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Social and Demographic Policy of the USSR in the 1950s and 1960s within the Context of the “Demographic Explosion” of the Kazakh Population

The article provides an analysis of the socio-demographic policy of the USSR in the 1950s and 1960s which is one of the main reasons for the “demographic explosion” of the Kazakh population. The purpose of the research is to consider the state measures implemented in various socio-economic and cultural areas of the society (healthcare, education, housing construction, social protection and pensions, maternal and child health) and their impact on the demographic indicators of the population of Kazakhstan. The authors paid the greatest attention to the socio-economic reforms affecting the rural sector as part of the ongoing program for the development of virgin and fallow lands. These reforms significantly influenced the reduction of mortality rates, especially among children, and the emergence of favorable trends in the demographic development of the Kazakh population of the republic. Based on an analysis of the socio-demographic policy features, the authors came to the conclusion that these reforms had a positive impact on the well-being of the Soviet people and on birth rates. State support of the population of the republic (including rural one), implemented in almost all spheres and directions as an interconnected and complementary system, made it possible to significantly increase the population size and improve the life quality, thereby stimulating a demographic explosion in Kazakhstan. The demographic potential of the Kazakh population originated from the period of the 1950s and 1960s was not only quantitative, but also qualitative in nature. The generation of the “demographic explosion” was almost entirely covered by the system of secondary education, partially by post-secondary (vocational) and higher education.

Keywords: birth rate, Kazakhs, rural population, USSR, decree, healthcare, education, pension reform, collective farm, state farm, motherhood.

Introduction

The relevance of the research problem is explained by the fact that in modern Kazakhstan there is a significant increase in birth rates among the Kazakh ethnic group. Similar demographic evolutions were observed in the middle of the 20th century and caused by a “demographic explosion” of the titular population of the republic. The period of the 1950s and 1960s received a generally negative assessment in post-Soviet Kazakh historiography due to the fact that it is viewed through the ethnic prism of the processes of industrialization and development of virgin lands and migration influxes, which radically changed the ethno-demographic situation in the republic, leading to a reduction in the proportion of Kazakhs and the formation of the distorted settlement system. At the same time, there are other historical phenomena remained on the periphery of scientific thought that also significantly influenced the demographic development of the country’s population. The presented analysis does not contain an ethnic context since the social policy reform concerned the entire population of the USSR. The objectives of the authors were to highlight the positions and priorities of the state and to study the measures taken in the post-war period to improve the socio-economic development of the country.

Materials and Methods

The article is also based on scientific works (monographs and articles) covering the features of social policy during the period under study, statistical data and materials from Internet resources, some legislative documents of the Communist Party and the Soviet government, namely, laws of the USSR and decrees of the Presidium of the Supreme Council, directives and resolutions of the Council of Ministers of the USSR and the Central Committee of the CPSU, and other party programs (1961) [1]. The significant volume of state legislative acts used by the authors is necessary for the purpose of a comprehensive analysis of the socio-

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demographic policy of the USSR in the mid-20th century, which covered almost all aspects of society's life — health care, education, housing construction, social protection. Despite the fact that the legislative system of the USSR assumed the existence of two levels (the union and the republican ones), these normative documents, adopted by the highest party and executive bodies, determined various aspects of the USSR society activities and were mandatory for implementation by all organizations and enterprises at the union level.

To conduct the research, the authors used the main general scientific methods such as analysis, synthesis, generalization, and description in combination with general historical ones (historical-typological, historical-comparative, historical-systemic methods and the methods of demographic analysis). These methods made it possible to characterize the features and individual directions of the socio-demographic policy of the USSR in 1950–1960. They became a tool for a comprehensive analysis of social institutions designed to provide conditions for the socialization of children (education, health care, social security system).

Results

The era of the “thaw” was a time of reforms and changes in the social policy of the country such as housing construction, consumer goods production, remuneration and pension systems, etc. That period gave rise to a new daily routine, the elements of a new style and new models of behavior, which, in one way or another, led to the formation of new demographic trends. That new era was fundamentally different from the previous period in its focus on people and their needs. At the fourth session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on March 15, 1953, in the report of G.M. Malenkov, it was officially stated that “the law for our government is the obligation to relentlessly care for the welfare of the people, for the maximum satisfaction of material and cultural needs” [2]. The measures taken were predominantly political, largely populist in nature, but they were remembered with gratitude for a long time since they reflected the new priorities for social development — something the country had not seen in many years

In the mid-1950s the state started implementing a broad program to increase the wages. In 1961, as compared to 1950, the wages increased 1.3 times, and taking into account payments and benefits from public consumption funds the increase was 1.35 times. The total number of workers and employees changed from 40 to 62 million [3; 277].

In general, in the second half of the 1950s and early 1960s the social opportunities of the population in the areas of education, health care, housing, food and household items consumption were significantly expanded. Complex modern technology as well as previously unavailable goods — wristwatches, cameras, household goods, radios, and then televisions — entered everyday life.

Payments and benefits from public consumption funds in the form of free medical care, free education, various types of pensions and benefits were of significant importance for the family budget. Thus, in the post-Stalin decade, the government sought to improve the living standards of workers, pensioners, and collective farmers.

The agricultural reforms also showed some positive results such as a significant increase in food consumption by urban and rural residents. Thus, the pre-war level of nutrition in the families of collective farmers for the most high-calorie products was noticeably exceeded by the mid-1950s, and in 1958, compared to 1940, they consumed 6 times more sugar, 3 times more confectionery and fish products, 2 times more meat [4; 277].

The reform of legislation and legal regulation in the period of 1950s and 1960s mainly affected the economy and the sphere of social protection, including the rural population.

The program of economic reforms at the session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR in August 1953 was proposed by the Chairman of the Council of Ministers G.M. Malenkov. According to his instructions, in March 1953 the Ministry of Finance prepared a draft change in tax policy for rural areas. It noted a sharp decline in the living standards of collective farmers during the post-war period, mass rural exodus, and “an economically unjustified increase in taxation of peasants”: for example, in the period of 1941–1952 the average agricultural tax increase was by 2.7 times. Many families, especially those left without able-bodied men after the war, were simply unable to pay it.

This led to the conclusion that it was necessary to write off tax arrears, reduce tax rates and increase purchase prices for agricultural products so that collective farms could pay peasants for workdays. Increasing the material interest of collective farmers, removing restrictions on the development of personal subsidiary plots and increasing government investment in the countryside were recognized as the main ways to increase labor productivity, the volume of crop and, especially, livestock production. It was essential that the state realistically assessed the low level of agricultural development of the country.

In September 1953, the Plenum of the CPSU Central Committee made a number of important decisions for agricultural development of the country:

1. Purchase prices for milk, livestock, poultry, butter, and potatoes were increased 2–5 times.
2. The system of taxation of personal subsidiary plots changed — now the amount of the tax depended on the size of the personal plot, and not on the number of livestock, the number of fruit trees, beehives and the like.
3. It was decided to increase the state funding of the agricultural system.
4. The problem of shortage of qualified personnel was solved by sending specialists from the administrative apparatus to the villages (in total over 120 thousand people) [5; 122].

In the following years the state continued to implement the measures of material support and social policy in the rural areas as well as to improve the well-being of the whole population. So, at the 20th Congress of the CPSU in February 1956 N.S. Khrushchev presented the draft of the sixth five-year plan for the period of 1956–1960 according to which it was envisaged that over five years the real wages of workers and employees would be increased by 30 %, and cash and in-kind incomes for collective farmers — by 40 %.

Another important measure to improve the life standard in the country was a pension reform. The State Pensions Law came into force on October 1, 1956. It significantly simplified pension legislation, increased the level of pension provision, and established supplements to the basic pension amounts. The establishment of state pensions for collective farmers was of exceptional importance, as it was the first time such a system had been introduced in the country. At the same time, the law introduced a higher age limit which applied only to those who continued to work on collective farms. While the pension size of workers and employees ranged from 30 to 120 rubles per month, the pension of collective farmers was only 12–15 rubles. It was believed that villagers could receive the rest of their livelihood from their private farming [6; 213–216].

On September 3, 1964 the Council of Ministers of the USSR adopted a decree on the The creation of a centralized social security fund for collective farmers within the union, and on November 6, 1964 — a decree on the organization of a commission for the assignment of pensions and benefits for collective farmers [7].

In general, the Soviet legislation for pension provision was understandable to large masses of workers; its specific provisions provided direct answer to the questions regarding pension rights and entitlements. All of this contributed to making the Soviet pension model one of the most accessible in the world.

State measures and reforms to improve the social infrastructure of collective and state farms during the 1950s and 1960s deserve special attention. First of all, they concerned the issues of electrification, radio installation, housing construction and lending, improvement and expansion of trade, postal services, etc. Here, we can refer to the following Decrees of the Council of Ministers of the USSR and the Central Committee of the CPSU such as “On the electrification of collective farms by connecting to state energy systems, industrial and communal power plants,” “On the construction of collective farm and inter-collective farm power lines connected to state energy systems, industrial, municipal and rural state power plants,” “On the electrification of agriculture in the USSR in 1961–1965,” “On measures to accelerate the electrification of agriculture in the USSR,” “On measures to further develop and complete radioification of rural areas,” “On the development of housing construction in state farms,” “On residential buildings construction lending for collective farmers,” “On the construction and improvement of collective farm markets and trade,” “On measures to improve the postal services in rural areas” [8].

The consequence of all the above-mentioned economic reforms and positive changes in the field of social protection was an increase in the standard of living and the size of the rural population. During the intercensal period of 1959–1970 the number of residents in the rural areas of the republic increased by 23.8 %. At the same time, the number of rural Kazakhs increased by 47.9 %. In general, during the mentioned intercensus period, the number of Kazakhs in the republic as a whole increased by 51.9 % (by 4.7 % per year) [9; 13–15]. The transformation of collective farms into state farms had a great influence on the improvement of the above indicators, which also contributed to an increase in investment and preferences from the state.

Legislative reforms of the 1950s and 1960s affected not only the economic sphere, but also education, healthcare, motherhood and childhood protection.

In October 1952, at the 19th Congress of the CPSU, in the directives on the five-year development plan of the USSR for 1951–1955 it was decided to:

- complete by the end of the five-year plan the transition from the model of seven-year education to general secondary education (ten years) in the capitals of the republics, cities of republican significance, in regional and largest industrial centers;
- prepare conditions for the full implementation of general secondary education (ten years) in other cities and rural areas in the next five-year period;

- increase the construction of urban and rural schools by 70 % compared to the previous five years;
- begin implementing polytechnic education in secondary schools and prepare the transition to general polytechnic (vocational) education [10; 281–283].

On August 30, 1954, the government of the USSR and the Central Committee of the Party adopted a Decree on training, distribution and use of specialists with higher and post-secondary vocational education. The USSR State Planning Committee and ministries determined the need for specialists and used it as the basis for new educational institutions opening — for instance, over 80 new universities (mainly in the eastern regions of the USSR) including 9 in Kazakhstan were opened in the 1950s. In 1960, there were 753 higher educational institutions in the USSR including 27 in Kazakhstan [11; 40-41].

In 1960 the largest share among university students of Kazakhstan (44.1 %) was Russian students while Kazakhs took second place (40.7 %). The total number of Kazakh students amounted to 31.4 thousand [12; 218, 100].

The result of the reforms was the fact that in the 1980 Kazakhstan the representatives of the Kazakh ethnic group had the highest level of enrollment in higher education. That figure was also one of the highest in the USSR.

The state also allocated additional funds to develop the material base of general secondary and post-secondary (vocational) education institutions and significantly expanded the system of personnel training through evening and distance learning, especially in technical and agricultural majors.

The issue of organizing and constructing boarding schools became of great importance in the mid-1950s. This can be traced in a number of Decrees of the Council of Ministers and the Central Committee of the CPSU: “On the organization of boarding schools,” “On measures related to the organization of boarding schools,” “On measures for the development of boarding schools in 1959–1965,” “On benefits and advantages for boarding school teachers” [13]. The boarding schools were mainly aimed at teaching children of stock farmers and workers from remote areas who had no schools in their villages.

Thus, education became one of the main priorities and value guidelines for the people of Kazakhstan of the 1950s and 1960s. Their “right to education” as cited in the Constitution of the USSR was understood literally; it was the core of all aspirations in the educational sphere. Through reforms the state made secondary and higher (or post-secondary vocational) education more accessible and, therefore, more widespread. The abolition of tuition fees, the expansion of general secondary education, reforms in the field of post-secondary vocational and higher education directly affected rural residents, including Kazakhs, and served as an impetus for raising the educational level of the whole population. All the measures to improve and develop the cultural and educational sphere in the country found a favorable demographic soil — increases in birth rates and the number of children and youth. Rural Kazakhs got the opportunity to give their children not only secondary, but also higher education which resulted in the gradual formation of a statistically significant layer of educated Kazakh youth, a future main construct for the urban space development.

As mentioned above, the legislative reforms of the 1950s and 1960s also affected the healthcare sector. At the same time, healthcare reforms had several directions:

Firstly, labour remuneration and social protection of medical workers, including rural ones, through Decrees of the Council of Ministers of the USSR “On increasing wages for medical workers,” “On approval of instructions on the procedure for assigning long-service pensions to doctors and other medical and pharmaceutical workers,” “On measures to provide medical and pharmaceutical workers of healthcare institutions serving the rural population with living areas” [14].

Secondly, measures to further improve medical care and public health through Decrees of the Council of Ministers of the USSR “On measures to increase the production of medicines, medical instruments and equipment, sanitation and hygiene items and improve the provision of the population and medical institutions with them,” “On measures to further improve medical care and health protection of the population of the USSR,” “On measures to further improve healthcare and develop medical science in the country,” “On measures to further reduce the incidence of tuberculosis” [15].

Thirdly, professional and advanced training of medical personnel, including paramedics and veterinarians, through Decrees of the Council of Ministers of the USSR “On the system of advanced training for veterinarians and agronomists in plant protection,” “On the system of advanced doctors training,” “On the system of advanced paramedical personnel training,” “On the procedure for paying scholarships to non-resident students of institutes, faculties and advanced training courses for doctors” [16].

Fourthly, medical care and sanatorium services for children through Decrees of the Council of Ministers of the USSR “On the abolition of allowance fees for children with tuberculosis in sanatorium-based children’s”

“On the establishment of uniform standards for food costs state-funded sanatoriums for children, regardless of subordination” [17].

In 1959, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR approved the fundamentals of the USSR and union republics legislation on healthcare that enshrined the following principles of public medical care: universal access, free of charge, qualified, motherhood and childhood protection. It was emphasized that protecting public health was the function of all government bodies and public organizations. The measures to further improve public health care included, first of all, building large specialized and multidisciplinary hospitals, clinics, and dispensaries. To better provide the population with all types of medical care the network of ambulance and sanitary-epidemiological stations were expanded and the number of hospital beds were increased [18; 90].

However, despite the adoption of the program and legislation reforms, many pressing health issues remained unresolved. The material and technical base of medical institutions was extremely weak and required expanding and improvement measures. Government healthcare spending was increasing at a slow pace. Healthcare problems were most pronounced in the eastern regions of the USSR and in rural areas. For example, in collective and state farms (sometimes in regional centers) of Kazakhstan, the most pressing health issues were the lack of hospitals (including children’s), maternity hospitals, antenatal clinics, medical personnel, etc. During the period under review, there was a significant increase in the birth rate of Kazakhs (“demographic explosion”), which further increased the need for healthcare institutions.

However, despite the above-mentioned problems, it was the reforms in the health care system that were the main reason for the reduction in mortality, primarily child and maternal, and the increase in the Kazakh birth rate. Medical programs implemented in rural areas of Kazakhstan led to an increase in the number of hospitals, maternity hospitals, medical stations and points, antenatal clinics, and pharmacies. It was during the period under study that there was a significant reduction in the level of exogenous diseases, including mass infectious diseases, diphtheria, brucellosis, tuberculosis, and an increase in human life expectancy. Much attention was paid to the training of medical personnel focused on rural areas: nurses, obstetricians and paramedics, and in a later period (mid-60s) doctors, primarily specialists in children’s and women’s diseases. Preventive measures contributed a lot to the reduction of all kinds of diseases, including children’s diseases, education of hygiene, safety precautions, etc. In general, medical services were provided to cattle breeders, shepherds, residents of remote livestock farms, and other rural workers.

Thus, the reform of the healthcare system of the USSR (in particular, Kazakhstan) positively resulted in a significant increase in the number of Kazakhs and the formation of new demographic trends in the republic.

Discussion

In the second half of the 1950s and early 1960s, social changes also affected the protection of motherhood and childhood. The benefits and leave duration for women during pregnancy and childbirth were expanded. In 1944, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR established the honorary title “Mother Heroine” and the Orders of “Maternal Glory” and “Motherhood Medal” [19].

To give women opportunities to combine maternal and labor responsibilities the state created a system of child care institutions that were to be built everywhere along with priority facilities. The state also developed a unified program for preschool education and, due to the demographic explosion of the Kazakh population, initiated the construction of nurseries and kindergartens (especially in rural areas) starting from the mid-1950s. The supply of high-quality food products to kindergartens and nurseries was strictly controlled in cities and rural areas. The Ministry of Health of the USSR and the Ministries of the Union Republics were made responsible for organizing medical and preventive services for children, for staffing and observing the sanitary and hygienic regime in children’s institutions [20].

Thus, during the 1950s and 1960s, the Soviet state pursued a social policy aimed at increasing the birth rate, protecting childhood and encouraging motherhood as the main function of women. At the same time, an analysis of the Soviet legislation clearly shows the mandatory inclusion of women as a member of a socialist society in labor relations, which was perceived as quite common (a woman, as a member of society, had to work). But this situation acquired an increasingly preferential character through an increase in social support measures. Here, it is necessary to take into account the general rules of socialist development related to the absence and prohibition of private property, exploitation of man by man, and the special role of labor, expressed not only in the form of duty, but also as a common property. An individual in Soviet socialist society was, first of all, a worker.

Conclusion

So, the analysis of the social policy of the USSR in the period of the 1950s and 1960s reveals the constant change and development of legislation. The carried out reforms had a positive impact on the well-being of the Soviet people and birth rates, which was an important factor in overcoming the huge demographic losses of the Great Patriotic War. The reforms affected almost all spheres of life of the Soviet people: the economy, construction, social protection (increasing wages, changing pension legislation), education, healthcare, maternal and child health, family policy, etc.). They resulted in an increase in the number of kindergartens and nurseries, schools, universities, health care institutions, and in active housing construction both in cities and villages, thus expanding the social opportunities for the population in the field of education, medicine, and housing. Free medical care, free training, the growth of various types of pensions and benefits, the introduction of a cash form of payment on collective farms, bonuses and material incentives for workers, the transition to a seven- and six-hour working day, and improvement of social infrastructure not only in cities, but also in rural areas, etc. are worth mentioning. That new era made a turn of the economy in the direction of the social problems of Soviet society, overcoming the asceticism of the first decades of the USSR. The ideological pathos of those years actively popularized the country's successes in healthcare, education, culture, science, social protection of the population, and improving its well-being through the media at all levels — from all-Union and republican to regional ones.

The above-mentioned cardinal transformations entailed changes in the demographic indicators of the population. A qualitatively new demographic system began to take shape in Kazakhstan, marked by a noticeable increase in population. Among the European ethnic groups of the republic, this growth was largely driven by migration, whereas among the Kazakhs, it resulted primarily from a rise in birth rates — reflecting natural population growth. During the intercensal period of 1959–1970 the number of Kazakhs almost doubled. The natural increase in 1960 reached the highest value in the history of Kazakhstan — 30.6 per 1000 population. The total birth rate in 1958–1959 was 4.4; and that of among Kazakh women was one of the highest in the USSR [21; 100]. A tradition of large families among the titular population of Kazakhstan started forming at that period. Another consequence of the reforms was the formation of a long-term trend of Kazakh people urbanization. Already in the 1960s, the growth rate of the urban Kazakh population exceeded the growth rate of the rural population by 1.3 times and was the highest among the large ethnic groups of Kazakhstan. In the period between the population censuses of 1959 and 1970 the number of urban Kazakhs increased by 64.9 % (Russians — by 62.9 %) [22; 96-97].

Thus, the emerging new demographic trends in Kazakhstan in the 1950s and 1960s were mainly due to changes in the social policy legislation of the USSR, which led to fundamental reforms and new programs. State support for the population of the republic (including rural), implemented in almost all spheres (medicine, education, economics, construction, social protection, etc.) and directions (economic, political, social, cultural) as a single interconnected and complementary system, made it possible to significantly increase the population size and improve the life quality, thereby stimulating a demographic explosion.

Acknowledgements

The article was prepared as part of a scientific project “Kazakhs as the demographic potential of Kazakhstan: retrospective and development prospects” under a grant from the Science Committee of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan (registration number AR19676895).

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Қазақ халқының «демографиялық жарылысы» контекстінде 1950-1960 жылдардағы КСРО-ның әлеуметтік-демографиялық саясаты

Мақалада қазақ халқының «демографиялық жарылысының» басты себептерінің біріне айналған 1950-1960 жылдардағы КСРО-ның әлеуметтік-демографиялық саясатына берілген. Зерттеудің мақсаты — мемлекеттің қоғамның әлеуметтік-экономикалық және мәдени өмірінің әртүрлі салаларында — денсаулық сақтау, білім беру, тұрғын үй құрылысы, әлеуметтік қорғау және зейнетақымен қамсыздандыру, ана мен баланы қорғау салаларында жүзеге асыратын шараларды және олардың Қазақстан халқының демографиялық көрсеткіштеріне әсерін қарастыру. Авторлар тың және тыңайған жерлерді игерудің басталған бағдарламасы аясында ауыл секторына әсер ететін әлеуметтік-экономикалық реформаларға көп көңіл бөлді. Бұл іс-шаралар өлім-жітім көрсеткіштерінің, әсіресе балалар өлім-жітімінің төмендеуіне және қазақ халқының демографиялық дамуының қолайлы үрдістерінің пайда болуына айтарлықтай әсер етті. Әлеуметтік-демографиялық саясаттың ерекшеліктерін талдау негізінде авторлар зерттеу кезінде жүргізілген реформалар кеңес халқының әл-ау қатына және туу көрсеткіштеріне оң әсер етті деген қорытындыға келеді. Біртұтас өзара байланысты және бірін-бірі толықтыратын жүйе ретінде іс жүзінде барлық салалар мен бағыттарда іске асырылатын Республика халқын (оның ішінде селолық) мемлекеттік қолдау халық санын едәуір ұлғайтуға және оның өмір сүру сапасын арттыруға, сол арқылы демографиялық жарылысты ынталандыруға мүмкіндік берді. 1950-1960 жылдары құрылған қазақтардың демографиялық әлеуеті сандық қана емес, сапалық та болды. «Демографиялық жарылыс» буыны орта білім беру жүйесімен, ішінара, орта арнаулы және жоғары білім берумен толықтай қамтылды.

Кілт сөздер: туу, қазақтар, ауыл халқы, КСРО, қаулы, денсаулық сақтау, білім беру, зейнетақы реформасы, колхоз, совхоз, ана болу.

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Социально-демографическая политика СССР в 1950-1960 гг. в контексте «демографического взрыва» казахского населения

В статье дан анализ социально-демографической политике СССР в 1950-1960 гг., ставшей одной из главных причин «демографического взрыва» казахского населения. Цель исследования — рассмотреть меры, реализуемые государством в различных областях социально-экономической и культурной жизни общества — здравоохранении, образовании, жилищном строительстве, социальной защиты и пенсионном обеспечении, охране материнства и детства, и их влияние на демографические показатели населения Казахстана республики. Наибольшее внимание авторы уделили социально-экономическим реформам, затрагивающим сельский сектор в рамках начавшейся программы освоения целинных и залежных земель. Данные мероприятия значительным образом повлияли на сокращение показателей смертности, особенно детской, и на зарождение благоприятных тенденций демографического развития казахского населения. На основе анализа особенностей социально-демографической политики, авторы приходят к выводу, что реформы, проведенные в исследуемое время, положительно отразились на благосостоянии советского народа и на показателях рождаемости. Государственная поддержка населения республики (в том числе, сельского), реализуемая практически во всех сферах и направлениях как единая взаимосвязанная и взаимодополняющая система, позволила значительно увеличить численность населения и повысить качество его жизни, тем самым, простимулировать демографический взрыв. Демографический потенциал казахов, заложенный в 1950-1960 гг., был не только количественный, но и качественный. Поколение «демографического взрыва» было практически полностью охвачено системой среднего образования, частично, средне-специального и высшего образования.

Ключевые слова: рождаемость, казахи, сельское население, СССР, постановление, здравоохранение, образование, пенсионная реформа, колхоз, совхоз, материнство.

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