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# HISTORICAL VIEW OF ECONOMY

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC REFORMS OF THE 1920S  
AS A PREPARATION FOR THE  
FORTHCOMING «AGRARIAN RADICALISM»**

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**Annotation:** The article considers socio-economic reforms of the 1920s in Kazakhstan as a preparation for the forthcoming «agrarian radicalism». Historiography still does not give any distinct conclusions on the question, whether the socio-economical reforms of the 1920s years allayed the problem of inequality in the aul. The author calls for a wider perception spectrum of the so-called Soviet experience of modernization the agrarian sphere of Kazakhstan.

One of the most famous developers of modernization theory, S. Eisenstadt, wrote: "Historically, modernization is a process of alterations in such kinds of social, economic and political systems, which developed in Western Europe and North America from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries and later spread to the other countries..." (Chayanov, 1989).

Soviet historiography consolidated in the minds the concept about a special messianic role of "the first country of socialism" in "taking peoples out of dark nooks of their prehistory to the radiant future". It was quite natural that while being one of the national-Bolshevist ideology tools, it couldn't link modernization with the movement following lead of the "odious" capitalist countries.

The time passed, researcher generations gave place to other generations of researchers, the pile of the empirical material, which was "copied out" from the archives, was growing. Its "critical mass" came up to the level when the quality should undergo some transformations. But it didn't take place for a long time. And it certainly was not the researchers' fault. They came to be in such kind of "methodological perimeter" captivity, which could create problems for explorers, if they tried to break out from it. Also, the so-called rule of "large numbers" let the explorers down. It is the influence of this rule that strengthened the belief of the few people, who "doubted" the fact that the reforms promoted social progress. The researchers' conscience could be clear nominally: many documents, which indicated the matter of the reforms, showed only its positive characteristics. The source knowledge was subjected to the timeserving selection on the part of the researchers themselves. The so-called "scientific methodology", "principle of science partisanship" and other views of "the Marxist-Leninist world-view" initially set the "theoretical"

construction, and the scientists were obliged to arrive to it in the course of their research (if only they didn't want to be accused of misrepresentation of "the Marxist-Leninist world-view of the historical process"). In other words, a researcher, without yet having sat down at the desk, knew a priori what kind of result he should get. And he needed the archives not for arriving at the truth, but for the notorious conclusions that required certain documentary illustrations. Certain prospectors "kept ignoring" the documentary witnesses, revealing the events and facts, which didn't fit in with the ready schemes and stereotypes in the course of the so-called research procedure.

The first agrarian reform, which drew a wide response in historiography, was the Soviet government efforts in order to settle the land-water relationships in the south of Kazakhstan in 1921-1922.

One of the first men, who tried to reveal the socio-economic and socio-political land-water reform results, was T. Ryskulov. In his work *Dzhetysu issues*, which was published in Tashkent in 1923, he wrote: "The land reform, conducted in the period of 1921-1922, in Dzhetysuisk region, gave great political results. First of all, ... the resettlement kulaks violence, which was used to the defenseless Kirghiz (Kazakh - R.K.) population even during the first years of the Soviet government existence, was finally captioned ... But on the other hand, the land reform did not have any great results from the economic point of view... The quality of grounds, which were excerpted from the Kazakh and peasant kulaks and native bais was insignificant... In the land reform work itself, the political moments predominated over economic..."<sup>1</sup>

The individual writers pay attention in their works to the land-water reform content and to the aims

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<sup>1</sup> See "The History of Kazakhstan Soviet Socialist Republic", Almaty, 1963.

of the declared New Economic Policy. They agreed, that the land-water reform convinced the peasants of having the rights for major production factors (for land and water), which had been taken away during the colonization period. Thereby, the reform favored the restoration of aul farming, and consequently, “fitted in with” the New Economic Policy ideology. However, the authors marked, that New Economic Policy and the land-water reform came to agreement only with the national village. In case of Cossack village and resettlement village, the land-water reform turned out against the New Economic Policy, so long as it took the utilized land-grazing areas and water recourses out of their economic use.

Pushing aside of the anti-colonial aspect of the land-water reform continued in the historiography in the period of “the reign of F. Goloshchyokin on the Kazakhstan Party throne”. He tried to prove his conception of “Small October in the Kazakh aul”. So, he considered all the actions which were held in the national village before him as “the vain attempts that lacked in any class charge”, that’s why these actions required more radical additional editing (Danilov et al., 1989).

The assessments of the land-water reform by political journalism of the 1920s - 1930s passed to the post-war period historiography and literature of the 1950s - 1960s. Here it was also mentioned that the economic potential of the reform hadn’t been realized in full. First of all, because the content of given period literature was confined to the common land redistribution (taking away from one and giving to another). The land without the possibility of its development was just land, but not a means of production.

Though the historiography of the 1960s noted the ethnic conflicts during the reformation, it was done in certain “relaxed” intonations, without articulation. But on the other hand, some isolated cases concerning land and water rearrangements, which led to the rise of the Kazakh poor class-consciousness and its closer relations with the resettlement and Cossack villages poor, were centered obsessively. If that historiography was to be trusted, then the common mentality, which oriented the peasant on the intra-group solidarity and conformism priorities, and vice versa, on the antagonism with respect to the other groups (including ethnic groups), gave way to the “class solidarity” values. It is still less believable, because it was a matter of “the Kazakh and the resettlement poor”, simply speaking - about paupers and lumpens. And, as it was generally known, these categories of the aul and village social structure were devoid of class consciousness. In other words, there were efforts to pass the desirable for reality (in terms of the ideological censorship, of course) at the cost of ignoring the elementary sociology axiomatics (theories and concepts), in the same period of historiography. It was made, as we have already noticed, to try to ensure against any risks, but often

because of the actual incompetence in the social structure theory.

So, the land-water reform of 1921-1922 was regarded in the Soviet historiography of all the periods of its development as the action aimed at the colonialist heritage liquidation in the land-water relationships. But this aim acquired, so to say, a double projection. The first aspect was the demonstration of the new authority of its determination to develop the “fraternal paternalism and concessions” policy in relation to the national province, its yearning to struggle against any kind of great-power chauvinism. The second aspect was that the national peasants’ restitution on the land-water recourses answered the New Economic Policy ideas. It was so because the social reproduction process regained its expropriating preconditions. But both the first and the second cases supposed only the return to the forfeited status quo. In other words, more beneficial functioning and reproduction conditions of the traditional social and economic aul organization were restored. It was clear that the reform couldn’t be ascribed to the manifestation of the Soviet socialist modernization model, because the social and economic relationships were former in form and content in the course of the land-water reform. But this conclusion refers to the post-Soviet historiography now (Bander, 1956).

One of the most important function of the Soviet historiography as the integral part of the ideological structure was the creation of myth and its reproduction from generation to generation, which justified the power and the power actions. It was necessary to single out from the most stable myths the concept about the modernizing role of the social and economic reforms in the aul in the second half of the 1920s, fostered by the Soviet historiography.

Farming collectivization, tax policy, nomadic and semi nomadic farm settlement and other government actions in aul had been refused any positive projections for a long time. The hayland and cropland redistribution or farms expropriation of the so-called “bais - semifeudal lords” reserved a certain dubious appraisal: supposedly, alongside with the negative points there were much more useful things in it. “The useful things” were seen mainly in the role that the reforms had played in the destruction of the patriarchal-feudal aul principles and the break of its conservative support.

It was necessary to stress, that speaking about the direction of the reforms of the second part of the 1920s against the patriarchal-feudal relations, the political journalism of that time characterized it not as a universal real fact for the aul, but as “vestiges”, which were inherited from the “dark age of the feudalism”. In other words, the social and economic relationships in the aul were not considered in the literature of those years as “absolutely pre-capitalist”.

The historiography of the 1920s formulated the points concerning the agrarian reforms (the hayland

and cropland redistribution and semi-feudal *bais'* farming confiscation), and sent them as messages, which like a baton, were delivered from one historiographic period to another. The essence of the matter was: the reforms favored the "patriarchal and feudal remains" liquidation in the aul, removal of the obstacles for the expansion of commodity relations here. These obstacles, being better "cleansed of the patriarchal and feudal remains" in the post-reform period, caused class differentiation, class-consciousness advance in the auls, i.e. self-identification of "the aul working people as the antagonists of the exploiter elements".

This assessment of the reforms role was assumed by the whole future historiography without checking it against the criterion of methodological justifiability.

Nobody tried to put the question marks here, although there were many opportunities to do that, especially from the beginning of the 1950s. It was, as if everybody was in collusion. They "endorsed" in their publications just those meaning and sense of the reforms, which were engaged by the historiography of the 1920s - beginning of the 1930s.

Thus, following the assertions and conclusions of Soviet historiography, the agrarian reforms of the second half of the 1920s assisted the solution of triune modernizer problem. Firstly, they, allegedly, destroyed the patriarchal-feudal relations. Secondly, they assisted in releasing the "entrances" for commodity (market) relations in the Kazakh aul. Thirdly, the aul, by virtue of operation of the first two moments, began to demonstrate presuppositions of "readiness" for the perception of ideas of "class solidarity" and "socialist reorganization of society". According to Soviet historiography, all the three aims "organically built into" the azimuth of the general Bolshevik modernization pretension - to "carry" the social systems that were backward in their development (in accordance with the so called Marxist-Leninist structural theory - "patriarchal-feudal") to socialism, escaping the "Calvary" of capitalism".

As we have already noted earlier, this sense of the reforms was variably used with good effect by both the pre-war and post-war historiography, and at the last stage of development of Soviet historiography. The researcher of the process of historiography of that period N. Alimbayev (Алимбаев Н.) specially noted that "modern historiography of the problem (the literature of the second half of the 1950s - 1980s was meant. - R.K.) synthesizes the achievements of the two previous periods (end of the 1920s - middle of 1930s, end of 1930s - first half of 1950s)" (Ergaziev, 1956).

It is conceived that in Soviet historiography the modernization potential of the reforms of the 1920s turned out to be given an overrated mark in to the extent that was demanded by the ideological doctrine. And the latter was more and more losing the sense of proportion and became a hostage of self-created

unprecedented wave of opportunism. "The only scientifically true Soviet Marxist-Leninist historiography" did not get tired "to hurt truth" by the so-called bourgeois falsifiers of the history of Kazakhstan and other republics of the Soviet Orient by their singular success, which became possible because of "the transfer to socialism, escaping the stage of capitalism development". The conclusive proof for the demonstration of such success were the "gloom and lack of prospects" of many Afro-Asian countries. Their social structures were equal to those of Kazakhstan and Central Asian community before the socialistic modernization. But for all that, for some reason the success "was forgotten". For example, in Japan the "economic miracle" ripened from the depth of pre-industrial relations not as a result of their "escaping" capitalism, but right because of its strongest force of modernization.

The later historiography (the 1960s - 1980s) gradually became familiar with this tradition without managing itself with any verification and critical overestimation of the worked-out stereotypes and schemes. It came to nothing more than to the "creative attachment" in the early mounted manner of execution, as it were, "the new arguments" or, as it was qualified, "introduction of the earlier unknown facts and materials in the scientific use".

"The strongest argument" in favor of the conclusion about "the undermining of patriarchal-feudal exploitation institutes" during the realization of the action on the redistribution of grasslands and croplands in the aul became statistics. It started from the lofty tribunes of the Party and from here it was already duplicated by the Party social and political journalism.

A certain breakthrough in the research of the socio-economical reforms of the 1920s took place at the stage of historiography development that fell on the end of the 1980s and on the beginning of the 1990s. The monograph of Zh. Abylkhozhin "The traditional structure of Kazakhstan: social and economic aspects of functioning and transformation" (1920-1930) was published in 1991. The author offered a new vision of the socio-regulative actions of the state through the analysis of the functioning mechanism of the reproduced connections in the pre-kolkhoz aul (grasslands and croplands redistribution, expropriation of farms of the so-called "semi-feudal *bais'*"). He showed that within the communal cooperation, as at the level of wider territorial-economic and social organization, very complicated processes took place, which provided a stable reproduction of the traditional socio-economic structure.

In this connection, we introduce the notion of "socio-economic ecosystem", extending it over the traditional structure that had been formed over the centuries. We aim to underline that the peculiar ecosystem principle took place within the limits of the traditional structure. The traditional structure that functioned in those times can figuratively be presented

as a peculiar socio-economic ecosystem, where all the elements, be they communal and non-communal formations, i.e. the farms of ordinary commoners, prosperous landowners and cattle-farmers, small and middle bays, as well as semi-feudal bays, occupied a niche that had been assigned for them in the production process... The actual entity of each of them served the guarantor of the whole social stratum life sustenance. The removal or the coercive blocking of any of these elements were conjugated with the breakage of production (economic) relations and, subsequently, caused the processes that destructed the mechanism of self-organization and self-producing of the traditional structure, which had been debugged during the prolonged social reclamation of natural areas". Our main conclusion regarding the socio-economic reforms consequences of the 1920s came to the following well-reasoned statement: "...Within the bounds of the traditional structure, there operated a great deal of reproduction economic connections. They all were some kind of nerves of the economic-technological organism. If you touch one of them it will hurt the entire organism. The state with its "class" policy did not only touch, but even mercilessly tore those reproduction "nerves", dooming the functioning economic system to palsy".

First of all, the given article is attractive by a new concrete-historical material and its interpretation in the context of new conceptual schemes. But, nevertheless, the research concentration is appreciable, substantially, on the socio-political sides of the reforms to the detriment of their socio-economical meaning disclosure.

Thus, the history of the socio-economical reforms of the 1920s in the Kazakh aul in modern historiography begins to be involved in a rather serious research development. In connection with this, there is a certain historiographic material that allows making some critical observations. In our opinion, we can express them in the following points:

- historiography still does not give any distinct conclusions on the question, whether the socio-economical reforms of the 1920s years allayed the problem of inequality in the aul. The Soviet historiography replied positively, referring to the formal characteristics, for instance, how much land was redistributed in favor of pauper economy, and how many cattle and agricultural inventory were forfeited from bay farms and given to poor farms and so on, whereas access to farmland did not yet mean that low-powered households had an ability to include it effectively in turnover;

- the answer to the formulated above question can be got only through the analysis of economic reproduction connections functioning in the Kazakh aul, i.e. how they reacted to interference in their debugged mechanism;

- rental relations contents demands a thorough study, as some materials and observations of

contemporaries indicate that, for example, a poor peasant household, having got hayfields in the course of the reform, immediately let them on lease to their bay farms, from which they had been detached (the same was the case with ploughed fields and agricultural inventory), and in the course of cattle confiscation, the paupers, as soon as the "reform representative" departed, returned it to bay and again as if on the rent right;

- it is necessary to clarify the question, how the reforms deformed the economical correlation between the community and the cattle farms (in the Soviet historiography they are designated as "semi-feudal bay");

- it is necessary to give a new interpretation to the reforms as the beginning, the counting point of the approaching demographic tragedy;

It seems that these and other problems let to come to wider perception spectrum of the so-called Soviet experience of modernization the agrarian sphere of Kazakhstan.

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