

Kazakh autonomism in 1918: competition of projects and dynamics of alliances

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In the Russian Empire, the transition from traditional to modern society took place at different rates, had regional and ethnosocial specifics. Nation-building, as it is understood today, was not on the agenda of the tsarist and Provisional governments. But the formation of sufficiently significant educated and politically active strata in the regions has actualized federalist sentiments in the context of the disintegration of the state¹. At the same time, in 1917, the all-Russian administrative-territorial format became the basis for the development of regional ethnopolitical projects. They remained within the boundaries of the former empire's space, which was historically and geographically stable, perceived in the long term as reliable, familiar and habitable (subject to its democratization). This spatial integrity also affected the interaction of regional leaders and structures.²

The active growth of intercultural contacts of the Kazakh Steppe at the beginning of the XX century. encouraged the comprehension of the essence of “Kazakhness” by the educated part of society. Already in 1913, the name of the national newspaper appeared as a self-determination “Kazakh”, and the development of a political project, starting with an interest in all-Russian and even international cultural, linguistic and religious solidarity, went in the direction of local ethnocentricity. Kazakh democrats, in comparison with other Central Asian national activists, were the most integrated into all-Russian politics, had already gained organizational and socio-cultural experience in the parties of the Socialist-Revolutionaries, Cadets, Social Democrats, as well as in large public structures such as Zemgor.

The deepening national crisis stimulated their initiative, and the leader of the movement A.N. Bukeikhanov realized the futility of maintaining loyalty to the program and practice of the People's Freedom Party, of which he became a member of the Central Committee in the context of the collapse of the country. His decision in July 1917 to create the national party “Alash” was unanimously supported by his comrades-in-arms. Hardly had he organized it as a full-fledged instrument of the struggle for power, when spoke in favor of “regional territorial-national autonomy” as part of

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¹ In 1905—1907. the post-revolutionary structure outside the Russian Empire was seen only by radical Polish nationalists and some of the revolutionaries (Historical course “New imperial history of Northern Eurasia.” Ch. 10. XX century: empire in the era of mass society. Part 1. The collapse of the regime of the Russian national empire // Ab Imperio. 2016. No. 1. P. 362—363).

² Their federalist sentiments during the revolution were reactive and improvisational. (Krasovickaya T.YU. Etnicheskie elity o formah federativnogo ustroystva Rossii (1917—1929) // Mir Bol'shogo Altaya. 2017. № 3. S. 142).

the future Russian Democratic Federation³, which also responded to the sentiments on the outskirts. Despite the absence of the party program, already in the summer in the Steppe Territory, Kazakh committees were functioning, which became both party structures and local self-government bodies. As the latter they entered into coalitions with other local authorities — both created on their own initiative in the spring and then by the Provisional Government.

Autonomism turned out to be the highest point of evolution and the most radical demand of Kazakh democrats at the beginning of the 20th century. The leaders of “Alash” considered the federation the optimal form of relations between the center and national-territorial entities, combining the benefits of state unity and centralized power with balanced independence of the outskirts. The choice of the autonomist model was based on taking into account the state of society: a fairly deep integration of the region into the Russian political and economic system, the historically established relationship of Kazakhstan with other regions of the country, a high probability of losing even minimal independence in the event of the declaration of independence. At the same time, the project assumed participation in the nationwide reorganization of Russia.

The Kazakh autonomists had to quickly respond to the rapidly developing competition between the leading military-political forces, which relied on their own preferences and ideas about the country's future. The dynamics of the development of autonomist preferences and their specific models differed depending on the nature and speed of political processes in the regions, the level of organization and influence of ethnopolitical activists, the strength and strength of ties between the main participants in the struggle for power. The embodiment of these models fell on the extreme 1918. The almost unlimited faith of the Kazakh leaders in autonomy through the All-Russian Constituent Assembly, with the help of which they were going to obtain statehood and power as the only legitimate representatives of their people, was reinforced by the traditions of the ethnosocial hierarchy. Already in September 1919, when the Bolsheviks began to create Soviet autonomy, a member of the Kyrgyz Military Revolutionary Committee (KirVRK) Lukashev (Vadim) wrote to the Central Committee of the RCP (b): “And if now the Kyrgyz masses are shouting about autonomy, absolutely not knowing, what autonomy is and not knowing what it carries with it, but expecting something better, better than what it was and what it is now, she nevertheless as one person exclaims “autonomy-autonomy” [I am convinced that they are shouting about “autonomy “only” Tunganchins “, not the mass ... — approx. Auth.], this does not mean that this mass is for Soviet power, and even more so for communism ... While this “autonomist” adventure was suggested to her by a bunch of rich khan bandits, whom we were “forced” to temporarily pat on the head, by all means attracting them to themselves “to help”, as an element that has “enormous” [there is no “huge” influence of them! And they receive it — “through us”! — approx. author] influence on the dark people, influence based on the pitiful remnants of the former despotic greatness.⁴ “

The reorganization of statehood was the result of a fierce confrontation between competing projects: all-Russian (Bolshevik and anti-Soviet) and local, which com-

³ Delo (Semipalatinsk). 1917. № 61. 18 avgusta; Alash-Orda. Sbornik dokumentov. Kzyl-Orda, 1929. S. 34—35, 38, 39—40.

⁴ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 86, d. 129, l. 112. Until 1925, Kazakhs were called Kyrgyz (Kyrgyz-Kaysaks, Cossack-Kyrgyz).

bined political, confessional and cultural needs. The provisional government did not dare to grant autonomy to the national borderlands, and the anti-Soviet forces were unable to offer a realistic alternative to the adversary's slogans. As a result, the struggle unfolded between the regional elite, which united all significant political forces with different ideological "stuffing" and common cultural and religious identity, and left-wing radicals led by the Bolsheviks.

The statement of the leaders of "Alash" on the political unification of the areas of traditional settlement of Kazakhs could not be realized without "external" support from military, financial, material and technical and other resources. The Bolshevik version of Kazakh autonomy provided for the recognition of Soviet power with its class principle. He was opposed by supporters of "united and indivisible Russia" ("white") and federalists (Committee of members of the Constituent Assembly — Komuch). The strong side was the regionals — the Siberian regional specialists, in November 1918, however, forced to agree to a misalliance with the consolidating enemy of the Soviets — the government of A.V. Kolchak. But the very center of power, capable of reuniting the territory of the disintegrated country, "moved" in the military-political and geographical sense.

This predetermined the situational tactics of the Kazakh ethnocentrists. Unlike other autonomists in the region⁵, history has provided them with much more room to maneuver. I had to enter into complex and unpredictable relationships with different political partners, each of whom had their own vision of their role in the struggle for power. As a result, at the same time it was necessary to negotiate and bargain with different, sometimes opposing sides. I will dwell on the most important episodes.

The close connection of Kazakh intellectuals with Siberian oblasts, due to objective reasons, political pragmatism and the dynamics of the internal evolution of both forces, was established long before the revolution and persisted in 1917—1919⁶. Autonomists were in no hurry To "break away" from their Siberian colleagues, preferring to participate in their congresses and to be part of the structures they created, until the end of 1917 they did not dare to declare autonomy and dissociate themselves. Oblast and Alash residents allowed a combination of territorial and national approaches to

⁵ About Turkestan autonomy see Agzamhodzhaev S. *Istoriya Turkestanskoy avtonomii* (Turkiston Muhtoriyati). Tashkent, 2006; *Istoriya obshchestvenno-kul'turnogo reformatorstva na Kavkaze i v Central'noj Azii* (XIX — nachalo XX veka). Samarkand, 2012; Gafarov N.U. *Dzhadidizm v Srednej Azii v konce XIX — nachale XX vv.* Avtoref. dis. ... d-ra ist. nauk. Dushanbe, 2013; *Turkestanskaya avtonomiya* (Turkiston Muhtoriyati). Sozdanie i razgrom. Sbornik statej (URL: <https://greylib.align.ru/503/turkestan-skaya-avtonomiya-sozdanie-i-razgrom-sbornik-statej.html>); Abdullaev R.M. *Nacional'nye politicheskie organizatsii Turkestana v 1917—1918 gg.* Tashkent, 2016; i dr.

⁶ See more: Shilovskij M.V. *Hronika oblastnicheskogo dvizheniya v Sibiri (1852—1919)* // *Materialy k hronike obshchestvennogo dvizheniya v Sibiri v 1895—1917 gg.* Vyp. 1. Tomsk, 1994. S. 6—16; Amanzholova D.A. *Kazahskij avtonomizm i Rossiya. Istoriya dvizheniya Alash.* M., 1994; Remnyov A.V. *Zapadnye istoki sibirskogo oblastnichestva* // *Russkaya emigratsiya do 1917 goda — laboratoriya liberal'noj i revolyucionnoj mysli.* SPb., 1997. S. 142—156; Shilovskij M.V. *Oblastnichestvo i regionalizm: evolyutsiya vzglyadov sibirskogo obshchestva na puti inkorporatsii Sibiri v obshcherossijskoe prostranstvo* // *Administrativno-gosudarstvennoe i pravovoe razvitie Sibiri XVII—XX vekov.* Irkutsk, 2003 (URL: <http://kraeved.lib.tomsk.ru/page/12/>); Nam I.V. *Nacional'nyj vopros v programmyh ustanovkah sibirskih oblastnikov, zakonotvorcheskoj i politicheskoy praktike Sibirskoj oblastnoj dумы (1917 — yanvar' 1918 gg.)* // *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta.* Ser. «Istoriya. Kraevedenie. Etnologiya. Arheologiya». № 281. 2004. S. 47—57; Nam I.V. *Nacional'nyj faktor v deyatel'nosti Sibirskoj oblastnoj dумы v period «demokraticeskoy» kontrrevolyucii (iyun' — noyabr' 1918 g.)* // *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta.* № 288. 2005. S. 151—158; Shishkin V.I. *Pervaya sessiya Sibirskoj oblastnoj dумы (yanvar' 1918 goda)* // *Istoriya beloj Sibiri. Sbornik nauchnyh statej.* Kemerovo, 2011. S. 54—61; i dr.

the federalization of Russia and Siberia with the inclusion of Kazakh lands in the latter.

This is shown by the decisions of the Siberian Regional Congress in Tomsk (October 8—16, 1917), in which 10 Kazakhs also took part. The delegates were divided into autonomists and federalists (the latter did not recognize the unity of the region and advocated its division into several regions).

Bukeikhanov said: “We want to get self-determination together with Siberia.” He advocated the territorial consolidation of the Kazakh lands on the basis of their economic specifics and free interethnic integration. The congress spoke in favor of the formation of “extraterritorial personal-autonomous unions within the Siberian autonomy, which was to include the territory to the east of the Urals with the inclusion of the entire Kyrgyz Territory with the free expression of the will of the population inhabiting these limits.” Siberia had “the right to transfer part of its legislative powers to separate regions and nationalities occupying a separate territory, if the latter required it, thus turning into a federation, ie. union of regions and nationalities”.

Bukeikhanov was cautious, preferring a gradual movement from unity to isolation. Speaking in November 1917 in Semipalatinsk, he emphasized that there are peoples in Russia who speak 105 languages, therefore there cannot be one law that satisfies everyone: “Such a law can be issued for itself by each individual nation only by itself.” In the Constituent Assembly, the Kazakhs must defend the idea of autonomy based on the unity of either blood, or territory, or economy. The head of “Alash” considered “common territory” preferable, and therefore “it is beneficial for the Kazakhs to enter the Siberian autonomy.” He did not give up self-determination, but did not consider it possible to rush due to the lack of managerial personnel. And when “we are sufficiently prepared for management, then we will demand autonomy from Siberia, there will be no delay, at the Siberian Congress this is included in the program.” In the Siberian Duma, the Kazakhs, he noted, together with other peoples (Yakuts, Buryats) will take a worthy place⁷. The draft program “Alash”, published on November 21, indicated: Russia should be a democratic federal republic with a presidential form of government and universal suffrage, legislative power should belong to the Duma. “The autonomy of the Kyrgyz ... is included in the Russian Federation on an equal basis with other nationalities ... there is equality, personal inviolability and freedom of speech, press and unions.” “At first, the Kazakh autonomy can form a single entity together with other peoples interested in this, and if not, then from the very beginning it can become an independent unit.” At the 2nd All-Kazakh Congress (December 1917, Orenburg) Bukeikhanov “ardently argued that under modern conditions of social life and the state of culture and education among the Kyrgyz, it would be inexpedient and unreasonable to isolate them politically and take an independent course of purely autonomous government.” The newspaper “Kazakh” soon explained what is the basis of statehood: “1) the presence of a separate territory, 2) the presence of the population on it, 3) the power that governs the country.”⁸ Later it was

⁷ On October 16, the delegates defined the “Regional structure of Siberia”: with the unity of the Russian Republic, its parts needed “national or territorial autonomy.” Ermekov became a member of the Siberian Regional Duma of the government of Western Siberia, representing the interests of small peoples. See.: *Sibirskaya zhizn'* (Tomsk). 1917. 8, 11, 17, 21 oktyabrya; *Put' naroda* (Tomsk). 1917. 17 oktyabrya; *Dvizhenie Alash. Sbornik dokumentov i materialov. April' 1901 g. — dekabr' 1917 g.* / Pod. red. T.K. Zhurtabayeva. T. 1. Almaty, 2004. S. 456—457; Amanzholova D.A. Na izlome. Alash v etnopoliticheskoy istorii Kazahstana. Almaty, 2009. S. 180—181; SHilovskij M.V. Oblastnichestvo i regionalizm...

⁸ *Kazhstanskaya pravda*. 1989. 19 iyulya; *Alash-Orda...* S. 73—76; *Dvizhenie Alash...* S. 439, 504; *Orenburgskij kazachij vestnik*. 1917. 23 dekabrya; *Kazah*. 1918. № 257 (Cit. po: Bejssembiev K.B. Idejno-

noted that the main reason for the refusal to immediately proclaim autonomy was the uncertainty of the situation in the province and the situation in neighboring regions. So, at this stage, regionalists, preferring national and cultural autonomy, nevertheless went to meet the Kazakh leaders. The two neighboring centers of autonomism seemed to have found a compromise and did not compete, counting on a democratic reorganization of the whole of Russia and assuming different options for future relations. However, more and more clear organizational and political contours were acquired by their own centers, claiming regional leadership and a new nature of relations with the all-Russian government⁹.

Meanwhile, the transfer of power to the Bolsheviks in the capitals and the subsequent wave of Sovietization meant a new challenge for all regionals. At the II All-Kazakh Congress, Bukeikhanov and his comrades managed to overcome the resistance of the supporters of an alliance with Turkestan, yielding to them in demanding an immediate declaration of autonomy. It is significant that the leader of "Alash" reasonably proposed to proclaim it only after clarifying the attitude of the non-indigenous population and the creation of a people's militia. As a result, these important ideas were ignored, although the decision of the congress declared the granting of "other peoples" 10 out of 25 seats in the government (which in fact turned out to be mono-ethnic). It soon became clear that the Kazakh asset of the Syr-Darya region ready to unite with the autonomy on condition of its union with Turkestan and the location of the capital in the city of Turkestan. The congress decided to create the Alash autonomy with the capital in Semipalatinsk. It included "a continuous territory with a dominant Cossack-Kyrgyz population of a single origin, a single culture, history and a single language", offered cultural and national autonomy to the "landless peoples" and their proportional representation in all institutions¹⁰.

In turn, the Bolsheviks tried to establish an alliance with the active nationally organized force of the East region. As you know, the unconditional attractiveness of the right of peoples to self-determination, their equality and sovereignty, the abolition of national and national-religious privileges and restrictions played a huge role in the establishment of Soviet power on the ground. Of particular importance were the Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia and the appeal of the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR "To all working Muslims of Russia and the East."¹¹ The III All-Russian Congress of Soviets on January 10–18 (23–31), 1918, adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Working and Exploited People¹², which was then included in the Constitution. All the peoples of Russia were given the opportunity

politicheskie techeniya v Kazahstane v konce HIH — nachale HKH vv. Alma-Ata, 1961. S. 363).

⁹ V.I. Shishkin notes that both governments arose "from below" — at the initiative of the local community and almost simultaneously. However, he is wrong, considering that Alash-Orda "left the historical arena" at the beginning of November 1918 after A.V. Kolchak. (SHishkin V.I. Vzaimootnosheniya Alash-Ordyy i Vremennogo Sibirskogo pravitel'stva // Izvestiya Ural'skogo federal'nogo universiteta. Ser. 2. Gumanitarnye nauki. T. 96. 2011. № 4. S. 111, 110). In fact, Alash-Orda negotiated with the government of Kolchak even in 1919, and ceased to exist in fact at the beginning of 1920.

¹⁰ Alash-Orda... S. 50–53, 56; Amanzholova D.A. Dvizhenie Alash v 1917 godu. M., 1992. S. 32. Let us recall the definition of Stalin, who advocated regional autonomy: "A nation is a historically established stable community of people, which arose on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life and a mental make-up manifested in a community of culture." (Stalin I.V. Marksizm i nacional'nyy vopros // Stalin I.V. Sochineniya. T. 2. M., 1946. S. 296).

¹¹ Dekrety Sovetskoj vlasti. T. I. M., 1957. S. 39–41; Sobranie uzakonenij i rasporyazhenij rabocheho i krest'yanskogo pravitel'stva. № 6. 1917. 19 dekabrya.

¹² Dekrety Sovetskoj vlasti. T. I. S. 321–323.

“to make an independent decision at their own plenipotentiary Soviet congress: do they wish and on what grounds to participate in the federal government and in other federal Soviet institutions¹³”. The basis of the federation was declared the power of the soviets, elected from the workers and peasants.

Federalism in the Soviet style became the main project for the region. In March I.V. Stalin, M.M. Vakhitov and a number of other leaders of the RSFSR People's Commissariat for Ethnic Affairs sent a telegram to the localities outlining the Regulations on the Tatar-Bashkir Soviet Republic developed by Vakhitov¹⁴. The revolutionary organizations of Azerbaijanis, Tatars, Georgians, Armenians, Kazakhs, Sarts, Tekins and others were asked to “communicate their specific plans for the federation” in connection with the preparation of a similar situation for them in the People's Commissariat. The next day Pravda published the document itself and Stalin's appeal on this matter. He assessed the creation of the republic as an example of federal relations between Russia and the peoples of the former empire¹⁵. On March 24 and 27, the Narkomnats sent telegrams to the Tashkent Council of Deputies, the revolutionary committees of Orenburg and Bashkiria. At the same time, the Bolshevik leadership (as well as the nationals) could not abandon the pre-revolutionary geographical and administrative “image” of the region and the division of its population into “Europeans” and Muslims.¹⁶

On March 28, 1918, the Kazakh Committee of Semipalatinsk received a telegram from the People's Commissariat for Nationalities: “We ask you to immediately send representatives to organize the Commissariat for Kyrgyz Affairs to work on the implementation of the Kyrgyz state. Please grab the relevant materials.¹⁷” Obviously, the formation of “federal states” (republics) was supposed to be carried out according to the Tatar-Bashkiria scheme and on the basis of the implementation of the principle of “self-determination of workers”. Alash-Orda sent to the department of the Constituent Assembly deputies Zh. And Kh. Dosmukhamedovs with the documents of the II All-Kazakh Congress. Negotiation materials were not found. According to the available data, it can be assumed that they were quite successful. Stalin considered it possible to recognize the decision of the congress, subject to the recognition of the power of the Council of People's Commissars in the center and local councils, the autonomists received the right to organize a commission to convene a constituent congress. Alash-Orda decided to “recognize the central government of the Federal Soviet Republic” and put forward a number of proposals: the boundaries of future autonomy

¹³ Sobranie uzakonenij i rasporyazhenij rabocheho i krest'yanskogo pravitel'stva. № 15. 1918. 13 yanvarya. St. 215.

¹⁴ See more: YUldashbaev B.H. Nacional'nyj vopros v Bashkirii nakanune i v period Oktyabr'skoj revolyucii. Ufa, 1984; Kul'sharipov M.M. Z. Validov i obrazovanie Bashkirskoj Avtonomnoj Sovetskoj respubliki (1917—1920 gg.). Ufa, 1992; Nureev I.S. Rol' obshchestvennyh dvizhenij i politicheskikh partij nacional'nyh rajonov Povolzh'ya v nacional'no-gosudarstvennom stroitel'stve v 1917—1920 gg. (na materialah Bashkortostana i Tatarstana). Avtoref. dis. ... kand. ist. nauk. SPb., 1993; Iskhakov S.M. Russkaya revolyuciya 1917 goda i tyurki Central'noj Azii // Turkestanskaya avtonomiya (Turkiston Muhtoriyati)

¹⁵ RGASPI, f. 558, op. 1, d. 134, l. 1—2; Pravda. 1918. 23 marta.

¹⁶ The self-determination of peoples in polyethnic Turkestan was postponed, for a time the cultural and confessional unity of the “Muslim nation” was legally formed, which a little later served as one of the foundations of the famous project of T. Ryskulov. (Arapov A. Krah proekta Tyurkskoj sovetsoj respubliki (1919—1920) (URL: <http://memoryoffuture.blogspot.ru/2010/06/1919-1920.html>); Turkestan v nachale XX veka: k istorii istokov nacional'noj nezavisimosti. Tashkent, 2000. S. 151—160; Magomedov R.M. Narkomnac Rossijskoj Federacii i nacional'no-gosudarstvennoe stroitel'stvo v sovetskom Turkestane. Avtoref. dis. ... kand. ist. nauk. M., 2003; i dr.).

¹⁷ GA RF, f. 130, op. 2, d. 898, l. 32 ob., 33.

(within the modern territory of Kazakhstan), the powers of its authorities before the convocation of the constituent congress, relations with local councils. Autonomists defended the right to convene a congress in close cooperation with the local council, to retain for this purpose the supreme legislative and administrative power. At the local level, they offered to transfer power to the soviets "organized on a democratic basis with respect for proportional representation from nationalities." Where councils had not yet appeared, it was proposed to preserve the Kazakh committees, zemstvo and city self-government, as well as national courts and the people's militia.

Subordination to the national class determined the pragmatism of the Bolsheviks in relation to the self-determination of peoples. Despite the opposition of the small left-wing party "Ush-Zhuz", the compromise took place. The successful course of the negotiations was reported by a telegram to the Kazakh uyezd committees on April 16: "The Council of People's Commissars recognizes our autonomy, subject to the recognition of Soviet power." Alash-Ordinsky pledged not to support the anti-Soviet actions of the Cossacks.¹⁸ However, the fall of the soviets in the major centers of the future autonomy by the summer of 1918 slowed down the alliance with the Bolsheviks for almost a year. On June 24, Alash-Orda adopted a resolution invalidating all the decrees of the Soviet government on its territory. Laws and declarations of the Provisional Government on freedom of conscience, speech, press, assembly, unions and personal inviolability were enacted. The Kazakh government took upon itself the right to authorize railway construction and collect all state taxes from the population of the autonomy, ordering to immediately start collecting the wagon tax. The Military Council appeared with the functions of the War Ministry and the right to create local military councils and was obliged to "call up horsemen to fight the Bolsheviks." The latter, however, turned out to be difficult and required the support of the more powerful opponents of the Reds.

To manage the autonomy, the zemstvo institutions were restored, introduced by the law of June 17, 1917. By the decision of June 25, regional and uyezd councils were created everywhere, the composition of which (3–5 people) was temporarily appointed by Alash-Orda, and then elected at the first regular zemstvo meeting by vowels. Kazakhs and was approved by the government. It was clarified: if the non-Kazakh population also expresses a desire to remain in the autonomy, then the councils are elected by the entire assembly. The regional councils were responsible for conscription to the Alash units, tax collection, preparation of materials for the convocation of the Alash Constituent Assembly and on the agrarian issue, issues of cultural and economic development, the protection of "state order and public peace" and monitoring the exact implementation of the rules of temporary land use¹⁹. When developing manage-

¹⁸ On April 17, Zh. Dosmukhamedov at a meeting of the executive committee of the Saratov Sovdep gave more details: "The entire Kyrgyz region should be rebuilt according to the Soviet model. There should be eight Tips. In Semipalatinsk there should be a central Soviet administration of the region. So far ... there is a zemstvo. Alash-Orda must be replenished with other representatives. In general, it is difficult for us to organize Soviets, there is no one to make them out of. There are almost no workers, there are almost no soldiers either ... We have only zemstvo institutions, which it has been decided to keep in the center. The Council of People's Commissars will organize a Commissariat for Kyrgyz Affairs ... I declare on my own behalf that the only government that has sympathetic to us is the Soviet government. We tried for a long time to stand out as a separate autonomous unit, and no one, except for the Soviet government, went to meet us. We will not forget such an attitude towards ourselves ". (Saratovskij Sovet rabochih deputatov (1917–1918 gg.). *Sbornik dokumentov*. M.; L., 1931. S. 454, 455–456). According to some reports, at the request of the Dosmukhamedovs for the preparation of the congress, Lenin ordered to allocate 12 million rubles to them. (Kazakhdebieti. 1990.24 tamyz).

¹⁹ Unlike county councils with similar functions, regional councils had the right in important cases to conclude "temporary blocs with the governments of neighboring autonomies to protect the interests of

ment principles tried to combine the multi-ethnic local government bodies created after February and national structures. Close cooperation of councils with zemstvos was supposed. The task was set to ensure non-interference in the competence of zemstvo and city councils and dumas (although in the areas subject to the Alash-Orda, zemstvos were often headed by its supporters). “Alash” counted on an alliance with the Siberian and Bashkir autonomies and on the help of weapons from the Orenburg ataman A.I. Dutova.

For all the attractiveness of the concept, this system made it difficult to solve everyday administrative and economic problems, as it created a kind of dual power, supplemented by energetic intervention of emissaries of the “central” authorities — the Siberian Provisional Government and Komuch²⁰. The prompt implementation of the decisions of the Alash-Orda was also hampered by the lack of transport infrastructure, difficulties in postal communications, complex and rapidly changing military circumstances. Due to the incompleteness of the construction of the local authorities of Alash and their real weakness, the subordination of different districts of the region to the opposing forces, it turned out to be practically impossible to implement the decision taken at the same time to recruit the people’s militia²¹.

On June 24, rules on temporary land use in the autonomy appeared. The final resolution of the issue was postponed until the All-Russian Constituent Assembly, at which Alash intended to present a draft agrarian reform. Private land ownership was abolished. Permission to exploit the earth’s interior, “fish resources of water and the free power of water” was given only to Alash-Orda. Disputes between Kazakhs settled the arbitration court, between the Kazakh and non-indigenous population — zemstvo bodies. The rules satisfied all the most important pre-revolutionary requirements for agrarian and resettlement issues.

Since the end of 1917, a new stage of relations between the Alash and Siberian autonomies began at the level of governments and their local structures regarding mutual recognition, the priority of the orders of each authority, their equality or subordination, the powers and subjects of jurisdiction of local structures of both governments, the organization of military units and their subordination. In each of the areas, interaction developed quite tensely due to the dynamics of the military-political situation, the influence and pressure of other forces (Komuch, Bashkir and Turkestan autonomies, Cossack governments — primarily Orenburg), and internal problems. In addition, both forces had their own priorities.

The territorial faults of Kazakhstan (west, north-east with center and south) hindered the unity of actions of the autonomists. In addition, in the west, until September 1918, there was a self-proclaimed Uilskiy Olyat, whose head Zh. Dosmukhamedov even declared himself a khan. The residents of Alashorda could not boast of serious organizational and political resources; they also had no military significance. Therefore, they naturally counted on an alliance with a stronger federation-oriented neighbor. However, back in January 1918, no attempts were made to move from declaration to deed. The Syr Darya Kazakh congress spoke in favor of leaving as part of the Turkestan autonomy. At the same time, the Semipalatinsk regional committee “Alash”, the zemstvo and the council of peasant deputies recognized the Provisional Siberian Government before the proclamation of Kazakh autonomy, although the

Alash” upon their subsequent approval by the government (Alash-Orda... pp. 91—92).

²⁰ Ibid. p.78—80

²¹ Ibid. p.92—93

establishment of Soviet power changed the situation²².

Shishkin believes that the oblast and Alash-Orda residents showed mutual interest in the summer of 1918 to solve their own problems, especially because in January the Bolsheviks dispersed the Siberian Regional Duma and “refused to accept the conditions of the Alash-Orda.”²³ This is not entirely true: the residents of Alashorda reached a compromise in negotiations with Moscow in the spring, and their cooperation was interrupted by an anti-Soviet coup in the south of Western Siberia and in the north of Kazakhstan, which led to the transition to an alliance with the new government in the region.

The Provisional Siberian Government, headed by P.V. Vologda initially formed as a Socialist-Revolutionary and included the Ministry of Native Affairs, headed by M.B. Shatilov. But on June 30, its composition changed, it became more right-wing²⁴, which affected the relationship with the Kazakh autonomy. In addition, the commander of the army and the head of the military department A.N. Grishin-Almazov quickly leaned towards a military dictatorship. The Siberians positioned themselves as the center, hoping to subdue Alash. As a result, relations with the Horde, which sought to uphold the principles of federalism and equality with other autonomies, deteriorated.

In July, the “Basic Provisions on the Boundaries of the Cultural Autonomy of the Nationalities of Siberia” appeared, transferring the right of the final decision on the issue of territorial and political autonomy to the All-Russian Constituent Assembly. On this basis, the government refused to recognize “the Committees elected by some nationalities (for example, the Alash-Orda Kyrgyz-Kaisaks) as bodies of national-territorial statehood.” It expressed its readiness to grant the peoples of Siberia “national and cultural autonomy, guaranteeing the free development of each individual nationality.” Accordingly, national authorities were recognized only as representative in matters of cultural autonomy and local self-government²⁵.

Alash-Orda sought to support the autonomy. On July 10, its delegate to the West Siberian Commissariat A. Ermekov handed over to the government a note calling for unity to defend the gains of the February Revolution, “which gave rise to the political revival of the peoples and outskirts of Russia.” The Horde promised all-round support to the Siberian government and proposed a draft agreement, according to which Omsk recognized it as a part of the regions, determined by the II All-Kazakh Congress, when establishing borders, taking into account the views of the population of border regions. The recognition of the Horde as a central body, temporarily performing the functions of state power, implied the exclusive subordination of all national public organizations and institutions to it without the right to interfere in its sphere of com-

²² Ibid. p. 50-53. Kazah. 1918. 16 sentyabrya. Centr dokumentacii novejshej istorii Vostochno-Kazahstanskoy oblasti, f. 44, op. 1, d. 8, l. 4, 8;

²³ Shishkin V.I. Vzaimootnosheniya Alash-Ordyy i Vremennogo Sibirskogo pravitel'stva. S. 111

²⁴ See more: Zhuravlyov V.V. Rozhdenie Vremennogo Sibirskogo Pravitel'stva: iz istorii politicheskoy bor'by v lagere kontrevolyucii // Grazhdanskaya vojna na vostoke Rossii: problemy istorii. Bahrushinskije chteniya 2001 g. Mezhevuzovskij sbornik nauchnykh trudov. Novosibirsk, 2001. C. 26—47; Zhuravlyov V.V. Rol' Vremennoj Sibirskoy oblastnoj dумы v processe obrazovaniya Vremennogo Vserossijskogo pravitel'stva // Problemy istorii gosudarstvennogo upravleniya i mestnogo samoupravleniya Sibiri v konce XVI — nachale HKHI v. Materialy VII vserossijskoj nauchnoj konferencii (Novosibirsk, 6—8 iyunya 2011 g.). Novosibirsk, 2011. S. 128—131; Shishkin V.I. Komanduyushchij sibirskoj armiej A.N. Grishin-Almazov: shtrihi k portretu // Kontrevolyuciya na vostoke Rossii v period grazhdanskoy vojny (1918—1919 gg.). Sbornik nauchnykh statej. Novosibirsk, 2009. C. 126—195.

²⁵ GARF, f. 193, op. 1, d. 8, l. 1—1 ob.

petence. Before the declaration of autonomy state and mixed institutions of administration and self-government were subordinate to the Siberian government with the indispensable participation of representatives of "Alash"; the self-government bodies elected in 1917 were also retained. The project substantiated the need to provide the Alash-Orda with a loan from the Siberian government, which ran all financial institutions on Kazakh territory, and proposed to convene in the near future a congress of deputies of autonomous peoples and outskirts "in order to create federal power." The most promising was the federation of Siberia, Alash, Bashkiria and Turkestan with equal participation of regional forces in the organization of a single state as a federation of autonomous regions²⁶.

The note arrived at the Siberian Council of Ministers on July 26. It contained a brief description of the decisions of the All-Kazakh congresses and the reasons for the decision on autonomy, substantiated the need for mutual support and close alliance "in an hour of mortal danger for the homeland and freedom." By that time, the delay in negotiations led to the loss of the Ural region. and the danger of the collapse of autonomy, which forced Alash-Orda "to decide on extreme measures, to abandon the Union with Siberia, to declare the autonomy of Alash and to save the unity of the Cossack-Kyrgyz people, sacrificing the benefits of an alliance with Siberia." Recognition of autonomy would give it the opportunity to "pull Turkestan away from the German orientation, to keep it within the Russian Federation" (this was how adherence to all-Russian interests was demonstrated). Bukeikhanov strove to organizationally and politically strengthen the unity of the autonomy and push the Siberians towards an equal union. A draft mutual recognition agreement was proposed for Omsk's decision. The appointment to responsible posts in the autonomy had to be coordinated with the Horde, which also had the right to special taxation, to collect wage tax in its favor, the organization of national courts and local councils in charge of national affairs that are not within the competence of zemstvos and city councils²⁷.

The note was discussed in a commission chaired by the Minister of Public Education V.V. Sapozhnikov on July 29, 30 and August 2, 3²⁸. Item 1 on mutual recognition was removed from the discussion. Proposals on the management and operation of the Alash-Orda bodies, their rights were retained with a small revision. It was suggested that Bukeikhanov should address the issue of allocating a loan directly to this department. The idea of a congress of deputies of autonomies was supported, but without inclusion in the project. The problems of creating the Alash army were transferred for joint study with the military department. The solution of the land question was postponed until the All-Russian Constituent Assembly.

The representative of the Ministry of Agriculture and Colonization A.M. Yarmosh. He pointed to the uncertainty of "the nature of the political structure of the Kyrgyz people and the essence of its state-legal relations to Russian statehood and autonomous Siberia ". Preservation of such can cause mutual exacerbation of relations.

²⁶ IBID. 26—26 ob.; Gosudarstvennyj arhiv Tomskoj oblasti (GA TO), f. R-72, op. 1, d. 39, l.

²⁷ Alash-Orda... p. 108 — 111.

²⁸ The meeting was attended by a representative of the military department, General V.L. Popov, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs P.D. Mikhailov, A.M. Yarmosh, leaders of the Alash-Orda A. Bukeikhanov, A. Ermekov and H. Tokhtamyshev. For some reason, Shishkin claims that the Alash-Orda project was not discussed, which allegedly aroused the latter's concern for its authority and the political distrust of Siberians, and then still describes the discussions at the end of July — beginning of August. See: m.: Shishkin V.I. Vzaimootnosheniya Alash-Ord i Vremennogo Sibirskogo pravitel'stva. S. 116, 117—119. A more accurate account of events is given by another author: Selivyorstov S.V. Alash i Sibir' v 1918—1919 gg.: pozitsiya A. Bukejhanova i tendentsiya regional'nyh otnoshenij // Mir Evrazii. 2008. № 1. S. 22—27.

It is necessary to establish at least temporary legislative norms instead of the expired laws on the state of the region in the Russian Empire²⁹.

The project never gained legal force. The lack of a clear legal basis for relations between the autonomies led to the continuation and aggravation of conflicts. The general instability of the military-political situation, acute rivalry in the struggle for power in Siberia between the Provisional Siberian Government and Komuch, in the presence of other regional governments that also sought to strengthen the influence, ambitions of the ruling circles and distrust of national movements, the real weakness of the position of the Alash Horde played a role. ... The results of the commission's work were also influenced by the conclusion of the government consultant K.G. Dishler. He believed that only the Siberian Constituent Assembly could recognize political autonomy on the territory subordinate to the government, and the All-Russian Assembly outside of it. In the event of the formation of an autonomous state with certain bodies and real power, the Siberian government, if necessary, could enter into temporary relations with it, but did not have the legal right to authorize such outside its territory, and even more so to contribute to its creation. Dishler considered the draft agreement unsatisfactory: removing the issue of autonomy from discussion, he actually meant its recognition. The inadmissibility of Alash's recognition was also emphasized by the official newspaper *Sibirskaya Rech*³⁰.

The Siberian government could not fail to take into account the historical boundaries of the settlement of Kazakhs, but combine them with the needs of effective political governance and economic zoning with the activity of the autonomists, it failed. It acted in relation to the Alash-Orda, as if trying on the functions of the center and offering it only cultural autonomy practically unrealizable in those conditions. Kazakh autonomists, with their claim to political self-determination, already supported by the Bolsheviks at the beginning of 1918, obviously could not agree to this. The Siberian regionalist project came into conflict with the national projects of the Yakuts, Buryats and Kazakhs.

Meanwhile, on June 3, Komuch began to operate in Samara. He acted as a legislative body, executive power belonged to the Board of Governors of the departments. All posts in it were occupied by the Social Revolutionaries, with the exception of the department of labor, headed by the Menshevik I.M. Maisky. On July 15, ataman Dutov, as well as the Ural regional government, joined Komuch. In mid-September, it already numbered about 100 members, including 11 members of "Alash"³¹.

Commitment to the idea of a democratic federal republic became the basis for a close alliance between Komuch and Alash Orda. Another important factor of rapprochement was the categorical rejection of the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly, on whose decisions both the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Kazakhs pinned their main hopes. Komuch sent his delegates to Alash and other national governments. The foreign department of the propaganda cultural and educational department of Komuch was supposed to regulate relations between nationalities, attract nationals into the ranks of the People's Army, help strengthen the power "in the non-Russian part of the population", consider petitions from them, collect materials from the field and submit

²⁹ Alash-Orda... p. 108 — 111.

³⁰ GA RF, f. 193, op. 1, d. 8, l. 33—34; *Sibirskaya rech*. № 57. 1918. 5 avgusta.

³¹ Alibekov, D. and H. Dosmukhamedov were listed as having joined from the Kazakh executive committee, the rest — from the Alash party (Svyatitskij N.K. K istorii Vserossijskogo Uchreditel'nogo sobraniya. M., 1921. S. 5; Orenburgskij vestnik Komiteta upolnomochennyh chlenov Uchreditel'nogo sobraniya. 1918. 4 sentyabrya).

them to the Committee for legislative work. The recommendations of Alashorda residents on the appointment of local commissioners were taken into account³².

On September 25, Komuch's Declaration on the formation of the Alash-Orda stated: "To restore a united, strong, free Russia and strengthen the federal democratic system in it, it is necessary to participate in the upcoming creative work of all peoples inhabiting it," and therefore "autonomous rights is the best guarantee of the success of the forthcoming heroic work to re-create a united great Russia. "Until the final resolution of the issue by the All-Russian Constituent Assembly, Komuch proposed leaving behind military and foreign affairs, communications, mail and telegraph, as well as "measures of a nationwide nature on supply and food issues." Alash's decrees, laws and orders were not supposed to contradict the decisions of Komuch, under her a commissioner of the committee was appointed with the right to suspend her decisions. The temporary regulation on management in the region was developed by Alash-Orda and approved by Komuch. The Armed Forces of Alash were also created in agreement with her. Disputed territorial issues were proposed to be resolved jointly with the authorities of the adjacent regions "and in accordance with the will of the local population, expressed through a popular vote or through local self-government." Confidence was expressed that these conditions correspond to the desire for autonomy and the idea of a democratic federation, and the Kazakh people "with their characteristic courage and solidarity will take an active part in the decisive struggle against the usurper Soviet power."³³

Meanwhile, the days of Komuch were numbered. On the eve of the State Conference³⁴ in July and August, two meetings of representatives of Komuch and the Siberian government were held in Chelyabinsk. The decision of August 26 recognized the powers of the regional and national governments³⁵, while the instructions to the delegates of the Provisional Siberian Government were strictly prescribed: "Not to recognize the government of the Alash-Orda Turko-Tatars, but only cultural autonomy."³⁶ The Siberian government (like Komuch, by the way) also hoped to subjugate Turkestan.

The delegations of Alash-Orda and Turkestan were headed by A. Bukeikhanov and M. Chokaev, members of Alash G. and I. Alibekovs, S. Doschanov, V. Tanachev, D. and Kh. Dosmukhamedovs and others were present. They joined the majority — supporters of "democracy" and opponents of the dictatorship. On September 12, Bukeikhanov confirmed his adherence to the all-Russian democratic program: "We, foreigners of the old autocratic Russia, joined the democratic part of Russia, republican Russia, we waited, hoped that the hopes for democracy would be realized. The All-Russian Constituent Assembly ... but our dreams were shattered, like the dreams of all Russia's democrats ... Some tend to attribute the organization of regional gov-

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³³ Orenburgskij vestnik Komiteta upolnomochennykh... 1 oktyabrya; Alash-Orda... S. 123—124.

³⁴ More.: Garmiza V.V. Ufimskoe soveshchanie // Istoriya SSSR. 1965. № 6. S. 3—25; Garmiza V.V. Krushenie eserovskikh pravitel'stv. M., 1970. S. 184—197; Dumova N.G. Kadetskaya kontrrevolyuciya i eyo razгром. M., 1982. S. 168—176; Ioffe G.Z. Kolchakovskaya avantyura i eyo krah. M., 1983. S. 80—96; etc.

³⁵ Among them were named both Alash-Orda and "the national administration of the government of Alash-Orda". Probably, they meant representatives of the Alash-Orda, headed by Bukeikhanov, and the Uilsky olyat, headed by Dosmukhamedov.

³⁶ Vestnik Komiteta chlenov Uchreditel'nogo sobraniya. 1918. № 39, 41. 24, 26 avgusta; Ufimskoe soveshchanie i Vremennoe Sibirskoe pravitel'stvo // Krasnyj arhiv. 1933. T. 6/61. S. 65.

ernments to separatism ... Those organizations on whose behalf I speak³⁷ are not representatives of separatism, but they think that they are part of a united Russia, that the autonomous regions in the concert of the world powers cannot play any role if they wanted to create some small separate state. We are united with the democratic federal republic of Russia, we think of ourselves as only a part of a united Russia ”³⁸. At the same time, the internal conflict caused by the ambitions of Dosmukhamedov and his attempt to create the Uilsky olyat was resolved. On the initiative of Bukeikhanov, the authority of the single center of autonomy was confirmed by a special decision of the Alashorda residents. Olyayat became an integral part of the autonomy, which strengthened the status of Alash as a legitimate representative of the regions named by the II All-Kazakh Congress³⁹.

The main programmatic provisions in the national sphere were reflected in the “Act on the formation of the all-Russian supreme power” of September 23. Alashorda residents also signed it. Provided for the “reunification of the alienated, fallen away and scattered regions of Russia”, as well as granting certain regions of territorial and national autonomy, recognition of the extraterritorial ethnic groups of the right to cultural and national self-determination on the basis of laws adopted by “The sovereign Constituent Assembly”⁴⁰. However, the compromise concluded in Ufa was initially unstable. The Directory did not have a strong apparatus, the necessary finances, and official bodies. The ministries she created were often headed by representatives of the continuing Siberian government, which soon affected relations with Alash. Other governments also worked, which received in Ufa the recognition of “the right to broad autonomy due to both geographic, economic and ethnic characteristics,” as well as to cultural and national self-determination. Bukeikhanov admitted an alliance with regional officials and Bashkir autonomists, although interaction with all regional governments was accompanied by numerous conflicts over positions, rights, powers and spheres of control⁴¹.

However, inspired by the decision of the conference in Ufa and the achievement of an apparent agreement around the idea of the Constituent Assembly, the residents of Alashorda hoped to finally acquire a real legal status and free themselves from the “yoke” of the Siberians. At the beginning of October, the autonomous regions received the right to preserve the existing order and management bodies in matters of internal affairs, supply and food, trade and industry, agriculture and public education. Prior to the cancellation by the government or by the autonomies themselves, the decisions of the regional governments were in force. In addition, the chief authorized directors appeared, who observed that the orders of the autonomies did not exceed their competence and did not contradict the laws and orders of the All-Russian government, and also supervised the activities of their local bodies⁴².

But soon the Directory abolished all regional governments, including Alash-Orda, although it recognized the need to take into account the everyday and economic

³⁷ Alash-Orda and Turkestan autonomy under the leadership of Kazakh leaders, which had collapsed by that time.

³⁸ Rossiya i Central'naya Aziya. Konec XIX — nachalo XX veka. Sbornik dokumentov i materialov / Sost. D.A. Amanzholova, T.T. Dalaeva, G.S. Sultangalieva. M., 2017. S. 227—228.

³⁹ O vzaimootnosheniyah Komucha i Alash-Ordy sm.: Amanzholova D.A. Kazahskij avtonomizm i Rossiya... S. 84—104.

⁴⁰ Istoriya «beloj» Sibiri. Tezisy nauchnoj konferencii. Kemerovo, 1995. S. 166—167.

⁴¹ Alash-Orda... S. 108 — 112; Amanzholova D.A. Kazahskij avtonomizm i Rossiya... S. 49—83.

⁴² Rabochee utro (Orenburg). № 107. 1918. 10 oktyabrya.

characteristics of the “Cossack-Kyrgyz peoples” in organizing management and creating a representative body for these purposes in the future. The post of the Chief Commissioner for the management of Alash was established with the temporary retention of the Horde’s governing bodies, subordinate to the central departments. A “special commission was created to develop regulations on the Alash representative body and elections to it.” These bodies included Bukeikhanov and other members of “Alash”⁴³. Thus, the activities of all national governments were regulated by the “center”. The overthrow of the Directory and the creation of the Provisional All-Russian Government under the Supreme Ruler A.V. Kolchak in November changed the situation again. Alash-Orda, like other regional structures, moved from the tactics of maneuvering between different centers of power to protracted and partially successful negotiations with the united anti-Soviet center on the status and powers, creation and support of military units. Since the end of the year, in the military situation, a turning point has been growing in favor of the Red Army. Alash-Orda could not pursue an independent policy and play the role of a “third force” in the struggle between the “Reds” and “Whites”. An alliance from any of the opposing sides removed her from solving program problems and ultimately led to defeat.

Alliances and conflicts of autonomous structures reflected the need for administrative centralization and unification of large regions, their economic and communication integration. But the contradictions in the division of spheres of responsibility were just as clearly reflected, which influenced the stability of the territorial and political organization of the country, as well as the multivariate functioning of the autonomies and their activists. In 1917–1918 on the basis of structures that were different in geography, capabilities and operational capacity, federalist projects arose, which tried to establish themselves as all-Russian and regional. In the conditions of revolution and war, it was practically impossible to achieve harmonization of this complex of interconnections.

In particular, the balance of political forces and their relations, disrupted since the end of 1916, provoked a struggle in Turkestan and neighboring regions between various state and proto-state structures that had real or fictitious power — the Bolsheviks, interventionists, “internal” counter-revolution, nationalists⁴⁴. The establishment of Soviet power turned the Bolsheviks into the only force capable of minimizing military resistance and stabilizing the situation in the region: organizing a management system, improving economic life and food supply for the population, and reducing the intensity of interethnic contradictions.

The federalist preferences of the participants in the political process during the revolution and the Civil War were quite close in terms of the priority of the new form of state structure and the preservation of the integrity of the former imperial space. However, the views on the principles of interaction of autonomies as subjects of the future federation and even on the boundaries of the subjects diverged⁴⁵. The Council of People’s Commissars and the People’s Commissariat for Nationalities suggested that the autonomists recognize the class nature of the organization of power

⁴³ Vestnik Vremennogo Vserossijskogo pravitel’sva. 1918. № 10. 16 noyabrya.

⁴⁴ According to S.M. Iskhakov, in Turkestan “there was not even a trace of any deliberate” class struggle “; the reformers found themselves squeezed between the extremes of Islamist bitterness and ethnic mistrust.” (Iskhakov S.M. The Russian Revolution of 1917 and the Turks of Central Asia).

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and reserved the exclusive right to determine their territorial and political boundaries, the form and composition of government bodies. Other issues remained out of sight until the end of the war, since the main incentive was the recognition of the right to self-determination and national equality. Their opponents also did not have elaborate plans for the federal construction of a new Russia. Siberian oblast experts found themselves immersed in regional problems and limited themselves to supporting cultural autonomy for the “nationals”. The ethnopolitical elite of the region viewed federalism as the embodiment of autonomy for “their” peoples. The leader of the Alash movement Bukeikhanov, supporting the creation of polyethnic autonomies beyond the Urals and in the Volga region with the participation of Kazakhs living there, in fact, from the end of 1917, headed the construction of an ethnocentric project. The political forces were required to be willing and able to act situationally and flexibly, to enter into an effective dialogue with national elites. The Bolsheviks showed the best ability in comparison with their opponents to win in conditions when the right of nations to self-determination became one of the dominants of world development, and social, ethnic and local-territorial problems were closely intertwined in Russia⁴⁶.

The failures and even the hopelessness of the anti-Soviet autonomist ambitions of the Kazakh and Central Asian nationals did not provoke separatist sentiments and did not cancel the strategic focus on state unity with Russia⁴⁷. It is symptomatic that in the conditions of the collapse of the Russian Empire, at the end of the 20th century, the ethnopolitical elites of the Central Asian states were in no hurry to abandon the familiar Soviet project and its possible modifications. In both situations, the belief in the power and survival of the huge imperial organism played a role. At the same time, the mastered state landscape with its understandable and well-developed socio-political ties, official and tacit privileges, compromises and dependencies looked much more comfortable and safer than unpredictable independence, in which responsibility was completely transferred to the new centre of power represented by the national elite itself.

⁴⁶ Soviet federalism was part of the situational policy of the Bolsheviks, who did not have a specific program for creating a federation, and did not imply a treaty approach (especially for autonomies). In practice, the RSFSR and the USSR turned out to be a symbiosis of a federal form and a unitary content with various mechanisms and possibilities for the modernization of ethnic groups in a single multicultural society. V.P. Buldakov and S.M. Iskhakov note: federalism for the Bolsheviks has become a decent legal label in the fight against the decentralization of the country ((Buldakov V.P., Iskhakov S.M. *Dinamika dezintegratsionnyh processov. Vyhodnye dannye?* S. 333).

⁴⁷ It is unlawful to spread the assertion to the Central Asian regions of Russia that the national outskirts and movements after October 1917 “rushed to distance themselves from the crumbling Russian statehood, declaring independence” (Gerasimov I. *The Great Imperial Revoluton // Ab Imperio*. 2017. No. 2. P. 43).