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Establishment of Soviet Power in Bukhara and Khiva, Increasing Economic Representation

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Abstract

This article explores the historical processes surrounding the establishment of Soviet power in the Khiva Khanate and Bukhara Emirate, focusing on economic policies introduced by both the Russian Empire and the Bolshevik government. It examines the imposition of economic ideologies such as military communism, cotton policy, and forced collectivization. The article discusses how these policies contributed to economic stagnation and widespread suffering, as local populations were subjected to forced labor and the disruption of traditional agricultural practices. It further analyzes the impact of these policies on local economies, including the significant shift from food production to cotton cultivation, and the ensuing food shortages and famine. Additionally, the article considers the socio-political consequences of Soviet control, emphasizing the forced introduction of communism and the repression of local populations. The study highlights the role of Soviet administrative structures and the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate in enforcing these policies and their long-term effects on the region's economy and social fabric.

Keywords: Empire, party, Bolshevik, inspection, cell, tithe, metropolis, commissariat

1. Introduction

During the period when Soviet power was being established in Tashkent, the region still contained political entities that had recently been under the influence of the Russian Empire, namely the Khiva Khanate and the Bukhara Emirate. Under the impact of political events unfolding in the imperial center, the situation in the Khiva Khanate also began to change. By June 1917, the reformist efforts of the “Young Khivans” aimed at introducing changes within the khanate had ended in failure. Seventeen members of the party were arrested, while the remaining activists came under persecution. Some reformists fled to cities such as Tashkent, To‘rtko‘l, Chorjuy, Ashgabat, and Marv, which were part of the Turkestan Governor-Generalship [1]. In these urban centers, they established branches of the Young Khivans’ Party, with the central leadership concentrated in the party’s Tashkent City Committee.

As events unfolded, internal divisions arose within the organization, leading a faction to proclaim themselves the “Khiva Revolutionary Party.” Their programmatic platform primarily outlined objectives such as overthrowing the khan’s authority through armed force,

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confiscating the lands of large landowners, and annexing the territory of the khanate to the RSFSR. Up until the spring of 1920, however, there did not exist an independent Communist Party in Khiva formed with the participation of local national representatives [2].

2. Methodology

From November 1919, the Bolshevik government established in Tashkent launched military operations against Khiva with its own army. By the end of January, the Young Khivans' military detachment, joined by several hundred Turkmens and two companies of the Red Army, occupied the city of Khiva. On 1 February 1920, the last Khivan khan, Sayyid Abdullah, was deposed. At the First General Khorezm Congress, held between 26 and 30 April, the establishment of the Khorezm Soviet People's Republic was officially proclaimed. Polvon Niyoz Hoji Yusupov, a member of the Young Khivans' Party, was elected as Chairman of the Council of Ministers [2]. Thus, national statehood in Khiva was abolished, and a new communist government was established on the basis of Soviet-style administrative structures [3], [4].

Between 1918 and 1920, the diplomatic relations conducted by the Emir of Bukhara with the Soviet state yielded no tangible results. Finally, at the end of August 1920, a well-armed Red Army force began its assault on Bukhara. During the battles fought between 29 and 31 August 1920, the Emir of Bukhara was defeated and forced to retreat to Eastern Bukhara. In September, the emirate was overthrown, and the proclamation of the Bukhara People's Soviet Republic, modeled after the Soviet system, was announced [5].

3. Result and Discussion

In addressing the question of economic reconstruction during the 1920s, the local administrative bodies—specifically the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate (IDI-RKP) [4]—played a significant role. In 1921, branches of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate (IDI) were established in all enterprises, villages, and districts. The People's Commissariat of the Turkestan Republic allocated 49.3 million rubles solely for the needs of the Amu Darya provincial administration (present-day Republic of Karakalpakstan – Sh.M.) and its local organs.

The IDI cells formed in rural areas were tasked with recording the property and assets of volost executive committees, soviet farms, and artisans' cooperatives, as well as supervising the distribution of bread, monitoring agricultural production, and overseeing the cultivation of high-quality cotton seeds. In addition, they fought against private trade in cotton, while inspecting the timely tillage of land, the proper use of agricultural machinery, and related matters among cotton producers.

On 25 June 1921, the First Party Conference of the Amu Darya Province was convened in Turtkul. The conference resolved to expand cotton cultivation in the province by increasing the sown area in 1922 by 50 percent compared to 1921, and to more actively involve the local working population in party and soviet construction. As a result, by 1923 the irrigated crop area of the province had increased by 30 percent relative to 1922, while cotton fields expanded by 2,201.5 hectares compared to the previous year [6].

From the earliest days of Soviet rule, the leadership of the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic had issued decrees and orders concerning compulsory labor. For example, in the decree of the Turkestan Regional Committee dated 29 July 1920, *On General Labor Obligation*, Order No. 4, "On the Registration of Skilled Workers and Their Distribution Across Various Branches of Production," it was declared:

"In order to ensure the systematic and purposeful utilization of all skilled labor in the branches of production, it is necessary to properly register such workers and, taking into account the needs of enterprises requiring skilled labor, to distribute them accordingly[7]. This is to be carried out by the Regional Commissariat of Labor in coordination with the Commissariat of Labor and Social Welfare. …Following the collection of the aforementioned data by local labor (registration and distribution departments), the information shall be forwarded to the territorial departments, and subsequently to the Komtrud's central office for labor registration and distribution. …Persons failing to comply with this order shall be held accountable as offenders" [8].

The decree even stipulated that graduates of vocational schools and apprentices working in workshops were to be registered and included in the system of labor distribution.

In the early years of Soviet rule in Turkestan, the roots of the famine tragedies lay in the colonial policies of the Russian Empire. Following Russia's conquest of Turkestan, the region's centuries-old agricultural traditions were disrupted. In pursuit of metropolitan interests, grain fields were reduced and replaced with cotton plantations, transforming Turkestan into the empire's principal supplier of raw cotton.

Cotton fields were expanded excessively, to the extent that cotton became the dominant crop. For instance, in Namangan Uyezd the area under cotton cultivation increased from 14,000 hectares in 1899 to 45,000 hectares by 1911. This expansion exacerbated the impoverishment of the population, as the number of landless peasants grew. By 1908, 18 percent of households in the Fergana Valley alone had no access to arable land.

In addition to the broader processes affecting the Russian Empire, there were specific factors within Turkestan that precipitated the food crisis. Chief among these was the state policy of promoting cotton monoculture, which left cotton-growing regions particularly vulnerable to famine. As Russia's Minister of Agriculture, A. Krivoshein, bluntly stated regarding the significance of Turkestan's cotton: *"The grain of Turkestan competes with Russian grain, but its cotton competes with American cotton. Whatever happens to the population of Turkestan, Russia's interests must remain fully protected"* [9].

This "cotton obsession" intensified further in the early twentieth century, as the empire's demand for cotton steadily increased. The situation was reflected in contemporary press reports. For example, an issue of *Turkestanskie vedomosti* emphasized that cotton grown in Turkestan rivaled American cotton in quality, and that cotton had become the leading agricultural crop in the region.

Similarly, I. Slutskii, the author of *Turkestanskii khlopok* (*Turkestan Cotton*), highlighted the centrality of cotton in the Russian economy: *"Cotton constitutes the backbone of life throughout Turkestan. The livelihood of both the local population and Russian settlers in the provinces of Fergana, Samarkand, Syr Darya, Transcaspia, as well as in the khanates of Khiva and Bukhara, largely depends on this highly profitable crop. The lives of hundreds of thousands in Central Russia—factory owners, industrial workers, and railway laborers—are intimately tied to Turkestan's cotton. Industrial and commercial progress in both Turkestan and central Russia benefits the tsarist government immensely. If the tsar's forces conquered Turkestan and seized its true jewel, then it can rightly be said that one of these jewels was cotton, which firmly bound Turkestan to Russia. Furthermore, the extension of the Central Asian Railway to Andijan and the construction of the Tashkent–Orenburg line were in fact driven by this invaluable resource"* [10].

Prior to the Bolsheviks' rise to power, Turkestan's economic relations with Russia were structured on the colony supplying raw materials—primarily cotton—in exchange for grain and

industrial goods from the metropole. However, the disruptions caused by the First World War, alongside the breakdown of trade relations, meant that rural Turkestan could no longer obtain sufficient grain from Russia [11]. Consequently, during the Civil War, as famine-stricken populations from the Volga region and central Russia poured into Turkestan, the local peasantry itself faced severe hunger.

Despite widespread land degradation, the tsarist authorities continued to demand the expansion of cotton production. Their rationale was that greater grain cultivation in Turkestan would reduce demand for imported Russian grain, resulting in financial losses for the empire. Conversely, expanding cotton cultivation increased demand for Russian grain while simultaneously reducing reliance on expensive American imports.

As a result, the cotton acreage, which had stood at 268,013 desyatinas in 1901, had risen to 533,671 desyatinas by 1916. Correspondingly, exports of cotton fiber from Turkestan to Russia grew sharply: from 6.9 million poods in 1901 to 18.5 million poods in 1916 [12].

The ultimate aim of expanding cotton monoculture was twofold: to secure raw materials for the metropole and to ensure the region's permanent dependence on the center in terms of grain supply. The destructive consequences of this dependency became starkly evident during the famine of 1921–1922.

From the very outset, the newly established government, which had seized power through coercion, embarked upon the governance of the country on the basis of a form of violence unprecedented in human history. The administrative-command system of economic management, introduced in the earliest days of Soviet rule, soon began to reveal its negative consequences. This was most clearly manifested in agriculture, particularly through the food requisitioning (razvyorstka) policy implemented between 1918 and 1920.

At that time, food requisitioning occupied a central place in the system of "war communism" measures [13]. In fact, the famine that had begun during the years of the First World War had already spread widely across Turkestan's villages by 1917–1918. As a result of the requisitioning policy, even the peasants' last remaining possessions were confiscated.

Those who personally witnessed the arbitrariness of the Soviet state in the economic sphere, its authoritarian command-administrative system of governance, and the tragedies it produced—compatriots who later went into exile—also recorded their memories:

"...The communist regime prohibited grain cultivation throughout the region. The goal of this prohibition was to starve the people and break the national will. Despite the ban, villagers who planted wheat for their own subsistence were subjected to severe punishments. Komsomol activists such as Abdulla Nabiyev, who discovered the planted fields, set the crops on fire and mercilessly punished the peasants who had acted independently. Prior to the establishment of the communist regime, foodstuffs in the region had been abundantly available. However, once the despotic rule took hold, shortages and scarcity spread, just as they did throughout the entire country. In the Margilan district, storage facilities once full of produce were emptied. Most private shops in the city were closed under the burden of heavy taxation. Shop owners, even after surrendering all their wealth and possessions to the state, could not escape the relentless pressure." [14]

With the establishment of Soviet power, the policy of "food requisitioning" was introduced to feed the army. This process entered history under the name "war communism." Under this system, as in the rest of Russia, the grain in the hands of Turkestan peasants—considered "surplus"—was forcibly "purchased," or rather, confiscated at extremely low prices. Consequently, peasants in many areas rose in rebellion. In general, the violent imposition of "communism" pushed Soviet rule itself to the brink of collapse.

This policy directly led to the emergence of a devastating famine in Turkestan between 1917 and 1922. The famine was a direct result of the colonial-style economic policies pursued by Soviet Russia in Turkestan. As a consequence of the Bolshevik October coup, private property—long regarded as sacred and inviolable—was confiscated, market-based economic relations were dismantled, and transportation, industry, banks, as well as large estates owned by wealthy individuals, were declared state property. The abolition of private ownership and the dispossession of property gravely worsened the material condition of the population and culminated in a severe economic crisis [15].

4. Conclusion

From the very first days of Soviet rule, its chief architects and so-called "leaders," V. Lenin and J. Stalin, undertook decisive measures to keep Turkestan in a new form of subjugation and to tighten the chains of colonial dependency. The Bolsheviks' food policy directly served these objectives. By deliberately exploiting a strategy of starvation to enforce obedience, the central authorities skillfully employed hunger as a tool of domination.

5. References

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