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SOME ASPECTS OF "DISSENT" AMONG THE YOUTH OF KARAGANDA IN 1940–1945

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Abstract. *Introduction.* This article examines the activities of a group of young people whose childhood coincided with the formation of the Soviet political system after the establishment of the USSR. Having experienced numerous social upheavals during their school years and developing their worldview while studying at higher education institutions, some young people formed alternative views. Their activities are analyzed in the context of changes in the socio-political life of Soviet society in 1940–1945. This study is based on official source documents and archival collections of the Special State Archive of the National Security Committee Department for Almaty City, the Archive of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Archive of the Karaganda Regional Department of the Committee on Legal Statistics and Special Records of the Prosecutor General's Office of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the State Archive of the Karaganda Region, and the Archive of the M. O. Auezov Institute of Literature and Art. These materials reflect the features of "dissent" among some young people in Karaganda regarding Soviet policy in 1940–1945. *Goals and objectives.* The article aims to examine the history of certain representatives of Soviet youth in Karaganda during the first half of the 1940s whose disagreement with the policy being pursued in the USSR motivated them to create underground organizations. The objectives of this publication are to provide a brief historiographical overview of the issue, analyze the gender, age and ethnic composition of youth organizations with alternative views, and identify connections between the underground activities of some young people in Karaganda and similar processes in other regions of the Kazakh SSR. *Results.* The results of the study show that the socio-political changes of 1940–1945 had different effects on the development of the worldview of Soviet youth in Central Kazakhstan. *Conclusion.* Dissent among

young people during the period under consideration can be broadly divided into two phases: before the war and during the war. Within these two periods, the underground youth organizations "Soyuz", "Razlagateli" and "ESEP" ("Elin suygen erler partiyasy" – Party of Heroes Who Love the Motherland) were identified by the NKVD through its agent networks in Karaganda. Although the majority of young people supported Soviet government policy, the existence of groups of young people with alternative views who united in underground organizations reflects the general trends of dissent within the region's strict system of political control and surveillance.

Keywords: Social and political life; Kazakh SSR; Karaganda; youth movement; dissent among young people; underground youth organizations "Soyuz", "Razlagateli", "ESEP" ("Elin suygen erler partiyasy" – Party of Heroes Who Love the Motherland)

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1940–1945 ЖЫЛДАРДАҒЫ ҚАРАҒАНДЫ ЖАСТАРЫ АРАСЫНДАҒЫ «ӨЗГЕШЕ ОЙЛАУДЫҢ» КЕЙБІР АСПЕКТІЛЕРІ

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Аңдатпа. *Kіріспе.* Мақалада КСРО құрылғаннан кейін кеңестік саяси жүйенің қалыптасу кезеңімен балалық шағы тұспа-тұс келген жастардың бір бөлігінің қызметі қарастырылады. Мектептегі оқу жылдарында көптеген әлеуметтік күйзелістерді бастан өткеріп, жоғары оқу орындарында дүниетанымын қалыптастыра отырып, кейбір жастар балама көзқарастарды ұстанды. Олардың қызметі 1940–1945 жылдардағы кеңес қоғамының қоғамдық-саяси өміріндегі өзгерістер аясында талданады. Зерттеу Кеңес Одағының 1940–1945 жылдары ұстанған саясатына қатысты Қарағанды қаласындағы бірқатар жастардың «өзгеше ойлау» ерекшеліктерін бейнелейтін ведомстволық дереккөздер мен архив құжаттарына негізделген. Атап айтқанда, Алматы қаласы бойынша Ұлттық қауіпсіздік комитеті департаментінің Арнайы мемлекеттік архиві, Қазақстан Республикасы Президентінің архиві, Қазақстан Республикасы Бас прокуратурасының Құқықтық статистика және арнайы есепке алу комитетінің Қарағанды облысы бойынша басқармасы архиві, Қарағанды облысының мемлекеттік архиві және М. О. Әуезов атындағы Әдебиет және өнер институтының архиві құжаттары пайдаланылды. Зерттеудің мақсаты – 1940 жылдардың бірінші жартысындағы

Қарағанды қаласындағы кеңестік жастардың кейбір өкілдерінің КСРО-ның жүргізіп отырған саясатына келіспей, астыртын ұйым құрған іс-әрекеттерінің тарихын зерттеу. *Жарияланымның міндеттері* – мәселенің қысқаша тарихнамалық шолуын жасау, «өзгеше ойлайтын» жастардың жынысы, жасы және этникалық құрамын талдау, Қарағанды қаласындағы кейбір жастардың астыртын ұйым құру істерінің Қазақ КСР-інің басқа өңірлеріндегі ұқсас процестермен өзара байланысын анықтау. *Нәтижелер*. Зерттеу нәтижелері 1940–1945 жылдардағы қоғамдық-саяси өзгерістер Орталық Қазақстандағы кеңестік жастардың дүниетанымының қалыптасуына әрқилы әсер еткенін көрсетеді. Қорытынды. Қарастырылып отырған кезеңдегі жастардың өзгеше ойлауын шартты түрде екі кезеңге бөлуге болады: соғыс басталғанға дейінгі және соғыс жылдарындағы кезең. Осы екі кезеңде Қарағанды қаласында НКВД агенттік желілері арқылы анықталған «Союз» (Одақ), «Разлагатели» (Іріткі салушылар), «ЕСЕП» (Елін сүйген ерлер партиясы) астыртын жастар ұйымдары зерттелді. 1940–1945 жылдар аралығындағы кеңестік биліктің ұстанған саясатын жастардың көпшілігі қолдағанымен, олардың арасында өзгеше ойлайтын жастардың бір бөлігінің болуы аймақтағы қатаң саяси бақылау мен қадағалау жүйесіндегі келіспеушіліктің жалпы үрдістерін көрсетеді.

Түйін сөздер: Қоғамдық-саяси өмір; Қазақ КСР; Қарағанды; жастар қозғалысы; жастар ортасындағы өзгеше ойлау; «Одақ», «Іріткі салушылар», «ЕСЕП» (Елін сүйген ерлер партиясы) астыртын жастар ұйымдары

Дәйексөз үшін: Сақтағанова З., Жағыпар Ә., Байгожина Г. 1940–1945 жылдардағы Қарағанды жастары арасындағы өзгеше ойлаудың кейбір аспектілері // Asian Journal «Steppe Panorama». 2026. Т. 13. № 3. 772–788 бб. (Ағылш.). DOI: 10. 51943/3135-8055 _2026_13_3_772–788

НЕКОТОРЫЕ АСПЕКТЫ «ИНАКОМЫСЛИЯ» СРЕДИ МОЛОДЁЖИ КАРАГАНДЫ В 1940–1945 ГОДАХ

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Аннотация. *Введение.* В статье рассматривается деятельность части молодежи, детство которой совпало с периодом формирования советской политической системы после создания СССР. Пережив многочисленные социальные потрясения еще в годы обучения в школе и развивая свое мировоззрение в высших учебных заведениях, некоторые представители молодежи сформировали альтернативные взгляды. Их деятельность анализируется в контексте изменений общественно-политической жизни советского общества в 1940–1945 гг. Исследование основано на ведомственных источниковых документах и фондах архивов Специального государственного архива Комитета национальной безопасности по г. Алматы, Архива Президента Республики Казахстан, архива Управления Комитета по правовой статистике и специальным учетам Генеральной прокуратуры Республики Казахстан по Карагандинской области, Карагандинского областного государственного архива и архива Института литературы и искусства имени М.О. Ауэзова. Эти материалы отражают особенности «инакомыслия» среди части молодежи города Караганды по отношению к политике Советского Союза в 1940–1945 гг. *Цель и задачи исследования* – изучить историю деятельности некоторых представителей советской молодежи города Караганды в первой половине 1940-х годов, которые, не соглашаясь с проводимой в СССР политикой, создавали подпольные организации. Задачи публикации – проведение краткого историографического обзора проблемы, анализ половозрастного и этнического состава организаций молодежи с альтернативными взглядами, выявление взаимосвязей подпольной деятельности части молодежи Караганды с аналогичными процессами в других регионах Казахской ССР. *Результаты* показывают, что общественно-политические изменения в 1940–1945 гг. оказали различное влияние на развитие мировоззрения советской молодежи Центрального Казахстана. *Выводы.* Инакомыслие молодежи в рассматриваемый период условно разделено на два этапа: до начала войны и в годы войны. В рамках этих двух периодов исследованы подпольные молодежные организации «Союз», «Разлагатели» и «ЕСЕП» («Елін сүйген ерлер партиясы» – Партия героев, любящих Родину), выявленные органами НКВД посредством агентурных сетей в Караганде. *Заключение.* Несмотря на то что большинство молодежи поддерживало политику советской власти в 1940–1945 гг., существование части молодых людей с альтернативными взглядами, объединявшихся в подпольные организации, отражает общие тенденции инакомыслия в жесткой системе политического контроля и надзора в регионе.

Ключевые слова: Общественно-политическая жизнь; Казахская ССР; Караганда; молодежное движение; инакомыслие в молодежной среде; подпольные молодежные организации «Союз», «Разлагатели», «ЕСЕП» (Партия героев, любящих Родину)

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Introduction

The history of the development of human thought shows that, despite attempts to impose uniformity of opinion on society through prohibitions and restrictions, it is impossible to force everyone to think alike. People differ in origin, intellectual ability, psychological characteristics, education, upbringing and life experience. They also differ genetically. Therefore, uniformity of opinion contradicts human nature itself.

Nevertheless, totalitarian regimes have always strived to establish such uniformity of thought, subjecting society to a unified ideological way of thinking and behaving. A powerful propaganda machine, based on a mix of half-truths, outright lies and boundless demagoguery, combined with total control over “ideological purity” and the repressive apparatus, enabled the totalitarian regime to achieve a relative sense of spiritual unity among the population. A considerable part of society became victims of constant propaganda and consciously supported the established order; another part adapted to the circumstances and became conformist; a third group, however, displayed dissent and found the courage to protest against the existing system.

Germany's aggression against the USSR during World War II united the Soviet people in their struggle against the invaders and boosted patriotism. The public consciousness underwent significant changes. Although targeted propaganda aimed to foster unity within Soviet society and mobilize all forces to combat the enemy, dissent and certain acts of protest by some young people emerged in several regions of the USSR, driven by dissatisfaction with policies implemented during the prewar and war periods. It is precisely these circumstances that make this study relevant.

The necessity for change was felt most acutely by young people. A comparative historical analysis demonstrates that young people perceived the repressive policies of the Stalinist regime through the experiences of their families, along with their direct exposure to the tragedy of war. The challenges of wartime and the loss of loved ones made it possible to identify the regional manifestations of the underground youth organizations' activities at the microhistorical level. Young people whose adolescence coincided with the war years discovered a discrepancy between real life and the image of reality shaped by Soviet propaganda through their own life experiences.

Students in HEIs and Soviet schools sought to contribute to society and were looking for ways to fulfill their potential. However, the Komsomol organization, with its bureaucratic and rigid structures and ideological uniformity, failed to satisfy a segment of the youth who were inclined toward independent and critical thinking. In this regard, the paper introduces the phenomenon of underground youth organizations that emerged in certain Soviet cities during 1940–1945 into academic discourse. Although their political goals were not always clearly formulated, the members of these groups were striving for honesty and fairness, as well as for propaganda that was in line with the realities of life. The purpose of this study is to examine and present the history of a group of Soviet youth in Karaganda city in the first half of the 1940s who disagreed with the policies of the USSR and created underground organizations.

The proposed topic provides an excellent example for examining clandestine youth organizations in domestic history through a microhistorical approach, drawing on archival documents, interviews, and memoirs. The following events are analyzed in chronological order for the period under review: an anti-Soviet group of students, writers, and university faculty members in Almaty (1941); an anti-Soviet group of young people in Karaganda, uncovered by the NKVD during the "Soyuz" operation; an "anti-Soviet" and "nationalist" group at the Karaganda Teachers' Institute, uncovered by the NKGB Directorate for the Karaganda Region as part of the "Razlagateli" operation; the underground political youth organization "ESEP" ("Elin Suigen Erler Partiyasy" – Party of Heroes Who Love the Motherland), founded by B. Iskakov in February 1941 while he was studying at the Karaganda Teachers' Institute; as well as the fates of members of the "ESEP" organization, identified by the NKVD in 1944 as part of the "Pechatniki" intelligence case.

Similar incidents were observed not only in the Kazakh SSR. During 1942–1946, the counterrevolutionary group "Ideological Communist Youth" was active in Chelyabinsk; in 1944 and early 1945, a "Youth Terrorist Organization" was uncovered in Moscow (Prishchepa, 1999: 202–204); in 1944, the underground nationalist organization "ZHP" was uncovered in Lukovsk District (Związek Harcerstwa Polskiego – Polish Youth Union) (Noskova et al., 1994: 46–47). The "Circle of Marxist Thought" and the "Leninist Union of Students" were also operating, and in 1945 an anti-Soviet student organization was revealed in Chelyabinsk (Lukin, 1992: 125–126). The "Union of Belarusian Youth" was active in Belarus during 1943–1944 (Kozlova et al., 1999: 212). The examples above show that some young people organized resistance movements in the socialist countries of Eastern Europe and in regions under Soviet rule.

Materials and Methods

For this article, the sources were divided into two groups: published and unpublished. The first group includes materials from Volumes 1 and 11 of the publication "Fighters for the National Freedom, Independence, and Territorial Integrity of Kazakhstan", published by members of the State Commission for the Full Rehabilitation of Victims of Political Repression in the 1920s–1950s, established by decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan K. Tokayev.

The second group consists of documents from restricted collections of departmental archives, which the authors of this article accessed while working as members of the State Commission at the regional and national levels with special clearance for secret materials. Thus, published sources consist of official documents, while unpublished sources include personal files, interviews and other archival materials.

The primary published archival sources used in this study are documents and materials from the first and eleventh volumes of the State Commission for the Full Rehabilitation of Victims of Political Repression in the 1920s–1950s, which contain information on the cases of members of underground youth groups in the Karaganda Region. Previously unpublished archival documents covering the relevant period were drawn from these volumes.

The following materials from unpublished archival sources were studied: Case No. 5204 of the Special State Archive of the National Security Committee Department for Almaty City (1941) concerning the case of Khamit Abrakhmanov and others; File No. 3942 of Fund 20, Inventory 1 of the Archive of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan (1951) regarding the case of B. I. Iskakov and others (6 individuals); Case No. 4142 of the same archive (1944) regarding the case of Z. Abildin and others (3 individuals).

Special attention was paid to the personal file of prisoner Burkit Ibragimovich Iskakov, stored in the Archive of the Karaganda Regional Department of the Committee on Legal Statistics and Special Records of the Prosecutor General's Office of the Republic of Kazakhstan (inventory 184, archival document No. 649), as well as documents from his personal collection held in the Archive of the M. O. Auezov Institute of Literature and Art (inventory 2, case 209, folder 10). The study also includes interviews with members of the underground youth organization "ESEP" ("Elin Suigen Erler Partiyasy" – "Party of Heroes Who Love Their Homeland"), Makhmet Temiruly and Zheken Kaliuly, conducted by one of the article's authors, Adilet Zhagypar.

To achieve this goal, both general scientific methods and specific historical methods were applied. A comparative analysis was used to examine the impact of the processes that took place in the USSR between 1940 and 1945 on the socio-political life of the Kazakh SSR. A structural approach was taken to identify the interrelationships between political and ideological processes shaped by the national context, as well as the interactions between protest groups and society. A statistical method was utilized in analyzing the composition of members of the underground youth groups "Soyuz," "Razlagateli," and "ESEP" in Karaganda during 1940–1945, including their gender, age, ethnicity, Komsomol membership, as well as their academic departments and years of study. To gain a more comprehensive picture of the narrative interviews obtained from two former members of the underground youth organization "ESEP" and two of their descendants, oral history and interview techniques were employed.

In order to reconstruct and understand public sentiment, people's mindsets, and the reasons that motivated historical figures to act in certain ways during the period under consideration, memoir-based analysis was used. In particular, the recollections of B. Iskakov, published in periodicals, were used as primary historical sources.

The history of the underground youth groups "Soyuz," "Razlagateli," and "ESEP" is viewed through the lens of the microhistorical approach in historical studies. The microanalytical methods of microhistory allow us to examine the social reality of the past by studying the daily lives of ordinary people, their educational and life experiences, their social environment, and the development of their personalities, as well as the relationship between society and the authorities and the influence of "ordinary people" on the course of history.

This study opens up new possibilities for re-examining underground political organizations of Soviet youth with alternative views within a regional context. During the period under review, the Karaganda Region was not only an industrial hub but also the place where one of the largest camps in the Gulag system – Karlag – operated, a camp established by the Stalinist regime. A comparative analysis of the worldviews of young people who participated in underground organizations reveals the influence of intellectuals who were imprisoned in Karlag and, due to a shortage of specialists, were recruited to work in various fields. This enables us to determine the geographical spread of their

ideas and the history of their reception, as well as to identify the characteristics of how the phenomenon of "dissent" took shape among young people.

Discussion

The political, social, economic, and other aspects of the first half of the 1940s have been extensively covered in the works of scholars who have studied the Soviet period. Foreign researcher A. I. Prishchepa writes about the underground youth organizations that were active in the Soviet Union during that period. According to his data, a counterrevolutionary group "Ideological Communist Youth" was active in Chelyabinsk from 1942 to 1946, and a "Youth Terrorist Organization" was uncovered in Moscow in 1944 and early 1945 (Prishchepa, 1999: 202–204). These facts indicate that, although in relatively small numbers, underground youth groups expressing alternative views existed in various regions of the Soviet Union.

However, the topic of anti-Soviet views and actions among young people in Kazakhstan during the first half of the 1940s remains insufficiently researched to the present day. In the fourth volume of the five-volume academic publication "History of Kazakhstan (from Ancient Times to the Present Day)", the authors note: "At various times during the Soviet period, youth groups and individuals opposed to the Soviet regime were active within the republic" (Mazhitov et al., 2010: 63). However, in chapters six (Abzhanov, 2010: 386–390; Abzhanov, Kapayeva, 2010: 391–410) and seven (Kozybayev, Aldazhumanov, 2010: 411–419; Kuznecova, Dilmanov, 2010: 419–427; Aldazhumanov, 2010: 427–433) of this volume, we were unable to find any information about underground youth organizations that opposed the Soviet government during the period in question.

In present-day Kazakh historiography, a certain tradition has developed regarding the study of anti-Soviet groups (organizations) and individuals (Kydyralina, 2008: 400). For the given period, Zh. Kydyralina provides the following data: "During the war years, political repression continued to be carried out on ethnic grounds". Between June 1941 and June 1945, more than 300 people were arrested on charges of "Kazakh nationalism" (Kydyralina, 2008: 204).

Although there is no relevant data in academic publications, this issue has been partially discussed in domestic historiography. B. S. Saylan's doctoral dissertation examines the political significance of youth organizations in the history of Kazakhstan during the period 1917–1991. However, in the fourth chapter, which is devoted to youth policy during the Great Patriotic War and the reconstruction of the devastated economy, the author mentions only one underground organization of Kazakh youth that was active during the war: the "Union of Defenders of the Kazakh People" (Saylan, 2010: 196–197). In our opinion, the limited scope of such studies is largely due to the inaccessibility of departmental archival documents.

Although we were unable to obtain full access to the official archival documents about the cases of all these individuals, this study draws on materials published by the State Commission for the Full Rehabilitation of Victims of Political Repression in the 1920s–1950s, established pursuant to the Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated November 24, 2020. In addition, the study includes archival documents investigated by the authors during their work as members of republican and regional commissions. Based on these materials, data on the Karaganda Region are compared with the overall situation in the USSR.

Results

Anti-Soviet views among young people during the period under consideration are examined on the basis of departmental archival documents (Materials V. 11, 2022: 335). We have divided this period into two phases: the pre-war period and the war years.

Archival documents containing information about anti-Soviet groups formed among young people in the period leading up to the war are found in a report by the NKVD of the Kazakh SSR dated August 12, 1941, addressed to the secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Kazakhstan. The document reports on the identification and elimination of anti-Soviet groups among schoolchildren and university students in the first half of 1941 (Materials V. 11, 2022: 335–337).

According to NKVD data, the recruitment of young people into anti-Soviet activities, including sabotage, terrorism, and agitation and propaganda, was carried out by former kulaks, children of repressed individuals, and other so-called "hostile elements". The document also notes that while youth groups in 1940 were primarily hooligan-like in nature, by 1941 they had become more organized, with their own programs, charters, and even weapons. It is emphasized that these groups included not only individuals from so-called "socially alienated circles", but also members of the Komsomol, university students, teachers, and representatives of the literary intelligentsia (Materials V. 11, 2022: 335–337).

In departmental archival documents, these organizations are described by NKVD officials as "anti-Soviet" and "nationalist". This naturally raises the question: did these organizations actually belong to anti-Soviet nationalist movements, or could such a characterization have been the result of an interpretation by the NKVD? The document further provides examples of two anti-Soviet youth groups that were active in Almaty and Karaganda.

For example, on April 29, 1941, the Secret Political Department of the NKVD of the USSR arrested and prosecuted an anti-Soviet group that had organized a literary circle consisting of students, writers, and faculty members of HEIs in Almaty. The investigation found that the members of the group were engaged in organized anti-Soviet activities (Materials V. 11, 2022: 335–337). Biographical information about the members of this organization is presented in Table 1.

№	Last name, first name, middle name	Year of birth	Place of birth	Social background	Party affiliation	Occupation	Place of study/work
1	Chivkunova Valentina Alekseyevna	1908	Saratov	from a family of employees	non-partisan	a teacher of foreign languages, engaged in literary activities	Mining and Metallurgical Institute
2	Kalashnikov Ivan Fedorovich	1914	not specified	not specified	member of the Komsomol	journalist, poet	temporarily not working
3	Shemetov Alexey Ivanovich	1913	Irkutsk region, Talma village	from a peasant family	non-partisan	Student	Kazakh State University, Faculty of Philology
4	Mordovtsev Nikolay Pavlovich	1920	Aktobe region, Bystry Istok village	from a peasant family	member of the Komsomol	student (4th year)	Kazakh State University, Faculty of Philology

Table 1 – Members of an anti-Soviet group consisting of students, writers, and university faculty members in Almaty (1941) (Materials V. 11, 2022: 336).

According to archival documents, the investigation concluded that this group had organized an underground literary circle at V.A. Chivkunova's apartment, united by their shared anti-Soviet sentiments. As part of the club's activities, its members engaged in literary work, read aloud their own "anti-Soviet" writings, criticized contemporary literature and art, and encouraged students from the HEIs of the city to join this club (Materials V. 11, 2022: 336).

One of the most active and organized anti-Soviet youth groups was dismantled in Karaganda in April 1941. The core of this group consisted of students from the Karaganda Teachers' Institute. The initiative to establish the anti-Soviet organization came from V. N. Tazekhulakov, a member of the Komsomol and senior Pioneer leader at School No. 4 (Materials V. 11, 2022: 336).

The investigation found that "the group members had sworn an oath of allegiance to counterrevolutionary activities". The text of V.N. Tazekhulakov's oath: "Here are four members of a

self-organized union gathered together. Apart from the four of us, there's no one else here yet. So that we can work without fearing one another, so that the members remain loyal to one another, and to ensure our secrecy, each of us must take an oath. Let me go first... I swear to fight against Soviet rule for the rest of my life, as I have been ordered to do. If I break my word, I deserve to die; for treason, or if necessary, I will die in the line of work. I know for sure that we are not alone; we have the support of powerful alliances from the older generation, so we have nothing to fear ..."(Materials V. 1, 2022: 448). In this case, members of the group were arrested; their socio-demographic profiles are presented in Table 2.

№	Last name, first name, middle name	Year of birth	Place of birth	Social and family background	Party affiliation	Occupation	Place of study/work
1	Tazekhulakov F. N.	1922	Rostov-on-Don	Father – a former white officer, executed for counterrevolutionary activities	member of the Komsomol	student	Karaganda Teachers' Institute; Senior Pioneer Leader of School No. 4
2	Berezovsky S. N.	1922	Shakhty, Rostov Oblast	Father – a former miner, shot in 1937 as a member of a counterrevolutionary organization; mother was imprisoned in a camp	non-partisan	student	Karaganda Teachers' Institute
3	Neiman Ya. A.	1922	Semey	The father, a former civil servant, died; the brothers live abroad (Vilnius, Italy)	member of the Komsomol	collector	trust "Karagandaugol"
4	Demerchyan A. A.	1923	Sochi	Armenian; father and brother were repressed and deported	not specified	9th grade student	School No. 4
5	Kalachev V. N.	1922	not specified	Father is a priest	member of the Komsomol	student	Karaganda Teachers' Institute; employee of the regional committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Kazakhstan
6	Jurnius E. E.	1922	not specified	Son of a special settler	not specified	student	School No. 4

Table 2 – Members of anti-Soviet group formed by young people from the city of Karaganda (1941)
(Materials V. 1, 2022: 447–448).

This group was established by Tazekhulakov in February 1940. The organization's founders aimed to recruit as many students as possible from Karaganda whose parents and relatives had been subjected to political repression (Materials V. 11, 2022: 336–337).

In note No. 20489, classified as "Top Secret," sent to the heads of regional departments and signed by the People's Commissar of State Security of the Kazakh SSR, Senior Major of State Security A. N. Babkin, and the head of the Secret-Political Department of the NKGB of the Kazakh SSR, Senior Lieutenant of State Security M. N. Golovkov, on May 8, 1941, it was noted that attempts to form anti-Soviet groups and organize resistance against Soviet power had been identified among students of HEIs in the Kazakh SSR. The document indicates that such activities tended to be acts of revenge for the arrests of parents and close relatives who had been persecuted as "enemies of the people" (Materials V. 1, 2022: 445). It is also reported that "anti-Soviet elements were identified both in Almaty and in all regions of the republic among students". The "Soyuz" case is mentioned as an example. As part of this operation, the Karaganda Regional Office of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs arrested seven people – mostly students at the Karaganda Teachers' Institute whose parents had been subjected to repression for counterrevolutionary activities in February 1940 (Materials V. 1, 2022: 445).

However, a comparison with the data presented in Table 2 shows that the NKVD arrested six people without revealing its agent. Consequently, the information contained in the two archival documents may pertain to the same case. It follows that, to dismantle the anti-Soviet group created by F. Tazekhulakov, the NKVD launched Operation "Soyuz" and infiltrated the group with its own agents.

When comparing 1940 and 1941, it is necessary to identify the reasons why anti-Soviet sentiments among young people began to manifest themselves in the form of organized underground groups. At the beginning of 1941, considering the global geopolitical situation, the Soviet leadership viewed nationalism as an objective and progressive sociocultural phenomenon which, in its left-wing form (democratic and patriotic), was supposed to be dialectically compatible with the principles of proletarian internationalism. This view was based on the intention of the leadership of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) to give the international communist movement a national orientation and new organizational forms. At the heart of this issue was the prospect of the Comintern's future existence. According to Joseph Stalin and his supporters, under the circumstances, this organization had exhausted its potential, and as part of the struggle against fascist ideology, elements of nationalist ideology were to be used to unite forces. Evidence of this is found in the diary entries of the General Secretary of the Executive Committee of the Comintern, G.M. Dimitrov, which record a speech by A.A. Zhdanov, with the participation of A.A. Andreev and G.M. Malenkov, on February 27, 1941: "We made a mistake regarding the national question. We did not pay enough attention to national issues. Proletarian internationalism must be combined with the healthy national sentiments of each people. We must educate our "nationalists"" (Dimitrov, 2003: 150). Furthermore, on November 7, 1941, during a military parade on Red Square in Moscow, J. V. Stalin called on Soviet soldiers in his speech to draw inspiration from the heroic traditions of historical figures. In particular, he noted: "May the examples of our ancestors – Alexander Nevsky, Dmitry Donskoy, Kuzma Minin, Dmitry Pozharsky, Alexander Suvorov, and Mikhail Kutuzov inspire you in this war" (Dolmatov, 2020: 291). This speech played a significant role in promoting the implementation of the Soviet Union's policy objectives. Posters from that period illustrate propaganda efforts that featured heroes from wars of earlier historical eras (Photo 1). In this regard, the foreign scholar N. Werth noted in his work that during the war years the Stalinist regime underwent a significant evolution toward "consensus-based governance" (Werth, 1990–1991: 284–288). Archival documents contain specific facts indicating that some educated citizens, who closely monitored every move made by the Soviet authorities in the socio-political sphere, recognized this shift in national policy and continued their underground activities, spreading relevant ideas among students.



Figure 1 – Soviet propaganda poster from 1941 (Dolmatov, 2020: 291).

During such a difficult period, the Soviet authorities used every possible means to foster a sense of patriotism among young people, including the higher education system. In its early stages, the Karaganda Teachers' Institute, founded in 1938, attracted not only professors and lecturers specially invited from Moscow, Saratov, Leningrad, Almaty and other cities, but also scholars imprisoned in Karlag. Annual archival documents on the main activities of the Karaganda Teachers' Institute contain the following information: "List of faculty members who taught at the Karaganda Teachers' Institute in 1939–1940: Rymarev, Mamikonyan, Kobylatsky, Abishev, Tkachenko, Nareshev, Spasibenko, Baitasov, Romanovskaya, Medeleys, Naumov, Tabysheva, Bogoslovsky" (SAKR. F. 764. Inv. 1. C. 6. P. 9). This list includes Professor P. S. Bogoslovsky (1890–1966), who served a sentence in Karlag and taught at the Karaganda Teachers' Institute from 1940 to 1946. He was a Russian and Soviet literary scholar, folklorist and ethnographer, professor and head of the Department of Russian Literature at the Faculty of History and Philology of Perm University (1922–1931, 1947–1948), a full member of the Imperial Petrograd Archaeological Institute, and, from 1928, a full member of the Russian Geographical Society (Sedyakina, 2014). In this regard, the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) placed the Karaganda Teachers' Institute under strict surveillance, viewing it as a potential hotbed of nationalist sentiment.

In the postwar period, five young people were charged in connection with the "Razlagateli" case (an investigative operation) involving the Karaganda Teachers' Institute (SSA NSC Almaty, No. 5204). In January 1944, Junior Investigator Yegorov of the NKVD Investigative Directorate compiled a review of the investigation file concerning K. Abrakhmanov, A. Magrupov and five other individuals. It is stated that members of the organization were arrested by the NKGB Directorate for the Karaganda Region as a result of an operational investigation into the "Razlagateli" case in July 1941. Their socio-legal characteristics are presented in Table 3.

№	Last name, first name	Year of birth	Social and family background	Criminal record	Occupation	Place of study/work
1	Khamit Abdrakhmanov	1920	son of a dispossessed landowner	no prior convictions	student	Karaganda Teachers' Institute
2	Magrupov Aglam	1921	brother of a person convicted of counterrevolutionary activities	no prior convictions	student	Karaganda Teachers' Institute

3	Rakhymbekov Kuanysh	1916	son of a bai	In December 1940, he was sentenced to five years“ imprisonment under Part II of Article 74 of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR	not specified	Prior to his arrest, he was held in an NKVD labor camp
4	Kemelbaev Islamkayir	1920	son of a participant in the bai“s uprising	In December 1940, he was sentenced to three years“ imprisonment under Part II of Article 74 of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR	not specified	Prior to his arrest, he was held in an NKVD labor camp

Table 3 – Members of an anti-Soviet nationalist group at the Karaganda Teachers“ Institute (1941)
(SSA NSC Almaty, No. 5204).

During the investigation of this case, it was found that the above-mentioned Kazakh students“were members of an anti-Soviet nationalist group” operating at the Karaganda Teachers“ Institute. As an NKVD agent noted, the group“s goal was”to disrupt internal order at the institute, obstruct the educational process, undermine Party and government initiatives, and carry out subversive activities among students directed against Soviet power”. They sought to educate students“in a nationalist spirit, fostered discontent with Soviet authority, and organized protests to discredit the institute“s faculty and the student Komsomol leadership” (SSA NSC Almaty, No. 5204).

On June 27, 1941, the prosecutor of the Karaganda Region, Chuvakin, authorized the arrest of Kh. Abdrakhmanov. The next day, June 28, the head of the NKGB in the Karaganda Region, State Security Captain Demidov, approved the arrest warrant for Kh. Abdrakhmanov. The arrest document indicated that the NKGB operative officer for the Karaganda Region, State Security Sergeant Tursunov, had reviewed the materials submitted to the department regarding the case of Khamit Abdrakhmanov. Abdrakhmanov was a student at the Karaganda Teachers“ Institute, born in Aul No. 2 in the Zhanaarka District of the Karaganda Region in 1920. The investigation revealed that“Abdrakhmanov, as the son of a dispossessed bai, held anti-Soviet views and formed an anti-Soviet nationalist group at the institute”. He recruited new members from among students who were in a difficult social situation from the Soviet authorities“ perspective,”spread counterrevolutionary ideas of a national-fascist nature and the ideas of the Alashorda movement among them, and organized subversive activities”. The group members focused on“countering the communist students who had previously exposed several members of the group” (SSA NSC Almaty, No. 5204). Archival documents indicate that this group“s activities were aimed at spreading Alash ideas among young people. On April 10, 1941, the Karaganda Regional Court sentenced Kh. Abdrakhmanov to 10 years“ imprisonment, followed by a 5-year deprivation of civil rights, for the aforementioned anti-Soviet activities; Magrupov and Kemelbaev were sentenced to 8 years in prison and 3 years“ deprivation of civil rights; Rakhymbekov was sentenced to 10 years in prison and 5 years“ deprivation of civil rights; Rakhymzhanov was acquitted (SSA NSC Almaty, No. 5204).

To prove the affiliation of the anti-Soviet group known in the investigation materials as“Razlagateli” with a broader nationalist structure at the Karaganda Teachers“ Institute, we refer to an archival document – a characterization of the agent“Saulen” approved on November 21, 1944, by the deputy head of the NKVD, Lieutenant Colonel of State Security Nikhrikov (APRK. F. 20. Inv. 1. C. 4142). It states that on August 27, 1941, while studying at the Karaganda Pedagogical Institute,”Saulen” was recruited as an informant to gather intelligence on the target of the agent operation“Razlagateli” – Burkit Isakov, with whom he maintained close relations both at the institute and in his personal life (APRK. F. 20. Inv. 1. C. 4142).

Based on our analysis of archival documents, we believe that the“anti-Soviet nationalist group” at the Karaganda Teachers“ Institute was an underground youth organization known as ESEP (“Party of Heroes Who Love the Motherland”). It should be noted that the educational institution in the

archive is listed as the Karaganda Pedagogical Institute, but in fact it is the Karaganda Teachers' Institute. This document contains Burkit Iskakov's autobiography dated June 20, 1968, in which he indicated: "I enrolled in the Karaganda Teachers' Institute in 1940 and graduated from it in 1942" (AAILA. Inv. 2. personal file 209. V. 10). In the interrogation record dated November 14, 1944, to the question: "Were you given any specific instructions by the NKVD regarding reports of Iskakov's nationalist sentiments?" "Saulen" replied: "I did not receive any specific assignment regarding Iskakov, but I was tasked with monitoring students, including him" (APRK. F. 20. Inv. 1. C. 4142). Based on archival records, it can be concluded that the NKVD's system of surveillance at the Karaganda Teachers' Institute was effective: as a result, four people were arrested, two of whom were students at the institute.

B. Iskakov was arrested by the Ministry of State Security of the USSR in Almaty on December 18, 1951, on charges that, while studying at the Karaganda Teachers' Institute in 1940–1942, he had established an underground youth political organization called "ESEP" (APRK. F. 20. Inv. 1. C. 3942. P. 281–293). Makhmet Temiruly, who studied at the same institute, said in an interview with A. Zhagypar that the organization "ESEP" was founded in February 1941 and originated from the literary circle "Jas Qalam". The head of the circle and Kazakh literature teacher, A. Nareshev, acquainted students with the works of Alash movement leaders through her personal library and sought to establish a party similar to Alash – a party that would serve the people and act in their best interests (Zhagypar and Temiruly, 2011).

In his memoirs, B. Iskakov describes how, during his studies at the Karaganda Teachers' Institute, his thirst for knowledge and the support of those around him helped him become a top student by the end of his first semester and earn a higher scholarship (Iskakov, 1989: 4). During that period, there was a long-standing tradition at the institute of summarizing semester results. At a general meeting of faculty and students, Professor P. S. Bogoslovsky spoke about Burkit and remarked: "We have a first-year student Iskakov. His first name is Burkit. And indeed, like an eagle, he soared through his exams" (Iskakov, 1989: 4). In his memoirs, Burkit describes how he felt about this praise as follows: "All the faculty members and students present at the meeting heard these words from the renowned and respected professor. For me, coming from a small village, this was a huge support. They gave me strength and inspiration. That's exactly what motivated me to take up literature in earnest" (Iskakov, 1989: 4). It can be concluded from this that intellectuals imprisoned in Karlag on political charges, when given the opportunity to educate young people, were able to make effective use of it, sowing the seeds of knowledge that inspired the younger generation to "think differently".

A brief comparative analysis of the program of the underground youth organization "ESEP" and that of the Alash Party highlights several common features. First, the underground youth organization "ESEP", based on the ideas of Alash and viewing the Alash movement as a struggle for Kazakh independence, continued to uphold its ideals. Preserving historical continuity, it sought to promote the movement toward independence, in a sense acting as the successor to the ideas of the Alash Party. Second, the program of the "ESEP" organization provided for the creation of a "people's state," just as the Alash Party had done at the Second All-Kazakh Congress (December 1917), where it established the independent state of "Alash" (prior to the October Revolution, Alash had advocated for its existence as one of the constituent entities within a federal Russian republic). Third, the program of the "ESEP" organization emphasized that the Kazakh people support the Turkic-speaking peoples of the world, who share a common origin, and the common destiny that binds the Kazakhs to these brotherly peoples. The Alash Party believed that Kazakh autonomy could be temporarily united with related peoples. However, there were also some differences in their programs. The program of the "ESEP" organization emphasized the special role of Islam in society, stating that Islam was the religion held in particular esteem, whereas the Alash Party's program separated religion from the state and did not single out any particular faith, as is the case in any secular state. The program of the "ESEP" organization emphasized the necessity of uniting the youth and their willingness to sacrifice their lives for their homeland and their people, whereas the Alash Party's program called for the creation of an army to defend the country. The Alash Party had enormous support among

Kazakh society even after the establishment of Soviet rule, and the spiritual legacy of the Alash movement influenced the minds of several generations of Kazakhs in the 20th century. The youth organization "ESEP", founded under the harsh conditions of the 1940s–1950s, was completely unknown to the Kazakhstani public; its members were few in number, quickly dispersed, and never gained any experience in political activity. The ideas articulated in the program of the underground youth organization "ESEP" continued to persist among a small but significant segment of Kazakh youth during the Soviet period, until Kazakhstan achieved independence.

In an interview with A. Zhagypar, M. Temiruly and Zh. Kaliuly also noted that on the initiative of a group of students, including B. Iskakov and M. Temirov, a socio-political movement called "ESEP" emerged at the Karaganda Teachers' Institute in early 1941 (Zhagypar and Kaliuly, 2013).

The indictment in criminal case No. 600 states that Iskakov and Temirov established the anti-Soviet nationalist organization "ESEP" first at the Nura Secondary School and then at the Karaganda Teachers' Institute between 1940 and 1942 (SSA NSC Almaty, No. 600). According to the document, the organization aimed to separate Kazakhstan and the Central Asian republics from the Soviet Union and establish a bourgeois state on their territory. They engaged in anti-Soviet propaganda among Kazakh youth, distributed counterrevolutionary literature, and in 1942 evaded conscription into the Soviet Army. In secret, Iskakov and Temirov discussed the formation of armed units and preparations for an uprising against Soviet authority (AKRD. Inv. 184. C. 649. P. 11–14). Based on archival documents, the founder of the underground youth organization "ESEP" ("Party of Heroes Who Love Their Homeland") was Burkit Iskakov. In addition, active members of this organization, Makhmet Temiruly and Zheken Kaliuly, also referred to Burkit Iskakov as their leader in their interviews with us.

During those years, the NKVD continued its hunt for nationalists in the Karaganda Region and launched the "Pechatniki" investigation (APRK. F. 20. Inv. 1. C. 4142). The indictment issued by the NKVD of the Kazakh SSR on January 31, 1945, and approved on February 3 of the same year, reported on the activities of an anti-Soviet Kazakh nationalist group that had been operating in Karaganda since the fall of 1942. The group was initiated and led by Zeynolla Abildin, an actor at the regional theater. The group consisted of student Asygat Rustemov, journalist Beysembay Zhaksylykov, correspondent of the republican newspaper Zhappar Umirbekov, and a number of other individuals who were involved at various stages of the investigation. According to the investigation, the suspects studied nationalist literature, held illegal meetings, recruited Kazakh youth, and engaged in anti-Soviet propaganda. The organization adopted the name "ESEP" ("Party of Sons Who Love Their People"); an oath was taken, and a leadership was elected. They discussed plans to distribute anti-Soviet leaflets, acquire cold weapons, and establish ties with other anti-Soviet organizations. The group's ultimate goal was to unite the Muslim population and establish an independent state (APRK. F. 20. Inv. 1. C. 4142. P. 400–401). By a resolution of the Special Council of the NKVD of the USSR dated June 4, 1945, Abildin and Zhaksylykov were each sentenced to five years of imprisonment for participating in an anti-Soviet group; Rustemov and Umirbekov were released after their time in pretrial detention was credited toward their sentences (APRK, F. 20. Inv. 1. C. 4142. P. 419–421).

Starting in 1942, the NKVD deployed its agents "Sabit", "Akhmetov" and "Saulen" as part of the "Pechatniki" investigation (APRK. F. 20. Inv. 1. C. 4142). Operational materials from the NKVD regarding agent "Saulen" contain the following information: "... He knew about counterrevolutionary activities, behaved hypocritically, warned members of the organization of the need for caution and did not inform the NKVD–NKGB, which had recruited him and infiltrated him into an anti-Soviet nationalist organization, until September 20, 1944" (APRK. F. 20. Inv. 1. C. 4142). Based on the information contained in these archival documents, it can be concluded that agents recruited by the NKVD were effectively infiltrated into underground youth organizations and, by informing their members of their status or carrying out covert operations, helped ensure that these groups remained undiscovered between 1942 and 1944.

Conclusion

In summary, we can note that in 1940–1945, some young men who sought to raise their social status and improve their financial situation came to the cities to pursue an education. There were people with alternative views among Soviet youth, even though they were in the minority; their gatherings, which began as literary circles, gradually evolved into underground groups and organizations. Their activities were uncovered by the NKVD through its network of informants.

The study found that repression against so-called "enemies of the people" was primarily based on social (background, level of education, having relatives abroad), political (party affiliation or participation in political activities), and ethnic grounds.

In this regard, several factors have been identified that explain why Karaganda was viewed as one of the centers of nationalist sentiment:

First, in order to mobilize public support, Soviet policy employed elements of nationalist rhetoric to bolster patriotic sentiment, a sentiment that resonated with some Kazakh youth.

Second, the young people who formed underground groups faced the consequences of the state's repressive policies toward their family members in their personal lives, which fueled their desire to change the socio-political situation.

Third, after their release from the Karlag camp, members of the scientific and creative intelligentsia who had been convicted on political charges and had come from various regions of the USSR worked in the Karaganda Region. While working at universities and research institutions, they shared their life experiences and helped foster independent thinking and intellectual freedom among the youth of Central Kazakhstan.

Sources

GAKO — State Archive of the Karaganda Region
 SSA NSC Almaty — Special State Archive of the National Security Committee Department for Almaty City
 AP RK — Archive of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan
 AAILA — Archive of the M. O. Auezov Institute of Literature and Art
 AKRD — Archive of the Karaganda Regional Department of the Committee on Legal Statistics and Special Records of the Prosecutor General's Office of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Дереккөз

КОМА — Қарағанды облысының мемлекеттік архиві
 Алматы қ. бойынша ҰҚКД АМА — Алматы қаласы бойынша ҰҚКД арнайы мемлекеттік архиві
 ҚР ПА — Қазақстан Республикасы Президент архиві
 ӘӘИЯ — М. О. Әуезов атындағы Әдебиет және өнер институтының архиві
 ҚР БП ҚСЖАЕАК ҚОБА — Қазақстан Республикасы Бас прокуратурасының Құқықтық статистика және арнайы есепке алу Комитетінің Қарағанды облысы бойынша басқармасы архиві

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