leaders saw Kazakhstan as an autonomous subject and attempted to reinforce its sovereign statehood, putting forward a politically and economically justified program to develop Kazakhstan's autonomy. But the party's ideas were not supported by the Bolsheviks, and it ceased to exist in 1920.*

Keywords: Kazakh statehood, autonomy, Bolshevism, the Soviet Union.

In the history of each state there are stages that have significantly changed the course of the history of the country. For Kazakhstan, this period was the stage of formation of the political intelligentsia and the „Alash” party. This moment can be called the key in the process of establishing Kazakhstan as an independent state. In this article, the author sets out to review the activities of the Alash party, its policies and the results of its activities throughout the country.

Methods

The methodological basis for the disclosure of the analyzed topic was the system approach, which assumes a holistic examination of the object, the identification of its structural elements and the principles of its organization. This work also used such scientific methods as the chronological method, the comparative method, the historical-descriptive method, the method of studying documents, the content analysis of documents and scientific works. Along with the traditional methods of complex analysis of historical phenomena, a modern methodology for studying politics is used, which requires attention to the personal aspects of the activities of the holders of power. The historicism principle allowed not only to investigate the formation of the Alash party, but also to trace the results of its activity in each specific

historical situation. In the study of the organizational structure of the party, methods of institutional and functional analysis were used.

Discussion and Results

After the February Revolution of 1917 in Kazakhstan, the issue of creating a new Kazakh statehood, raised by the national intelligentsia, became highly relevant. The Alash Party leaders began to take decisive steps immediately after receiving news of the October Uprising in Petrograd to proclaim the Alash autonomy and prevent the transfer of power to the Soviets.

The question of determining the legal status of Kazakhstan was planned to be considered at the II All-Kazakh Congress (December 3-13, 1917), which ultimately demonstrated the political maturity and civil position of the national intelligentsia in the issue of Kazakhstan's political self-determination.¹ The congress delegates, having heard and thoroughly discussed Khalil Gabbasov's report on the formation of the Kazakh autonomy and the creation of the people's militia, were unanimous in defining autonomy as a national-territorial state formation. The newly formed Kazakh (Alash) autonomy included the Bukey Orda (Horde), Ural, Torgai, Akmola and Semipalatinsk regions, as well as districts of the Transcaspian region and the Altai province (gubernia) populated by the Kazakhs.²

Two years later, on February 11, 1919, A. Bukeikhanov assessing the decision of the II All-Kazakh Congress on the formation of national-territorial autonomy noted: „*At the congress it was decided to implement the national-territorial autonomy of the Kyrgyz [Kazakh] people, without waiting for the sanction of the Constituent Assembly. The resolution of the Congress was caused by the desire to prevent anarchy in the territory inhabited by the Kyrgyzs and not let Bolshevism develop in the steppe... The autonomy of the Kyrgyzs in the conditions in which Russia found itself could not be realized. The next step was the struggle against the enemy of freedom-Bolshevism*”³

¹ G. Kendirbaeva, „We are children of Alash...”, in *Central Asian Survey*, no. 18/1, 1999, pp. 5-36.

² The Alash autonomy included Semipalatinsk, Akmola, Torgai, Ural, Syr-Darya, Fergana, Semirechye, Bukey regions and the Kazakh population of Biysk, Slavgorod, Zmeinogorsk uyezds in the Altai province; N. Martynenko, *Alash Orda. Collection of documents*, Almaty, Aykap, 1992, p. 69, 96.

³ *History of Kazakhstan (from ancient times to our days)*, volume 4, Almaty, Atamura, 2009, p. 129.

For the struggle against Bolshevism, it was decided to create the Kazakh militia. The militiamen were supposed to engage males aged 30 to 35 „by free hiring, and when impossible, by lot”.⁴ The total number of militiamen in Bukey, Ural, Torgai, Akmola, Semipalatinsk and Semirechye regions was 13.500 including: 1000-in the Bukey region, 2000-Ural, 3000-Torgai, 4000-Akmola, 1500-Semipalatinsk, 2000-Semirechye.⁵ 68.960.000 rubles were to be collected for the organization of the militia by means of these regions.⁶

The provision of the militia with weapons was to be carried out by the central administration at the expense of taxation. For the training of officers, it was decided to use the experience and assistance of the Orenburg Cossack army, which implied an alliance with the White Guards of Orenburg, led by Ataman Dutov. Although this alliance was largely formal and ineffective, it subsequently complicated the situation of AlashOrda (Horde of Alash).

The delegates of the II All-Kazakh Congress „for the sake of saving the people” from anarchy and disaster decided to form a firm government represented by the Provisional People’s Council, entitling it „Alash Orda” (government of the Alash autonomy), consisting of 25 people. Alash Orda was instructed „to immediately take a firm hold of executive power over the Kazakh population”.⁷

At the II All-Kazakh Congress, 15 members of the government were elected, and 10 seats were reserved for representatives of Russian and other peoples living in Kazakhstan. Representatives of all nations living among the Kazakhs were guaranteed cultural autonomy, minority rights and proportional representation in the institutions of the Alash autonomy.

The Alash Orda members were Ualikhan Tanashev (Bukey Orda), Khalil Dosmukhamedov (Ural region), Aidarkhan Turlybayev (Akmola region), Akhmet Birimzhanov (Torgai region), Khalil Gabbasov (Semipalatinsk region), Sadyk Amanzholov (Semirechye region), Mustafa Chokayev (Syr-Darya region). Outside the regions, Alikhan Bukeikhanov, Zhakhansha Dosmukhamedov, Alikhan Ermekov, Mukhametzhan Tynyshpayev, Bakytgerey Kulmanov, Zhakyp (Yakub)

⁴ D. A. Amanzholova, „Kazakh Autonomy and Russia: The History of the Alash Movement (Excerpts)”, in *Anthropology & Archeology of Eurasia*, no. 36/3, 1997, pp. 10-23.

⁵ *Alash Orda. Collection of documents*, Almaty, 1992, p. 73.

⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷ H. Oraltay, „The alash movement in Turkestan”, in *Journal Central Asian Survey*, 4/2, 1985, pp. 41-58.

Akpayev, Bazarbay Mametov and Otyynshy Alzhanov entered Alash Orda by the Congress decision.

The Chairman of the Government was elected on an alternative basis. Three candidates were nominated for this position: Alikhan Bukeikhanov, Bakytgerey Kulmanov and Aidarkhan Turlybayev.

As a result of secret voting, A. Bukeikhanov received 40 votes, A. Turlybayev-20, and B. Kulmanov-19. A. Bukeikhanov, who received the majority of votes, was elected the Chairman of the Government of the Kazakh (Alash) autonomy.⁸

Alash Orda was located in Semipalatinsk and later, to manage the western part of the Alash autonomy, the Western branch of the Alash Orda government was established.

The Alash autonomy was supposed to be approved by the All-Russian Constituent Assembly, according to the plan of M. Dulatov and other national leaders (A. Bukeikhanov, Zh. Dosmukhamedov, Kh. Dosmukhamedov, A. Baytursynov and others).

Thus, the proclamation of the Alash autonomy showed the desire of the national intelligentsia to get hold of political power and take an active part in the elections to the All-Russian Constituent Assembly that would affirm the democratic federal system of Russia and consolidate the status of the Alash autonomy.

Such a position of the leaders of the Kazakh intelligentsia was explained by the fact that, in their opinion, in a possible democratically federal Russia, Kazakhstan can take its rightful place as a national autonomous republic with broad powers. The question of the revival of an absolutely independent sovereign Kazakh state, although it was their cherished dream, was not raised in specific historical conditions of the early 20th century. It was not raised because the country with a nomadic economic structure, economically poorly developed and politically fragmented, without established national political institutions, was unable to secure its sovereignty and territorial integrity in the fight against Russia, which was ahead of Kazakhstan in terms of these indicators. A. Bukeikhanov, following the examples of other nomadic peoples, indirectly acknowledged the complexity of this question.⁹

The Alash Orda government was not destined to turn their plans into reality for a number of historical reasons: the distrust of the

⁸ D. Amanzholova, *Na izlome: Alash v etnopoliticheskoi istorii Kazakhstana*, Almaty, Taimas, 2009, p. 412.

⁹ U. Tomihiko, *Perception of the international situation of the early 20th century by A. Bukeikhanov and his contemporaries*, Astana, 2011, pp. 13-19.

temporary Siberian government and Russian generals on suspicion of separatism; the split in Kazakh society into „revolutionaries” and „counterrevolutionaries”; the establishment of the Soviet power in Kazakhstan. Nevertheless, the statehood of Kazakhstan, conceived by the Alash Party, and the degree of its independence at that time is undoubtedly of interest today.

After the victory of the February Revolution in Russia, the colonial peoples, inspired by the democratic slogans of the Provisional Government, believed that the time for their state self-determination had come. Some of them managed to declare themselves independent socialist republics (Russia, Belorussia, Ukraine, and the Transcaucasian Republic). However, they quickly lost this independence in 1922, having joined the socialist federation, called the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

The same situation was observed in the Bukharan People’s Soviet Republic and the Khorezm People’s Soviet Republic, which were abolished in 1924 as a result of the national delimitation in Central Asia. The Uzbek S. S. R. and the Turkmen S. S. R., established in their place, became part of the U. S. S. R. In 1929, one more subject entered the U. S. S. R.-the Tajik S. S. R., which had been detached from the Uzbek S. S. R. However, Kazakhstan for some reason did not get into this list.

The mass but unsystematic sovietization of Kazakhstan, conducted in 1917 under the auspices of the Provisional Government and later of the Soviets, brought elements of a new statehood. The Soviets of Workers’, Soldiers’ and Cossack deputies acted mainly in towns and other large settlements. Not covered by common principles of organization and activity, these Soviets considered themselves subordinated to the commissars of the Provisional Government in the initial period. As Bolshevism was developing, many Soviets recognized the Revolutionary Military Council of Russia as the higher instance.

In both cases, the Soviets did not consider themselves to be the political foundation of the reviving Kazakh statehood. The spontaneous wave of Sovietization did not arise until the question of sovereign Soviet Kazakhstan was raised. The opinions of representatives of the population and other nations who lived here did not interest anyone. Even the arguments of the Alash Party, which offered a „soft” version of the revival of Kazakh statehood, were ignored. Repeated meetings of the leaders of the Alash Party with the leaders of the Communist Party of the Bolsheviks on autonomy did not yield any results. The

management of Kazakhstan was entrusted to the hastily created Kyrgyz and Siberian revolutionary committees.

Meanwhile, the Alash Party showed a much better understanding of the problem of national autonomy. In opposition to the Bolshevik empty slogans about the right of the nation to self-determination (the example of the 1918 Constitution of the R. S. F. S. R.), the leaders of the Alash party (A. Bukeikhanov, A. Baytursynov and others) put forward a politically and economically justified program to develop Kazakhstan's autonomy (1917). It was completely devoted to the state structure of Kazakhstan and could form a sound constitutional basis of the Kazakh state. But history ordered otherwise.¹⁰

The party leaders saw Kazakhstan as an autonomous subject of the Russian Federation. The federation itself was defined as a „*union of small states*”, where „*each individual state is autonomous and ruled by itself on the same rights and interests*”.¹¹ It was assumed that Kazakhstan should enter the R. S. F. S. R. as an autonomous state. Thus, such a step was taken in the direction of the revival of the Kazakh statehood.

In its program, the Alash Party pays special attention to the national aspect of statehood. Taking into account that the Kazakhs and most of them did not speak Russian or their Russian was poor, the Party stressed: „... *if the case is being examined in the localities with the Kyrgyz (Kazakh) population, then it must be in the Kyrgyz (Kazakh) language and all assessors must be Kyrgyz (Kazakh). The court in the steppe must take place according to all customs and traditions of the people*”.⁷ The special attitude of the Alash Party to judicial power should be emphasized. Declaring that „*all nations are equal before the court*”, it solemnly asserts: „*In view of the fact that judges and assessors are the second strongest, after God, all must be subject to their decision without exception*”.¹²

The following lines of the program are permeated with the same concern for the Kazakh language: „*In primary schools, teaching should be conducted in the native language*”.¹³ The program does not ignore the issue of military defense of the state by its people. Recognizing the need for a standing army, the program proposes to borrow the principles of the people's militia, which proved its effectiveness in the numerous battles of the Kazakhs with their opponents. It is especially important that „*the division of the troops into units should be carried out on a related principle*”. Such

¹⁰ „The Alash Party program”, in *Kazakh*, no. 251, 1917.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹² *Ibidem*.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

organization of the military unit, when blood relatives fought side by side, raised the fighting spirit and predetermined victory in battles. Subsequently, this principle was taken as the basis when the people's militia as part of the armed forces was formed.

The Alash Party offered a fair way to solve the land issue. It recognized the priority of the indigenous population in land allocation.¹⁴

These and other politically weighted and socially-economically grounded lines of the Alash Party did not find understanding among the Bolsheviks because of their orientation toward the victory of the world proletariat, which did not recognize the national, religious or other social characteristics of peoples. Opponents of the Bolsheviks, supporters of Russia's single statehood, openly denied the idea of a national revival of non-Russian peoples. Therefore, they also dismissed the issue of the national state self-determination of non-Russian peoples as having no historical perspective. To its credit, the Alash Party officially declared its political platform and began active work on its implementation.

Six months after the adoption of the Alash Party's program, its leaders were labeled as „*autonomously bourgeois groups*”. Developing the idea of the anti-people essence of autonomous bourgeois groups, as perceived by the People's Commissariat of Nationalities, J. Stalin in his address „On the Next Task of the Soviet Government” to the Soviets of Kazan, Ufa, Orenburg, Ekaterinburg, the Council of People's Commissars of Turkestan Krai and others called: „*It is necessary to take' autonomy away from them, having first cleansed it of its bourgeois filth, and transform it from bourgeois into Soviet autonomy*” (April, 1918).

The Bolsheviks apparently did not succeed in this cleansing, since no article out of the 90 articles of the 1918 Constitution of the R. S. F. S. R. subsequently mentioned an autonomous republic, although Article 2 solemnly proclaimed: „*The Russian Soviet Republic is established on the basis of a free union of free nations as a federation of Soviet national republics*”. In this case, the concept and status of a national republic remained unclear and were not established by the Constitution. Moreover, Article 11 confused this issue, establishing „*autonomous regional unions*” as the subjects of the federation that unite „*the Soviets of regions differing in cultural and national composition*”.

The Alash Orda government of the autonomous national democratic state formation of the Kazakhs existed for two years in the conditions of the civil war, from December 1917 to December 1919, and

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

officially ceased to exist on October 22 (November 4), 1918 under the Decree of the Provisional All-Russian Government in the city of Omsk.

At the same time, the small historical period of the Alash autonomy project implemented by the Alash Orda government shows that it was a necessary stage objectively contributing to the further understanding of the need for state consolidation of the entire nation by the Kazakh population of Central Asia. Against the backdrop of these and other historical factors, it is not confirmed that the early oppressed nations of the Russian Empire „*did not have the slightest aspiration to form separate, and even more so bourgeois, states*”¹⁵

Conclusions

The political activities of the Alash Party did not achieve the desired goal because of the fundamental disparity in its positions with the platform of the Bolshevik Party, aimed at establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat on a world scale. Post-revolutionary euphoria, which gave rise to the Alash Party program, quickly evaporated, giving way to a growing sense of the messianic role of the proletariat and its ideological inspirer, the Communist Party.

Nevertheless, history has put everything in its place, giving Kazakhstan an opportunity to realize the ideas of the Alash Party and revive its sovereign statehood in line with the democratic world order. The idea of the world proletarian revolution and the practice of the totalitarian political activity of the Communist Party were completely discredited. But all this happened seventy-four years later. The October events remained in the history of Kazakhstan, freeing its way towards independent democratic development.

¹⁵ G. I. Kunitsin, „Self-determination of nations-historical and modern background”, in *Issues of Philosophy*, no. 5, 1989, p. 67.