**“Stalin’s Empire: Soviet Propaganda in Kazakhstan, 1929-1953.”**

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**\*\*The following is a draft of the first half of my second chapter, tentatively titled “‘Fatalistic Hopelessness’: The Crisis and Tepid Recovery of Soviet Propaganda in Kazakhstan, 1929-1939”\*\***

**Introduction**

During the 10 years from 1929 to 1939, the propaganda and agitation departments of the Kazakh Communist Party were plagued by various crises and problems. Many of these problems stemmed from the chaos and suffering brought on by collectivization, which Moscow had started to implement union-wide in 1929. Upwards of two million people in Kazakhstan starved to death as a result of the collectivizing of farmland, the sedentarization of nomads, and the persecution of kulaks, so called wealthy peasants whom the state blamed for hoarding grain and plotting against the Soviet government. Soviet ideologues believed that reorganizing individuals farms and lands into state-owned collective farms would result in significantly greater agricultural output, as well as provide a smoother avenue through which the state could sell agricultural products. It would also be a way for the Soviet government to establish social and economic control over the peasantry and rural populations, which had shown significant resistance to the policies and power of the central government in Moscow. Lackluster grain harvests in the late 1920s, combined with fears that kulaks and other peasants were hording grain and not bringing it to market, spurred Stalin and other leaders to begin rapid and full on collectivization throughout the Soviet Union.

Collectivization was one wing of a larger process by which Stalin aimed to transform the Soviet Union from what was still largely an agrarian country, into an industrial powerhouse. The second wing was crash industrialization, implemented through the Five Year Plans. Much of this industrialization was to be financed through the sale of grain, gathered by the state through collectivization, on the foreign market. Thus, the success of collectivization was vital to the success of industrialization and was given priority over nearly all other matters. Ironically this included propaganda, which, in theory, should have played a large role in convincing and mobilizing peasants to combine their farms, livestock, and various holdings into collective units owned by the state. In Kazakhstan, the Party’s propaganda and agitation department played little role in the collectivization process largely due to the Party’s prioritization of collectivization over propaganda, and a general lack of resources and talent among the local party officials and workers. This resulted in the near total collapse of the Party’s propaganda networks in several regions of Kazakhstan, to the point where there was essentially no propaganda work being carried out by propagandists or agitators.

By the mid to late 1930s, the Party propaganda and agitation departments had recovered to the point where propagandists and agitators were regularly carrying out their work. But despite this there were still systematic issues and shortcomings that undermined the larger goals of the propaganda and agitation departments. These issues included poor training at party schools, unrealistic expectations for propaganda and agitation workers, and the lack of financial and material resources for the carrying out of propaganda and agitation work. But there were also significant issues with the Party’s relationship and management of propaganda and agitation. A significant number of local and regional party leaders did not consider either propaganda or agitation to be important towards the Party’s larger goals. They were neither ready nor willing to devote financial and material resources to such work. These officials considered it to be more worthwhile for a propagandist or agitator to be working as a laborer on a collective farm than to be discussing party ideology. In many areas of Kazakhstan there was a prevalent philosophy of “It is better to spit on party work, than to receive a reprimand regarding grain procurements.[[1]](#footnote-1)”

There was also a lack of decisive leadership regarding the management of propaganda from either Moscow or Alma-Ata. Party propaganda and agitation in Kazakhstan was heavily decentralized, with local party officials and individual agitprop workers largely responsible for the creation and dissemination of propaganda and agitation content. Only in exceptional cases did orders come from central party organs dictating what agitprop workers should say and how they should say it. Few direct orders came from either Moscow or Alma-Ata that said little more than to carry out agitprop work or to carry out more agitprop work. This is despite the fact that party leaders were clearly aware of the numerous problems and shortcomings with the propaganda and agitation apparatus all throughout the 1930s. Reports from local party officials, inspectors, and occasionally from the propagandists themselves flooded back to Alma-Ata and even made it to Moscow, but little to no meaningfully decisive action was taken by the Party to rectify the various issues. The majority of the responses from the Kazakh party organs were tepid platitudes on the importance of ideology and agitprop to the construction of communism and calls for regional party leaders to improve agitprop work.

However, there was no enforcement mechanism, nor even threats of discipline to accompany these suggestions. This was true even at the height of the purges in the latter half of the 1930s.[[2]](#footnote-2) The onus of improving agitprop work was passed on through the bureaucratic channels by high ranking party leaders to the most local level of party leadership, and to the individual agitprop workers themselves. This was problematic as it was local party leaders who often contended that propaganda and agitation were unimportant to the larger tasks at hand, namely collectivization. Furthermore, the agitators and propagandists who were shirking their responsibilities were often the ones charged by local party officials to improve propaganda and agitation work. I contend that this type of bureaucratic feedback loop resulted in a republican-wide propaganda apparatus that was at times barely able to function and was perennially unable to fully meet the expectations placed on it by the Party. Propaganda shortcomings and the failure of local party leaders to understand the importance of propaganda in the state’s larger ideological goals, had the effect of undermining confidence and support in the Communist Party and the Soviet state as a whole. Lackluster and inept propaganda work likely inspired little support or confidence in the Kazakh populace regarding the state’s ability to build socialism.

These issues with propaganda point to a larger question about the role of ideology in the Soviet Union. Previously, historians have argued that ideology played a central role in the form and function of Soviet society, permeating every facet of life in the 1930s to the extent that average people were learning to “speak Bolshevik.[[3]](#footnote-3)” According to this argument individuals were adapting to and maneuvering through the new ideologically defined socio-economic structures that the communists were creating by internalizing Marxist-Leninist ideological precepts. But in Kazakhstan, local party officials unwilling to devote resources to propaganda and agitation work and directly stating that such work is unimportant indicates that official party propaganda might not have played a major role in disseminating ideology or teaching people in Kazakhstan how to “speak Bolshevik.” This circumstance raised the question of the extent to which ideology in Kazakhstan affected peoples’ lives. Collectivization and de-nomadization were driven by ideological justifications, and as such it is impossible to say that ideology did not affect peoples’ lives in Kazakhstan. But the specific teachings, theories, and precepts of Marxist-Leninist ideology do not appear to have been that important or at least well communicated to either Ivan Ivanovich or Muhamed Muhamedovich.

This issue raises the larger question of why the Party did not exercise tighter control over its propaganda and agitation apparatus or take serious concrete measures to improve the quality of agitprop work. Outside of newspapers, propaganda and agitation represented the only direct form of communication from party officials to the common individual and it seems puzzling that the Party would not take full advantage of this avenue.

I contend that there are three specifics reasons for this state of affairs. The first, as argued in the previous chapter, was that the Party placed wholly unrealistic expectations on propagandists and agitators, especially those who were not full time paid agitprop workers. These workers were fully expected by the Party to be competent and professional enough to carry out propaganda work with minimal oversight and were thus often left to their own devices and without direct management by higher party officials. Unrealistic expectations combined with training that was inadequate to meet these expectations resulted in propagandists and agitators who conveyed incorrect information or simply shirked their ideological responsibilities.

The second reason is the bureaucratic culture of the propaganda and agitation departments. This bureaucratic culture emphasized quantity over quality and considered the number of propaganda events and institutions (lectures, classes, study circles, and party schools) to be more important than the transformative effect of propaganda itself. Said bureaucratic culture also considered identifying shortcomings and discussing them to be on par with solving the shortcomings. This mode of thinking was problematic as it removed any kind of direct proactive management or quality control of propaganda and agitation work on the part of higher part officials and organs, leaving all such responsibilities to local party leaders and the agitprop workers themselves. It also meant that major shortcomings and problems were rarely rectified by party or agitprop authorities in Alma-Ata and left to local party leaders and agitprop workers, the very people who had the problems, in order to solve.

The third reason is that, at least in the early 1930s, the Party and state clearly held the implementation of collectivization and industrialization to be more important than ideological education and propaganda work overall, despite assertions on the importance of the correct understanding of Marxist-Leninist ideology in the building of socialism. In Kazakhstan, collectivization was such a difficult process, with not only millions starving to death, but tens of thousands fleeing to China and instances of open revolt against state authorities, that state and party officials focused all their attention and resources on collectivization, paying little attention to propaganda. This mainly applied to the early 1930s and resulted in the near total collapse of the party propaganda network, but the prioritization of economic matters over ideological matters, especially propaganda and agitation, was present throughout the decade.

Overall, the shortcomings and problems with the Kazakh Communist Party’s propaganda and agitation department over the 1930s were so numerous and chronic that its effectiveness, that is its ability to disseminate ideological information, educate the populace, and influence their way of thinking, was at times nonexistent and calls into question not only the role of ideology in peoples’ lives or the ability of the Communist Party to exercise control over the country, but also the very ideological foundations of the Soviet Union.

**Part I: The Propaganda Crisis in Kazakhstan, 1929-1930**

**Agitprop Organization**

In order to fully understand how propaganda and agitation functioned in Kazakhstan, it is necessary to know the administrative and bureaucratic structure of the region. In the case of Kazakhstan, before it became a union republic in 1936 it was technically an autonomous area or *krai* of the Russian Soviet Republic. In this position as a *krai* Kazakhstan possessed its own Kazakh Communist Party (which was subordinate and obedient to the central, or all-union, Communist Party that ruled from Moscow) along with its own Kazakh party agitprop departments. Similarly, there was a *krai* government with its own assemblies, laws, and leaders, and which was connected and subordinate to the All-Union government in Moscow. While the governments in Moscow and Alma-Ata (the capital of Kazakhstan) were technically the ruling bodies of the Soviet Union and Kazakhstan, respectively, in reality the Communist Party, headed by Joseph Stalin, was the most powerful organ in the country and dictated policy to the government. Similarly, the Kazakh Communist Party, rather than the *krai* was the true power in Kazakhstan, and the head of the Kazakh Communist Party in the late 1920s and early 1930s, Filipp Goloshchyokin, was the most powerful individual in Kazakhstan. In theory he answered only to the All-Union Party Central Committee in Moscow, and to Stalin.

The highest party administrative body in Kazakhstan was the *krai* party committee or, in following the Bolshevik obsession with abbreviations, the *kraikom.* The next administrative unit was the *okrug*, which was equivalent to a province or American state and headed by the *okrug* party committee or *okruzhkom.* This was followed by the *rai*, which is roughly equivalent to the American county and ruled over by the *raikom,* the rai’s party committee. The city administrative units were referred to as *gorod* or just *gor* and, controlled by the *gorkom,* the city communist party committee. Each of these administrative units and their party committee had its own set of leadership, administrative, and agitprop organs, based off of the model set by the main party administration in Moscow. This meant that there was an agitprop department at the *krai* level, as well as at the *okrug*, *raion,* and *gor* level. The party committee at the *krai* level, the *kraikom,* was the main ruling body in Kazakhstan during the Stalinist period, and the other administrative party committees, the *okruzhkom, raikom,* and *gorkom* were subordinate to it.The system of party hierarchy and control extended all the way to Moscow where all party organs were, in theory, controlled by the Central Committee, and its executive committee, the Poliburo, with Stalin in the position of General Secretary ruling over all party organs. Once Kazakhstan became a union republic in 1936, the names of certain party and state organs changed, though the party hierarchy that had existed remained largely in place. It should be noted that all of these structures are within the administrative and bureaucratic purview of the Communist Party, not the actual state and government of the Soviet Union or Kazakhstan.

A chaotic and frustrating characteristic of the Soviet state and party system was the frequency at which bureaucratic organs and classifications were restructured and organized. In addition to party organs like the agitprop department being reorganized in the late 1920s and early 1930s, in Kazakhstan *okrugs* came to be called *oblasts* in the early 1930s as well, a minor if somewhat confusing change. The Kazakh *kraikom* changed to the Kazakh Party Central Committee after Kazakhstan became a union republic in 1936. Similarly, the main ruling body in the Soviet Union changed over the course of the Stalinist period. In 1952 the Politburo’s name changed to the Presidium.

In 1929 the Central Committee’s Secretariat in Moscow (the organ of the party that dealt with coordination, administration, and staffing of all party entities) split the agitprop department into two entities: The Department of Culture and Propaganda and the Department of Agitation and Mass Campaigns. This first organization, the Department of Culture and Propaganda was responsible for the control of the press, general education, the education of party members, as well as university education.[[4]](#footnote-4) The second organization, the Department of Agitation and Mass Campaigns was to control agitational campaigns such those related to socialist competitions, grain procurements, the Five Year Plan, and collectivization. The centralized hierarchical structure of the party meant that the division of the main agitprop department in Moscow resulted in agitprop departments in all regions and republics having to follow suit and divide into two, including the party agitprop department in Kazakhstan. These administrative changes had not yet taken effect in 1930, but by 1933 the agitprop department in Kazakhstan have been divided into two.

The division of the agitprop department was based on the differences between propaganda and agitation. This difference was first developed by Georgii Plekhanov in the pre-revolutionary era. Propaganda was focused on the ideological education of literate individuals. They were to be taught the various components of Marxist-Leninist ideology, as well as expected to read and discuss political texts. Agitation was much more of an appeal to emotions and was not so much based on classroom learning as it was on meetings, speeches, and demonstrations.[[5]](#footnote-5) As such it was geared towards the illiterate. By the end of the 1930s the levels of literacy in the Soviet Union had risen to the point that there no longer needed to be a special section or department devoted to disseminating propaganda to the illiterate and the distinction between propaganda and agitation became defunct. In fact, throughout the 1930s these terms had been used interchangeably by some party officials and agitprop workers. In Kazakhstan by the latter half of the 1930s the two departments had merged back together as one institution, the Department of Agitation and Propaganda, or simply the agitprop department, and would continue to be one department through the rest of the Stalinist period.

Unless directly stated, it was often unclear the extent to which agitprop workers were organized. Most appear to have done their work individually or in small groups ranging from 2 to 10 individuals, although more individuals were certainly possible. They were responsible for carrying out lectures, holding classes, running study circles, and other related activities in a specific geographic region. Many of these people were rank-and-file party members and served as part-time propagandists, carrying out their agitprop responsibilities when not on the job.[[6]](#footnote-6) In fact, in some instances agitprop workers were unable to carry out agitprop work because they spent most of their time working their full time job. This was a frequent problem at the height of collectivization in 1929 and 1930.[[7]](#footnote-7) At other job sites, such as those connected to the construction of the Turksib railroad, there were agitprop workers who doubled as railroad workers and plied the propagandists trade during the evening hours and during free days. In fact, there is evidence that people received training as agitprop workers while they were on the job, or at least in a way that that did not allow for breaks from production.[[8]](#footnote-8) The exact nature of this on-the-job training is unclear from the archival record, and was likely seen by some officials as an efficient move, to work and to learn at the same time, although it is doubtful that the workers themselves found such on-the-job training pleasant.

Agitprop workers in work places or on collective farms were often part of small groups of party members, which were referred to as cells. These party cells were often just the party members at a particular workplace, and would be responsible for holding meetings, organizing workers, and carrying out party policy. The presence of these cells in workplaces reveals the extent of the party’s penetration and influence in everyday life. These party cells were under the purview of the local party administration and controlled the local agitprop department, to which the agitprop workers were answerable.

There were also full-time agitprop workers whose sole job was to disseminate party propaganda to the masses. These individuals were party functionaries, and they were often organized into units simply referred to as propaganda groups. These groups would often be sent out on orders of propaganda officials in Alma-Ata to inspect and report on the state of agitprop work in different regions of Kazakhstan. Propaganda groups also carried out normal propaganda work for specified durations of time, especially in regions where there were significant problems with agitprop, or when local agitprop workers and party leaders requested help. In some instances, the propaganda groups were the only organs carrying out agitprop work in a certain region.

The Party’s propaganda and agitation departments were not the only bodies in Kazakhstan, or the Soviet Union, that were responsible for the production and dissemination of propaganda. The Komsomol, the communist youth organization, also agitated amongst the populace, and even had their own propaganda schools. It often worked closely alongside the party agitprop department doing very similar work. The League of the Militant Atheist was an organization that specialized in disseminating atheistic propaganda and promoting the standard party line of religion as the opiate of the masses. In Kazakhstan, before its dissolution in 1942, the League specialized in denouncing Islam, and Christianity to a lesser extent, as backwards remnants of a capitalist society that served no productive purpose in the new world the Soviets were building. Newspapers such as *Pravda* and *Izvestia*, and especially Kazakh newspapers like *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda* (in Russian) and *Sotsialistik Kazakhstan* (in Kazakh), as well as other party print media were some of the main ways in which the party line, along with the news, circulated amongst the Kazakh populace. Agitprop workers often used newspapers in their lectures and study circles, reading and explaining the meanings of decisions and implications from officials in Moscow or Alma-Ata. In fact, newspapers might have been the main way in which propagandists and agitators received information about how to conduct agitprop work, rather than from the actual agitprop department. All of these organizations were involved to varying degrees with the dissemination of the party line. But the largest, the most extensive, and the most important agitational institution in the Soviet Union was the party’s agitprop department.

The different levels of the agitprop apparatus communicated with each other through reports, letters, and telegrams. The communiques going from agitprop workers to the center often described actions (and inactions) of local agitators and propagandists and communiques going from the center to agitprop workers often contained resolutions and decisions by higher party organs, such as the *okoms*, *kraikoms*, or the republican central committee. These communications were likely sent via the post or by way of courier, with the more pressing and immediate issues sent via telegraph. The sending and receiving of these communiques was often made difficult by the vast Kazakh geography.[[9]](#footnote-9) The Kazakh SSR was the largest union republic after the Russian republic, and the modern Republic of Kazakhstan is the ninth largest country in the world, making it larger than Western Europe. Much of the land was covered by steppe and sparsely populated. Even after the construction of the Turk-Sib railroad in 1930s, large swaths of the republic were not easily accessible. This factor not only made regular communication between the different parts of the Kazakh agitprop network difficult, but also helps to explain why there was a chronic lack of agitprop printed materials for agitprop workers. It was difficult and expensive simply to transport these materials, and similarly difficult and expensive to maintain regular communication with isolated parts of the republic through the 1930s, 40s, and 50s.

In theory, all officially trained propagandists and agitators were connected to either one of the agitprop departments. These individuals went to party schools, took classes, and would work as either full or part time agitprop workers. The party expected them to agitate and propagandize according to the official party line as dictated by Moscow. There was the expectation from Moscow and Alma-Ata that propagandists and agitators would be supported by the local party administration, as well as work with other organizations, such as the Komsomol and the League of the Militant Godless, to spread official doctrines and ideologies to the masses. But Alma- Ata’s or even Moscow’s connection between the propagandist in far-flung places like rural Eastern Kazakhstan or Semipalatinsk, could be tenuous at best. Despite the centralized and dictatorial nature of the party system, the propaganda network in Kazakhstan was surprisingly decentralized, with little direct oversight exercised by the higher party organs (and occasionally the lower, local party organs) over the ideological activities of agitprop workers. At times in the early 1930s there seemed to be irregular communications between agitprop workers and higher party organs, with most communications consisting of the passing along of resolutions from party conferences on the need to conduct and improve upon agitprop work, without any real substance or guarantees of support. In fact, it is likely that most agitprop workers learned of resolutions and changes in party policy mainly from newspapers, rather than from higher party organs. During the latter half of the 1930s communication seems to have improved somewhat with the appearance of work plans issued by the central agitprop office in Almaty or other regional centers, but often without specifics on how to conduct meetings or what should be discussed beyond very broad themes. The content creation for the agitprop activities rested largely on the shoulders of the agitprop workers themselves.

This level of decentralization reveals the enormous expectations that the party placed on agitprop workers. It clearly believed that the training agitprop workers received at party schools would be sufficient for them to successfully carry out their propagandist and agitational responsibilities. In this idea there are echoes of the New Soviet Man (and Woman), an idea born of the NEP era in the 1920s that called for the transformation of Soviet society into an educated and politically conscious populace, striving towards the advancement of socialism. There was almost a naive idealism regarding the manner in which the Party expected agitprop workers to carry out their work, perhaps harkening to the utopian and millenarianist communist world whose creation was their ultimate goal. But there were significant shortcomings and deviations in agitprop work in the late 1920s and early 1930s that were in part due the lack of skills of the agitprop workers, but also to a variety of factors that included collectivization, prioritization of the economic over the ideological, and a stultifying bureaucratic culture within the party agitprop department.

**The Crisis of Propaganda in Kazakhstan**

At the 1929 December plenum of the Kazakh *kraikom*, a meeting of the ruling body of Kazakhstan, committee member Bulatov gave a speech detailing the work of the Party’s agitprop network. He stated that agitprop work all throughout the Kazakh *krai* was extraordinarily poor due to the high turnover rates of agitprop workers. Bulatov said “as a rule we need to say that there are agitprop [workers], but they do not remain constant and change like someone changing their gloves, refusing to stay in once place.[[10]](#footnote-10)” A major reason for this were the grain procurements that was part of the collectivization drive. Agitprop workers were expected to participate in the procurement of grain, in addition to carrying out their agitational activities so that they should not “be stuck to their chairs.[[11]](#footnote-11)” But it seems that few agitators found participating directly in the implementation the party line to be as pleasant as talking about the party line. Neither party enlightenment nor mass agitational work was being carried out. Bulatov notes that agitprop workers saw themselves solely as agents of mobilization and teaching, not responsible for the actual work.[[12]](#footnote-12) The expectation that agitprop workers would have to participate in the harvest resulted in many propagandists and agitators abandoning their agitprop responsibilities, leaving party organs to constantly work to recruit and train new agitprop cadres and having an overall detrimental effect on the agitprop process.[[13]](#footnote-13)

In other areas of Kazakhstan the collection of grain was given priority over party work by local officials who kept setting aside agitprop work because they did not see it as important to the larger goal of building socialism. Bulatov contended that this is an enormous error because “mass work is the central link in the struggle for [socialist] construction, when mobilization of the masses around every concrete slogan of socialist construction is an important condition of the decision that is standing before this era.[[14]](#footnote-14)” He stated that despite the importance of ideology and propaganda in the carrying out of the party line, not one economic or political campaign has been launched by the agitprop department to coincide with collectivization.[[15]](#footnote-15)

Bulatov assered that the *okruzhkom* party secretaries were largely to blame for this situation because they knew that there was a dearth of agitprop work and none of them have taken any actions to rectify this.[[16]](#footnote-16) Assuming that he was speaking without exaggeration, this reveals that party ideology was being ignored not only by local party cadres, but also by higher ranking regional party officials, and had become sidelined with the more pressing material concerns of collectivization and grain procurement. The fact that regional party secretaries, individuals who were in charge of all party operations within the *okrugs*, were blatantly ignoring propaganda is significant because it demonstrates that the casting off of propaganda as irrelevant was not a feature solely of low ranking party cadres in isolated villages, but also the purview of high ranking party officials. The party officials at the plenum were alarmed because their orders were not being carried out, but also because party ideology held that the construction of socialism without proper ideological framing could lead to a wide variety of problems, not the least being further deviations from the party line.

This particular instance also speaks to the level of control and centralization in the Kazakh party network. *Kraikom* party officials almost certainly expected mistakes and deviations from the party line by individual agitprop workers. But to have regional secretaries ignore propaganda, to themselves act like agitprop workers shirking their responsibilities, represents a breakdown in cadre discipline and shows that central party organs, like the *Kraikom* had trouble directly controlling the lower party organs, at least in the early 1930s. Bulatov expressed a level of frustrated powerlessness stating that “we [higher ranking party cadres] discuss the training of new cadres, the need for an increase in theoretical qualifications, and when we talk about mass enlightenment, it is revealed that there is no enlightenment in many areas.[[17]](#footnote-17)” It is also necessary to keep in mind that the division of the agitprop department into the Department of Culture and Propaganda and the Department of Propaganda and Agitation was not ordered by Moscow until November 22nd, 1929.[[18]](#footnote-18) These issues all took place before this, thus the bureaucratic reorganization of the agitprop department, and the expected disorganization that could result from it, were not factors in these significant shortcomings.

There also appears to have been a breakdown of bureaucratic control and management, with regional agitprop officials failing to carry out their responsibilities and the *Kraikom* unable (or unwilling) to exert its authority. Bulatov notes that he is unsure if preparations had even been made by the agitprop department for the upcoming 1930 spring planting season and mockingly notes that for the spring planting season, “the bureau will issue a directive. The Organizational department will mobilize people and send them out [to plant the crops]. And what will the agitprop department do? Why should we bother them? They can just watch the grass grow.[[19]](#footnote-19)”

To rectify these issues Bulatov said that the *okruzhkom* secretaries needed to devote more attention to agitprop work and offer practical help to the local agitprop departments. Without the help of local party organs agitprop workers would not be in a condition to do much of anything.[[20]](#footnote-20) Bulatov also called for a resolution to strengthen and improve agitprop work, to train more full-time agitprop workers, and that they should be rendered assistance in propaganda and mass work by local party committees and leadership.

Clearly there were serious problems with the party agitprop apparatus. Most of these problems appear to have been centered around the regional and local party organizations, with officials viewing propaganda as unimportant to the larger work of collectivization and unwilling to put any serious effort to ensure agitprop work would be carried out. These issues extended further on down the bureaucratic hierarchy to the agitprop workers themselves, when many of them balked at having to carry out party work as well as physically take part in the collectivization process, suggesting a lack of professionalism amongst the agitprop workers. This also suggests a serious shortage of trained propagandists and agitators on hand to conduct agitprop work. Collectivization was the uniting theme behind all of these problems and the stresses that this placed on Kazakh society are clearly visible. Forcing the peasantry and nomads onto collective farms and ensuring that enough grain was collected by the state was supposed to lead to the construction of socialism and strengthen the Soviet Union overall. Instead, it appeared to be weakening and undermining the power of the Communist Party and its ideology, to the point where regional and local party officials were beginning to lose sight of the proverbial forest for the trees, contending that propaganda was useless to the construction and running of the collective farms.

With the chaos and suffering that resulted from collectivization in Kazakhstan it is unsurprising that agitprop and party organs were not functioning as expected[[21]](#footnote-21). But even assuming that some of the information from the party plenum was exaggerated, the implications of this information are striking. The k*raikom* was not directly involved in the management of agitprop workers and played little to no role in the actual creation of propaganda content. Its role in the larger agitprop network was much more bureaucratic and managerial. The fact that Bulatov was far more concerned that agitprop work was not being carried out, than about what the agitprop workers were saying is quite telling. The majority of the responsibility for managing propaganda, as well as for the creation and dissemination of agitprop content lay ultimately with local party officials and the agitprop workers themselves. Furthermore, it does not appear that Moscow was directly involved with the management, creation, or dissemination of propaganda at the grassroots level in Kazakhstan either, despite having direct control over other facets of the ideological and propaganda apparatus, like the publication of the newspaper *Pravda* and other propagandistic texts.

One would expect that given these problems agitprop workers would be disciplined or punished for their poor work, especially the *okruzhkom* secretaries, who were powerful party members far above the normal rank and file members. But no such action was proposed by Bulatov, just exertions that work should be improved and that local party organs should make greater efforts to improve and support agitprop, as well as an occasional mocking comment. One likely reason no disciplinary actions were taken, as Bulatov himself mentions, is that the turnover rate for propagandists was so high, that it is becoming difficult to maintain an appropriate number of agitprop workers. Firing or disciplining agitprop workers could only serve to exacerbate the manpower issue. But it is striking that there is no sense of moving to reprimand agitprop or party officials beyond a verbal slap on the wrist.

The proposed solutions likewise did not appear to be in proportion to the severity of the apparent shortcomings. Party secretaries were ignoring agitprop work and in many places it seems that little agitprop work was being carried out. Yet the solution was just a resolution calling for the need to improve agitprop work and support for agitprop workers, without any specific or concrete measures to back these words up. While the setting or venue that Bulatov was speaking in might not have been the appropriate place to propose specific actions or legislation, the lack of specificity in his solution speaks to a hollow bureaucratic-style answer that is meant to convey an attempt at rectification, rather than any serious attempt at addressing the shortcomings. There also seems to be a hint of passing the problem down the line, asserting that the *okruzhkoms*, not the *kraikom*, need to work harder to correct the noted shortcomings in agitprop. For all the hot air and anger that one can imagine Bulatov exerted in giving this speech, his solution appears to be a rather toothless action, one that provides no real way to solve the shortcomings in agitprop.

But what was the actual state of propaganda and agitation work in Kazakhstan in 1929 and 1930, as the Party and Soviet state were implementing mass collectivization throughout the Kazakh countryside? Were things really as bad as Bulatov was conveying?

**Syr-Daryo Agitprop**

The state of propaganda varied throughout Kazakhstan. In the Syr-Daryo region of the Shymkent *okrug, okruzhkom* officials noted a mix of good and bad, though overall the reports appear to have been negative. Agitprop workers had been able to establish agronomy courses for peasants and kolkhoz workers, which would be useful during the spring 1930 sowing season.[[22]](#footnote-22) Agitprop workers had also successfully held meetings, carried out decisions of the *okruzhkom,* and had even been able to reorganize the local party network. But despite this, agitprop workers in the region also had to contend with numerous difficulties, such as unsatisfactory living quarters for agitprop students, a lack of enthusiasm in the mobilization of workers into shock labor battalions, and indifferent attitudes on the importance of cadre training. Furthermore, work plans for some agitprop groups had not been realized, such as the carrying out of party enlightenment and correspondence courses, and a general lack of agitprop work. The reasons for these issues was that local officials used agitprop workers for non-propaganda work connected to collectivization. There was also the issue that propaganda funds had been used inappropriately for work that was not related to propaganda.[[23]](#footnote-23) Agitprop work in the Syr-Daryo region does not seem to be nearly as bad as Bulatov might have indicated, but the negative aspects of the work do seem to heavily outweigh the positive. This information was provided by the Southern Kazakh *okruzkom* in response to Bulatov’s declarations on agitprop work in Kazakhstan. It is reasonable to assume that party officials in Southern Kazakhstan *okrug* played down the negative aspects or shortcomings related to propaganda so as to not look like they were as incompetent as Bulatov suggested *okruzhkom* secretaries and officials were.

In response to Bulatov’s declarations from the 1929 *kraikom* plenum, *okruzhkom* officials laid out a series of measures to improve agitprop work in the Syr-Daryo region. These measures decreed that agitprop workers should not be involved in other kinds of work besides propaganda and agitation, as well as for their funds to be better managed. Furthermore, the *okruzhkom* agitprop department pledged to organize classes during the summer to combat illiteracy, help train cadres, establish new correspondence courses, as well as to teach new agronomy techniques to people on the kolkhozes. It called for the creation of a group at least 20 of the most capable and experienced Kazakh individuals to take on leadership positions in the local party administration. Particular attention was to be paid to providing classes and cadre training courses for those working on cotton kolkhozes. The *okruzhkom* resolved that after a month there will be an inspection to on the work of the local agitprop departments and its agitprop groups to determine if the directives of the *kraikom* and *okruzhkom* have been carried out.[[24]](#footnote-24)

This bureaucratic exchange is significant because it demonstrates how *okruzhkoms, gorkoms,* and *raikoms* interacted with the higher party organs in Alma-Ata on matters of propaganda, as well as revealing aspects of the bureaucratic culture within the Kazakh party propaganda departments. Problems with propaganda would usually be made known to the *kraikom* through reports from inspectors dispatched by the *kraikom* agitprop department, and sometimes through the bureaucratic chain of command from the *raikom* to the *kraikom*. What is particularly striking is how the Southern Kazakhstan *okruzhkom* resolved to solve its problems with propaganda. Much like Bulatov at the *kraikom* plenum, the solution of the *okruzkom* was to call for an increase in propaganda work, without very many specifics beyond a call for the training of 20 Kazakh agitprop workers. Also, like Bulatov’s declaration, there is a striking lack of specifics and instead the resolutions to improve agitprop work read more as vague generalities. The discussion and reporting of propaganda events, regardless of whether they were successes or failures, were often lacking a lot of specific contextual information. Often, though not always, officials simply reported that propaganda events took place, did not take place, or took place incorrectly. This very bureaucratic view of reporting on propaganda was problematic because it was solely focused on the negatives and problems of propaganda work. Similarly, this bureaucratic perspective resulted in the plans and resolutions calling for the improvement of agitprop work to lack specificity and instead contained vague calls to improve agitprop work.

Daniel Peris, in the context of the League of the Militant Godless, has argued that Soviet bureaucratic culture often contextualized inquires or reviews of party work into a question of how a particular institution was faring, but that this often became framed in the negative. The question of “how is this organization faring?” evolved into a question of “how far is this organization deviating from the party line or bureaucratic standards and expectations? ”[[25]](#footnote-25) In the case of the Kazakh party agitprop department, reports and inspections of agitprop work were often focused mainly on the negative. The main concern of these reports was less on the effect of agitprop work, but rather centered on questions of whether or not agitprop courses or lectures were being held or if agitprop workers were being trained, or even the extent to which agitprop work was aligned with the party line. Quantity over quality, a maxim that dominated Soviet thinking on agriculture and industrialization, was also a major factor in the production and dissemination of party propaganda. At times, even the question of quality or the content of propaganda was ignored by Soviet officials in favor of questions of quantity.

Ultimately, there is no way to determine whether the Southern Kazakhstan *okruzhkom* actually implemented the measures they said they would implement. There is no further documentation on this specific matter. The shortcomings in Syr-Daryo, while significant, do not appear to be as bad as Bulatov indicates in his speech to the *kraikom*. But despite some predilections of the Soviet bureaucracy to report on the negative over the positive, the apparent magnitude and types of problems that came from reports and reviews on propaganda work from 1929 and 1930 do indicate a significant and major problem with the functioning of the propaganda system at this time. Reports from other regions of Kazakhstan give a much more dysfunctional picture of the party propaganda apparatus.

**Semipalatinsk Agitprop**

In the Semipalatinsk *okrug* of northern Kazakhstan there was a general lack of agitprop work and correspondence courses, despite directives from the *kraikom* agitprop department. A report from the Semipalatinsk *оkruzhkom* in January 1930 in response to Bulatov’s resolutions stated that this situation had negatively impacted construction of the party system, the training of cadres, economic and political campaigns (i.e. collectivization and industrialization), as well as the “international enlightenment of the masses.[[26]](#footnote-26)” Furthermore, the lack of agitprop would hinder the spread and use of “Bolshevik self-criticism,” the explaining and implementation of party decisions, and that this will lead to the “ideological hardening” of organizations and to the weakening of vigilance against the rightist and leftist deviations.[[27]](#footnote-27) Shortages of Kazakh-language materials had also been plaguing the Semipalatinsk agitprop apparatus, which had the effect of hindering the work of Kazakh agitprop workers and of the recruitment of new Kazakh cadres. It would seem that the lack of propaganda was foretelling the collapse of the entire Soviet experiment in Kazakhstan.

To rectify these shortcomings the Semipalatinsk *okruzhkom* laid out a plan that called for the selection of trained propagandists to carry out agitprop work, the retraining of cadres and agitprop workers, more correspondence courses, greater discussion by agitprop workers of resolutions from Moscow and Alma-Ata, and a request for the increase in Kazakh and Russian-language materials from the *kraikom* agitprop department. The Semipalatinsk *okruzhkom* also suggested the implementation of self-inspection and more self-criticism amongst agitprop workers and groups as a way to improve agitprop work.[[28]](#footnote-28) Self-criticism was a corrective device that involved individuals and party members denouncing party and state officials who were incompetent or corrupt, resulting in “the party/state system criticizing itself”, hence the name.[[29]](#footnote-29) In many instances an individual also had to confess their own mistakes in front of their comrades. As one could expect, this could get wildly out of hand. Open criticism of local party organizations began to appear in the press.[[30]](#footnote-30) In the Leningrad region in Russia, self-criticism had to be tampered by party officials and limited to ordinary individuals and lower-ranking party activists, lest the Party’s legitimacy be questioned.[[31]](#footnote-31) It is likely that in the Semipalatinsk *okrug*, self-criticism was limited to lower-ranking party officials and agitprop organizations. The *okruzhkom* declared that some of these plans were to be implemented within three days, and before March 15th there should be a series of inspections of the *okrug’s* agitprop workers, which was to pay specific attention to their political knowledge and methodological training.[[32]](#footnote-32)

Much like in the Syr-Daryo region, there were quite obviously problems with the party agitprop department in the Semipalatinsk *okrug.* The main issue was that there did not appear to be much of any agitprop work taking place. The reason for this was collectivization and its prioritization over all other matters. Reports from the Syr-Daryo region stated that the agitprop workers were involved in other work besides their propaganda and agitation responsibilities. The information from the Semipalatinsk *okruzhkom* also indicates that agitprop workers were preoccupied with other responsibilities to the extent that agitprop work was more or less not being carried out. Whether these agitprop workers were full-time propagandists, or party activists who conducted propaganda in their free time, they were exhorted by party officials to participate in collectivization and were thus unable to carry out their propaganda work in addition to helping with collectivization. What was particularly striking about this was that Bulatov called for agitprop workers to directly participate in the collectivization process and that they should not “be stuck to their chairs[[33]](#footnote-33),” albeit not to the detriment of agitprop work. This line of thinking certainly confused those party officials and agitprop workers who were trying to rectify the problems with propaganda and told that agitprop workers should directly aid in collectivization to some extent.

The *okruzhkoms* of both regions came up with essentially the same solution to this problem, which is similar to the solution that Bulatov stated at the party plenum in Alma-Ata: resolutions for more agitprop work. This type of problem solving, a type that essentially equated the declaration of the problem with solving the problem, was a very common feature of Soviet bureaucratic culture. It presented an image of direct and forceful action that was being taken to solve an issue1, but these solutions were broad and lacking any real specifics. There was a clear lack of imaginative or dynamic thinking on the part of the *okruzhkom* to solve the issue. Instead, like in any good bureaucracy, the actual burden of fixing the issues with propaganda was passed on down by the *okruzhkom* to the *raikoms* and *gorkoms,* the local and city party organizations, respectively. In the end it was usually up to low ranking party officials and the agitprop workers, relying on whatever resources were locally available to implement the resolutions on propaganda work. On one hand, this is how delineation of responsibility is supposed to work in a bureaucracy. The responsibility for an issue was passed up or down the hierarchy by the different bureaucratic levels until (ideally) it ended up with the organ that could most effectively resolve the issue. On the other hand, such a system can result in issues being passed by bureaucrats up and down the hierarchy without significant guidance, leadership, or even action. At least within the context of party propaganda bureaucratic culture in Kazakhstan, what was more important in the end was the appearance of something being done, rather than action being taken.[[34]](#footnote-34) As the evidence indicates, this was an incredibly sub-par way of running and managing propaganda.

The follow-up inspection of the Semipalatinsk *okrug’s* agitprop department in March 1930 revealed not only that previously stated measures to improve agitprop work were wholly inadequate, but also that the state of agitprop work was worse than officials originally indicated in the *okruzhkom* report from January.[[35]](#footnote-35) The inspector noted a lack of discussion on the mistakes and problems of the rightist deviation, a wing of the party leadership that disagreed with many of Stalin’s polices and who were gradual forced out of power by Stalin in the 1920s. In the Zaisan region of the Semipalatinsk *okrug* supposed rightist deviationist elements had apparently infiltrated the leadership of the local *raikom*, with party leaders enacting rightist policies. The inspector actually criticized agitprop workers for not using this opportunity to mobilize the masses in a struggle to adhere to the party line and well as combat opportunists, or for using this example to teach to peasants and laborers the incorrectness of the rightist faction of the Party. Furthermore, there had also been no agitprop work concerning the recent 16th party congress or the resolutions from the November Partly Plenum held in Moscow, nor had there been type of activism related to the first Five Year Plan in the Zaisan region.[[36]](#footnote-36)

The Zaisan *raikom* being infiltrated by rightist deviationists was almost certainly an exaggeration and likely the result of mistakes and unintentional deviations on the part of the regional party leadership. That the inspector bemoans the inability of agitprop workers to take advantage of this situation is indicative of the high expectations that the party placed on agitators and propagandists. To take advantage of a supposed deviation in the local party administration and use it as a teaching moment would have required a rather insightful and brave agitprop worker. Taking the step to criticize local party leadership could be a risky action, even in the early era of party self-criticism. A propagandist could have easily been accused of deviating from the party line for defaming the party leadership. This instance could be indicative of a no-right-answer situation and may partly explain the widespread lack of agitprop work. Agitprop workers often did not receive the necessary training to fully meet the party’s expectations. It seems possible that agitators and propagandist might have opted to not carry out any agitprop work if they did not fully understand what they were supposed to discuss, or how exactly they were supposed to carry out the work. Being chastised for not saying anything might have been better than being chastised for saying the wrong thing.

Despite the *okruzhkom* report from January that called for an increase in propaganda and agitation, for the months of February and March there were no work plans issued by the agitprop department.[[37]](#footnote-37) In fact there was evidence that it was not only regional or local party officials who were shirking agitprop work, but also party leaders at the highest level. One inspector noted that Filipp Goloshchyokin (the highest ranking leader of the Kazakh Communist Party and de facto leader of Kazakhstan answerable only to Stalin and the Central Committee in Moscow) had been present at a Semipalatinsk *okruzhkom* meeting and seemed unfazed by the absence of the head agitprop department, but quite critical at the absences of the heads of other departments. There, in fact, was no chairman of the *okrug* agitprop department at that point in time, and thus the reaction might not have been unexpected.[[38]](#footnote-38) But it does seem striking that Goloshchyokin was not fazed by the lack of a representative from the agitprop department.[[39]](#footnote-39) The inspection report implied that the reason for this was that Goloshchyokin and the other party leaders did not consider agitprop to be important enough for their attention.[[40]](#footnote-40) In fact, the inspector stated that there does not appear to have been much of an agitprop department in the *okrug*. Not only was there no head of the department, but in the main agitprop offices in Semipalatinsk there was often just a single person who was there because regulations dictated that someone occupy the offices during work hours.[[41]](#footnote-41) A sense of “fatalistic hopelessness” had spread throughout the *okruzhkom* agitprop department, brought on by the subordination of nearly all party matters to collectivization.[[42]](#footnote-42) It ultimately appeared that the Semipalatinsk *okrug* agitprop department had essentially ceased to function, and party leaders at all levels did not seem to care. In fact, there was some fear that the problems and shortcomings with the agitprop department had become so normalized that they might spill into other party organs in Kazakhstan and undermine the entire endeavor of building socialism.[[43]](#footnote-43)

This fatalistic hopelessness and the chronic lack of value perceived in agitprop work was not only present in the *okrug* agitprop department, but also existed in the regional agitprop departments. A *raikom* party secretary requested from the leadership of the *raion’s* agitprop department an increase in the amount of agitational and mass work. However, the *raion* agitprop chairman responded indifferently with a “phenomenal answer” noting, “there will always be bread and work,” implying that regardless of whether or not agitprop work is carried out, there will always be food and work.[[44]](#footnote-44) There was very little officially sanctioned agitprop work carried out alongside collectivization and the accompanying grain procurements. The inspector scathingly notes that “The management and organization of work on the part of the Propaganda and Agitation department, in the most important political, and especially economic campaigns, has come to nothing.[[45]](#footnote-45)”

What’s more, the agitprop work that was carried out appears to have been done by individuals who were less than qualified in the eyes of the Party and often expressed ideas and held discussions on topics that were significant deviations from the party line. In the Zyryanovskii region one propagandist could not identify the leaders of the rightist opposition, nor explain the main ideas of Marxist-Leninism. A propagandist in the Kurhumskii region and another in the Samarski region were subsequently exposed as “kulaks”. A Kazakh propagandist who was recently admitted to the Party in the Dzhariminski region had proven himself to be lacking the necessary skills to be an agitator, and on a construction site of the TurkSib railroad one propagandist discussed the *impossibility* of the creation of socialism in one country.[[46]](#footnote-46) One of Stalin’s widely touted goals of collectivization and industrialization was the building of socialism in one country, and what this propagandist was saying was in fact the exact opposite. In addition to these issues in the Semipalatinsk *okrug* there was also a general lack of correspondence courses, with none having been held since January 1930.[[47]](#footnote-47) There had also been a complete lack of training of cadres, to the point where it seems as the agitprop department given up on the entire venture of training cadres. No training or preparation courses were held during the recent winter months.[[48]](#footnote-48)

Despite these massive problems in the Semipalatinsk *okrug*, there was some limited agitprop work in the form classes and training courses. From November 1929 through January 1930 there were at least 6 training courses that educated 314 students in such topics as tractor driving, leadership, agricultural techniques, and general cadre training. These courses were held by the propaganda groups, units that the *kraikom* agitprop department in Alma-Ata deployed to investigate and improve agitprop work in certain regions.[[49]](#footnote-49) These groups appear to have been the only properly functioning agitprop organs within the Semipalatinsk *okrug* during 1929 and 1930. The reason for this was that the members of the propaganda groups were all full-time agitprop workers, who had been specially trained and tasked by the agitprop department leadership in Alma-Ata to go out to troubled regions where there were significant problems with propaganda. The inspector concluded his lengthy report by stating that the *okruzhkom* agitprop department had largely failed in its work, and that in doing so deprived the party of one of its most powerful weapons in implementing the party line.[[50]](#footnote-50)

The negativity surrounding the agitprop department and agitprop work in general in Semipalatinsk was so intense that it almost seems beyond belief, especially given the lack of concrete efforts on the part of the Party to improve the functioning and work of the agitprop department. But this information corresponds with other sources, such as Bulatov’s declaration on the shortcomings of propaganda and *okruzhkom* leaders not caring about the conduct of agitprop, as well as the reports on agitprop shortcomings from Southern Kazakhstan, even if the shortcomings in the Semipalatinsk *okrug* seem much more severe than the issues in the Syr-Daryo region.[[51]](#footnote-51) Collectivization and industrialization resulted in problems and shortcomings all throughout the Soviet Union. That agitprop was failing to meet the expectations and suffering from shortages was not unique and can almost expected in 1930s Soviet society. Setting unrealistic goals was, in fact, the modus operandi for most institutions in the Soviet Union, and was the norm for party agitprop since its establishment in the 1920s.[[52]](#footnote-52) But the problems were not solely agitprop workers failing to hold a certain number of propaganda events or meet a quota of students in classes. Rather, what happened was the near total failure of an entire *okrug* agitprop apparatus to function due to systematic issues with an unresponsive bureaucracy, shortages of resources, and a willful ignoring of party agitprop.

**The 7th All-Kazakh Party Conference**

The Kazakh party leadership attempted to address these problems with agitprop at the 7th All Kazakh Party Congress in June of 1930. A resolution on party enlightenment and theoretical training of party members acknowledged that there had been significant problems with party propaganda. Officials at the party conference reasserted the importance of ideology to the Soviet Union, stating that as a result of the massive socialist transformation the country was undertaking there would be an intensification of class struggle and that the main weapon to fight this struggle would be Marxist-Leninist ideology. Ideology would also be pertinent to enhancing the quality of party leadership and improving mass work, as well as work towards maintaining vigilance against opportunist maneuvers by rightist and leftist deviationists.[[53]](#footnote-53)

The conference called for fundamental changes to all party organs and for these organs to change their relationship towards party enlightenment and elevate it to the most important level of party work. Officials noted that the underestimation of party work stemmed from a lack of understanding of the importance of Marxist-Leninist ideology in Kazakhstan. Because Kazakhstan lacked a native industrial proletariat and a Bolshevik presence before 1917, agitprop was vitally important to the enlightenment of young Kazakh (party) organizations and for the training of Kazakh cadres.[[54]](#footnote-54) These resolutions were almost certainly in response to party officials who prioritized collectivization and other matters over ideology and propaganda, or who considered propaganda to be unimportant to the work that they were doing.

To rectify the shortcomings with agitprop, the resolution called for the *kraikom* and the *okruzhkoms* to reform how party enlightenment work was carried out, including a reform of the agitprop department, with party committees at all administrative levels to implement a system of controls and inspections so that future agitprop and ideological shortcomings could be addressed. The theoretical training of cadres by agitprop workers was to be improved, the number of propagandists was to be increased, especially in nomadic regions and on collective farms, and there was to be an increase of agitprop workers who had proletarian backgrounds.[[55]](#footnote-55) The party conference also agreed that a new network of party schools should be established with sessions lasting 3-4 months. The issues of illiterate individuals being admitted to the party ranks was also discussed, with calls for candidate members to become fully literate during their 6-month candidacy stage. It also noted that there should be more widespread studying of party theory for cadres, through organizations besides the agitprop department, such as the Komvuz (the Communist School of Higher Learning), as well as through evening party schools and correspondence courses. The lack of agitprop literature in Kazakh was also discussed by delegates at the conference, with a resolution calling for the kraikom to ensure that more Kazakh-language ideological literature, especially the works of Lenin, be printed.[[56]](#footnote-56)

In addition to these logistical matters, the conference also directed agitprop departments on issues of content and ordered all levels of the agitprop apparatus in Kazakhstan to discusses the theories and mistakes of the rightist deviation, along with the remaining negative influence of the leftist deviation and Trotskyism. Propagandists and agitators were also ordered to discuss the negative effects of national and regional chauvinism because these issues had started to appear in society due to the implementation of socialist labor and reconstruction. Agitprop workers were also directed to talk about the actions of the Comintern (the Communist International), the state of the international workers movement, and the nature of the increasing crisis of capitalism (the Great Depression).[[57]](#footnote-57)

These resolutions to implement changes and corrections of party work were similar to the calls for improvement that Bulatov made at the Kazakh party plenum in November 1929 and the calls for improvement from the Semipalatinsk *okruzhkom* in January 1930. They were broad without any specifics and in general called for more propaganda work or an improvement in propaganda work. The specific propaganda topics are also vague and offer no real insight into what was to be said about the leftist deviations, Trotskyism, the Comintern, or the Great Depression. Party officials assumed that agitprop workers would know the ideologically correct thing to say for each topic, despite evidence that some agitprop workers clearly did not know what to say. Considering the significant institutional problems with the Kazakh agitprop apparatus in certain parts of the republic, more specific guidelines on how to solve shortcomings, calls for party or agitprop leadership to be changed, or for the devotion of more resources to agitprop work throughout the Kazakh *Krai* would have been expected. Much of the responsibility for implementing these changes was left to the *okruzhkoms, raikoms,* and *gorkoms*. However, a lot of the problems associated with agitprop, as made clear in the lengthy report from Semipalatinsk, stemmed from party officials at all levels having given little importance in agitprop work in relation to collectivization or industrialization, and thus devoting few resources to propaganda or agitation. The resolution from the Kazakh party congress deftly notes that attitudes towards party enlightenment needed to change. This is likely a carefully worded acknowledgment on the part of party leaders that many party officials did not consider agitprop to be an important component in the building of socialism or worth time, energy and resources. The likelihood that such views could be changed based on these resolutions seems low, and, as further evidence will demonstrate, these views did in fact not change. In fact, a disciplinary system for agitprop workers, which might have encouraged propagandists, agitators, and local party officials to take their ideological responsibilities more seriously, was largely nonexistent. Agitprop workers were occasionally chastised and even kicked out of the propaganda department or the party, but that fact that for many agitprop workers their propaganda responsibilities were essentially acts of unpaid volunteerism, meant that many could and did walk away without any fear or expectation of disciplinary retribution.

Lack of resources, poorly trained agitprop workers dealing with unrealistic expectations from the Party, and the prioritization of collectivization over propaganda and ideology all contributed to the shortcomings within the Kazakh agitprop apparatus. Collectivization was also a major factor in the failures and collapse of the agitprop department. Nearly all party resources were dedicated to collectivizing to the detriment of all other issues, and it was likely the most significant reason for the massive shortcomings in the Semipalatinsk *okrug*. Communist officials in Alma-Ata, as well as Moscow, were fully aware of the problems with propaganda and the effect collectivization had on the agitprop apparatus. Reports from inspectors made their way to the highest echelons of power in the Kremlin. But party leaders chose to ignore collectivization’s influence on propaganda in much the same way that it ignored the suffering and starvations of peasants and nomads who were being forced by the Party and state onto the collective farms. Still, as severe and detrimental an influence collectivization was to party agitprop, not to mention the catastrophic effect it had on the Kazakh populace as a whole, it was only a temporary influence limited to the late 1920s and early 1930s. The most significant and systemic problem with the Kazakh party agitprop department was a bureaucratic culture that equated passing broad resolutions with actually solving the problems. Such a circumstance resulted in the passing along of responsibility for solving these problems onto party institutions and people who were often unable or unwilling to solve them. This, combined with the lack of any real disciplinary system within the propaganda department, meant that the problems with propaganda were never fully resolved by the Party. Without significant organizational and bureaucratic reforms, as well as a major shift in Soviet bureaucratic culture, it seems unlikely that major improvements in agitprop would ever have been possible.

**Conclusions on the Crisis**

A crisis of propaganda gripped large swaths of Kazakhstan during the late 1920s and early 1930s. This crisis ran the gamut from agitprop workers not holding classes or fulfilling their agitational responsibilities, to an *okrug* agitprop department only having one administrative employee, all the way to an *okruzhkom* secretary, and even the *kraikom* secretary, ignoring the significant shortcomings of local agitprop departments. While individual propagandists deviated from the party line by way of incorrect teachings, party leaders ignoring agitprop at all levels represented a massive deviation from the party line that calls into question the entire ideological foundation of the Soviet Union.

It was through agitprop that Soviet citizens were supposed to understand and internalize Marxist-Leninist ideology and work towards the construction of socialism. Ideology was supposed to be at the center of Soviet life. Stalin himself reinforced this idea stating that ideological theory gives “practical strength of orientation, clarity of perspective, certainty of work, and faith in the victory of our cause.[[58]](#footnote-58)” Agitprop and ideology were necessary to properly and successfully implement collectivization and industrialization. But party members and officials, those very people whom Lenin referred to as the vanguard of the party, were ignoring propaganda.[[59]](#footnote-59) The lack of a functioning agitprop department in Semipalatinsk and the disinterest of the *okruzhkom* and the Kazakh party leader attest to a broad underestimation of the supposed value and importance of agitprop. The enactment of collectivization and industrialization without agitprop would indicate that Soviet ideology was not needed and cast doubts on the veracity Marxist-Leninist ideology. Not just party members but actual ranking party officials eschewing ideology could have served to undermine the Communist Party’s monopoly on power, and thus the entire Soviet experiment. This interpretation, while never directly voiced by party officials, does seem to represent the thinking and fears behind the constant repetition of the necessity and importance of ideology and propaganda to the building of socialism. For all the reports describing party officials ignoring propaganda or casting it aside as useless, there were also party officials constantly scrambling, often in a Sisyphean-like effort, to find some way to improve the quality of agitprop work because of the possible ideological ramifications of a lack of agitprop work.

This situation also raises the question of the role of ideology in the everyday life of people in Stalin’s Soviet Union. While people in Kazakhstan clearly saw and understood that the Communist Party and Soviet state were taking away their land, animals, and irrevocably changing their lives (often for the worse) by ordering them to form collective farms, it is unlikely that they fully understood the ideological or political reasons behind these actions. Part of the reason for this, though assuredly not the only reason, was poor agitprop work. In his memoirs on growing up as a nomad in the 1920s and 1930s, Mukhamet Shayakmetov notes that the figures for animal ownership that determined if someone was a kulak kept changing[[60]](#footnote-60) and that collectivization activists (some of whom would have been agitprop workers) often interpreted the laws and rules governing collectivization as they saw fit[[61]](#footnote-61) and likely took advantage of the plight of kulaks through the confiscation of their possessions.[[62]](#footnote-62) With these levels of inconsistency and exploitation, along with the ensuing famine and other hardships that the Kazakh populace faced during collectivization, there was likely little time or energy devoted to agitprop work and few Kazakhs who were learning to “speak Bolshevik.”

Given the broad nature of Soviet political culture it is likely that the resolutions from the 7th All-Kazakh party conference had little influence in the improvement of agitprop or were even implemented given the state of agitprop departments throughout Kazakhstan. The suggestions for a reorganization of agitprop organs, a greater prioritizing of agitprop work, more party schools, more agitprop workers, or more agitprop events, classes, or courses of all types was the de facto response by all party organizations to any perceived shortcoming amongst the agitprop apparatus for the entirety of the Stalinist period. In most of these resolutions for more or improved agitprop work, little concern was given to increasing financial or material resources for the agitprop organs. It was often left to the local agitprop organs, the very groups that were suffering from the numerous problems, to come up with the resources and plans to implement the resolutions given by the higher party organs.

This belies not only a lack of imagination among party officials, but it also reveals the metrics by which the party judged agitprop work to be a success or failure.[[63]](#footnote-63) Kazakh party officials’ clearly saw that there were problems and the agitprop apparatus was failing because propagandists and agitators were not carrying out agitprop work. Propaganda events held by agitprop workers, as well as statistics on numbers of meetings held, people in attendance of the meetings, and the numbers of people trained were what mattered to the Party. While this is at least one valid metric to judge agitprop work it was often held by the party as being the most important metric for success. As such, the solution for any and all problems was to call for increases in agitprop activity. More agitprop workers, more agitprop groups, and more agitprop events would eventually fix all perceived shortcomings and would result in the spread and acceptance of the facets of Marxist-Leninist ideology among the populace, which in turn would result in the correct and successful implementation of the party line. This is not to say that agitprop and party officials were unconcerned with the content of propaganda work. Officials were clearly aware of mistakes in propaganda content and the calls for improved agitprop work meant both an increase in the number of propaganda events, as well as an improvement of the quality of the propaganda content. But numbers of events held, people in classes, and cadres trained, among other types of statistical information, were the main metrics for success.[[64]](#footnote-64)

This is a strikingly bureaucratic approach to problem solving that associates the mere existence of agitprop work and workers with the inevitably successful spread and acceptance of Soviet ideology and the party line. One can’t help but notice the influence of Marx’s ideas on the inevitability of the rise of the proletariat and the emergence of communism in this thought process. Furthermore, this approach does not prioritize the actual changes and social transformations that agitprop could affect on society. For example, in a class on tractor operation that would have been taught by a propagandist, what was more important was the number of students who finished the class, rather than if the students actually used their training to become competent tractor operators. The effects of agitprop on society were not totally ignored by the state and party. The secret police in its various manifestations was always keen to know the mood of the population regarding politics, news, and other events, but this was not a major purview of the agitprop department.

This bureaucratic approach to ideological work, combined with the decentralized nature of agitprop content creation resulted in a fragile superstructure of agitation and propaganda being constructed over the Kazakh populace, one whose sole strength and anchors for success were derived from the bureaucracy. Daniel Peris has described a similar political culture as the basis for the League of the Militant Godless, noting that the focus on the number of cells, councils, and organizations as signifiers of the League’s success and the spread of atheism resulted in a “Potemkin village of atheism” in which the League existed largely on paper.[[65]](#footnote-65)

But it would be inaccurate to call the agitprop apparatus a Potemkin village. Firstly, the agitprop organs were a fundamental part of the Communist Party and its vast network of cells, committees, and organs. They were an institutional feature that was as permanent as the Communist Party’s hold on power. In the end the Party’s agitprop organs survived until the ultimate collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Secondly, propaganda and agitation were revolutionary traditions the predated the Bolshevik Party, going back to far as to the 1870s when groups of the Russian intelligentsia “went to the people”, venturing into rural Russia to teach the peasantry the new developments of the modern world. The Bolsheviks used agitprop to rally supporters to their cause in the early days of the October Revolution and to encourage the soldiers of the Red Army to defeat the White factions during the Russian Civil War. Agitprop work was a direct and living connection that the party had with the common Soviet man or woman, and it was often through the agitprop worker that common people embodied or conceived of the party. In an era before widespread adoption of television and when the ownership of radios was restricted by the state, agitprop work, along with newspapers, were the only regular communication between the masses and the party state apparatus.

Thirdly, the Soviet Union was, despite its problems with propaganda in Kazakhstan, an ideological state, governed by certain ideological precepts, and whose ultimate goal of communism had been dogmatically defined by Marx. Without Marxist-Leninist ideology the Soviet Union did not have a reason for existing. Agitprop was there to keep the flames of ideological thought alive, to constantly teach and explain to the Soviet people why the Soviet state and the Communist Party existed and what it was that they were trying to achieve. While the Soviet leadership may have truly believed in their ideology and goals (or at least thought of themselves as true believers), they clearly did not trust the populace to understand and internalize the ideology on their own. After all, the Bolshevik party was the vanguard of the revolution and its members were responsible for interpreting and disseminating ideology and its goals for the benefit of the populace. And it was through the agitprop organs that this interpreting and disseminating was to be done. For the agitprop organs to fall to the wayside and into irrelevancy like the League of the Militant Godless ultimately did was anathema to the entire Soviet enterprise. The Soviet Union could not exist for long if its entire ideological and propagandistic base was a Potemkin village.[[66]](#footnote-66)

Somewhat paradoxically, the highly bureaucratic nature of the agitprop department, along with the all-encompassing presence of the party was also a major source of endurance. The agitprop department and its work would always be present no matter if their work was a success or failure in any sense of the words. There would always be another agitprop campaign, or series of courses and lectures, or another cohort of agitprop workers completing training at party schools. The idea of effective or ineffective propaganda almost seems moot considering that even if agitprop workers were able to convince all of Kazakhstan of the merits of socialism and Marxist-Leninist ideology and were able to adequately train the populace in the skills needed to implement the party line, agitprop work would not end. It would continue on as it had before, with success or failure having little bearing on its course.

The importance of propaganda to the Soviet Union is what makes the agitprop problems of 1929 and 1930 in Kazakhstan so striking. That the agitprop apparatus suffered hardships and major shortcomings due to the disastrous effects of collectivization and the party’s single-minded drive to implement it is in and of itself not groundbreaking. What is groundbreaking was the irrelevance of ideology and propaganda in the face of massive social change and transformation, not so much in the sense that it did not matter or affect the people who were being forced onto the collective farms or were suffering from collectivization, but that sections of the Party itself seems to have abandoned its ideological goals and interpretations. Party officials in Moscow and Alma-Ata might were still espousing the importance of agitprop in the achieving of the party line, but on the ground, at least amongst the chaos that collectivization wrought in Kazakhstan, the evidence clearly indicated that agitprop and ideology were not the concern of local and regional party officials. What mattered in the end was fulfilling the orders to collectivize and appropriate grain that came in from the center, a bureaucratic outlook the belies the true nature of the party-state apparatus.

This situation reveals the unique position that agitprop had in the Soviet system and how its incorrect application (or its absence) could detrimentally affect the Party’s power. Collectivization, as dictated by the party leadership, was seen as a vital component of the party line. The party line, in theory, could only be achieved through the knowledge and skills that agitprop work imparted on the individual. Officials blamed problems with collectivization on the lack of agitprop and made repeated complaints that agitprop work was needed to correctly implement the party line. What was happening in several regions in Kazakhstan was that collective farms were being established without the necessary agitprop and ideological knowledge. There may have been problems on these farms, and especially in the northern regions such as Semipalatinsk where there were major issue with refugees and starvation, but socialism was still being built through coercion and brute force, without the necessary ideological context (at least the ideological context as provided by the agitprop department). An individual in Kazakhstan could interpret this as evidence that Marxist-Leninist ideology, propaganda, and agitation were not necessary to implement the goals of the state, thus calling into question the need for the Party as an ideological driving force.

Party officials were concerned that agitprop work was not being carried out because it meant that party organs were not functioning as they should. It also meant that the work being done to implement the party line (such as collectivization) was flawed and the final results would themselves be flawed. These perspectives reinforce the important position that agitprop played in the wide Soviet system and explains why some officials were very distressed by the lack of agitprop work being carried out. The drive for collectivization in Kazakhstan, the implementation of the party line that agitprop was meant to support, had the unintended consequence of weakening the agitprop network.

1. Kaz. Pres. Arv., f. 141, op. 1, del. 3630, l. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. There is little mention of the purges in the internal documents of the Kazakh propaganda and agitation departments. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See Stephen Kotkin’s *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization.* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Matthew Lenoe, *Closer to the Masses: Stalinist Culture, Social Revolution, and Soviet Newspapers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 209. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Karl Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger: Soviet Propaganda During World War II* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 2012), 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Kaz. Pres. Arv. f. 141, op 1, del. 11637, ll. 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Kaz, Pres. Arv. F. 141, op 1, del 3630, ll 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Без отрыва от производства. Kaz. Pres. Arv. f.141, op1, del. 11626, ll 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Kaz. Pres. Arv., f. 141, op.1, del. 11661, ll 34-35. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Kaz. Pres. Arv. f. 141 op. 1 del. 3630, ll 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Kaz. Pres. Arv. f. 141 op. 1 del. 3630, ll 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Kaz. Pres. Arv. f. 141 op. 1 del. 3630, ll 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Kaz. Pres. Arv. f. 141 op. 1, del. 3630, ll 28 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Kaz. Pres. Arv. f. 141 op. 1 del. 3630, ll 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Bulatov is speaking of the agitprop as one singular apparatus or institution. The decision to split the two different departments was made on November 22, 1929. It is likely that the Kazakh agitprop department had not yet been split into 2 separate organs yet. At least that it what I am assuming. Kaz. Pres. Arv. f. 141 op. 1 del. 3630, ll 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Kaz. Pres. Arv. f. 141, op. 1, del. 3630, ll 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Kaz. Pres. Arv. f. 141, op. 1, del 3630, ll 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Matthew Lenoe, *Closer to the Masses: Stalinist Culture, Social Revolution, and Soviet Newspapers,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 209. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Kaz. Pres. Arv. f. 141, op. 1, del 3630, ll 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Kaz. Pres. Arv. f. 141, op. 1. Del., 3630, ll 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Although these same shortcomings will continue to plague the agitprop department throughout the 1930s, 40s, and even into the 50s. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Kaz. Pres. Arv. f. 141, op. 1, del. 3630, ll 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Kaz. Pres. Arv. f. 141, op 1, del 3630, ll 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Kaz. Pres. Arv. f. 141, op. 1, delo 3630, ll 1-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Daniel Peris, *Storming the Heavens: The Soviet League of the Militant Godless* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 148. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Kaz. Pres. Arv. f. 141 op. 1, del. 3630, ll 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Kaz. Pres. Arv. f. 141, op 1. del . 3630, ll 3. The rightist and leftist deviations were factions in the Communist Party that opposed various aspects of Joseph Stalin’s rule over the Soviet Union. Stalin emerged victorious in the struggle with these factions, with many members of these factions eventually executed during the Great Terror. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Kaz. Pres. Arv. f. 141, op 1. del . 3630, ll 3-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Lenoe, *Closer to the Masses* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 182. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Matthew Lenoe, *Closer to the Masses: Stalinist Culture, Social Revolution, and Soviet Newspapers,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 185. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Matthew Lenoe, *Closer to the Masses: Stalinist Culture, Social Revolution, and Soviet Newspapers,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 209-210. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Kaz. Pres. Arv. f. 141, op 1. del . 3630, ll 4-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Kaz. Pres. Arv. f. 141 op. 1 del. 3630, ll 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. This echoes much of what Daniel Peris has written about in the context of the League of the Militant Atheist. He argues throughout his work that bureaucratic action and forms came to be equated with cultural change. In much the same way I am arguing that bureaucratic action and forms gave the appearance of progress and solutions to problems with propaganda, but in the end remained largely bureaucratic actions because there was no cohesive or direct guiding force in the production and dissemination of party propaganda in Kazakhstan. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Kaz. Pres. Arv. f. 141, op. 1, del. 3630, ll 35. In an interesting side note, the author of this report, who is unknown, states that in the 11 days he was on his inspection tour he was not able to take in a deep survey of all the agitprop work in the region. This seems a bit exaggerated, although the specifics of his inspection tour are unknown. The author notes that the purpose of this report is to affect radical improvement in the level of agitprop work in the region. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Kaz. Pres. Arv. f.141, op. 1., del. 3630, ll 36-38. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Kaz. Pres. Arv. f. 141, op. 1, del. 3630, ll, 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. This might also explain why the Semipalatinsk okrug agitprop department was not functioning well. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Kaz. Pres. Arv., f. 141, op. 1, del. 3630, ll 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. This in and of itself is noteworthy as the inspector reporting this information is leveling very serious charge against the most powerful individual in Kazakhstan. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Kaz. Pres. Arv., f. 141, op. 1 del. 3630, ll 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Kaz. Pres. Arv., f. 141, op. 1, del. 3630, ll, 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Kaz. Pres. Arv., f. 141, op. 1, del. 3630, l. 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Kaz. Pres. Arv., f. 141, op. 1, del. 3630, ll, 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Kaz. Pres. Arv., f. 141, op. 1, del. 3630, ll, 45. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Kaz. Pres. Arv., f. 141, op. 1, del. 3630, ll 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Kaz. Pres. Arv., f. 141, op. 1, del. 3630, ll 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Kaz. Pres. Arv., f. 141, op. 1, del. 3630, ll 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Kaz. Pres. Arv., f. 141, op. 1, del. 3630, ll 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Kaz. Pres. Arv., f. 141, op. 1, del. 3630, ll 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. This was likely due to the fact that northern Kazakhstan, where the Semipalatinsk *okrug* was located, was a grain growing region and among the first parts of the republic that were heavily collectivized. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Peter Kenez, *Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917-1929*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 123. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Kaz. Pres. Arv., f. 141, op. 1, del. 3630, l. 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. *Resolutions and Decrees of the 7th All-Kazakh Party Conference, June 1930.* (State Library of the Republic of Kazakhstan), http://nblib.library.kz/elib/Sait/%D0%A0%D0%B5%D0%B4%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%B5%20%D0%BA%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B3%D0%B8/01-12-2014/%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B7%D0%BE%D0%BB%D1%8E%D1%86%20%D0%B8%20%D0%BF%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%8F%207%20%D0%B2%D1%81%D0%B5%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%B9%20%D0%BF%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%82%D0%BA/1.html#1/z page 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. *Resolutions and Decrees of the 7th All-Kazakh Party Conference, June 1930.* (State Library of the Republic of Kazakhstan), http://nblib.library.kz/elib/Sait/%D0%A0%D0%B5%D0%B4%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%B5%20%D0%BA%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B3%D0%B8/01-12-2014/%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B7%D0%BE%D0%BB%D1%8E%D1%86%20%D0%B8%20%D0%BF%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%8F%207%20%D0%B2%D1%81%D0%B5%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%B9%20%D0%BF%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%82%D0%BA/1.html#1/z page 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. *Resolutions and Decrees of the 7th All-Kazakh Party Conference, June 1930.* (State Library of the Republic of Kazakhstan), http://nblib.library.kz/elib/Sait/%D0%A0%D0%B5%D0%B4%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%B5%20%D0%BA%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B3%D0%B8/01-12-2014/%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B7%D0%BE%D0%BB%D1%8E%D1%86%20%D0%B8%20%D0%BF%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%8F%207%20%D0%B2%D1%81%D0%B5%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%B9%20%D0%BF%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%82%D0%BA/1.html#1/z page 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. *Resolutions and Decrees of the 7th All-Kazakh Party Conference, June 1930.* (State Library of the Republic of Kazakhstan), http://nblib.library.kz/elib/Sait/%D0%A0%D0%B5%D0%B4%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%B5%20%D0%BA%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B3%D0%B8/01-12-2014/%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B7%D0%BE%D0%BB%D1%8E%D1%86%20%D0%B8%20%D0%BF%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%8F%207%20%D0%B2%D1%81%D0%B5%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%B9%20%D0%BF%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%82%D0%BA/1.html#1/z page 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Kaz. Pres. Arv., f. 141, op. 1, del. 3630, ll. 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Kaz. Pres. Arv. f. 141 op. 1 del. 3630, ll 28; Kaz. Pres. Arv. f. 141 op. 1 del. 3630, ll 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Mukahamet Shayakmetov, *The Silent Steppe: The Memoir of a Kazakh Nomad Under Stalin*, (New York: The Rookery Press, 2007), 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Mukahamet Shayakmetov, *The Silent Steppe: The Memoir of a Kazakh Nomad Under Stalin*, (New York: The Rookery Press, 2007), 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Mukahamet Shayakmetov, *The Silent Steppe: The Memoir of a Kazakh Nomad Under Stalin*, (New York: The Rookery Press, 2007), 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. For further discussion see Daniel Peris’ *Storming the Heavens: The League of the Militant Godless*. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. This aligns with the Party’s larger view of propaganda management in that the central party and agitprop organs were largely unconcerned with dictating propaganda content and pass the responsibility for content creation to the lowest bureaucratic levels. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Daniel Peris, *Storming the Heavens: The Soviet League of the Militant Godless* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. It could, of course, be argued that the Soviet Union did not last longer than its 74 years precisely because of its ideological hollowness. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)