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## Some Comments on The Soviet Land and Water Reforms in Uzbekistan In the Early Twentieth Century and Its Consequences

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**Abstract:** The Bolshevik government, which came to power after the October coup, continuously politicized socio-economic life. In land and water relations, special attention was paid to the abolition of private property and the establishment of collective farms instead of small farms. These efforts became a complete barrier to economic development opportunities by limiting healthy market relations. The political events of 1917 in Turkestan devastated all sectors of the economy, especially the agricultural sector.

**Keywords:** economic policy, Fergana, Samarkand regions, Andijan, Kokand and Namangan, Russian landowners, Revolutionary Committee, Koshchi.

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### INTRODUCTION

The Soviet Decree of October 26, 1917 “On Land”, which was considered to be significant in socialist industrialization and in solving the task of creating the material and technical basis for socialist transformation of agriculture, highlighted the permanent abolition of private land ownership, and the land cannot be sold, purchased, leased or mortgaged, or acquired in any other way [1. 278]. Although the decree initially declared land entirely “public property” [2. 207] it later declared all land, regardless of who used it, to be “single state property,” and individual land use was described as “temporary and ended its life”. It was now noted that a peasant, charikor or laborer could use the land only through his own labor, and hired labor and the lease of private land were completely forbidden [2. 36]. As a result, lands belonging to the tsar’s house, Russian landowners, local rich people, agricultural equipment and buildings were confiscated in all regions of Turkestan. The economic policy of the Soviet government and the Bolsheviks aimed at the abolition of private property, the expansion of socialist state ownership in all spheres of social life, the centralization of national economic management, and the use of administrative- bureaucracy methods instead of economic methods further aggravated famine and destruction in Turkestan. The country’s colonial economy exacerbated the situation. The policy of nationalization of the Soviet government affected not only large-scale industry, but also the smallest workshops in handicraft production. At the same time, the Soviet government in order to gain public confidence, did everything possible to link the fate of the poor Muslim masses with the fate of the revolution and to involve them in the revolutionary struggle. In order to further strengthen the established Soviet power, the Bolsheviks formed various associations, committees, and organizations, with the help of which they tried to seize political power. These organizations were given great powers, and they also served as the legislature and the executive. One of such organizations was the Revolutionary Committee, adapted to the conditions of military communism and the struggle against the counter-revolution, which was established in Turkestan in the spring and summer of 1919 in the Fergana, Samarkand regions, Andijan, Kokand and Namangan uyezds. Such Revolutionary Committees operated in 6 regions, 26 uyezds and 477 volosts of Turkestan [4. 174]. The Revolutionary Committees had unlimited powers, and its members were mainly members of the Turkestan Communist Party. They were involved not only in political but also in administrative and economic affairs, with their participation directly in the registration and confiscation (nationalization) of private property, land and water reforms were also carried out [243].

Land-water committees formed by Soviets, committees of the poor and peasant associations played an important role in land-water relations, in particular, the reforms in this area. Land and water committees confiscated the lands of wealthy farms, imposed fees on them, distributed the confiscated lands to peasants, provided them with equipment, and provided assistance with loans. For example, by the end of 1917 and the summer of 1918, the property of the rich, merchants, and the people so-called as if “living without labor” was confiscated, or by early 1919, more than 100,000 desiatinas of land [12-13] were confiscated, and later the lands of self-sufficient farms as well. On May 18, 1918, land and water committee of the Mahalla volost in Samarkand uezd confiscated 21.5 desiatinas of arable land of merchant P. Abramov, along with agricultural equipment and buildings, as well as 13 desiatinas of S. Abramov’s land in Sochak village [7. 279]. The land and water committee of the Bulatov volost of the Tashkent uezd registered about 2,500 desiatinas lands of the rich and distributed them to 12 collective farms established at that time. The Oqjar Land and Water Committee in Tashkent uezd seized the

nationalized Qoplonbek and Kensoy lands, the Gulbahor property, as well as other farms [8. 114]. The first communes and artels were established on these lands, and land was given to landless and less-land owning peasants. Since 1918, the management of the national economy of the country was in the hands of the Central Council of National Economy of Turkestan established in the Turkestan ASSR, local economic councils (sovnarkhozes) of regions, cities and uezds.

It can be seen that the class approach prevailed in the conduct of the Soviet coordinated land policy in the country, while the efforts to strengthen all-round stratification in the villages and the socialist reconstruction of the country's villages also prevailed. Therefore, first of all, work was done to unite the poor peasants, to fight against the rich, to accelerate the process of stratification in the countryside, to strengthen the Soviet authorities every and each place, to organize agricultural production. The communes set up for this purpose did not yield results. One of the largest communes in the country was the "International", which was founded on July 25, 1918. On November 1, it had 152 divisions, so far the state had allocated it 8,818,050 rubles, but that year the yield was very low.

The "International" had a population of 8,933 and cultivates 12,431 desiatinas of land. The members of the commune lived in a specially built 456-room barracks, which had at their disposal 854 horses, 1,128 oxen, 41 camels, 48 donkeys, 661 sheep, 90 goats, and 394 cows.

In order for the communes to operate under normal conditions, they needed a certain amount of various agricultural equipment, and at that time they needed 50,350,000 rubles at market prices to buy a plow, a harrow, a drill, a hoe, a shovel, a hoe. Also 50,000 rubles at market prices to buy gardening equipment, 159,000,000 rubles at market prices for clothing for members of the commune were required. At least 550 apartments would have to be built to solve the communal housing problem. For this, 363,000,000 rubles were needed. In order to feed the members of the "International", 13,742 rubles were required per person for bread and 13,840,000 rubles for fodder for livestock until the new harvest. This means that 641,769,000 rubles a year, or 70,000 rubles per person, were needed to run the farm in the "International" commune [9. 280].

Of course, with such a large amount of money, it was impossible to set up communes for the Soviet government, which was economically insolvent. The new government in Turkestan was to set up the activities of all the enterprises, that is, to provide them with funds and appropriate raw materials, technical forces and office staff. Unfortunately, the Bolsheviks were unable to accomplish this task for a long time and completely disrupted manufacture. As a result, enterprises closed and workers were fired.

After the decree of the Fifth Congress of the Turkestan Communist Party and the Ninth Congress of Soviets of the Turkestan ASSR to carry out land and water reforms in the country in 1921-1922 and 1925-1929, efforts to further strengthen Soviet power in the country intensified. The first task of agrarian reform was in the socialist direction, which also included the abolition of "non-labor rich kulak farms" and the settlement of the nomadic population. The second task was of a "revolutionary-democratic nature" and included the distribution of land among landless and less-land owning peasants, batraks, and chorikors according to labor norms. The third task was to reclaim land from Russian peasants who had been resettled during the Stolypin reforms during the reign of the Russian Empire. It should be noted that at the beginning of the reforms, the total number of Russians relocated to the country was 8 percent, but they occupied almost half of all developed lands and were provided with 15 times more land than the local population [10. 182]. The reforms of 1921-1922 were carried out primarily in the Ertisuv, Syrdarya, Fergana and Transcaspian regions of the country. During the reforms, 148,000 desiatins of land were confiscated and distributed to 4,500 households, 90,000 desiatins of land were confiscated and distributed to 2,223 households in Syrdarya region, and 37,750 desiatins of land were confiscated and distributed to 2,000 households in Fergana region [11. 205].

The implementation of land and water reforms at that time was considered as the abolition of rich households, expulsion the people "living by the labor of the poor" from agriculture, to reduce the power of those who own lands more than the norm by to confiscating the extra land of theirs, to "rescue" peasants from the hands of the rich, to allow them to work freely on their own lands, to give land to the poor, landless and less land owning peasants, enabling all newly established farms to manage their own farms independently with material help (animals, tools and money), to make of the middle peasants friends with the poor without touching their lands, and to raise the economy of the country behind this alliance [12. 39].

The Koshchi Association took an active part in the implementation of these measures in the villages. In 1918-1920, there were various forms of peasant associations in Turkestan, including the Koshchi association, which played an important role in the socialist reconstruction of agriculture, first restricting the rights of self-sufficient farms, and then abolishing them, and cooperating individual farms. Meantime, during these years, such associations were formed in 7 regions, 2 autonomies, 28 uezds and 135 volosts throughout the country [13. 56].

The issue of establishing the Koshchi association was resolved in 1920 at the Fifth Congress of the Turkestan Communist Party. At the joint congress of the Koshchi Association and the Republican Land and Water Committees, which took place on December 2-12, 1921, the Koshchi Association declared itself a qualified political organization. Similar associations have been set up outside of Turkestan, and were called "Koshchi" in

Uzbekistan, “Jarli” in Kazakhstan, “Keden” in Kyrgyzstan, and “Juargaron” in Tajikistan. The first Koshchi association in Uzbekistan was established in Margilan. Its organizer was Y. Akhunboboev.

On April 17, 1922, the Decree “On the tasks of the association Koshchi” of the Central Executive Committee of the Republic of Turkestan was adopted. It defines the role and tasks of the association in liberating the poor engaged in agriculture and animal husbandry from the rich, kulak, the manap in ouls and villages, in order to establish independent peasant farms to restore and develop agriculture, to protect the economic and political interests of its members as well as the establishment of farms was also determined. By 1921, 98,026 members of the association, and by June 1923, 261,256 members, had taken part in this work. Whilst 166,701 of the members of the association, were landless and less land owning peasants, 40,125 of them were batraks and laborers. 54,434 of them were chorikors [4. 4]. By 1925, such associations were formed only in 9 districts of Andijan region [15. 54]. In general, the Koshchi association emerged as the driving force of the "agrarian attack". By 1921, this association had grown to 6,000 in the Turkestan ASSR and united more than 90,000 [16. 179] villagers, but they took over land confiscated from wealthy households in the first place. They also identified "non-labor households", took into account the land, livestock, labor tools of wealthy households, and exposed attempts to "hide" their wealth. As a result, with the help of the Koshchi Association, many self-sufficient farms that were “not engaged in labor” were liquidated [17. 183].

In total, 1,722,626 desiatinas of land were added to the land management fund during the reform process. This included 205,059 desiatinas of land acquired from the liquidation of resettled settlements, huts and first-occupied lands, 85,107 desiatinas of land acquired from the seizure of land in excess of the norm established in European settlements, 1,321,720 desiatinas of land acquired from the liquidation of free and immigrant funds, 40,835 desiatinas of lands taken from "non-labor" farms, 27,016 desiatinas of lands acquired as a result of alienation of monasteries, churches and foundations. Of these resources, only 15,745 local households were allocated about 600,000 desiatinas of land for cultivation and pastures (while the number of such households in more Uzbek-populated districts reached to 3,000) and 117,512 desiatinas were allocated for less-land owning and landless Uzbeks [18. 28-33].

Through the efforts of the Koshchi Association, peasants in the country were artificially attached to companies and collective farms. For example, by 1919, 21 socialist farms were formed, uniting 32,455 desiatinas of land. By June 1, 1921, 319 grain growing and horticultural companies and 60 cotton growing companies had been established in the country. By the end of 1921, 307 collective farms were cultivating 13,394 desiatinas of land, and the number of soviet farms reached to 74, and they used 17,880 desiatinas of land [19. 19]. Certainly, this formed collective and state farms did not fully meet the requirements for the establishment of a cotton monopoly. Therefore, in accordance with the decree of the Central Committee of the Cotton Committee and the Central Asian Bureau of the RCP (b) in November 1923, “Measures were taken to create a new form of company farms and defined to abolish the former special cotton companies and to establish agricultural companies instead of them, and to unite 500 cotton-growing peasants in each company” [20. 101]. By 1924, 552 out of 880 companies in Uzbekistan had been transferred to cotton growing [21. 101-102]. Cotton growing was a special concern in the country, and it was in a sad state.

By this time, the food problem was also one of the most acute issues in the Turkestan ASSR. The Bolsheviks imposed strict measures to seize grain and other foodstuffs from the hands of the local population. In January 1918, the Food Department was opened under the Turkestan HKS, and it was given great rights. It is known that on May 9, 1918, a food dictatorship was introduced in the RSFSR, and this issue was strictly enforced even in the center. In Turkestan, on June 15, 1918, a three-member regional food directorate was established [22. 253].

The directorate made major mistakes in its operations. "Muslims who had been ousted from authority had been deprived of bread. Consequently, the Muslim population, unable to escape starvation, began to perish. There appeared an impenetrable wall between the new Russian city as well as the Soviet authorities and the local population” [23. 81].

On June 4, 1919, food dictatorship was introduced with the decrees of the Soviet authorities and the Bolsheviks “On the Monopoly of Grain”, “On the Class Bread Card”, “On Giving Extraordinary Powers to the Food Commissioner to Implement Food Policy in the Republic of Turkestan”.

The grain monopoly was carried out without any preparation. The last packed grain of the peasants was confiscated by the food-gathering detachments, and even some of the local communists who served in these detachments, realizing how disgusting their work was, refused to do it.

In accordance with the decree "On the class bread card", a card system was introduced in Turkestan. The population was divided into three categories. The first category of workers, red soldiers and officials could receive 1 pound of bread. The second category of servants, blue collars could receive half a pack (205 grams) of bread, the third category including workers and the bourgeois could receive quarter a pack (102 gr.) of bread. At the same time, the situation was dire, with almost all irrigation systems in the country out of order [24. 479] and a third of livestock left [25. 101]. By 1921, 10 out of 249 ginneries [26. 58] and 14 out of 40 oil and soap factories were operational [27. 74]. It was clear that this would naturally create a food crisis.

It should be noted that the development of cotton growing was also one of the main tasks of the Soviet government. In addition to the confiscated lands in the country, from the early years of the establishment of the Soviet government, the central government began to worry primarily about the resumption of cotton growing. Meetings, plenums, congresses of the Central Committee of the RCP (b), the Central Executive Committee of the RSFSR, the Central Asian Bureau, the Turkic Commission and the Turkestan Communist Party also paid special attention to the issue of "restoration of cotton growing". The meetings focused on expanding cotton fields, establishing a state monopoly on the purchase and distribution of cotton, banning private ownership of land, nationalizing land and foundation property, confiscating cotton, increasing cotton planting at the expense of other crops, and shifting to mass collectivization, termination of kulaks as a class and such issues remained the main topic. For this purpose, the cotton industry was immediately included in the system of the Supreme National Economic Council (SNEC) of the RSFSR, and the General Committee on Cotton (Glavhlopkom) was established under the Council, and in the cotton-growing republics subordinate cotton committees were established.

After the Soviet decree "On Land", on the basis of the resolution of the SNEC of January 12, 1918 "On financing the cotton industry", the "cotton growing center" began to work. With this, issues related to cotton growing and trade were transferred to the government or a government monopoly was established on cotton. The remaining cotton stocks from the 1917 harvest were declared as state property. Following the decree "On monopolization of cotton growing", on February 26, 1918 the Council of People's Commissars of the Republic of Turkestan issued a resolution "On the confiscation of cotton in the country". According to it, the confiscation of cotton stocks and their conversion into state property was set as an important task, and if the owners resisted, they were "ordered to shoot on the spot". In a telegram sent to the center on March 2, 1918, on the confiscation of cotton and the nationalization of cotton enterprises, the Commissioner for Cotton in Turkestan, W. Schmidt, said: "All ginneries in Turkestan, including oil and soap factories, are being taken over by Russia. Therefore, in order to carry out this measure send 591 specialists". This was a clear evidence showing the attempt to subjugate the cotton industry to a single center in the country. On March 5 of the same year, the Resolution "On the nationalization of enterprises in the cotton industry, production of oil and cotton and the purchase and sale of semi-finished products" was a continuation of the previous resolution. During the confiscation process, 2 million 657 thousand pounds of cotton fiber and about 7 million pounds of cotton was nationalized. In accordance with the Decree of the Council of People's Commissars of Turkestan dated March 5, 1918, 273 ginneries, 38 oil and soap factories and trade enterprises engaged in the production of raw materials were converted into government property [28. 173, 135-136]. Workers in the cotton industry were united in the "Pakhtayogmoy" association. A special commissioner for cotton affairs was appointed to manage the cotton industry. The cotton industry was immediately included in the system of the Supreme National Economic Council of the RSFSR. By 1923, all branches of cotton-growing were included in the General Cotton Committee.

However, these conditions caused to reduce the price of cotton, which used to be three times more expensive than grain, and to increase the price of grain, and the crisis in the cotton industry led to an increase in the number of unemployed among the local population. In 1915 in Turkestan cotton was planted in 669 thousand desiatinas of field, from which 831 thousand tons' cotton were harvested. By 1921, the total cotton harvest was 15,000 tons, and by 1922 the cotton growing area had fallen to 11,5 thousand desiatinas [29. 243].

It should be noted that the agrarian reforms in the country, the further development of cotton growing, were under the strict control of the "genius" of the proletariat V.I. Ulyanov (Lenin). On April 19, 1920, at the Third Congress of All-Russian Light Industry Workers, the Soviet government emphasized the role of Turkestan as a raw material base in the development of light industry. "It is well known that light industry is in crisis, because there is no more imported cotton, and in Western Europe there is a great demand for raw materials. The only source is Turkestan, which was recently seized from the White Guards, but transport has not yet been established there [30. 322]."

On September 13, 1921, under the signature of V.I. Ulyanov (Lenin), the "Regulations on the state organization of cotton growing, ginning industry and cotton production" were approved. This Statute strengthened cotton as a state monopoly [31. 41-42]. In order to encourage peasants to grow cotton, the central government took measures to finance agricultural work from the budget, to bring agricultural weapons and to provide low-income households with working animals. These measures had some effect as well on farms. At the same time, the way to the effective use of free labor of peasants had been remained.

Although the Soviet authorities continued to confiscate the lands, they did not fully carry them out due to the intensification of the armed movement against the Soviet authorities in the country. Thus, the implementation of land and water reforms in the country was the result of the realization of the utopian idea of building a classless society. With the help of land-water reform of 1920-1922, the communists were on the move to achieve the goal of ending the rich and the landlord class. At a time when the local people were waging an armed struggle against the Soviets, it was clear that the people did not support the elimination of indigenous landowners in Uzbek villages. Therefore, in the first step of the land and water reform, the so-called "non-labor households" of Russian laborers in Russian settlements and villages were completely abolished, and the land of "kulak farms"

in excess of their labor norms of were confiscated. The owners in the villages and settlements inhabited by the Russians were entrepreneurs and business farms. They played a major role in the development of agriculture. Therefore, their abolition caused great damage to the development of agriculture. Thus, the implementation of land and water reform was wrong, as well as the abolition of “non-labor farms” and the confiscation of and the land of “kulak farms” in excess of their labor norms.

## CONCLUSION

In general, cases of land confiscation and nationalization after the October coup did not lead to a process of bringing property straightly closer to manufacturers. On the contrary, the administration was needed to manage government-owned property. In this way centralized governance emerged, which stifled initiative, entrepreneurship, and independence.

The full privatization of land also led to the transformation of the rural population into an ordinary hired labor force, rather than an association of free commodity manufacturers, who used the full support of the state in agriculture and primarily in the cotton industry of the country.

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