

Radio Free Europe/Munich
Non-Target Communist Area Analysis Department
Background Information USSR

2 March 1963

KAZAKHSTAN -- THE PERMANENT PURGE

The dismissal of the party boss of the largest farming barony in the Soviet Union for failure in the development of agriculture marks the sixth major shake-up in the party leadership of Kazakhstan since the plow-up of the Virgin Lands in 1954-55. The changing of the guard at party headquarters is a frequent phenomenon in the republics and regions, but in Kazakhstan the shifts are in a special category, and almost wholly related to Khrushchev's reaction to the outcome of the harvest in his favorite farming region, for this is the area where the First Secretary's own personal reputation stands or falls.

The latest victim of the rhythmic purge on the steppes is T. I. Sokolov, the first secretary of the vast Virgin Lands Territory (Tselinnyi krai), who now follows into political oblivion four of the six Kazakh republic party secretaries.¹ Two successive harvest debacles had been his undoing. At the November 1962 plenum, Khrushchev cast the die of the purge when he referred to the grain procurement results in the territory as "tantamount to failure."² Only 47 percent of the plan was reached in 1962, and 49 percent in 1961, leaving a net deficit of 16.1 million tons³ for the first four years of the 7-Year Plan. The decline in grain procurements is strikingly apparent from the table and fully document Khrushchev's assessment of last year's harvest in the Virgin Lands as a virtual failure:

Grain Deliveries, Tselinnyi Krai⁴

1956	-	13.5	million tons
1957	-	4.7	" "
1958	-	9.9	" "
1959	-	8.7	" "
1960	-	7.3	" "
1961	-	5.0	" "
1962	-	5.2	" "

¹ Kazakhstanskaya Pravda, 22 February 1963. The Tselinnyi territory was created in December 1960 and consists of the five leading grain oblasts in northeast Kazakhstan: Akmo-linsk, Kokchetav, Kustanai, Pavlodar, and North Kazakhstan. Its area is greater than that of France and the Benelux combined. In good years it supplied one-fourth of the USSR's marketable grain; the last two years its share has dropped to 9 percent.

² Pravda, 13 November 1962.

³ Selskaya zhizn, 22 Feb. 1963.

⁴ Kaz. Pravda, 26 December 1962; Narodnoye khozyaistvo SSSR, 1958-1961 editions.

The 1962 returns reflect the 7 percent expansion of the sown area over previous years following the implementation of Khrushchev's anti-grasslands and fallowing programs. A more graphic illustration of the deterioration of the Virgin Lands Territory as a supplier of marketable grain is the fact that in 1956 -- its best year -- it provided an even 25 percent of the total USSR grain stocks; by 1961 and 1962 this share had fallen to 9.1 percent.⁵

Perhaps the most decisive and devastating demonstration of the gradual deterioration and failure of the Virgin Lands Territory as a dynamic, producing granary is reflected in its average yields over the years:

Average Yields of Grain, Tselinnyi Krai
and Kazakhstan Republic⁶
(quintals per hectare)

1962 -	6.7
1961 -	6.9
1960 -	8.4
1959 -	8.7
1958 -	9.4
1957 -	4.6
1956 -	10.6

(For Western readers it may be useful to keep in mind that 10 quintals per hectare of wheat equals 14.5 bushels per acre -- a mediocre yield.)

The above averages apply to an area of over 15.4 million hectares, or double the grain area of France, the leading European producer. It is striking evidence of the steady and relentless deterioration of the natural grass-steppeland soils after years of monoculture with soil-depleting grain crops. No non-military project in the Soviet Union has had resources lavished on it so freely, even at the expense of other primary rural areas; but as the capital, land, and labor inputs steadily rose in dimensions, the output continued to decline year after year.

Under the impact of two successive harvest failures and declining yields, the Virgin Lands state farms (there are less

⁵ Narodnoye khozyaistvo SSSR, 1958 edition, p. 358; Kazakhstanskaya Pravda, 26 December 1962.

⁶ Pravda, 18 December 1958, 14 March 1961; Selskoye khozyaistvo SSSR, 1959, pp. 147, 211. 1962 data derived from Kazakhstan CSA report. The 1956-59 series refers to the Kazakh republic, the 1960-62 to the Tselinnyi krai. The comparison is valid, as three-fourths of the republic's grain comes from the krai, where yields average slightly higher.

than 50 kolkhozy) are in financial straits. In 1961, the December plenum of the Kazakh CP brought out that "many of the sovkhozy are in debt to the State"; their losses ran to 215 million rubles. Last year, of the 702 state farms only 72 showed a profit, so that 88 percent of all operating farms were unprofitable.⁷ This is a record scarcely equalled in any Soviet republic and stands in stark contrast to Khrushchev's boast at the 1958 agricultural plenum (made in the flush of the record 1958 harvest) that henceforth the state would buy its grain where it was the cheapest to produce -- in the Virgin Lands and the other specialized grain growing areas.⁸ The failure of the new lands to supply cheap grain has been a deep disappointment to Khrushchev and an effective weapon for his opposition within the party, as the XXII Congress revealed.

Confronted with steadily declining yields, rising costs of production, and mounting fiscal deficits on the farms, the familiar cycle of accusations and dismissals has followed with seasonal regularity. In one-two sequence, first at the Sixth Plenum of the Kazakh CC in December, and again at the plenary session of the Tselinnyi krai CP of Kazakhstan in February, the harvest of scapegoat party officials was begun. It is of political significance that at both plenums, F. R. Kozlov, CC Presidium member and Secretary of the CC, CPSU, "participated in the proceedings," although his speeches were not published.⁹

Sokolov's superiors at Kazakh CP headquarters, D. A. Kunaev, First Secretary (a Kazakh), and N. Rodionov, Second Secretary (a Russian), had been dropped from their posts "for serious shortcomings in the management of agriculture" just two months earlier at the VI Plenum of the CC of the Kazakhstan CP.¹⁰ The year before, Khrushchev had warned Dunaev of having "wrecked" the republic's harvest with deliveries of only 458 million poods grain as against a planned output of 900 million poods.¹¹ The 1962 performance was apparently also of "wreck" stature, as the deliveries to the state reached 501 million poods, or 385 million short of the goal. When the 10 percent increase in the sown area is considered, then last year's results are on a par with those of 1961. These successive setbacks should be held alongside Khrushchev's boast before the XXII Party Congress (1961) that the Virgin Lands project "will last forever,"

and that whatever shortcomings had developed were caused by mismanagement. His slogan, "Cadres Decide All," can be put to a decisive test by a roll-call of the party bosses in Kazakhstan for the past decade.

Tenures of First Secretaries of the CC, CP Kazakhstan

<u>Date</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Present Position</u>
Ante 1952 to April 1954	Shayakhmetov, Zhumabai	Unknown
Apr. 1954 to May 1955	P. K. Ponomarenko	Foreign Office (?)
Aug. 1955 to March 1956	L. I. Brezhnev	Chairman of Supreme Soviet, Member of the Presidium, CC, CPSU
March 1956 to Dec. 1957	I. D. Yakolev	Unknown
Dec. 1957 to Jan. 1960	N. I. Belyayev	Unknown
Jan. 1961 to Dec. 1962	D. A. Kunaev	Resumed his old post as Chief of the Kazakh Supreme Soviet

It is apparent that with one exception the post of party leader in Kazakhstan has been a burial ground for apparatchiki. Even Ponomarenko, who inaugurated the big plow-up, was transferred into the diplomatic service, subsequently dropped from the CC, and now holds an anonymous post. Three of these once powerful figures have completely disappeared from the public scene. The only exception to this burial-ground theory is L. I. Brezhnev, who, strangely enough, never had to face a harvest in Kazakhstan. His eight-months' tour of duty brought him to the pinnacle of power -- membership in the Presidium of the Central Committee. Yakolev and Belyayev each presided over one bumper harvest which was followed by a bad crop for which they were blamed and sacked forthwith. The old Russian adage that nothing succeeds like a good harvest needs modification for current communist cadres -- a follow up crop failure can wreck a career.

The new first secretaries -- Ismail Yusupov at the Kazakh CP, and F. S. Kolomiyets at the Tselinnyi krai -- are both on the hot seat.¹² They face an overwhelming assignment: to produce in 1963 the equivalent of the 1956-58 record deliveries! On the basis of the past record, this is highly unlikely, even with the continued expansion of the cropping area. One ominous note has already appeared: in late December soil moisture levels were lower than at the same time in 1961.¹³

¹² The established policy of balancing a Kazakh with a Russian in the party one and two spots is being maintained: Yusupov is a Kazakh, and his deputy, Solomentsev, is a Russian. One rather unusual item is that the Kazakh is a candidate member of the CC, CPSU, while the deputy is a full member.

¹³ Kazakhstanskaya Pravda, 26 December 1962.

The effect of the continuous monoculture of soil-depleting crops for nine years has left an indelible scar on the steppes soils of Kazakhstan which will take years of fallowing and soil building practices to correct. Another changing of the guard in the Virgin Lands, as the record convincingly shows, will not restore the fertility of the exploited soils -- nor the stature of Khrushchev as that "master of agricultural affairs." Sooner or later, the greater part of the Kazakh cropland will have to be returned to its original grassland cover for grazing purposes -- its only rational form of land use.

C.Z.