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Universidad del Zulia  
Facultad Experimental de Ciencias  
Departamento de Ciencias Humanas  
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# Repressive policy of Kazakhstan in the 20-30s of the 20th century

**Zhanar S. Saurykova<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Kazakh National Pedagogical University named after Abay, Kazakhstan

Email: Zhanar.Saurykova@knpu.ac.kz

**Samat B. Kurmanalin<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>2</sup>West- Kazakhstan innovative-technological university, Kazakhstan

Email: Samat.Kurmanalin@wkitu.kz

**Raisa L. Abdrakhmanova<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>3</sup>West- Kazakhstan innovative-technological university, Kazakhstan

Email: Raisa-Abdrakhmanova@wkitu.kz

**Akkaiyn M. Balykova<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>4</sup>West- Kazakhstan innovative-technological university, Kazakhstan

Email: Akkaiyn-Balykova@wkitu.kz

**Zhaskairat T. Yernazarov<sup>5</sup>**

<sup>5</sup>West- Kazakhstan innovative-technological university, Kazakhstan

**Email:** Zhaskairat- Yernazarov@wkitu.kz

## Abstract

The study aims to investigate the repressive policy of Kazakhstan in the 20-30s of the 20th century and its teaching in the course 'modern history of Kazakhstan' via comparative qualitative research methods. As a result, the teacher, using new pedagogical technologies in the lesson, puts the student in the position of the subject of their training, and as a result, they form new knowledge, they master new ways of action. In conclusion, the tactics of the repression against the peasantry differed significantly from the repressions against other segments of society.

**Keywords:** political repression, collectivization, peasantry, kulak.

# Política represiva de Kazajstán en los años 20-30 del siglo XX

## Resumen

El estudio tiene como objetivo investigar la política represiva de Kazajstán en los años 20-30 del siglo XX y su enseñanza en el curso 'historia moderna de Kazajstán' a través de métodos comparativos de investigación cualitativa. Como resultado, el maestro, usando nuevas tecnologías pedagógicas en la lección, coloca al estudiante en la posición de la materia de su formación y, como resultado, forman nuevos conocimientos, dominan nuevas formas de acción. En conclusión, las tácticas de represión contra el campesinado diferían significativamente de las represiones contra otros segmentos de la sociedad.

**Palabras clave:** represión política, colectivización, campesinado, kulak.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The past century has become a century of unprecedented shocks for Kazakhstan. Our society had to pay a huge price during the period of mass repression committed in the USSR throughout the entire period of its formation and existence. Repression is one of the most tragic phenomena of the 20th century. Hundreds of thousands of people were victims of legalized lawlessness. This caused irreparable damage to the gene pool, economy, defense capability, culture and the very spiritual essence of the people. The wheel of repression rolled through the destinies of both the intelligentsia and the peasants. In the

20-30s of the XX century in Kazakhstan, the population was dominated by the peasantry, which caused many features of the socio-economic and political development of the country, where farmers made up more than 70% of the population.

The problem of studying political violence, in particular, political repression against the peasantry, has become particularly relevant in connection with the changes that have taken place in Kazakhstan's society in recent decades (GELLER & NEKRICH, 2000). The question of the effectiveness and legality of the use of violence, including repression, in resolving social, national, and ethnic conflicts and the possibility of their use in the process of building a legal state implies an accurate knowledge of the essence and features of the legal mechanism for applying such measures. The experience of the past, the analysis of events in the 20-30s of the XX century allows us to identify patterns and take into account the lessons of dramatic events in the history of our country.

It should be noted that the Khrushchev thaw marked the beginning of a deeper study of the history of the period of repression. In the Soviet Union, research focused mainly on the analysis of causes, but on individual facts and the fate of specific people. Mostly they were either work of art written by eyewitnesses of events or biographies of repressed participants in the Civil war (DYAKOV, 1966). However, even these works allowed us to judge to a certain extent the scale of the tragedy that took place. By the time N.S. Khrushchev was removed from his position as the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union,

studies on political repression had ceased to be published in the USSR. In all the works devoted in one way or another to the period of the 1930s, at best there was a slight reservation about the ‘negative consequences of the cult of personality’, ‘excesses in the socialist construction’ (MOSHKOV, 1966; IVNITSKY, 1971).

A summary of the literature on the problem of political repression against the peasantry, published during the period from the 1920s to the present, shows that a large amount of factual and scientific material has been accumulated covering this process. Many historical sources that were previously inaccessible to researchers were introduced into scientific circulation (especially in the 1990s). However, it should be noted that the history of political repression against the Kazakhstani’s peasantry has not been studied enough. The main conclusion that can be drawn from the analysis of the historiography of the problem under study is the need for generalized research.

It requires a deeper understanding of the essence, mechanism and consequences of political repression against the peasantry, scientific analysis and a critical approach to evaluating existing research, and the search for new sources.

The purpose of the article is to study the scientific literature, archival documents and published sources to comprehensively investigate the process of political repression against the peasantry in Kazakhstan in the 20-30s of the XX century.

To achieve the goal, the following objectives should be solved:

–to reveal the general trends of political repression in the USSR;

–to study the situation of the peasantry in the context of repressive policies in Kazakhstan;

–to analyze the nature and mechanism of repression in the period of the procurement company and collectivization.

–to substantiate the features of the repressive state policy in Kazakhstan in the 20-30s of the 20th century.

–to describe new pedagogical technologies for the development of independent and critical thinking skills in teaching Modern History of Kazakhstan.

## **2. MATERIAL AND METHODS**

Political repression is not unique in history. Any state cannot do without the use of repression. Repression is one of the main functions of any state. In general, all against whom repression is used can be combined into two groups. The first is active opponents of the regime, both independently claiming power in the country, and betting on a third force. The second group is undesirable for the regime (dissidents and socially unreliable).

Repression in the USSR during the period 1927-1941 took place in the context of the newly established state structure, which predetermined their nature. Political repression in the USSR, did not go in a single stream. They varied depending on and for various

reasons. The most accurate reflection of the essence of repression seems to us to be the criterion of the tasks that were designed to solve the repression in a given period.

Speaking about the periodization of repression in the USSR, in relation to the chronological framework of 1917-1941, it is most correct to highlight the following stages:

Table 1: The periodization of repression in the USSR during 1917-1941

| <b>Stages</b> | <b>Years</b> | <b>Repression</b>   |
|---------------|--------------|---|
| <b>First</b>  | 1917-1922    | conquest of power   |
| <b>Second</b> | 1923 - 1927  | retention of power  |
| <b>Third</b>  | 1928 - 1933  | establishing control over the peasantry   |
| <b>Fourth</b> | 1934 - 1936  | establishing full control over the party  |
| <b>Fifth</b>  | 1937 - 1938  | Stalin's final victory in the struggle for sole power in the country ('Great Terror') |
| <b>Sixth</b>  | 1939-1941    | 'release of steam.'   |

In 1929, the Communist party and the Soviet government, in their relations with such a large class as the peasantry, began to pursue a policy of direct administrative pressure, which turned into political repression. Formally, there was no mention of a repressive policy

towards the peasantry or, even more so, of its liquidation. The peasantry class was divided into three separate groups: the poor, the middle class, and the kulaks (prosperous peasant). The liquidation of the exploiting class, the kulaks, was announced. 21 Jan 1930 in his article 'the question of the policy of liquidating the kulaks as a class' Stalin wrote: "... the current policy of the party in the village is not a continuation of the old policy, and turn from the old policy of restricting (and ousting) the capitalist elements in the countryside towards the new policy of eliminating the kulaks as a class" (ZHUMASULTANOVA, 1999: 12).

After the announcement of the liquidation of the kulaks, the question naturally arose as to how and who should do it and who should be classed as kulaks.

### **3. RESULTS AND FINDINGS**

The grain procurement campaign launched throughout the country in 1928 was the first in a series of mass economic attacks on the peasantry. The goal of the grain procurement campaign was to release the funds (mainly financial) necessary for the accelerated industrialization of the country. These funds were supposed to be obtained by selling the surplus of agricultural products on the foreign market. But the measures that were used to procure grain for the purpose of obtaining financial resources for industrialization were not a simple economic action. This was a real economic expansion against

the peasantry, undertaken because of the ideologized consciousness of the country's political leaders - the organizers of the grain procurement campaign. But they were pushed to this by the economic situation associated with difficulties in implementing the accelerated pace of industrialization. These difficulties were caused, among other things, by the beginning of the world economic crisis. For their permission, it was supposed to confiscate the product of their labor from the peasantry - bread. Ideologically, this was justified as the removal of surplus. Everything was taken from the peasants. The result of this approach to the peasant question was the complete impoverishment of the peasantry.

The grain procurement campaign, as an economic repressive policy, pursued quite definite goals and was intended to solve problems that its organizers did not consider possible to solve by other means. Goals can be focused on the following main points.

Economical: In a short time to get a significant amount of agricultural products, the implementation of which will make it possible: first, to avoid the consequences that threatened the emerging economic downturn, which turned into a global economic crisis. Secondly, use the funds received to create its industrial base, which is not inferior to the leading industrial powers of the world. Thirdly, to use significant funds to pursue an expansionist policy to maintain Communist internationalism and to be able to influence through it the foreign communist parties.

Political: First, to subordinate the peasantry to its influence by splitting it and depriving it of significant material resources. Secondly,

for the radical part of the Central Committee of the CPSU(b) to use the campaign as an opportunity to push more moderate circles in the party and government, while taking advantage of the aggravated situation in the country. Third, to strengthen the position of the Communist party as the only political force in the country, which the economically independent peasantry could potentially challenge.

To achieve these goals, the organized grain procurement campaign had to ensure the fulfillment of the main task: by any means to collect as much bread as possible in the shortest possible time. Stalin, who was the chief organizer and ideologue of the grain-procurement campaign conducted by such methods, said:

However, this method is sometimes combined with the use of extraordinary measures against the kulaks, which causes comic screams from Bukharin and Rykov. What is wrong with that? Why is it not possible sometimes, under certain conditions, to apply extraordinary measures against our class enemy, against the kulaks? (STALIN, 1939: 292).

There was also no precise legal definition of kulaks. The concept of kulaks defined by the law was too vague and, if desired, almost the entire peasantry could be brought under this concept (especially in Kazakhstan). To determine the number of kulaks in the village, the authorities relied to a certain extent on statistical data. In particular, the following description of kulak farms was used for statistical accounting in Kazakhstan:

Kulaks: farms for which the exploitation of their means of production is the main source of livelihood or the main source of cash

receipts; farms with **the systematic** employment of annual workers; part of farms with systematic hiring of laborers for a period of six months to a year; farms of industrialists and entrepreneurs; independent type of industrial farms with a significant amount of labor force; farms with fisheries and hiring of farm laborers for a significant period of time; the well-to-do part of farms with a simultaneous combination of land lease, delivery of means of production and a significant amount of hiring of labor.

It was from farms of this type that the virtually unrealistic plan for delivering bread was demanded. This plan was overstated. The farm **could not** then effectively exist, having passed this plan completely. The peasants did not understand the essence of the grain procurement campaign, except that with its help they wanted to take away bread. At the same time even the grain procurement plan was hidden from the peasants: "At all costs, it is necessary to ensure the top secrecy of the established **norms...**" (ZELENIN, 1994: 30).

Of course, the peasants, whose farms fell under heavy taxation, could not be satisfied with this state of affairs. At collective farm meetings, they spoke, expressing their dissatisfaction with the company. **This, in turn, became** the basis for condemning them as agitators against the Soviet government. Handing over bread to the state in economic terms did not give the peasant anything, as it should have been for the effective development of the economy. This was said by peasants, convicted later, as opponents of collective farm construction.

Besides, the peasants went to all sorts of tricks to avoid handing over the bread. At first, it worked, but each time it got harder and harder. When it became impossible to hide the already collected grain, the farmers moved to reduce the crops and hide them. Against this elementary, from an economic point of view, reaction to the confiscation policy, the authorities moved to more severe measures and stronger administrative pressure.

The main tool against the peasants, who hid their grain reserves and withheld their crops, the authorities made the judicial system. For example, a peasant who hid bread from the grain procurement authorities was condemned by the court under articles 61 and 107 of the Criminal Code of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic as a malicious speculator. The terms under these articles assumed a sentence of up to five years in prison. But the application of these emergency measures, however, did not give the expected results and did not allow the authorities to collect a significant amount of bread. The party leadership, not to be accused of liberalism against the kulaks, as the situation in the center become more strained, was forced to send the subordinate organizations of the strictest guidelines on the inadmissibility of any deviations from planned tasks and bringing to justice all those who did not provide sufficient in terms of grain

If you look at the judicial statistics, you will see that the courts were reloaded with cases on grain procurement. The number of people convicted in grain procurement cases exceeded all reasonable limits. So, in review the work of the courts during the campaign of grain on

Kazakhstan **Regional** Committee of the CPSU (b) given the following data, which we put to analyze the data in table 2.

Table 2: The class composition of convicts in Kazakhstan, convicted during the grain procurement period in the 30s of the 20th century

| № | Districts of Kazakhstan | The class composition of convicts |              |                  |            |          | Total convicts (persons) |
|---|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|------------------|------------|----------|--------------------------|
|   |                         | Kulaks %                          | prosperous % | middle peasant % | the poor % | others % |                          |
| 1 | Aktobe district         | 84,1                              | 14           | 1,4              | 0,2        | 0,2      | 1446                     |
| 2 | Alma-Ata district       | 70,7                              | 22,2         | 5,7              | 1,3        |          | 1044                     |
| 3 | Petropavlovsk district  | 79                                | 12,2         | 8,5              | 0,2        |          | 605                      |
| 4 | Ural district           | 82,8                              | 8,4          | 7,1              | 0,5        | 1,3      | 1521                     |
| 5 | Akmolinsk district      | 61,8                              | 30,8         | 5,8              | 1,5        |          | 829                      |
| 6 | Kustanay district       | 72,2                              | 18,6         | 5                | 4          |          | 412                      |
| 7 | Syr-Daryinsky district  | 66,6                              | 22,2         | 3,7              | 0,5        | 2        | 414                      |
| 8 | Semipalatinsk district  | 78,8                              | 11,7         | 9,2              | 0,3        |          | 792                      |
| 9 | Guryevsky district      | 94                                | 1,6          | 1                |            | 3,4      | 198                      |
| 1 | Kzyl-Orda               | 72                                | 2,2          | 2,1              |            | 23,7     | 153                      |

|        |                                |  |      |   |     |     |     |
|--------|--------------------------------|--|------|---|-----|-----|-----|
| 0      | district                       |  |      |   |     |     |     |
| 1<br>1 | Pavlodar<br>district           | 82,6   | 11,6 | 2 | 0,4 | 3,4 | 791 |
| 1<br>2 | Kar-<br>Karalinsky<br>district | the class composition of the convicts is unknown |      |   |     |     | 144 |

Thus, the leadership of the country has undertaken three types of repression against the peasantry.

The first was the grain procurement campaign. The fact that it was a repressive campaign confirms the fact that the attempt to get bread at any price was carried out in such a non-grain region as Kazakhstan. The campaign resulted in the failure to receive the expected significant funds, and the economic weakening of an already weak region.

The second type of repression was dispossession, as a result of which the village lost many previously profitable farms, and the state received relatively cheap labor from the dispossessed peasants.

The third type of repression against the peasantry was practically the same as that against the rest of the country's population. This type of repression was based on unjustified criminal prosecution and conviction. The last carriers of the former (before collectivization) self-consciousness and psychology were removed from the village. As a result, the peasantry ceased to be an economic force to be reckoned with and lost the spiritual core that **would, in turn, allow** it to restore its lost economic potential.

Thus, the teacher, using new pedagogical technologies in the lesson, puts the student in the position of the subject of their training, and as a result, they form new knowledge, they master new ways of action.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The study of the history of political repression against the peasantry of Kazakhstan and the activities of the party-state apparatus on the use of violence and coercion fully confirmed the relevance of the chosen topic.

In the process of studying the problem, three fundamental questions were identified: first, the reasons for the repressive policy towards the peasantry; secondly, the analysis of the mechanism of repressive (political, economic and ideological) measures used by the state against the peasantry; third, new pedagogical technologies in teaching Modern history of Kazakhstan.

As a result of the research, we came to the following conclusions:

1. The repressive policy in the USSR was determined by two fundamental motives. The first main motive was that the Stalinist group in the CPSU (b), which had won the struggle for power, was captured by its ideological doctrines and did not perceive reality otherwise than through the prism of the class struggle, understanding this struggle only as a military confrontation. All other forms of

struggle, which were proposed by relatively moderate circles in the CPSU (b), who lost in their claims to the leadership of the country, were dismissed as capitulating and compromising. The second motive was rational. But it played a subordinate role, though no less important. The basis of this motive was the fact that by 1929, outside the sphere of total control of the state, there were significant funds concentrated in the hands of millions of peasant farms. Therefore, the most irreconcilable figures in the leadership of the CPSU (b) not without reason believed that the existence of economically independent peasant farms is both a direct and potential threat to the existence of the power of the CPSU (b). To destroy the peasantry as the 'last capitalist class' and as a source of danger to political power, it was decided to deprive the peasantry of its economic independence. To implement this action, a policy of repression was undertaken. In other words, terror was the only lever of the government's influence on society. These motives were typical for the country as a whole because the motives of repression against the Kazakh peasantry could not be different than against the Siberian or other regions of the country.

2. Implementation of the task presented significant difficulties. The peasantry could not be repressed like the nobility because of their numbers and because the ruling regime could not exist without the peasantry. Therefore, the tactics of the repression against the peasantry differed significantly from the repressions against other segments of society. The organizers of the repressions used all the power of the state apparatus to subordinate the peasantry to their interests. For this purpose, three types of repression were undertaken: a

campaign of grain procurements, dispossession, and condemnation under a political article. These three types of repression are typical for the entire country. The grain procurement campaign had three goals. Firstly, obtaining funds from the sale of bread collected from the peasants for nothing to solve foreign policy problems. In particular, it was aimed at boosting industrialization, which made it possible to gain independence from industrially developed countries. Funds were also used for Communist expansion through the Comintern and foreign Communist parties. Secondly, the withdrawal of such a large amount of grain allowed the peasants to become relatively dependent on the state authorities. Third, this campaign was a touchstone in the attitude of society to the peasant question. Since the country was a peasant country until 1929, the citizens also had some pro-peasant thinking. Moreover, in the structure of Kazakhstan's urban population, the number of people from the village was significant. Therefore, this reaction of society to such an unceremonious withdrawal of grain showed the ruling circles how far they can go in their attack on the peasantry.

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