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SOVIET POLICY TOWARDS KAZAKH WOMEN IN THE 1920S–1930S: INVOLVEMENT IN PUBLIC LIFE AND EMPLOYMENT

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Abstract. Introduction. The article analyzes the impact of Soviet reforms on the status of Kazakh women in society, as well as the increase in women’s socio-political activity and their involvement in the labor force. One of the main social objectives of the Soviet authorities was to construct the model of the ‘new Soviet woman,’ thereby integrating women into society and maximizing their participation in the process of socialist construction. *Goals and objectives* – to identify the impact of socio-cultural transformations in Soviet Kazakhstan during the 1920s–1930s on the status of Kazakh women and to analyze the main directions of Soviet gender policy. The study also aims to identify the specific features of Kazakh women’s involvement in socio-political, socio-cultural, and labor activities. *Materials and methods.* The study is based on extensive archival material and press publications. Chronological and comparative-historical methods were employed in the work. *Results.* The study demonstrates that the Bolshevik campaign directed at women sought to define the traditional values of Kazakh society as ‘relics of the past’ and to promote new images of the ‘Soviet family’ and the ‘Soviet woman’ as instruments for accelerating the construction of socialism. Furthermore, an examination of archival documents reveals the multifaceted activities of the women’s departments, highlighting the importance attached to women’s incorporation into the workforce. *Conclusion.* The study demonstrates that, within the framework of the policy of ‘women’s emancipation,’ the Soviet authorities expanded women’s opportunities to participate in public life and obtain professional qualifications, but failed to relieve them of their domestic responsibilities. On the contrary, the ideal of the ‘working mother’ was promoted, requiring women to simultaneously fulfill the roles of hardworking workers who exceeded

production targets and caring mothers. During periods of economic crisis, this further increased women's domestic burden.

Keywords: women's equality, Soviet rule, women's department, new Soviet woman, gender policy

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1920–1930 ЖЫЛДАРДАҒЫ КЕҢЕСТІК БИЛІКТІҢ ҚАЗАҚ ӘЙЕЛДЕРІНЕ ҚАТЫСТЫ САЯСАТЫ: ҚОҒАМДЫҚ ӨМІРГЕ ЖӘНЕ ЕҢБЕККЕ ТАРТУ

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Андатпа. *Kіріспе.* Мақалада кеңес өкіметінің реформаларының қазақ әйелдерінің қоғамдағы мәртебесіне ықпалы, сонымен қатар, әйелдердің әлеуметтік-саяси белсенділігінің артуы мен еңбекке тартылуы мәселелері талданып, қарастырылған. Кеңестік биліктің негізгі әлеуметтік бағыттарының бірі - «жаңа кеңестік әйел» моделін қалыптастыру, сол арқылы әйелдерді қоғамға әлеуметтендіру мен социализмді құруға әйелдерді барынша тарту болды. *Зерттеудің мақсаты мен міндеттері* – ХХ ғасырдың 20-30 жж. Кеңестік Қазақстандағы әлеуметтік-мәдени өзгерістердің қазақ әйелдерінің жағдайына әсерін айқындау және кеңестік гендерлік саясаттың негізгі бағыттарын талдау. Онымен қоса, қазақ әйелдерінің қоғамдық-саяси және әлеуметтік-мәдени қызметке, сондай-ақ еңбекке тартылу ерекшеліктерін анықтау. *Материалдар мен әдістер.* Зерттеу ауқымды мұрағат материалдары мен баспасөз жарияланымдарына негізделген. Жұмыста хронологиялық және салыстырмалы-тарихи әдістер қолданылды. *Нәтижелер.* Мақалада большевиктердің әйелдерге арналған науқаны қазақ халқының дәстүрлі құндылықтарын «ескінің қалдығы» деп жариялап, жаңа «кеңестік отбасы» мен «кеңестік әйел» бейнелерін қалыптастыру арқылы социализмге жедел жету жоспарланғаны айғақталды. Онымен қоса, архив құжаттарындағы «әйелдер бөлімінің» жан-жақты қызметін көрсету арқылы әйелдердің жұмысқа тартылуының маңыздылығы айқындалды. *Қорытынды.* «Әйелдерді азат ету» саясаты аясында өкімет әйелдерді қоғамға араластырып, мамандық алуына мүмкіндік берсе де, оларды тұрмыстық міндеттерінен босата алмай, керісінше, қызметтегі жоспарды асыра орындайтын еңбекқор жұмысшы мен қамқор ана ролдерін бірге алып жүретін «жұмысшы

ана» идеалын насихаттап, экономикалық дағдарыс уақытында әйелдердің тұрмыстағы жүктемесін одан әрі ұлғайта түскендігі көрсетілді.

Түйін сөздер: әйел теңдігі, кеңес өкіметі, әйелдер бөлімі, жаңа кеңестік әйел, гендерлік саясат
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СОВЕТСКАЯ ПОЛИТИКА В ОТНОШЕНИИ КАЗАХСКИХ ЖЕНЩИН В 1920–1930-Е ГОДЫ: ВОВЛЕЧЕНИЕ В ОБЩЕСТВЕННУЮ ЖИЗНЬ И ТРУДОВУЮ ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТЬ

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Аннотация. *Введение.* В статье анализируется влияние реформ советской власти на положение казахских женщин в обществе, а также рассматриваются вопросы повышения их социально-политической активности и вовлечения в трудовую деятельность. Одним из основных социальных направлений советской власти было формирование модели «новой советской женщины», посредством которой предполагалось социализировать женщин и максимально вовлечь их в процесс строительства социализма. *Цель и задачи исследования* – определить влияние социально-культурных изменений в Советском Казахстане 1920–1930-х гг. на положение казахских женщин и проанализировать основные направления советской гендерной политики. Кроме того, целью являлось выявление особенностей вовлечения казахских женщин в общественно-политическую, социально-культурную и трудовую деятельность. *Материалы и методы.* Исследование основано на обширном архивном материале и публикациях в прессе. В работе использованы хронологический и сравнительно-исторический методы. *Результаты.* В статье установлено, что большевистская кампания в отношении женщин предусматривала объявление традиционных ценностей казахского общества «пережитками прошлого» и формирование новых образов «советской семьи» и «советской женщины» как одного из инструментов ускоренного строительства социализма. Наряду с этим, на основе архивных документов раскрывается многоаспектная деятельность женотделов, что позволило определить значимость вовлечения женщин в трудовую деятельность. *Заключение.* Показано, что в рамках политики «освобождения женщин»

советская власть, расширяя возможности женщин для участия в общественной жизни и получения профессионального образования, не смогла освободить их от бытовых обязанностей. Напротив, пропагандировался идеал «работающей матери», которая одновременно должна была выполнять роль трудолюбивой работницы, перевыполняющей производственные планы, и заботливой матери. В условиях экономического кризиса это способствовало дальнейшему увеличению бытовой нагрузки на женщин.

Ключевые слова: равенство женщин, советская власть, женотдел, новая советская женщина, гендерная политика

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Introduction. The problems of studying the place of women in society, culture, history are currently relevant and actively studied. It is impossible to understand the current position of women in society without turning to the past. The post-revolutionary period is especially important for the formation of the image of a Soviet woman, which in general has become an important part of the image of Kazakh women. It was then that the transition to a new model of a new socio-political social structure was carried out, which is one of the main goals of creating a new socio-cultural space.

The new government, which was established in the first quarter of the twentieth century, immediately took part in solving one of the most pressing problems in Kazakh society – the situation with women. Works and studies written in Soviet times were also exaggerated and glorified the contribution of the new government after the October Revolution in the ‘liberation of women.’ And when analyzing archival documents, the shadow points of this issue are also revealed.

One of the main directions in the social, demographic and cultural policy of Soviet government was the socialization of women into society. Including the formation of the image of a ‘new woman’ in the economy, politics, social structures and relations, that is, in a comprehensive, complete form, through the maximum involvement of women in the new construction of the state, involvement in public works. After all, the territory of the Soviet government in Central Asia and Kazakhstan was often not very interested in the idea of ‘building socialism’, retaining their characteristic, traditional life skills. Especially among the indigenous people, women had low socio-political activity.

In general, the problem of women was very relevant in the period from the XIX to XX centuries in Kazakh society. For example, if we turn to relatively pre-Soviet data, according to the census of 1897, 3,311,492 people lived in Kazakhstan, including 1,564,152 women, and 3,845,217 people lived in the region in 1914, including 1,795,511 women, that is, women made up 47% of the population. Although women made up almost half of the state's population, it was difficult for them to stay away from public life and live on an equal footing with men. And it can be noted that this issue, as a result of the measures taken by the later Soviet authorities, gave a rather positive result. The first decrees of the newly established authorities were adopted in relation to the institution of marriage and family. All-Russian Central Executive Committee and the Council of people's commissars of the RSFSR approved the decrees ‘On civil marriage, children and on the introduction of the civil status book’ and ‘On divorce’ in 1917. As a result, the legal threshold for marriage has now been established, as well as the possibility of voluntary divorce (Decrees of the Soviet government, 1957:237).

On the basis of a decree of the Central Executive Committee of the Kazakh Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic and the Council of people's commissars in December 1920, the custom of giving much cattle (qalin mal), which hindered the social rights of women, was declared illegal. And then, such legislative documents and acts were adopted, marking the marriage of girls without her own will, polygamy on January 2, 1924, levirate marriage and marriage of minors in 1925 as illegal. Traditions and customs, which have long been glorified in traditional Kazakh society, have now become ‘the exhaust of the old’ by the decree of the new authorities, and those who follow it are persecuted by law. Thus, the creation of a new role for women in society and the family has become

one of the most important steps in reducing its family and domestic responsibilities and actively participating in the formation of socialism.

Therefore, the relevance of the article is determined by the need to review the role played by women in the processes of Soviet political and economic modernization in Kazakhstan between 1920s and 1930s. Together with the Soviet authorities, a gender policy aimed at changing the social situation of Kazakh women was formed, and institutional mechanisms were introduced to involve them in socio-political, labor and managerial activities. This process, in turn, opened up new opportunities for women to receive education, to acquire a professional specialty, to participate in public organizations and the system of public administration. At the same time, this policy was implemented in close connection with the political, ideological and economic goals of the Soviet government. However, the involvement of women in public and industrial labor did not completely eliminate their traditional domestic and family responsibilities, although it expanded their social status. As a result, the model of a "working mother" was formed, which simultaneously combines labor, family and household responsibilities in social production. From this point of view, the study of the experience of involving Kazakh women in socio-political and labor activities allows us to determine the goals and specific results of the Soviet gender policy, its impact on the social structure of Kazakh society and the daily life of women.

Materials and methods. As for the theoretical and methodological part of the study, the research is based on the approaches of historicism, systematicity, and objectivity. To reveal the emergence, causes, and results of the women's issue in the Soviet period, the article employs the gender approach. This approach made it possible to establish that women's departments and other public organizations were planned as instruments for implementing the subsequent project of the 'new Soviet person.'

In the study, we used the method of consistency, so that the materials collected from archival data and the pages of the press are transmitted in an orderly manner between specific public laws, subject to all their regular rules. We had the opportunity to analyze and put into a single system the act documents and circulation minutes of Soviet government found in domestic archival networks.

Using the historical and comparative method, the common similarities and differences of various concepts on the basis of research works on the government of Soviet society in Kazakhstan and the woman in particular in the 20-30s of the XX century were studied.

Also using the chronological method, the study analyzes historical events in the order of their occurrence within the given time frame. We tried to determine the regularity of changes in society in Kazakhstan, the dynamics of development and inhibition, while maintaining the sequence of reforms adopted during that time.

In addition, by identifying the continuity of modern society in today's independent Kazakhstan and the socio-cultural transformation of society that took place in Soviet Kazakhstan in the 20-30s of the XX century, the retrospective method made it possible to reconstruct the post-October Revolution picture of the period.

The source base of the article consisted of mostly a stream of sources collected from domestic archives. For example, the documents of 139 funds of the archive of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Kirghiz (Kazakh) Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan (b), Kirghiz (Kazakh) regional party committee) and 141 funds (Kazakh regional party committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan(b)) provided the most valuable data.

The first data on the problem of women in Kazakhstan can be seen in the circulation of special letters sent by the Central Committee on the opening of a 'women's Department' on the ground to establish work among women in the fund of the archive of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 139 – Kirghiz (Kazakh) regional RCP(b).

In general, during the analysis of archival data, it was found that the specific tasks of the 'women's department' were adapted to the conditions of Kazakhstan and have been operating since 1922. However, there is still a dominance of generalized tasks. It can be seen in the text of the material 'Theses on working with women' among the documents of this foundation (AP RK. F. 139, Inv. 1, Fol.13 (a)). That is, the archival data clearly shows that by educating women in the spirit of

communism, it is planned to involve them in the framework of the 'new economic policy' to collect food taxes, involve them in cooperative work and increase labor productivity, teachers, employees of the Soviet apparatus, communication units working in engaged in intellectual labor, devoted to the idea of a more revolutionary 'through women's departments.' The text suggests the ways how to achieve them: the implementation of the decree of the Soviet government prohibiting 'getting much cattle (qalin mal) and polygamy,' holding cultural and political events to understand the essence of the class struggle of the party, literacy schools for women, a women's club, artels of entrepreneurship and crafts (wool, textiles), kindergartens and street children life pointed out the need of establishing special houses (AP RK. F. 139. Inv. 1, F. 200, Fol. 53-54.).

The 1st list of the 693rd fund of the Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan contains the collected data of the Society for the study of Kazakhstan under the people's Commissariat of education of the Kazakh ASSR for the period from 1920 to 1936, where minutes and special resolutions on women's issues are given. The second list of databases lasted from 1921 to 1941. That is why we could discover a lot of sources from the fund materials for our article.

Kazakh press newspapers and magazines of the XIX-XX centuries, as well as scientific works of domestic researchers on the problem of women's inequality in Kazakhstan in the first quarter of the XX century research works were also taken into account as the data base of our work.

Discussion. Although the course and results of the policy of the first years of Soviet power on the 'women's issue' are considered somewhat in foreign and domestic science, we believe that this topic still needs a comprehensive and full-fledged study.

If we talk about foreign studies that focused on the specifics of Soviet gender policy in the first quarter of the twentieth century, we should focus on the work of B. E. Clements 'Daughters of the Revolution: the history of women in the USSR (The history of Europe).' In his study, the author comes to certain conclusions, differentiating the changes in the situation and life of women before and after the October Revolution. According to B. E. Clements, Soviet politics, although it increased the position and status of women in society to some extent, could not free them from domestic and family obligations (Clements, 1994: 187).

And if we turn to the work of K. B. Usha, who is a researcher of the history of Central Asia and Russia, in her study 'Expanding the political rights and opportunities of women in the Soviet Union and Russia: ideology and implementation,' she argues that Marxist-Leninist ideology and the policy of Soviet power created a gender paradox in society. That is, the Soviet authorities, which carried out a large-scale campaign for 'the liberation of women,' put forward as an example the fact that, although women were given equal opportunities for education and work with men, in fact, the involvement of women in work was not carried out on a single equal basis, especially in state governing bodies and public organizations, as can be seen from the small number of women (Usha, 2005: 141-165).

Also, the works of Russian researchers of social history P. V. Romanov, E. R. Yarskaya-Smirnova are important in demonstrating the influence of the socio-cultural transformation of the Soviet period on the female condition is. They found that, although somewhat consistent with the general world trends of the historical revival of the Soviet Union, Soviet society and ideology are characterized by their own peculiarities, consider the problems of its interference and dominance of power over the life and way of life of the individual, the family, the expansion of benefits for certain categories, the emergence of the concept of 'social assistance' (Romanov, Yarskaya-Smirnova, 2009: 278).

Russian gender historian Z. A. Khotkina in her research raised the problems of feminization of unemployment and poverty, discrimination in the division of labor, low wages of women compared to men and inhibition of the growth trend of the position (Khotkina, 2023: 207-209).

Furthermore, E. A. Shabatura emphasized the need to examine the transformation of women's status in Soviet history and the impact of state ideology on people's lives through gender analysis (Shabatura, 2006: 192).

In another study entitled 'The Conflict between Ideology and Mass Consciousness in Defining Women's Place in Soviet Society in the 1920s: On the Possibilities of Studying the Problem' author focused on the position and role of women amid the contradictions and conflicts between the

patriarchal, traditional social order and the perspectives and principles promoted by the new revolutionary government (Shabatura, 2005: 55–57).

As for local researchers, Zh.R. Abisheva emphasized in her work on the given topic, that the socio-political work on Kazakh women was carried out within the framework of complex and contradictory processes, without a clear distinction between 'national consciousness' and 'class consciousness', the policy carried out under the motto 'equality' had a deep and significant impact on the social status of Kazakh women. As a result, it is noted that those policies have changed their traditional role and their own worldview, leaving an important mark on the system of historical consciousness and gender relations (Abisheva, 2003: 30).

A. I. Kasabekova in her monograph 'The problem of women's equality' in the 20–30s of the XX century (the social side, the history of the problem, the involvement of women in public life)' believes that although the Soviet authorities opened the way for Kazakh women to show 'great organizational talent and creative abilities,' trained sycophantic activists and made women 'the basis of the totalitarian system' (Kasabekova, 2013:145).

D. Kassymova and E. Teleuova examined the formation of the image of the 'new Soviet woman' and analyzed the works of foreign scholars who have addressed this topic. Their study highlights the main objectives and shortcomings of Soviet propaganda policy in shaping the image of the Soviet woman (Kassymova & Teleuova, 2015: 84).

Results. After the October Revolution, the Soviet authorities immediately launched their political and social projects concerning women. One of the most important parts of that was to make women more active by connecting them to the channel of radical changes taking place in society. Of course, the formation of a new image of women was carried out in accordance with the ideologically creative goals of the Soviet authorities and party workers and the activities and programs adopted in accordance with their own understanding. The social background for the formation of an active female appearance in society was the specific socio-economic and political interests of communist ideology. In the course of civil confrontation and wars, the majority of men were drawn to the front line, mortality increased, and the need to solve the shortage of labor by involving women in heavy and highly necessary work under the slogan 'Women's equality' as a source of human resources to ensure that farms and enterprises do not stop and work smoothly.

For the implementation of that idea, the Bolsheviks had to create an ideological basis for it, so women were actively involved in social activities, with the proclamation of their socio-political and socio-economic equality, since they had been victims of social inequality for centuries. It was necessary that the liberation of women began with the family. That is, at first until the middle of 1920, the importance of the family in the formation of a new female community was denied. It was accused of interfering with family work, it was said that the woman could not get out of the hustle and bustle of the house, her work deteriorated and her social activity was decreased. One of the scenes of such times described in the novel by Beimbet Mailin 'Raushan is a Communist' in 1929. In the same way, in the process of the above requirements, the transformation of family relations began in Kazakhstan and changes began to occur in the social status of women.

In solving the problems of attracting women to work, first of all, the development of a system of special kindergartens and the state protection of women's health were considered. A lot of work on the protection of children was done through the preschool Department of public education at the Kazarmyrevkom, created in 1919. Despite the difficulties of wartime, in the spring of 1920, enrollment in the course of preschool education was announced. The Kirghiz (Kaz)armyrevkom guaranteed the provision of cadets with hostels and scholarships of 50 rubles (Balgozina, 2009: 213).

Initially, in that two-month courses, 37 people studied full-time and 40 students studied in the evening or part-time department, although for various reasons most students did not complete their courses. Due to the ineffectiveness of the short courses, it was changed to a one-year women's course in September 1922, which trained the educator of preschool institutions. For the protection of young babies and mothers, the shortage of personnel was very serious problem in institutions. To solve the following problem, women with experience in public work were trained as delegates from the regions, and after having received the necessary professional skills, they got workplaces in the departments of

the protection of young infants and mothers as instructors or employees. The training of kindergarten teachers was explored on the basis of interns, accelerated and began to develop. On the initiative of pre-school education departments started to be opened kindergartens, milk distribution kitchens, mother and child homes, orphanages in the local area. That is, it was envisaged to create conditions for women to get a job.

However, many issues have not yet been resolved. The Soviet authorities declared women's equality, and although they allowed men to work equally, the cost of this equality was expensive. The newly created authorities carried out propaganda work, seeking to involve women in heavy industrial work under various slogans at the expense of the shortage of labor in the conditions of post-war economic turmoil. However, the low level of social assistance provided had a negative impact on the living conditions of women: a small number of: kindergartens, medical and obstetric centers, unlimited working hours, a shortage of necessary medical care, food storage, the complexity of social and hygienic conditions, no occupational safety was observed, the situation of women who worked half-naked in cold and unhealthy production buildings was still difficult.

In this regard, it is useful to draw on the information concerning women's health contained in A. Seitov's article, 'Illnesses among the Population and Public Health Measures,' published in issue No. 4 of the 'Dawn (Tang)', journal in 1925. The author specifically notes the high incidence of illness among the Kazakh population, particularly among women, and identifies several factors contributing to this situation. One of the main causes, according to Seitov, was the early marriage of girls whose bodies had not yet fully matured.

The author draws particular attention to the large number of impoverished families who married their daughters at the age of thirteen or fourteen. He points out that young mothers who were forced to begin childbearing at such an early age experienced impaired physical development, while their children were often born in poor health. The situation was further aggravated by the lack of qualified obstetric and medical assistance among the Kazakh population. In the absence of professional medical care, traditional birth attendants could subject women in labor to extremely harmful practices, including hanging and shaking them by a rope, pressing or pulling the abdomen, kicking the woman, and inserting their hands into the birth canal in an attempt to assist delivery. Such practices, as the author emphasizes, could cause particularly serious harm to young women (Alash in the history of the statehood of Kazakhstan..., 2018: 432).

However, the difficulties faced by Kazakh women were not limited to reproductive health. After giving birth, a young mother was expected to devote herself not only to childcare but also to the full range of household responsibilities throughout the day. Since comparatively few domestic responsibilities were expected of men, women were required to perform most of the household and subsistence-related work. For a woman who had recently given birth, the need to continue performing physically demanding domestic duties without adequate rest or attention to her own health inevitably had adverse consequences. The combination of childbirth, childcare, and intensive domestic labor ultimately contributed to the deterioration of women's health.

Thus, the high incidence of illness among Kazakh women, the shortening of women's life expectancy, and the decline in population growth were closely associated with the difficult socio-economic and domestic conditions in which women lived. The article suggests that addressing these problems required, above all, the dissemination of legal and social knowledge among the population, the establishment of maternity and obstetric facilities in rural areas, and the provision of accessible medical and obstetric assistance to women. Equally important was the need to raise public awareness of women's health and reproductive well-being (CSA RK. F. 693. Inv.1. C. 20. P. 25).

From the very first days of the Soviet government, commissions for working with stray children had already begun to work. The activities of women in relation to the fate of stray children were very active here: they organized various charitable events and received clothes, toys with the proceeds. They worked as a volunteer tutors at the orphanage. Of course, there were many people among the population who wanted to adopt orphans, but special state institutions opposed on that. For example: 'The Presidium of the Semipalatinsk gubkom of the RCP(b) on January 12, 1921, after having heard the information by the head of the Department "protection of mothers and babies' about the numerous

requests for adoption from citizens, decided: 'children from orphanages should not be adopted by private hands, they should be brought up in a communist spirit' (Balgozina, 2009: 214).

The adverse socio-political consequences of the plans developed by local party authorities with regard to orphaned and homeless children can be observed through statistical data. In 1924, the number of homeless children in Kazakhstan reached approximately 45,000. At the same time, there were only 218 specialized orphanages capable of accommodating such children, with a total capacity of merely 15,502 places. Even when children were admitted, these institutions faced a severe shortage of qualified personnel and adequate state funding. The provision of daily food, clothing, bedding, and other basic necessities remained at a very low level. As a result, children who found themselves in particularly difficult circumstances frequently escaped from orphanages and were forced to survive on the streets.

Nevertheless, despite the hardships caused by the famine and livestock losses of 1921–1922 and the economic collapse that followed the Civil War, measures aimed at protecting maternal and child health gradually expanded across the republic. Within this framework, medical consultation centres for pregnant women and infants were established, maternity and infant homes were opened, and commissions to combat prostitution were created.

Kazakh women also began to participate actively in the implementation of various social initiatives undertaken by the Soviet authorities through specialized public institutions and organizations. For example, reports of the Women's Department from 1925 indicate that 6,600 women from urban and rural areas had been elected as members of local soviets. The efforts of such prominent activists as Nazipa Kulzhanova, Sara Esova, Alma Orazbayeva, and Madina Begaliyeva contributed to the emergence of the first wave of the Kazakh women's movement. As part of these socio-political campaigns, programs were developed and implemented to promote women's education and to liberate Kazakh women from restrictive social and domestic practices.

According to archival records, the total number of delegates at the 1925 Women's Department congress was 10,787, of whom 3,925 were Kazakh women (AP RK. F.139. Inv. 1. C. 413. P. 23). During the same year, 445 meetings were organized specifically for Kazakh women and 1,455 for Russian women. Thus, a total of 1,900 women's delegate meetings were held, during which the plans of local Women's Departments, relevant programs and guidelines, as well as a range of important social and political issues, were discussed.

According to the reports of the cultural and educational section contained in the archival documents, one of the principal tasks of the mobile *Kyzyl Otau* (Red Yurt) units sent to remote villages was to identify literate women and direct them towards educational courses and school activities. The activities of the Women's Department of the Kazakh Regional Committee of the RCP(b) demonstrate that its work was not limited to political declarations but included concrete measures aimed at addressing women's educational and social problems. The organization not only formulated plans but also raised the issue of securing funding for the establishment of specialized schools for women.

As a result of negotiations with the Main Administration for Political Education (*Glavpolitprosvet*), funding was allocated for the establishment of 63 schools for the elimination of illiteracy. Of these, 33 were intended for women delegates, 20 for Kazakh women, and 10 for semi-literate women. In addition, the Women's Department assumed full responsibility for financing the ten schools planned specifically for Kazakh women.

Thus, in 1925, a total of 133 schools aimed at combating illiteracy were established in Kazakhstan, providing educational opportunities for 2,282 women, including 1,165 Russian and 757 Kazakh women. Sixty of these schools were established specifically for Kazakh women (AP RK. F.139. Inv. 1. C. 413. P. 30).

After having reviewed the 194 materials of fund, which contained data on the work of the department of education of the executive committee of Kyzylorda district between 1928–1930, in particular, circulating letters, protocols, statistics, lists of delegates, reports of the Republican People's Commissariat of Education, documents on the education of girls were identified. In Kyzylorda district, the number of students aged 8–12 according to the census of 1926 was 27,647 people. Among

them, the number of Kazakh girls was only 2249. In other words, the data clearly indicates that efforts to encourage girls to pursue education were in falter (KRSA. F.194. Inv.1. C. 5. P. 76).

The people's Commissariat of Education began to involve Kazakh girls in education and upbringing for the first time in 1926-1927. The minutes of the commissariat dated January 19, 1927 set out a plan for the mass involvement of Kazakh girls in educational institutions and specific measures for its implementation (AP RK. F.141. Inv.1. C. 2259. P. 3). As a result of that measures, the number of Kazakh girls in schools in that years increased by 1.5%. For example, in the Syrdarya region, in comparison with the previous ones, in 1926–1927, 4350 people took literacy courses, of which 668 were girls. In Kostanay, a boarding school for 50 places was opened at the girls' school. In addition to the boarding school, clubs for girls had started working in Shymkent.

The plan was developed to open two-year training courses for Kazakh girls who had reached school age in 1928-1929. Women's communal schools have started operating in Zharkent, Guryev, Aulie Ata and Semey. Their peculiarity was that the girls were taught not only education, but also special professional practice. Such preparatory courses for girls had been opened at universities. For example: teacher training courses for 30 people have been opened at the Aktobe Pedagogical College, and 2-year training courses at the Kazeducation Institute in Kyzylorda. Girls who completed the 4th grade curriculum were admitted to these courses. Those who completed it were involved in the revival of the work of 'Kyzyl Otau' (Red urts), which in those years reached 80. In 1928-1929, Kazakh students were attracted to schools: 89% were boys and 11 girls, compared to Russian schools: 66.3 boys and 33.7 girls. It was only through the implementation of consistent measures that the issue yielded results by the 1939–1940 academic year, with the proportion of girls reaching 45.1 %.

The living conditions of female students at higher education institutions were extremely poor; an example of this is an article titled 'The Living Conditions of Students at the Regional Kazakh-Kyrgyz Institute,' published in the 'Aq zhol (Bright way)' newspaper on January 24, 1923. for their living conditions, as primarily mentioned in the article that there was also told about the bedrooms comfort, although there were not enough beds. When they sleep at night, the surface beneath them is hard, and their backs ache. They lack of blankets or pillows; each child had been given only a single blanket. If they used it as a cover, they wouldn't have nothing to lie on; if they spread it out to lie on, they are left without a blanket to cover themselves. And if it was covered under them, it would not have a blanket to cover it. The article provides examples of the fact that there are many such gaps in the conditions of the hostel.

The situation regarding the provision of clothing for the institute's residents appeared critical: "Each child was issued only two sets of undergarments and two sets of outer clothing. No other clothing has been provided to date. It remains unknown whether winter clothing will be issued at all. Winter is already in full swing, yet there is no information on this matter. It is said that our 345 residents had neither winter footwear nor winter jackets. 'For our students, footwear is the most important element of winter clothing. It is currently very cold; without suitable footwear, the children could get severely cold and miss classes. If this issue is not given due attention, the situation will become critical,' the report stated.

The matter of the female students' diet did not go unnoticed either: 'The girls' daily breakfast consisted of half a loaf of underbaked bread and boiling water; if they did not drink it, they suffered from thirst, yet if they did, they burned their lips. Driven by necessity, however, they drank it nonetheless. After such a meal, the students remained hungry until five o'clock in the evening. Once classes ended, all the children would go to the dining hall. They were divided into groups of five.' Upon arrival, they were served three or four ladles of soup like the other members of the group. It contained rice, a negligible amount of potato, and three or four small pieces of meat. They couldn't even manage to feed the children their fill once a day; on some days, this meager meal was not provided at all. As a result, there was nothing to eat in the evening. Such was the daily ration. After having eaten, children spent two or three hours doing their homework,' wrote the author, vividly describing the harsh conditions of that time (Tanyrbergen, 1923: 11).

According to the article, the educational system consists of three stages: a practical-oriented school (where student selection took place), a preparatory class, and a main instructional class.

Students' progress from the practical-oriented school to the preparatory class and then to the main instructional class. In the upper grades, instruction was conducted entirely in Russian, with German taught three times a week, whereas a mixed approach is used in the lower grades. Despite the challenges of daily life, the students embrace the knowledge imparted by their teachers with great enthusiasm and diligence. Classes run continuously from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., except on Fridays.

However, the article explicitly stated that the harsh living conditions of the time affected both academic performance and the ability to continue their studies: 'Later, the children would band together in groups of five or six to figure out how to get some dinner. If they managed to eat their fill, they would sit down to do their homework. But often, the poor, hungry children wandered in search of food right up until bedtime, after which they went to sleep. The next morning, a bell would ring at six o'clock, rousing them from their beds. After washing up and eating their usual meager meal – plain black bread and hot water – the children would head to class. That was their diet.' That was nothing compared to the previous winter, when living conditions for the institute's students had been far worse and incredibly grueling. Their meager rations were woefully insufficient – they could barely scrape together enough black bread to last three or four days, and even cold drinking water was worth its weight in gold. Sometimes, their entire daily ration consisted of just three potatoes. Often, there weren't even enough of those to go around; many were left with nothing and wasted away until they were mere skeletons. In short, they were barely managed to survive. We hope that the situation this year will not repeat last year's. On the other hand, the quality of instruction at the institute is excellent. If the teaching were poor, the students wouldn't stay here for even a day. It is precisely because of the high standard of instruction that they continue their studies, despite all the difficulties. Of course, while there may be shortcomings in other aspects of the institute's operations, the high quality of education was of paramount importance. However, there is a downside: the students who studied there last year had gone, and the current students would not return next autumn. What does this tell us? This indicates that the hardships the students endured during the winter left an indelible mark on their memories. Currently, not even a quarter of those who studied last winter remain here. All this is the result of a lack of resources. Those who did not return did so not out of a lack of desire to learn, but because they had no other choice' (Tanirbergen, 1923: 12). Naturally, some young girls dropped out of their studies, unable to cope with deteriorating health or the difficulties of daily life.

Illiteracy posed a major obstacle to increasing civic engagement among women. Mothers lacking education and cultural awareness could offer their children nothing beyond basic upbringing – yet the importance of a woman's literacy in the matter of child-rearing was self-evident.

The aim was not only to involve women in the fight against illiteracy but also to enroll them in schools for adults, workers' faculties (workfac), and medical technical colleges (AP RK. F.139. Inv.1. C. 413. P. 27).

In November 1926, a permanent commission was established under the Central Executive Committee of Kazakhstan to study the living and working conditions of women, also socio-economic, domestic, and legal issues concerning women, and organize various public events (CSA RK. F. 248. Inv.1. C. 2. P. 30). The commission consisted of the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee of Kazakhstan, a representative of the Regional Department of women workers, the Youth Union, the Kosshy Union, the people's Commissariat of education, the Central Council of the people's commissariat and the people's Commissariat of Finance. Meetings of the commission were held once a month. Its divisions were organized under the provincial and county executive committees. To intensify the work of the commission, a special financial fund was opened. The following tasks were set for the commission:

- Assistance in the development of women's labor and living conditions, small business, and crafts;
- Ensuring the involvement of women in local enterprises and large industries in the country;
- Combating poverty, unemployment, and prostitution among women by establishing literacy courses, vocational-technical schools and colleges, and organizing handicraft workshops;
- Organizing associations, artels, and labor collectives within women's cooperative and economic organizations;

- Ensuring social and legal protection for women and appointing legal advisors to provide assistance regarding family and marital rights;

- Providing assistance to homeless women and facilitating their repatriation through government agencies;

- A special work plan for the implementation of those tasks had been developed: First of all, the creation of the organizational department of the commission, the main works of which were: setting the date of the meeting of the next meeting of the Commission; sharing of works between the members of the Commission.

- Secondly, the implementation of specific areas of work: consideration of the issue of creating a financial fund of the Commission; identification of ways to improve women's labor, that is, in the following areas:

- At home;

- At handicrafts;

- In the industry;

Consideration of issues that need to be considered and resolved during the meeting of the commission:

- Unemployment among women;

- Legal protection of women's labor;

- Revitalization of women's labor through the creation of workshops, artels;

- Improvement of production equipment to facilitate the work of women.

Consequently, to widely publicize the commission's work among the general public, it was proposed to publish information about it in local newspapers (CSA RK. F. 248. Inv. 1. C. 2. P. 5). 'Qyzyl Otau' (Red yurt) centers played a significant role in increasing the engagement of Kazakh women in rural areas. They began to actively participate in labor activities across the agricultural, handicraft, industrial, and cultural sectors.

While there were 13 of them in the country in 1926, the number had reached 50 by 1928. According to the guidelines, the staff of a 'Qyzyl Otau' was supposed to include a manager, a teacher, a doctor, and a legal specialist. However, despite a shortage of such professionals – and even though the mobile yurts were understaffed – they did not cease operations. The primary objectives of the 'Qyzyl Otau' included disseminating soviet laws among the population, providing necessary medical care, raising awareness about hygiene and sanitation standards, and conducting outreach and advocacy by engaging women in dialogue. However, the organization also faced significant challenges and shortcomings. Due to a lack of medical professionals, medical assistance was not consistently provided, and a shortage of specialized transport for moving the yurts (houses) between villages meant that these activities could not be carried out at all in remote settlements.

As for cooperatives, the trades most widely practiced by Kazakh women included the production of cream, butter, and dairy products, as well as carpet weaving, the making of alasha (traditional hand-woven runners), felt making, the processing of hides and wool, and garment manufacturing. For instance, cooperatives specializing in carpet weaving, yarn preparation, wool teasing, and headwear production operated in Kyzylorda. Similar cooperatives were established and began operations in the Zhetysu, Syrdarya, and Aktobe regions, as well as in Karakalpakstan. The primary obstacle to increasing the participation of Kazakh women in these cooperatives was their weakness in professional specialization.

According to 1927, the number of unemployed teenagers in Kazakhstan was 858, of which 250 were girls. For that reason, youth employment departments began to open in large cities. Unemployed youth were sent to seasonal jobs and special industrial courses.

A regular plenum of the Commission for Improving the Working and Living Conditions of Women was held on June 27, 1927. The issue addressed at this plenum was the establishment of special preparatory departments and handicraft schools for Kazakh women within existing vocational-technical schools, colleges, and technical institutes, as well as the creation of expanded boarding schools for girls attached to rural schools (CSA RK. F. 248. Inv. 1. C. 2. P. 31).

Furthermore, the meeting addressed issues such as professional agricultural cooperation, crop farming and land cultivation organizations, and the introduction – through Councils of the National Economy – of machinery designed to improve and alleviate women's manual labor (weaving looms, separators, sewing machines, etc.); it also considered combating outdated domestic practices and increasing women's participation in the work of public and state institutions (CSA RK. F. 248. Inv. 1. C. 2. P. 57). The commission 'improvement of labor and living conditions of women' was responsible for monitoring and implementing the implementation of that tasks. As a result, there were some opportunities opened up for some success. For example: in 1926, there were 329 Kazakh women in the party, and in 1928 this figure increased to 647. In addition, in 1926, obstetrics-paramedic – 2 technical schools and 1 – teacher courses were actively working, and 30% of those who studied there were women, 10% of them were Kazakh girls, and this figure increased by 11.7% the next year. In 1928, there were 2,589 Kazakh women in the labor and peasant trade unions, and 8% of those women held leadership positions (CSA RK. F. 248. Inv. 1. C. 29. P. 6).

However, there are discrepancies in the archival data; for instance, interesting information is presented in the report of the Women Workers' Department of the Kazakh Regional Committee of the RCP(b) for 1923–1924, held in Fond No. 139 of the Archive of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. While the number of female deputies was 1,176 (including 445 Kazakh women) in 1923–1924, it rose to 6,663 (including 3,492 Kazakh women) in 1924–1925 – an increase of nearly tenfold. According to the authors of the report, this was caused by the authorization of candidates from various clans to participate in the elections and by the manipulative tactics employed by the wealthy: 'we encountered instances where the wives of wealthy individuals and their relatives were nominated for election; since the men themselves were deprived of voting rights, they sent their wives to the electoral sections of the congresses to influence the course of the election campaign' (AP RK. F.139. Inv. 1. C. 413. P. 31).

However, directives were issued from above to 'deepen the class perspective' in the effort to liberate women from servitude and to move away from an approach based on sentimentality and pity – specifically, the view that women constituted a uniformly vulnerable group (whereby the vast majority, regardless of wealth or poverty, suffered equally at the hands of men, were universally backward and illiterate, and thus should not be socially differentiated) (AP RK. F.139. Inv.1. C. 413. P. 37).

Overall, an analysis of women-oriented initiatives reveals that they tend to be sporadic and campaign-driven rather than comprehensive or systemic in nature. This is evidenced by the fact that many such events are timed specifically to coincide with the period from March 8 to March 22 and are conducted with an ideological slant.

Conclusion. In conclusion, regarding the extent to which aspects concerning women's issues were realized within the framework of the Soviet project create a 'new Soviet person', it can be said that their full implementation had been a very long process.

The socio-political activism of Kazakh women evolved in close connection with the specific characteristics of the political systems of the union republics at the time. That is, in turn, fostered the awakening of Kazakh women's political consciousness and created a need for their active participation in the political transformations taking place in society. One contributing factor was that the successful and timely implementation of the political and economic reforms adopted in the 1920s and 1930s – in accordance with established plans – depended on women's participation. Women who participated in those campaigns and stood out were sent to regional courses, improved their political knowledge, and later got the opportunity to serve in the Soviet governing bodies. In addition, an important step was the involvement of Kazakh women in the work of public and state organizations, the training of future Soviet leaders among them. Therefore, the Regional Committee intended to use planned methods for their career growth by involving all party organizations in working with Kazakh women.

However, the article certainly cannot exclude the contribution of the Soviet authorities to the liberation of women from isolation, education, work, the formation of an active member of society, as

well as the opening of educational and cultural centers. This, in turn, contributed to the open raising of important social issues in society, as well as the creation of public organizations.

However, the process of mobilizing women and integrating them into the complex changes unfolding in society proceeded very slowly. The data and documents cited above demonstrate that the specific socio-economic and political interests of communist ideology lay at the heart of the social agenda to shape the image of the 'active woman' through various state-led initiatives. In the course of civil confrontation and wars, the majority of men were drawn to the front line, mortality cases increased, and the need to solve the shortage of labor force was solved by involving women in hard and necessary work under the slogan 'women's equality' as a source of human resources to ensure that farms and enterprises do not stop and work smoothly.

When assessing the effectiveness of such slogans, it becomes clear that many issues remained unresolved. Although the Soviet government proclaimed gender equality and paved the way for women to work alongside men, the cost of doing so proved to be extremely high. Facing a shortage of workers needed to rebuild the country, the Soviet authorities used various slogans to mobilize women for arduous labor. It was no secret that food shortages, the need for women's power in raising the shortage of household items to normal levels, and the scarcity of labor in stagnant, or newly opened heavy industries were also considered to be addressed through women, who are considered as cheap labor force.

The commission for the improvement of women's labor and living would have opened up many ways for women to work in handicrafts and light industry. However, that organizational work was mostly carried out only in large cities and provinces, such as Kyzylorda, Aktobe, and the attention was not paid to remote villages. 'Qyzil otai' were sent to develop such areas. At the same time, the work of the commission was hampered by a small number of relevant specialists, especially representatives of local nationalities.

At the same time, in the course of the analysis of the activities of the women's department and the 'Red families', it turned out that, despite the most important tasks of those organizations, they needed of attention on their works from the soviet authorities. That was, despite the lack of specialists in the departments of that period, lack of funds and lack of state support, women took on all the hardships and tried to fulfill the tasks that were constantly needed consulting. Therefore, it had been recognized that the socio-political work carried out among Kazakh women was difficult.

Although the policy of the 20-30s of the twentieth century towards women allowed women to enter society and get a profession, it did not relieve them of their domestic duties. Rather, under the slogans 'Labor mother', 'May kitchen slavery be destroyed! New will of life!', 'Every woman Cook have to learn to manage the state', the Soviet authorities promoted a woman to be accompanied by the roles of a hardworking worker and a caring mother, who exceed the plan in the service. As a result, the 'working mother' model was established as an ideal, and in times of economic crisis, the burden of women in marriage increased even more.

Therefore, the policy of 'women's equality', carried out by the soviet authorities without revealing the differences between national and class consciousness, made a huge change in the history of everyday life of Kazakh women.

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CSA RK — Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan
KRSA — Kyzylorda Regional State Archive
AP RK — Archive of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan

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