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MIGRATIONS IN THE SYSTEM OF THE SOVIET-CHINESE BORDER IN THE 1940S: SOCIETAL SECURITY IN THE KAZAKH SSR

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Abstract. Introduction. The article examines the return migration of Kazakhs from China to Soviet Kazakhstan in the mid-1940s and the factors that shaped this process. Since the mid-1930s, Kazakhs had been actively involved in the insurgent movements in Xinjiang, and in 1944 they participated in an armed uprising known as the Uprising of the Three Districts. Considerable losses among the Kazakh population and the continuing political and military instability prompted some Kazakhs living along the Soviet-Chinese border to migrate to the Kazakh SSR. *The purpose.* The purpose of the article is to trace the evolution of relations between the Soviet leadership, including the authorities of the Kazakh SSR, and Kazakh repatriates from Xinjiang. Particular attention is paid to the attempts of both sides to establish mechanisms of dialogue and to the measures taken by the Soviet authorities to minimize the potential risks associated with return migration within the conceptual framework of societal security. *Materials and methods.* The study is based primarily on archival materials from the Archive of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan (AP RK), supplemented by a critical analysis of scholarly literature on the return migration of Kazakhs from China. The theoretical and methodological framework combines the theory of societal security, the principle of historicism, and discursive approaches to textual analysis. *Results.* The study demonstrates that the Soviet authorities did not prevent the return of Kazakhs from China and were interested in increasing the population of the border regions of the Kazakh SSR. At the same time, the arrival of returnees provided the Soviet

authorities with an additional opportunity to obtain information about military and political developments in Xinjiang and changes in the attitudes of the local population toward the Soviet Union. Seeking to minimize the potential risks associated with return migration, the leadership of the Kazakh SSR provided assistance to both returnees and the local population. The leaders of the Kazakh repatriates from Xinjiang, in turn, sought to establish constructive relations with the Soviet authorities and adapted their discourse to Soviet political and ideological language. *Conclusion.* The Soviet leadership was interested in the return of Kazakhs from China but remained concerned about the potential destabilization of the Soviet-Chinese borderlands. Consequently, Soviet and Kazakh SSR authorities pursued a policy aimed at facilitating the settlement and integration of returnees while simultaneously supporting the local population and maintaining political and social stability in the border regions.

Keywords: Kazakh SSR, Kazakhs, migrations from China, societal security.

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СОВЕТ–ҚЫТАЙ ШЕКАРАСЫ ЖҮЙЕСІНДЕГІ 1940-ЖЫЛДАРДАҒЫ КӨШІ-ҚОН ҮДЕРІСТЕРІ: ҚАЗАҚ КСР-ІНДЕГІ ӘЛЕУМЕТТІК ҚАУІПСІЗДІК.

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Аңдатпа. *Kіріспе.* Мақалада 1940 жылдардың ортасында қазақтардың Қытайдан кеңестік Қазақстанға қайтымды көші-қонының ерекшеліктері және оған ықпал еткен негізгі факторлар қарастырылады. Қазақтар 1930 жылдардың ортасынан бастап Шыңжаңдағы көтерілісшілер қозғалысына белсенді қатысты. 1944 жылы олар тарихта «Үш аймақ көтерілісі» деген атаумен белгілі қарулы қозғалысқа қатысты. Қарулы қақтығыстар салдарынан қазақтар арасында орын алған елеулі адам шығыны мен өңірдегі әскери-саяси тұрақсыздық КСРО шекарасына жақын аумақтарда тұратын қазақтардың бір бөлігін Қазақ КСР-іне қоныс аудару туралы шешім қабылдауға мәжбүр етті. *Мақаланың мақсаты.* Зерттеудің мақсаты – әлеуметтік қауіпсіздік тұжырымдамасына сүйене отырып, қайтымды көші-қоннан туындайтын ықтимал тәуекелдерді азайту мақсатында өзара диалог тетіктерін қалыптастыруға ұмтылған КСРО және Қазақ КСР басшылығы мен Шыңжаңнан оралған қазақтар арасындағы қарым-қатынастардың эволюциясын зерделеу. *Материалдар мен әдістер.* Зерттеудің деректік негізін Қазақстан Республикасы Президенті Архивінің (ҚР ПА) материалдары құрайды. Сонымен қатар Қытайдан Қазақстанға қазақтардың қайтымды көші-қоны мәселесіне арналған

ғылыми зерттеулерге талдау жасалды. Зерттеудің теориялық-әдіснамалық негізі әлеуметтік қауіпсіздік теориясына, тарихилық принципіне және мәтіндік материалдарды талдаудың дискурстық әдістеріне сүйенеді. *Нәтижелер.* Зерттеу нәтижелері кеңестік биліктің Қытайдан қазақтардың оралуына кедергі келтірмегенін және бұл үдерісті шекара маңындағы аудандардың халқын толықтыру мүмкіндігі ретінде қарастырғанын көрсетеді. Сонымен қатар қайтымды көші-қон кеңестік билікке Шыңжаңдағы әскери-саяси үдерістер туралы ақпарат алуға және жергілікті халықтың Кеңес Одағына қатысты көзқарасындағы өзгерістерді бақылауға мүмкіндік берді. Қазақ КСР басшылығы қайтымды көші-қоннан туындайтын әлеуметтік және саяси тәуекелдерді азайту мақсатында оралған қазақтарға және жергілікті тұрғындарға қолдау көрсету шараларын жүзеге асырды. Шыңжаңнан оралған қазақтардың жетекшілері де кеңестік басшылықпен тұрақты қарым-қатынас орнатуға мүдделі болып, билік өкілдерімен өзара қатынаста кеңестік саяси-идеологиялық дискурста бейімделген риториканы қолданды. *Қорытынды.* Кеңес басшылығы Қытайдан қазақтардың оралуына мүдделі болғанымен, олардың жаппай қоныс аударуы кеңес-қытай шекарасындағы жағдайға кері әсер етуі және тұрақсыздық тәуекелдерін күшейтуі мүмкін деп қауіптенді. Осыған байланысты кеңестік және Қазақ КСР билігі оралған қазақтарды жаңа ортаға орналастыру мен бейімдеуге қолдау көрсетумен қатар, жергілікті халықтың әлеуметтік жағдайын тұрақтандыруға бағытталған шараларды жүзеге асырды. Нәтижесінде қайтымды көші-қон үдерісі демографиялық мүдделер, шекаралық қауіпсіздік және саяси тұрақтылық мәселелері өзара тоғысқан күрделі құбылыс ретінде көрініс тапты. **Түйін сөздер:** Қазақ Кеңестік Социалистік Республикасы, қазақтар, Қытайдан қоныс аудару, социеталдық қауіпсіздік

Алғыс: Мақала Қазақстан Республикасы Ғылым және жоғары білім министрлігінің гранттық қаржыландыру жобасы аясында дайындалды «Қазақстандағы әлеуметтік саясаттың тарихи динамикасы (XX ғ. 20–80 жж.)» (тіркеу № AP23490001).

Дәйексөз үшін: Д.Б. Касымова, Б.Н. Абдрахманов, А.К. Кенжегалин Совет–Қытай шекарасы жүйесіндегі 1940-жылдардағы көші-қон үдерістері: қазақ КСР-індегі әлеуметтік қауіпсіздік // Отан тарихы. 2026. Т. 29. № 3. 1347–1359-бб. [ағылшын тілінде]. DOI: 10.51943/2788-9718_2026_29_3_1347-1359

МИГРАЦИИ В СИСТЕМЕ СОВЕТСКО-КИТАЙСКОЙ ГРАНИЦЫ В 1940-ЫЕ ГОДЫ: СОЦИЕТАЛЬНАЯ БЕЗОПАСНОСТЬ В КАЗАХСКОЙ ССР

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Аннотация. Введение. В статье рассматриваются особенности возвратной миграции казахов из Китая в советский Казахстан в середине 1940-х гг., обусловленной комплексом военно-политических и социальных факторов. С середины 1930-х гг. казахи являлись частью повстанческого движения в

Синьцзяне, а в 1944 г. приняли активное участие в вооруженном восстании, известном как Восстание трех округов. Значительные человеческие потери, вооруженные столкновения и нестабильная военно-политическая ситуация вынудили часть казахского населения, проживавшего вдоль границы с СССР, принять решение о переходе в Казахскую ССР. *Цель статьи* – проследить эволюцию взаимоотношений руководства СССР и Казахской ССР с казахами-возвращенцами из Синьцзяна, а также выявить механизмы выстраивания диалога между советской властью и возвращенцами в контексте минимизации рисков возвратной миграции с позиций концепции социетальной безопасности. *Материалы и методы.* Источниковую основу исследования составили архивные материалы Архива Президента Республики Казахстан (АП РК), а также научные исследования, посвященные проблемам возвратной миграции казахов из Китая. Проведен вторичный анализ существующих исследований по данной проблематике. Теоретико-методологическую основу работы составили теория социетальной безопасности, принцип историзма и дискурсивные практики анализа текстового материала. *Обсуждение.* Возвращение казахского населения из Синьцзяна рассматривалось советским руководством одновременно в демографическом, социальном и военно-политическом контекстах. С одной стороны, советские власти не препятствовали возвращению казахов из Китая, поскольку были заинтересованы в пополнении населения приграничных районов Казахской ССР. С другой стороны, присутствие возвращенцев позволяло получать дополнительные сведения о военно-политических процессах в Синьцзяне и изменениях в отношении населения региона к Советскому Союзу. В связи с этим возвратная миграция приобретала значение не только как демографический процесс, но и как фактор приграничной и социетальной безопасности. *Результаты.* Установлено, что руководство Казахской ССР, стремясь минимизировать социальные и политические риски возвратной миграции, предпринимало меры по поддержке как возвращенцев, так и местного населения. В свою очередь, лидеры казахов-возвращенцев из Синьцзяна стремились установить устойчивые отношения с советским руководством и выстраивали коммуникацию с представителями власти с использованием советской политико-идеологической риторики, то есть, по выражению источников, говорили с ними «по-большевистски». Это свидетельствует о формировании определенного механизма взаимной адаптации и диалога между советской властью и прибывавшими из Китая казахами. *Выводы.* Советское руководство было заинтересовано в возвращении казахского населения из Китая, однако одновременно учитывало возможные риски дестабилизации приграничных территорий. Поэтому политика в отношении возвращенцев сочетала демографические интересы, меры социальной поддержки и задачи обеспечения безопасности советско-китайского приграничья. Проведенный анализ показывает, что взаимоотношения между советской властью и казахами-возвращенцами формировались на основе взаимной заинтересованности: государство стремилось контролировать миграционные процессы и минимизировать связанные с ними риски, тогда как возвращенцы были заинтересованы в адаптации к советским условиям и установлении конструктивных отношений с органами власти.

Ключевые слова: Казахская ССР, казахи, возвратная миграция из Китая, социетальная безопасность

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Introduction. Migration waves from China to Kazakhstan in the 20th century were primarily driven by geopolitical factors – changes in relations between the Soviet Union and China, and the priorities in the foreign policy of the regimes in power in both countries. From the end of the 1920s to the mid-1930s, the population from Soviet Kazakhstan moved to Chinese territory, as they no longer accepted Bolshevik practices of forced collectivization, which led to repressions and mass famine [Gasanlyi, 2015: 358].

Migrations of population groups from China to Kazakhstan since the 1930s were also determined by a number of foreign policy factors and events in China and the USSR, largely depending on the state of interstate relations. Return migration from China began in 1944, when both countries were at war – China was fighting militaristic Japan, and the USSR was fighting Nazi Germany. In Xinjiang, ethnic groups (Kazakhs, Uyghurs, Dungans, Mongols) had been fighting against the provincial Kuomintang government

since the early 1930s. The Soviet Union, interested in ensuring security on the Soviet-Chinese border, supported various political forces in China and the provincial authorities. The article aims to elucidate peculiarities of return migration of Kazakhs from China in mid 1940s that was caused by several factors. Kazakhs were part of rebellious movement in Xinjiang since 1930s, but in 1944 initiated a rebellion known as Three-District Revolution. Serious losses of population forced part of Kazakhs in border areas to cross to the Kazakh SSR. The Soviet authorities, on their side, did not oppose, as it was interested in population supply. But on the other side, considering societal security risks took measures to minimize risks – provided material aid to returnees and local populace. Leaders of Kazakhs- returnees, strove to create good relations with the Soviet authorities, in their message spoke in-Bolshevik manner.

Materials and Methods. The theoretical and methodological basis of the topic considered in the article is the theory of societal security, developed by the Copenhagen School of Security Studies, denoting "the ability of a society to maintain its essence under changing conditions and in the face of possible or explicit threats". Societal security is an integral part of the theory of the regional security complex, within which the process of raising the problems of reference objects to the rank of existential security threats of a certain type (including societal security) is considered within the framework of the concept of securitization. In 'Security: a new framework for analysis', Busan et al. formalize their broader understanding of security by introducing five sectors, each governed by "distinctive characteristics and dynamics", and conceptualized around particular referent objects and actors (i.e. military, environmental, economic, societal and political) [Buzan, 2003]. Societal security is about the survival of a community as a cohesive unit; its referent object is "large scale collective identities that can function independent of the state". Societal insecurities arise when "a society fears it would not be able to live as itself", and stem from: migration: the influx of people will "overrun or dilute" a group's identity e.g.

Discussion. In the series of events starting from the 1930s until the establishment of Communist rule in China in 1949 and the transfer of provincial administration to them by the leaders of the East Turkestan Republic, the leaders of the Kazakh liberation movement entered into various coalitions and acted as an independent force. After a series of unsuccessful clashes with Chinese forces, part of the Kazakhs (paramilitary formations and the civilian population) crossed over to Soviet territory with their livestock by the mid-1940s. On the one hand, this shows that part of the Kazakhs realized the need to seek a compromise with the USSR in order to obtain necessary assistance (military and material) and ensure conditions for the survival of the ethnos.

In the 1940s, the problem of forming the political culture of the Kazakhs of China (adopting an ideological platform for cooperation with the political regime under certain conditions) was very acute, as it occurred in conditions of military-political confrontation in China – the war against militaristic Japan, opposing Chinese forces (Communists and the Kuomintang), and movements representing the interests of ethnic groups (Uyghurs, Dungans, and Kazakhs). Since early 1930s, Kazakhstan became the main center for the development of trade and economic relations with Xinjiang, and all issues related to border security acquired special significance [AP RK. F.141. Op. 17. D. 416. L. 113-114].

From that time, the Kazakhs of China were involved in an acute confrontation with the Chinese authorities for survival and the right to live in a certain territory, entering into short-term coalitions with other ethnic groups, and building relations with Chinese administrations and external actors. To pacify ethnic groups and reconcile them with the Chinese administration, the governor of Xinjiang, Sheng Shicai, in the 1930s also carried out a temporary personnel reshuffle, appointing some representatives of the Kazakhs to administrative posts, but this did not resolve the vital problems of the Kazakhs – pastures and taxation [Samaev, 2010: 16-20].

Among external actors interested in Chinese affairs was the Soviet Union, which played a complex game in Xinjiang. It should be noted that the USSR skillfully manipulated the political interests of ethnic elites in Xinjiang and opposing political groups [Lukin, 2023]. The Soviet leadership considered it necessary to direct the processes of forming the political culture of ethnic minorities into the channel of the national liberation movement and anti-colonialism. The USSR actively interfered in the internal affairs of China with the aim of minimizing the risk of forming an anti-Soviet buffer in the adjacent province and developing trade and economic relations.

In wartime conditions, it was important for the USSR to secure the border with China. The westernmost Chinese province, Xinjiang, was for Russia, and later the USSR, a "gateway" to China and for a long time acted as a "buffer" through which contradictions between the two empires were resolved. After the Xinhai Revolution (1911), the province gained the possibility of autonomous existence. The governor

(duban) possessed almost unlimited power and only nominally submitted to the central authorities (the Kuomintang regime). The polyethnic and polyconfessional population of the province, depending on certain natural-geographic niches, had its own production specifics and was integrated into the system of hierarchical relations of subordination to the Chinese authorities [Şakenuly, 2007].

Ethnic groups paid taxes and participated in the system of commodity exchange, but were semi-autonomous within their internal systems. From 1942, after serious failures of the USSR in the confrontation with Nazi Germany, the Kuomintang leadership began to curtail relations with the USSR, betting on cooperation with the USA. A radical turning point in the course of World War II in favor of the USSR forced Chiang Kai-shek to reconsider his attitude toward the need to cooperate with Moscow. He wrote a letter of repentance to Stalin and asked to resume relations. However, the Kuomintang leadership ceased to trust Sheng Shicai; he was removed from the administration of Xinjiang and left for Taiwan.

The most brutal trials Kazakhs in Xinjiang had to undergo was under the administrations of governors Jin Shuren (1928–33) and Sheng Shicai (1933–44). "During this period, education in the Kazakh language was restricted, and the native people were increasingly taxed. Indigenous people's lands were confiscated and divided among Chinese immigrants. People were executed for even the smallest of crimes. After prominent community leaders were arrested, the Uyghurs and Kazakhs in the region revolted. Although these rebellions led to short-term success, they could not continue to confront the Governor's forces that were so superior in numbers and equipment. This led the nomadic Kazakh people to decide to migrate to areas where they could live freely" [Kara, 2019:3].

"During these years, there was a mass departure of residents of Xinjiang to the territory of the neighboring Soviet republics. At the end of August 1944, 451 families migrated from the Kobuk area of Xinjiang province to the territory of the Tarbagatai district of the East Kazakhstan region: 251 one family - Kazakhs from the Naiman clan, 200 families of Mongols–Torgauts. There were 817 families in Zaisan and Markakul districts. 45 families were returned back by the border guard, 50 families were refused by the head of the Alakul RO NKGB" [Kozhirova].

"Sheng Shicai's betrayal forced the USSR to revise its attitude toward the fighters for Xinjiang's independence"[digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org]. An important factor was also the reassessment of the economic potential of Xinjiang, where Soviet geologists discovered large reserves of uranium in Altai, which was controlled by Kazakhs led by Ospan Batyr [Wilson Center digital archive]. In May 1943, in connection with Sheng Shicai's anti-Soviet policy, the USSR decided: "To provide support to the non-Chinese nationalities of Xinjiang (Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Mongols, etc.) in their struggle against the colonial-oppressive policy of the duban and the Xinjiang government: a) for the equality of all nationalities of Xinjiang; b) for the free development of the culture of each nationality, for primary and secondary education in the native language at the expense of the state; c) against religious oppression; d) for the creation of government bodies in districts and counties" [Barmin, 2014: 19-24].

A decision was made to organize an insurgent movement on the territory of Xinjiang with the aim of overthrowing the Sheng Shicai regime and bringing to power a government loyal to the USSR. By 1943, the USSR was forced to withdraw its military units from Xinjiang and specialists working at a number of enterprises in the province. But at the same time, a plan was developed to activate the internal Xinjiang political confrontation with the authorities through support for the activities of ethnic groups. For that end, the resources of the Soviet republics of Central Asia – the Kazakh SSR, Uzbek SSR, and Kyrgyz SSR – were involved to form underground groups (called national revival groups) on the territory of Xinjiang from among Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and Mongols, reinforced by specially trained personnel from Central Asia.

In addition, the task was set to create training schools for preparing trained agents in Central Asia and their deployment into Xinjiang. A special task was assigned to intellectuals and representatives of the cultural elite of Soviet Central Asia to establish ties with representatives of cultural circles in Xinjiang. So-called "letters of support" from emigrants were intended to help create an atmosphere of involvement in the events in the Chinese province. Furthermore, the distribution of propaganda materials about the successes of Soviet state-building was planned for the republics, publishing materials by the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the USSR in the form of a book about the participation of USSR Muslims in the Great Patriotic War, which was also to serve as additional motivation for mobilizing the patriotic feelings of the peoples of Xinjiang.

The population of the three northern districts of Xinjiang (Ili, Tarbagatay, and Altai, primarily Kazakhs, Uyghurs, Mongols, and Dungans) in November 1944 rose in revolt against the Chinese authorities

(known in academic literature as the "Uprising of the Three Districts") [Jacobs, Justin (December 2010). "The Many Deaths of a Kazak Unaligned: Osman Batur, Chinese Decolonization, and the Nationalization of a Nomad". *The American Historical Review*. 115 (5): 1291–1314.]. In November 1944, when the anti-Chinese uprising covered the entire province, it was viewed by Soviet leaders as a struggle of Muslims against "Chinese colonizers," and the reasons were objective – the deterioration of the socio-economic situation due to the curtailment of trade and economic relations with the USSR, increased taxation, and repressive measures against ethnic groups.

Results. This also applied to Kazakhs (they are referred to as nomads). It was specifically noted that they were executed and held in a special prison [AP RK. F. 708. Op. 8. D. 275. L. 50.]. The Sheng Shicai regime in 1943–1944 pursued a repressive policy, throwing thousands of activists from among the Kazakhs and Uyghurs into prison, where they were subjected to brutal torture and subsequently physically destroyed. Bloody clashes between the opposing sides complicated the already difficult life of the population, and from 1944 cases of mass crossings from Xinjiang to Soviet Kazakhstan were noted. The composition of the migrants was diverse – those fleeing Soviet collectivization policies, staunch opponents of Soviet power, participants in the Basmachi movement, and White Guards.

The reasons for leaving China were also complex; part of them represented groups of clans seeking a temporary respite and intending to return to Xinjiang to resume the confrontation or continue the cycle of seasonal migrations. While others were part of active paramilitary groups; for them, moving to Soviet territory was a tactical regrouping and an opportunity for rest [AP RK. F. 708. Op. 8. D. 186. L. 17.]. Since the ethnic composition of the migrants was different, their goals also did not coincide. The uprising in Xinjiang in 1944 and the participation in it of Kazakhs led by Ospan Batyr seriously concerned the Soviet leadership [Borbasov, Rahym, Oshan, 2022]. They imagined the impact this would have on the Kazakhs of Soviet Kazakhstan, especially those living in border areas.

The immediate proximity of the border, the dire situation of the Kazakh population in border areas, hidden dissatisfaction with Soviet rule, the hardships of war, and the movement of Kazakhs from China to Soviet territory could, in the event of a successful uprising in Xinjiang, provoke Kazakhs to cross into China, while the militant part of the Kazakhs would have taken part in military events to support their relatives. Although the anti-Chinese uprising in the summer of 1944 by Kazakhs, Uyghurs, and Dungans received support from the USSR, Soviet special forces sabotage groups "Buyga" and "Batyr," deployed to northern Xinjiang, were coordinated by the Soviet consulate in Gulja.

Kazakhs lived in the Tarbagatay (Chuguchak), Altai, and Ili districts bordering the Kazakh SSR. According to the 1944 census, there were 438.5 thousand Kazakhs in Xinjiang (11% of the population) [Ablajey, 2012: 17]. The Soviet government guaranteed the safety of return to the USSR for those who had moved illegally to Xinjiang, and protection from persecution by the Chinese authorities for those who took part in the struggle in China against ethnic oppression. In addition, Soviet authorities promised support after crossing the border. Since trade relations with Xinjiang had ceased, the organization of illegal border trade was planned.

The People's Commissariat for State Security was authorized to create a network of national revival groups for organizing effective propaganda and other activities [digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org]. The Soviet administration in the areas bordering China was concerned with security issues. Documents preserved in the archives testify that despite the acceptance of all migrants, their data were processed for loyalty (clan-tribal affiliation, position in the Chinese administration system, and political disposition – with which force and against which).

At the end of August 1944, 451 families migrated from Kobuk, Xinjiang, to the Tarbagatay district of the East Kazakhstan region: 251 of them were Kazakhs of the Nayman clan, 200 were Mongol families, Torguts. In the Zaysan and Markakol districts, there were 817 immigrant families. The border administration demanded the departure of 45, and 50 families were forced to return to China from the Alakol district by the KGB committee [AP RK. F. 708. D. 303. L. 43-47. cited in Kozhirova, 2016: 35]. In January 1944, it was noted: '...insufficient control over the state of the passport regime; in some cases, individuals who do not have the right to stay in border areas penetrate them. Thus, for 1943, in 4 border districts of the region, 45 people were identified as violators of the passport regime who arrived in the border areas without authorization, of whom: Katon-Karagay district – 15 people, Markakol – [no number], Zaysan – 17, Tarbagatay – 13. 7 people from this number, as malicious violators of the passport regime, were held criminally liable.

It should be noted that the local population provides active assistance to the NKVD and police authorities to identify violators of the passport regime and suspicious elements appearing in border areas. In 1943, 161 statements signaling various violations of the border regime were received from local citizens of border districts by the NKVD and police. Katon-Karagay district – 17 statements, Markakol – 42, Zaysan – 45, Tarbagatay – 57. The political mood of the population in border areas is generally healthy; however, there are elements hostile to Soviet rule, from whom anti-Soviet statements have been noted. This is explained by the fact that in border areas, especially among the Kazakh part of the population, there is a certain number of individuals who have relatives across the border or resided abroad themselves in the past.

For example, in the Tarbagatay district, 533 families were identified that previously lived in China and then returned to the USSR. In the same district, 265 people with relatives across the border were recorded". The archival document contains data for 1943 on the number of defectors from China – "265 people who were accepted by local authorities as emigrants. Normal material and living conditions were created for these individuals. However, 6 of these defectors ran back to China after some time, taking a pair of collective farm horses. The reasons have not been established. There are two cases of crossing from our side" [AP RK. F. 708. Op. 9. D. 303. L. 5-10.].

In a report addressed to Zh. Shayakhmetov dated October 24, 1944, it was noted: "After regular Chinese units began to arrive in increasing numbers in the border areas of the Altai and Tarbagatay districts by the beginning of August of this year, the entire Kazakh, Mongol, and Uyghur population, fearing active Chinese actions, began to cross into our territory with all their livestock and some property under the leadership of their authorities and under the armed cover of insurgent detachments. Thus, by the time the commission arrived in the East Kazakhstan region, a total of 5,123 families with a total of 3,678,691 head of livestock had crossed over in search of temporary refuge. From the specified number, 2,132 families with 200,000 head of livestock moved to the territory of the Zaysan district, 1,815 families with 92,793 head of livestock moved to the territory of the Markakol district, and 451 families with 64,983 head of livestock to the territory of the Tarbagatay district"[AP RK. F. 708. Op. 8. D. 296. L. 48.].

In January 1945, 302 families (1,222 people) arrived in the Kazakh SSR (border Alakol district) [AP RK. F. 708. Op. 11. D. 328. L. 53.]. 3 Russian families that arrived with them left for China because they did not like the difficult conditions. Local authorities provided material assistance to the defectors. In a report by A. Karagulov, a responsible worker of the Central Committee of the CP (b) of the Kazakh SSR, "On the migrants from China to the Tarbagatay district of the East Kazakhstan region," dated March 5, 1945, it is noted that 1,278 Kazakhs and 74 Mongol-Torguts migrated to the Tarbagatay district. After a month and a half they left because, according to A. Karagulov, the Kazakhs and Mongols were hostile toward each other, and the Mongols feared the Kazakhs as they were in the minority. But the main reason was that the Mongols received an invitation from their ukurday – a Mongol district head – to return to China, as the Chinese authorities supposedly promised to create good conditions for them if they return and do not support Kazakhs (giving them use of pastures, most likely left by the Kazakhs or taken from the Kazakh insurgents) [AP RK. F. 708. Op. 8. D. 296. L. 2.].

Due to the fact that the Soviet side expected migrants from China, the task was set to strengthen the border in case of armed clashes, but it was also necessary to take measures for their possible establishment in the territory of Soviet Kazakhstan. Another side of the problem was to prevent the departure of Kazakhs from border areas to China to participate in the events taking place there or in search of an alternative to existence in the USSR. On April 29, 1944, a decree "On measures for the economic and cultural development of border districts of the Kazakh SSR" was adopted with the aim to reinforce the districts economically, technically, with personnel, and with literate and experienced leaders in case of unforeseen circumstances [AP RK. F. 708. Op. 8. D. 296. L. 48.].

Compliance with that decree obliged all regional, district, and settlement leaders to inform the Central Committee of the CP (b) on the 15th of each month: "In the information, it is necessary to indicate what specifically has been done on each point of the measures, while giving exhaustive answers to certain questions, the deadlines for which expire at the time the information is provided. Zh. Shayakhmetov" [AP RK. F. 708. Op. 8. D. 238. L. 64]. The extremely dire situation of the arrived people was pointed out: "The population of the border districts walks in rags, barefoot, it is painful to look at them, they are only wearing sheepskins, and we must not forget that the population of the border districts comes into contact with the population of Xinjiang. Since the border districts are adjacent to other borders, we say that we have built a bright life for the whole country" [AP RK. F. 708. Op. 9. D. 129. L. 6-7.].

The prospect of opening two fronts in the East – in the Xinjiang region and on the Chinese border – forced the Soviet authorities to take appropriate measures to reinforce the border to reduce social tension. For that, it was necessary to organize the supply of essential goods and improve, as far as possible, the housing and living conditions of the population. "At the same time, we bring to your attention that workers of the border state farms are in dire need of clothing, footwear, and other industrial goods. Many workers are literally barefoot and undressed. In such a situation, under the winter conditions that have begun in all border state farms, it becomes difficult to perform the most urgent work (hauling feed, caring for livestock, etc.).

The situation is further exacerbated by the fact that border state farms experience an acute shortage of workers. In view of the fact that the People's Commissariat of State Farms is not in a position to provide substantial assistance in clothing and footwear to the border state farms, I ask you to oblige the People's Commissariat of Trade to bring at least 100 sets of warm clothing and footwear to each of the four border state farms, as well as the possible amount of children's clothing and footwear, underwear, and other industrial goods. Deputy People's Commissar for Grain and Livestock State Farms of the Kaz SSR Dzhumagaliev. To the Secretary of the Central Committee of the CP (b) K comrade Shayakhmetov. September 29, 1944" [AP RK. F. 708. Op. 8. D. 296. L. 48.].

In addition, the support measures for the population included – the remission or cancellation of tax debts, payment of wage arrears, and in the socio-economic sense – the construction or opening of schools, hospitals, medical centers, and the repair of socially significant objects. Wartime documents relating to the events of 1944 and the crossing of Kazakhs from Xinjiang (China) to the territory of Soviet Kazakhstan can be categorized, on the one hand, as so-called "letters to power". But on the other hand, they are evidence of attempts by the Kazakhs of China to initiate a dialogue with the Soviet authorities and "check" the prospects for a cautious return in case of the failure of the insurgent movement in China.

The letters-appeals of the Kazakh defectors from China in 1944 are of academic interest for several reasons. First of all, attention should be paid to the fact that they were preserved in the archives in the Russian version, which was the language of power in Soviet Kazakhstan, and during the war years it became a means of transmitting vital information and could convey a request for help to the leaders of the USSR (although the Soviet leadership monitored the situation in China and was informed about the state of affairs through its proteges and an extensive agent network). The letters also testify to the evolution of the political culture of Kazakhs, who decided on a dialogue with the Soviet regime, although they had previously denied it and viewed it as an "evil".

Now, the Soviet power had moved into the category of "inevitable evils" with which it was possible to enter into a "negotiation process". In conditions of intensifying military-political confrontation in China, when a threat to the existence of the ethnos arose, the Kazakhs of Xinjiang and their leaders began to speak "in a Bolshevik way". The leaders of the migrants firmly declared to the Soviet authorities that: "1. They crossed into the territory in search of temporary refuge, intending to return immediately to their former places of residence under favorable development of the insurgent movement and liberation of the territory, where most had hidden property, grain, and buildings. 2. With the successful development of the insurgent movement, it is necessary to supply the insurgents with food products, horses, as well as human reserves. They asked to be left within the border districts and refused to move to rear areas, arguing that their removal from the border deprives them of the possibility of systematic supply of materials and human reserves to insurgent detachments. 3. The authorities asked for assistance with weaponry for newly formed detachments from among Kazakhs and Mongols. 4. They asked for aid with food, daily necessities, clothing, and footwear for about 1,000 extremely needy, poorest households" [AP RK. F. 708. Op. 8. D. 296. L. 2].

Further, we present in full the appeals of the Kazakhs of China to the Soviet leadership to create a full-fledged picture: "To the Government of Socialist Kazakhstan. A letter of gratitude from the population from the 'Sauyr' locality, temporarily inhabiting your territory. We express our great gratitude to you and address you with a letter regarding the following: Eastern Turkestan (Xinjiang) is our centuries-old homeland. We, your blood brothers, inhabiting Eastern Turkestan for several hundred years, from the moment of Chinese dominance were doomed to arbitrariness, despotism, and lack of rights on the part of the Chinese reactionaries.

A grave danger of destruction as a nation loomed over us – over Kazakhs, Mongols, and Uyghurs. In these terrible days, the people led by their batyr Ospan rose against the oppressors. Starting from July 1944, we, the Kazakhs, Uyghurs, and Mongols of the 'Sauyr Mountains' area, Dzimunai district of the Altai okrug, joined this national liberation movement. The troops of the bloodthirsty Chinese government attacked the

civilian population and plundered property to the ground. The bloodsuckers used all types of weapons against the unarmed civilian population – cannons, machine guns, etc.

On August 1, 1944, we crossed your border and found refuge. In your country, we were met warmly, like brothers, and were provided with all-out assistance. We want to list below what specific assistance was provided to us from the moment of our stay: 1. From the first day we stepped onto your territory, we were provided with pasture for summer and winter grazing and thereby provided for the first need. 2. By organizing trade through Sovsintorg, all our needs for industrial goods, clothing, and footwear were met. 3. In September 1944, artists from the city of Alma-Ata demonstrated the high art of the Kazakh people and thereby raised the spirit of our population. 4. All the needy population of our clan was provided with food and saved from starvation by the free food assistance you provided. 5. We were also provided with free medical and veterinary assistance. 6. After the heavy severe winter of this year, with the current spring, a brigade from Alma-Ata arrived, consisting of distinguished artists, doctors, and film workers.

As a result of the work carried out by the brigade, the spiritual level was raised even higher. We sincerely thank you on behalf of our entire clan – men and women, from the old to the small, for all the brotherly help provided to us in the critical days of our life. Long live the leader of the Soviet state – the Great Stalin! Down with German fascism! Forward under the banner of victory! [Respectfully yours, authorities and participants of the Sauyr Uprising: 1. Zalyn-Ramazan, 2. Taiji-Kabyl, 3. Mulla-Islam, 4. Mukhir-Meirym, 5. Imam-Kari, 6. Shaniya-Sakhab, 7. Zalyn-Zakon, 8. Perla-Kelen, 9. Abdulla-bai, 10. Nurke-Sunzhan, 11. Bayandy-Sunzhan, 12. Zangiru-Kelen, 13. Kasenbai-Sunzhan, 14. Rashat-murza, 15. Ibysh-Khazhi, 16. Anuar-Murza, Akbayev, 17. Tatai-Zangi, 18. Mustafa-Zalyn, 19. Kozhygur-Sunzhan, 20. Zhakup-murza, 21. Baimukhan, 22. Kamesh-murza, 23. Abdukhadir, 24. Kurmangali, 25. Zainep-Khanum, 26. Kabiden"] AP RK. F. 708. Op. 8. D. 238. L. 64.].

The titles of the signatories of the letter indicate their status characteristics according to Islamic criteria (khoja, murza, imam, sakhab), positions in the Chinese provincial administrative hierarchy (zalyn, zangi, taiji), Kazakh clan hierarchy (bai), and family status (kelin/daughter-in-law, khanum – respectful address to an elderly woman). Under Republican China, the internal Kazakh power structure did not change. It was integrated into the Chinese system of managing ethnic groups; Kazakh aristocrats received Chinese titles (wangs, guns, beise, taiji, ukurdais, akalakshi, zangi, zalyns, manaps, zhuzbasy, etc.). Taiji was the hereditary head of a clan in the traditional Kazakh power structure; below him was the mynbasy/ukurdai (head of a thousand families of one clan), and further down – zhuzbasy/zalyn – head of more than a hundred families of one clan.

Elbasy/zangi controlled 50–100 families of a clan, while onbasy/kunde was responsible for 103 yurts. Each of these formations was united into tens for administration and delegation of some political powers [AP RK. F. 708. Op. 9. D. 129. L. 6-7.]. Such a hierarchically built system was stable, especially in Altai. According to I. Svanberg, in the 1940s there were 30 taiji in Xinjiang. In resolving legal issues, the head of the clan consulted with biys, who were selected from among the most respected and wise mynbasy. Clan elders were engaged in tax collection and resolved household conflicts at lower levels. Under clan leaders (of different levels) there were assistants for various assignments – khabarshy (messengers), karaulshy and sakshy (responsible for security and order) [Svanberg, 1988: 119.].

Every year, general meetings of Kazakhs by clans were held – kurultai or majilis, at which controversial problems were resolved and discussed. Sakhab was a companion of the prophet, and subsequently, experts and interpreters of hadiths were so named. It should be noted that the language of power in Soviet Kazakhstan was Russian, while the language of communication between Kazakhs from China and the local administration was Kazakh. The texts were composed by Kazakhs who were in Soviet administrative service but adapted to the forms of typical letters-appeals to the authorities in order to correctly build a system of communication channels between the petitioners and the authorities as patron and clientele.

The Kazakh text, most likely oral, underwent careful editing; therefore, we can only guess what the real discourse of the Kazakhs of Xinjiang was. But since the decision was made to seek help from the Soviet authorities because of an existential threat, the Kazakh leaders expressed it in a form convenient for the authorities. The text does not identify the Kazakhs of China with the Kazakhs of Soviet Kazakhstan, although the petitioners use the Soviet lexicon/newspeak, symbol-words: gratitude, blood brothers, reactionaries, destruction as a nation, terrible days, rose against the oppressors, national liberation movement, bloodthirsty Chinese government, bloodsuckers, unarmed civilian population, found refuge, your territory, like brothers, provided with pasture, all needs met, high art of the Kazakh people, saved from

starvation, free food assistance, spiritual level, leader of the Soviet people Great Stalin, down with German fascism, under the banner of victory.

This refers to the collective perception of internal Chinese problems, concern for the situation of all Kazakhs in Xinjiang, and correlating the degree of threat to the existence of the Kazakhs of China with the scale of the threat that the entire Soviet people, including the Kazakhs of Soviet Kazakhstan, were trying to avert in the confrontation with Nazi Germany. However, the Kazakhs of China considered Xinjiang their homeland, or emphatically named it "centuries-old homeland" "Eastern Turkestan," using Chinese terminology (Xinjiang) to decode what Eastern Turkestan is.

For comparison, a letter from the Kazakhs of the Kerey clan is of interest: "A letter-appeal of refugee Kazakhs of the Kerey clan, located in the Markakol district. We migrated from the Kaba district in the month of August 1944. When we crossed the border through the Kara-Kaba outpost and stepped onto Soviet territory, we were politely met by Soviet border guards and allowed deep inside. Further, the leaders of the district came out to meet us and showed great care, helping us to settle in a timely and good manner. Our move caused damage to the crops and pastures of the collective farms. However, the local district authorities forgave us all this, considering that we arrived to find refuge, and gave corresponding instructions and explanations on various issues that were unclear to us until then.

At the same time, knowing that we were refugees who suffered from the flight, they provided necessary assistance through the Raipotrebsoyuz with food and industrial goods, as well as satisfied our other needs. According to the instructions of the district commission for settling migrants, the chairmen of the aul councils arrived and helped us settle along the Irtysh River for the winter, releasing timber for construction. Representatives of the district executive committee also arrived and helped conclude agreements with collective farms to provide the livestock with fodder and winter pastures. For using collective farm pastures under the agreement, we paid from 5 to 7 head for every 100 head of sheep, while we used the state land fund free of charge.

One of the slogans of the Soviet power, proclaimed by the October Revolution, was 'providing all-out assistance to oppressed nations'. We joyfully accepted this slogan and boundlessly enjoyed its fruits. The district leaders often came to us, were aware of the situation among the migrants, and saved us from the threatening hunger, providing all necessary supplies, first and foremost, food and industrial goods. We are delighted that everywhere and always we met paternal care, and with their advice they cleared our consciousness. The peoples of the Great Soviet Union in the difficult conditions of wartime, sparing no effort, work heroically for victory over the enemy; despite this, they managed to provide us – the refugees – with invaluable assistance in all respects. For the enormous assistance provided to us, for the manifested daily care and respect, we thank the district leaders from the bottom of our hearts and wish the Soviet power eternal existence and prosperity. Respectfully yours, representatives of the refugees of the Kerey clan: Gabduali, Komzhav, Kibas. April 27, 1945" [AP RK. F. 708. Op. 9. D. 303. L. 5-10.].

In the text of the letter, symbol-words predominate: politely met, district leaders came to meet us, showed great care, timely and well settled, gave instructions and explanations, used the state land fund free of charge, one of the slogans of the Soviet power proclaimed by the October Revolution was providing all-out assistance to oppressed nations, saved from threatening hunger, paternal care, cleared consciousness, peoples of the Great Soviet Union, difficult wartime conditions, work heroically for victory over the enemy, wish the Soviet power eternal existence and prosperity. The assistance provided to the migrants by the Soviet authorities was listed. The Kazakh leaders distanced themselves from the Soviet power, as they did not ask to be accepted into citizenship but wished it (the Soviet power) eternal existence, in accordance with Chinese tradition.

In the letters-appeals there is no personal attitude; they are collective, although the representatives emphasized their status position and indicated their positions and ranks in the Chinese power hierarchy. In the Soviet Kazakhstan, the traditional titles of Kazakh internal political structures had been abolished back in the period of the Russian colonial administration and criminalized in the 1920s and 1930s during modernization (the break) of the social structure of the Kazakh nomadic society. The Kazakh leaders (in the Soviet interpretation they are indicated as "authorities") indicated their titles because they emphasized their right to represent their people and speak on behalf of their clans.

In the minds of their people, they were leaders to whom the right to protect their people was delegated. Archival materials testify that the local authorities took measures to respond timely and effectively to the requests and appeals of the Kazakhs from China [AP RK. F. 708. Op. 8. D. 186. L. 17.]. The defectors were provided for both through local budget funds and by organizing the exchange of livestock for basic

necessities and food products. Sanitary and hygienic measures were also carried out and medical assistance provided. While almost all the Mongols left Soviet Kazakhstan, believing the assurances of the Chinese authorities, part of the Kazakhs nevertheless remained, and in the future, they continued to cross into Soviet territory in search of salvation.

Conclusion. Soviet authorities did not obstruct the return migration, interested on one side, in replenishment of borderland regions. At the same time, it gave an opportunity to monitor the changes in the military-political situation in Xinjiang and minimize societal risks of return migration. The soviet authorities provided assistance to migrants regardless of their ethnic background, whereas the Mongols did not have a perception of Soviet Kazakhstan as the land of their ancestors and, consequently, their stay was knowingly temporary. Thus, the "letters to power" of the Kazakh leaders did not influence the degree of activity of the USSR leadership in Xinjiang but indicated the possibility of creating, on the one hand, a negotiation mechanism with the Kazakhs and detaching them from radical leaders. On the other hand, they testified to the possibility of a split (and its deepening) among Kazakhs based on the choice of regime and forms of cooperation with the authorities.

The indicated cases of Kazakh leaders appealing to the Soviet power show that in conditions of an existential threat, they incline toward seeking a compromise with the power that offers the best conditions for the survival of the ethnos, even temporary ones (as the Kazakh nomadic leaders believed). If we apply the classification of political culture, part of the Kazakhs of China under the leadership of traditional leaders was at the stage of transition from patriarchal to subject/substantive, i.e., they realized the necessity to seek cooperation with the central power or the force determining the conditions of survival. Leaders returnee Kazakhs from Xinjiang were aimed in establishing good relations with the Soviet authorities and spoke in "Bolshevik way".

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