

Legacy of the "Perestroika" Policy in Karakalpakstan

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Abstract: The article illuminates the history of Karakalpakstan at a pivotal moment: when national leaders took office after the tragic events of the "cotton business." Based on the latest literature and archival sources, the author reconstructs these dramatic pages of our people.

Keywords: Uzbekistan, Karakalpakstan, "Cotton business," I. Karimov, S. Niyetullaev, history, repressions, economy, social status.

Introduction

The publication of fundamental monographs by historians of Uzbekistan on the studied topic [1] is significant. A large team of scholars from the Republic of Karakalpakstan, under the guidance of Academician S.K. Kamalov, developed the "New History of Karakalpakstan" in the years 1997-2000 [2]. The history of Karakalpakstan during this period was studied by S.K. Kamalov, S.D. Niyetullaev, B.A. Koshchanov [3]. Memoirs of state figures in Karakalpakstan played a crucial role [5].

Main Part:

In the socio-political life, the intimidating impact on the population was the result of the repressions from 1983 to 1988, which affected Uzbekistan and Karakalpakstan. Seeking to curb aspirations directed towards acquiring real sovereignty, the union leadership attempted, within the context of the impending struggle against the corrupt nomenklatura, to create a sensation around the fabricated "cotton business." At the IV Plenum of the Karakalpak Regional Party Committee in June 1984, "more than 90% of the composition of the party committee's leading workers and 85% of the leaders of the city and district levels were renewed [6,160]." Concerning the cotton complex in Karakalpakstan, 27 cases were initiated, resulting in convictions: in 1986 – 10; in 1986 – 56; in 1987 – 55; in 1988 – 24; in 1989 – 14, totaling 159 individuals.

In the spiritual-moral and political life, there was a state of "disarray." Feelings of fatigue and apathy were evident. Typically, in such times of stagnation, it is customary to criticize and denounce everyone and everything for the hardships experienced.

Political leaders, acting on behalf of the people, did not professionally study the interests and opinions of the people. In Karakalpakstan, there was no predictive-sociological service within the governing bodies, and there was no unified system for studying public opinion. The authorities in Karakalpakstan ignored their own scholars, spending hundreds of thousands of rubles outside the republic to fund programs for transitioning to market relations—programs that were not made public.

In the late 1970s, a decision was made to embark on a grand project to divert and transfer part of the flow of the Ob River to Central Asia, but various agencies actively undermined this idea. This project would have helped Uzbekistan address several strategic challenges at once. In particular, the republic would have received new investments, the size of which began to significantly decrease in the early 1980s. In addition, the development of additional thousands of hectares of virgin land would have sharply increased the production of agricultural products, providing employment and housing for

millions of people, and the Aral Sea would have been saved [7]. The entire country would have benefited from this project, with the estimated annual profitability of the canal (2,320 km) being evaluated at 7.6 billion rubles.

A new salt desert, "Aral-Kum," has formed, and together with the existing deserts of "Kara-Kum," "Kyzyl-Kum," and the sandy plateau "Ustyurt," inexorably encroaches on the flourishing oases of the Aral Sea region, progressively claiming new hundreds of square kilometers of fertile land from nature [8, 10].

The coverage of centralized water supply for urban populations in the Republic of Karakalpakstan has reached 75%, while rural areas range from 40% to 50%. Drinking water in the northwestern regions of the Republic of Karakalpakstan contains an elevated salt content ranging from 1.1 to 2.62 g/l (0.1-1.6 MPC). Water hardness ranges from 8.2 to 19 mg.eq/l. The copper content is 18.4-4.6 MPC, manganese is 1.0-6.1 MPC, and molybdenum is 2.2-3 MPC in all samples. Many residents in these areas use well water and hand-operated underground pumps for drinking, which contain a large amount of suspended matter, residues, and chemical pollutants, especially heavy metals. This can negatively impact the health of the local population. The shortage of freshwater has exacerbated the situation with drinking water, especially in areas where the population uses water from open water sources and underground hand pumps. Approximately a million residents have been affected by the extreme conditions: a severe lack of clean water, not only for drinking and sanitary-hygienic purposes but also for household and other needs (about 5 liters per person per day, instead of the standard 330 liters per day).

A significant portion of the population (about 40%) uses water for drinking from poorly equipped wells, and 23% rely on contaminated surface water sources.

The rural population of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, especially in the Shumanai, Kanlykuly, Nukus, Amudarya, and Bozatau districts, is severely undersupplied with high-quality tap water, accounting for 13.0-28.0% [9,12].

According to the State Committee for Nature Protection of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, more than 100,000 tons of 56 types of harmful substances are released annually into the atmosphere from stationary and mobile sources.

The main factors characterizing the connection of the Aral Sea with the environment are climate, soils, groundwater levels, biocomplexes, and the geochemistry of landscapes [10,19].

By the time of gaining independence, 85% of the entire GDP of the country was produced in state enterprises in the Republic of Karakalpakstan. The remaining part was created in collective farms. The majority of the employed population - 1,900,000 people in 1991 - worked in agriculture, while 915,000 were employed in industry, 400,000 in construction, 253,000 in trade, and 220,000 in transportation. Due to rapid population growth and an increasing shortage of jobs in Uzbekistan, the number of unemployed people increased every year.

In the second half of the 1980s, a new phase, rather a new wave of repression in the socio-political life of the republic, began. In August 1984, the leader of the Karakalpak party organization, K. Kamalov [11], was relieved of his position with the formulation "due to transition to diplomatic work." On his recommendation, K. Salykov [12] was appointed to his position. During this time, there was active agitation around the so-called "cotton case," resulting in the arrest of over 100 representatives of the Soviet-party apparatus, district leaders, and managers of enterprises [13,326]. The issue of personnel supply comes to the forefront again, and there is significant turnover in personnel.

On January 11, 1986, the XXIX Karakalpak Regional Party Conference took place. Delegates sharply criticized the current situation, pointing out various aspects of the administrative and managerial apparatus. For instance, it was noted that forgeries, embezzlements, and other abuses were identified in all sectors of the national economy. In the years 1984-1986, 150 leading officials of the administrative and managerial apparatus were criminally prosecuted for various violations, and 43 leaders within the party's nomenclature were replaced [14].

On July 26, 1989, at the Plenum of the Karakalpak Regional Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan, S.D. Niyetullaev was elected as the first secretary [15]. The government of Karakalpakstan was led by Damir Yadgarov [16] (October 1985-1989) and Amin Tozhiyev [17] (1989-January 1992).

The Republic of Karakalpakstan comprised 15 districts: Amudaryinskiy, Beruniy, Bozatauskiy, Karauzyakskiy, Kegeyliyskiy, Kungradskiy, Kanlykulskiy, Muynakskiy, Nukuskiy, Takhtakupyrskiy, Turtkulskiy, Khodzhayliyskiy, Chimbayskiy, Shumanayskiy, Ellikkalinskiy. Additionally, there were 8 cities of republican subordination: Beruni, Kungrad, Muynak, Nukus, Takhiatash, Turtkul, Khodzhayli, Chimbay.

If in 1980 the republic harvested 430.8 thousand tons of raw cotton, by 1985 it had decreased to 361.3 thousand tons, and in 1990 it further declined to 348.5 thousand tons [18]. The reason for this situation was the reduction in the level of the Aral Sea and the ineffective operation of the cotton-cleaning enterprises in the region – the lack of independence, initiative, and material interest in the results of the industry's work among the producers. In the prevailing circumstances, the Center aimed to maximize the efficient use of the cotton industry production in the republic to obtain more fiber. However, in the years 1986-1990, the region's cotton mills reduced the production of cotton fiber compared to the levels achieved in 1980. This was due not only to the insufficient supply of raw cotton but also to the inefficient operation of the cotton-cleaning enterprises under the Soviet economic system, where absolute command-administrative methods of management and a "common" character of ownership of the means of production were imposed. As a result, industry producers lacked independence, initiative, and a material interest in the results of their work, which had a negative impact on the economic activities of the cotton-cleaning industry in the region.

During these years, in connection with the planned plans to increase agricultural raw materials, namely raw cotton, there arose a need to create local production facilities for the complete processing of raw materials, eliminating unnecessary transportation and losses. In this regard, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, a decision was made to build a cotton-textile combine in Nukus and specialized small-capacity enterprises (branches of the Nukus Cotton Textile Combine) in the cities of Khodjeyli, Mangit, Turtkul, and Beruni. The construction of a dyeing and finishing factory in Nukus was planned for 1982-1986, and a spinning and weaving factory for 1985-1987.

In September 1985, the Khodjeyli Weaving and Beruni Spinning factories were put into operation, and in April 1986, the Turtkul Spinning factory, and finally, in December 1986, the Mangit Weaving factory [19]. It is worth noting that the implementation of measures to improve the production of spinning and weaving factories in the region and their reaching the design capacity at the time of the creation of the textile industry took place in difficult conditions. The enterprises were poorly supplied with auxiliary materials for equipment, lacked qualified workers in key professions and engineering and technical personnel, and there were also insufficient social and living conditions for the workers.

In the second half of the 1980s (during the years of restructuring), economic reforms were outlined. The main idea was to transition from command-administrative to predominantly economic methods of management, to extensive democratization of management, and comprehensive activation of the human factor. However, the economic reforms in these years did not alter the imperial policy of the Center in Uzbekistan and Karakalpakstan, where the resource-exporting nature of the national economy remained unchanged. Economic reforms proceeded inconsistently and slowly due to a lack of understanding by the authorities of the necessity for formational changes [20].

In terms of the standard of living, the population of the autonomous republic lagged behind other republics, and one of the main reasons was that labor collectives did not control the results of their work; meager remnants of the republic's wealth were allocated to them. A significant contribution to the development of the national economy in the 1960s was made by geologists. The Karakalpak Trust "Oil Exploration" conducted deep and structural drilling work and increased gas reserves. The Shahpaktinskoye gas and Kuvanyshskoye gas-condensate deposits were discovered, and large deposits of minerals in the Sultanuizdag mountains were identified [21]. It was noted that efforts should be

intensified to explore copper-nickel ores in the Urusai deposit and rare materials (beryllium, tin, tungsten) in the Aktay array [22]. It was also mentioned that the Jamansai and Sheykhjemensky arrays had industrial reserves of gold, established industrial reserves of talc, marbles, porphyrites, and other mineral resources. However, all these initiatives remained only on paper.

The shrinkage of the Aral Sea by more than 2 meters in the 1970s led to the cessation of navigation in the Muynak and Kazakharya bays. All the fish factories of the Muynak Fish Cannery were cut off from the fishing areas [23]. In this situation, the only means of transportation that provided the fish factories and canneries [24] with fresh fish was refrigerated transport.

In the 1980s, in terms of its overall indicators of economic, industrial, and agricultural development, Karakalpakstan was at a low level. The industrial industry remained largely underdeveloped, with Nukus hosting a quarter of all industrial enterprises in the republic, which, due to underutilization of capacities, produced only 17% of the total output.

The socio-economic development of the republic during this period was not oriented towards the presence and allocation of labor resources. The industrial sector developed uniformly throughout Karakalpakstan. Despite having raw material and labor resources, Karakalpakstan could not establish production with completed technology.

In small settlements and rural areas, where 52% of the entire population of Karakalpakstan resided, neither the sphere of production nor the sphere of education practically saw any development.

The exclusive right of the Center to distribute all material values of Karakalpakstan, dictate resource allocation, determine production, and address personnel issues turned Karakalpakstan into an economically backward region. Karakalpakstan transformed into an agrarian-raw material base, supplying rice, cotton, wool, fruits, vegetables, and natural gas. The republic did not have enterprises focused on producing finished products.

At the first Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR on May 30, 1989, the People's Writer of the Republics of Uzbekistan and Karakalpakstan, Tolepbegen Kaipbergenov [25], insisted on adopting a resolution on the Aral Sea issue. In particular, he proposed: "It's time to put an end to extensive farming methods. We need a law on criminal liability for expanding sowing on irrigated lands. Otherwise, we won't cope with enthusiasts for extra hectares for the plan, and therefore, extra irrigations. It is urgently necessary to introduce payment for water, and it's time to keep track of it" [26].

On March 17, 1986, a resolution was adopted by the Central Committee of the CPSU and the Council of Ministers of the USSR "On Measures to Accelerate the Economic and Social Development of the Karakalpak ASSR." In this resolution, alongside addressing several economic issues, significant attention is given to solving the ecological problems of the Aral Sea region.

On September 19, 1988, the second Resolution of the Central Committee of the CPSU and the Council of Ministers of the USSR, No. 1110, was adopted, titled "On Measures for Radical Improvement of the Environmental and Sanitary Situation in the Aral Sea Region, Increasing the Efficiency of Use, and Strengthening the Protection of Water and Land Resources in Its Basin."

Conclusion:

Thus, the centralized economy and the command-administrative system fostered dependent thinking in Karakalpakstan, giving rise to irresponsibility, all of which stifled any initiative. Indifference to the needs of the population and a lack of interest in the results of labor became a significant impediment to the development of productive forces.

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6. The Aral Sea is a former inland saltwater lake in Central Asia, on the border of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Since the 1960s, the sea's water level (and its volume) has rapidly decreased, partly due to the diversion of water from the main feeder rivers, the Amu Darya and Syr Darya, for irrigation purposes. In 1989, the sea split into two isolated bodies of water—the Northern (Small) and Southern (Large) Aral Seas.
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9. Rakhimova E.D. Socio-Economic Problems of the Aral Sea and the Aral Sea Region. Tashkent: Fan, 1990. P. 19.
10. Kallibek Kamalov (born on March 18, 1926) - a statesman, the first secretary of the Karakalpak Regional Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan (1963-1984). He graduated from the Karakalpak Teachers Institute in 1947 and completed the Karakalpak Pedagogical Institute (correspondence) in 1955. From 1942 to 1947, he worked as a teacher in a secondary school in the Taktakupyr district of the Karakalpak ASSR. From 1947, he was involved in Komsomol, Soviet, and state work. In 1951-1952, he was the deputy chairman of the Executive Committee of the Karakalpak ASSR. In 1952-1953, he was the chairman of the Executive Committee of the Nukus City Council. In 1953-1956, he served as the Minister of Municipal Economy of the Karakalpak ASSR. In 1956-1958, he was the Minister of Automobile Transport and Highways of the Karakalpak ASSR. In 1958-1959, he was the secretary of the Karakalpak Regional Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan. In 1959-1963, he was the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Karakalpak ASSR. In 1963-1984, he served as the first secretary of the Karakalpak Regional Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan.
11. From 1984 to 1986, he served as the Consul General of the USSR in Constanta, Romania. He underwent investigation for the "cotton case" in 1987. He was convicted and stripped of all awards by the Decree of the President of the USSR on June 15, 1990.
12. Kakimbek Salykov (January 22, 1932 - November 27, 2013) was a statesman, the first secretary of the Karakalpak Regional Committee of the Communist Party of the Uzbek SSR (1984-1989), and a poet. From 1989 to 1992, he served as a People's Deputy of the USSR and Chairman of the Committee of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on Ecology and Rational Use of Natural Resources.

13. Karakalpakistan: History and Modern Times – p. 326.
14. Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Fund 1, Inventory 13, File 6, Sheets 174-175.
15. Sagindik Dauletiyarovich Niyetullaev was born on March 31, 1948, in the Muynak district of Karakalpakistan, into a family of a civil servant, and he is of Karakalpak nationality. He holds a higher education degree, having graduated from the Tashkent Pedagogical Institute and Tashkent University, specializing in Russian language and literature, as well as law. From 1971 to 1979, he worked as a teacher and responsible employee of the youth and party department. In 1979-1985, he worked as a senior referent at the Council of Ministers of Uzbekistan and as a responsible worker at the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan. In 1986-1988, he served as the first secretary of the Regional Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan in the Kanlykul district and the first secretary of the City Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan in Nukus. In 1988-1989, he was the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Karakalpakistan. From July 26, 1989, he served as the first secretary of the regional party organization of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan.
16. Damir Salikhovich Yadgarov (born on February 18, 1937) was a state and public figure in the USSR and Uzbekistan. From 1985 to 1988, he served as the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Karakalpak ASSR; in 1984-1985, he was the head of the "Karakalkpirsovkhosstroy" management.
17. Tozhiev Amin Khamrayevich - from March 28, 1983, he served as the Minister of Agriculture of the Karakalpak ASSR. From July 1989 to January 1992, he was the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Karakalpak ASSR (Republic of Karakalpakistan) and again served as the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Karakalpakistan from October 1998 to October 7, 2002. He was relieved of his position "due to transition to another job" during the 10th session of the Jogorku Kenesh (Supreme Council) of the Republic of Karakalpakistan. As of 2008, he worked as the Head of the Forestry Department of the Ministry of Forestry and Water Resources of the Republic of Karakalpakistan and was a member of the Communist Party "Preservation of Tugai Forests."
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22. Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Fund 1, Inventory 22, File 103, Sheet 10.
23. Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Fund 1, Inventory 22, File 553, Sheet 4; also Fund 1, Inventory 22, File 633, Sheet 1.
24. Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Fund 229, Inventory 5, File 91, Sheet 103.
25. Tulepbergen Kaipbergenovich Kaipbergenov (May 7, 1929, Aul Shortanbai, Kegeyli district, Karakalpak ASSR - September 14, 2010, Nukus) was a Karakalpak writer. From 1989 to 1991, he was a People's Deputy of the USSR and a member of the Nationalities Council of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.
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