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The Role Of The Soviet Period In Central Asian Civilization

M. Kadirova

Karshi State University

Associate Professor of the Department of History of Uzbekistan

ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the role of the Soviet era in the civilization of Central Asia based on historical sources and scientific research. It extensively covers the socio-political life of the peoples of Central Asia during the Soviet period, economic development, changes in cultural and scientific processes, as well as issues of national identity. While the Soviet era created certain opportunities for modernization, industrialization, education and scientific development in the development of the peoples of Central Asia, on the one hand, the restriction of national and religious values, the policy of Russification and the negative consequences of centralized management were observed.

Keywords:

Soviet era, Central Asia, civilization, history, culture, national identity, modernization, Russification, colonial policy.

Introduction

At the beginning of the 20th century, a new era began in the history of the peoples of Central Asia. After the October Revolution of 1917, the peoples of the former Russian Empire, including the territories of Central Asia, fell under the influence of Soviet power. The Soviets radically reorganized territorial administration, transformed the economy through collectivization, and instilled Marxist-Leninist ideology in all aspects of social life.

The peoples of Central Asia have a unique civilization that has been formed over the centuries, and ancient culture, religion, traditions, and national values have entered a new stage in this process. The Soviet era accelerated the modernization processes in this region, but at the same time, it also increased the risk of losing national identity.

Literature Review

The healthcare system in Central Asia changed dramatically during the Soviet era. Starting in the 1920s and 1930s, a policy of bringing "public health" under state control was pursued. Previously, the region had mainly doctors, traditional medicine, and religious-educational

hospitals, but during the Soviet era, a centralized, free medical service system was established. Large clinics and research institutes were established in Tashkent, Almaty, Ashgabat, and Dushanbe. This led to an increase in life expectancy, a decrease in mortality, and extensive measures to protect motherhood and childhood. However, it should not be forgotten that the region's environmental problems, especially the Aral Sea disaster and the excessive use of chemical pesticides, often negated the achievements of the health system. Therefore, along with positive progress in health care, long-term environmental and medical problems remained as a Soviet legacy [1].

The Soviet authorities set the fight against illiteracy as a key task. In a short time, schools, technical schools, and higher educational institutions were opened in all republics. School curricula developed such subjects as mathematics, physics, and chemistry, and scientific achievements became widespread. At the same time, the education system was under ideological control: history textbooks were written in accordance with Soviet ideology, and important aspects of religion and national

history were ignored or interpreted as "reactionary." The main goal of education was to provide all students with a communist education and to form the ideal of a "builder of socialist society." On the one hand, this led to the formation of a new scientific mindset, but on the other hand, it led to the weakening of national consciousness and the distortion of historical memory. The Soviet era was a complex and contradictory period for the Central Asian intelligentsia. Although representatives of the Jadid movement, supporters of the new school, and national identity were active in the 1920s, the repressions of the 1930s eliminated most of them. Dozens of national intellectuals, such as Cholpon, Fitrat, and Usman Nasir, were executed or sentenced to long prison terms as "enemies of the people." This process created a vacuum in the spiritual life of Central Asia. However, in the 1950s and 1970s, a new generation of intellectuals emerged: historians, writers, and artists tried to restore national values to some extent. Despite this, their activities were always under political control and were often evaluated based on the criteria of "party affiliation" and "ideological loyalty." During the Soviet era, the population of Central Asia increased dramatically. The Uzbek, Tajik, and Kyrgyz populations grew rapidly in numbers. This process was accompanied by a demographic explosion and put great pressure on urban and rural infrastructure. A large part of the population moved to newly built urban districts and settlements around industrial enterprises. After the Tashkent earthquake (1966), the city was rebuilt and became one of the exemplary centers of Soviet urbanization. At the same time, the urbanization process significantly changed the social life of the local population, family and community relations: patriarchal forms of life were gradually replaced by a socialist culture of life [2].

Research Methodology And Empirical Analysis

The Soviet government created new state structures in Central Asia. The formation of the Turkestan ASSR (1918), and later the Soviet Socialist Republics of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan was

an important stage in the history of Central Asia. However, these republics were independent only in name, and in practice they were under the strict control of the Moscow center.

The political system was dominated by one-party rule, and the national intelligentsia was repressed as "enemies of the people" (the repressions of 1937–1938 are an example). This process led to the destruction of the local intellectual elite.

The Soviet era radically changed the economy of Central Asia. As a result of the collectivization policy, agriculture came under state control. Cotton monoculture was developed, and Central Asia became the "cotton supplier" of the USSR. Although this policy developed some industries, it also caused environmental disasters (for example, the drying up of the Aral Sea).

The industrialization process led to the construction of new factories and plants in the region. However, many manufacturing enterprises served only to supply raw materials to the center.

During the Soviet period, a wide-ranging campaign against illiteracy was carried out. As a result, in a short time, the general literacy rate in Central Asia increased sharply, higher educational institutions were established. Tashkent State University, large scientific centers were established in Samarkand, Bukhara, Ashgabat, Almaty and Dushanbe.

However, in culture and literature, "socialist realism" was promoted as the only direction. National literature, art and religion were restricted. Mosques were closed, religious education was banned, and Islamic values were suppressed [3].

During the Soviet period, the process of national identity development of the peoples of Central Asia took on a complex character. On the one hand, the establishment of national republics led to the formation of certain national symbols. On the other hand, the policy of Russification (language policy, Russification of cultural standards) undermined national values.

The alphabet was changed several times: the transition from Arabic to Latin, and then to Cyrillic, became a political tool for weakening national identity.

Results

Central Asia was located on the southern borders of the Soviet Union, and the region was of great strategic importance. Especially during World War II, the territories of Central Asia served as a "rear front". Factories, scientists, and cultural figures relocated from the western regions of Russia operated in Tashkent, Samarkand, and other cities. This process served to enrich scientific and cultural life [4].

The region was also considered a "geopolitical buffer zone" for Moscow, as it borders countries such as Afghanistan, Iran, and India. The establishment of military bases and strategic infrastructure in Central Asia also had an impact on civilizational development.

The Soviet government established scientific research institutes, technical universities, and academies. The Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan was established in Tashkent, and the Academy of Sciences of Kazakhstan was established in Almaty. Major scientific research was conducted in these scientific centers in the natural sciences, agriculture, geology, history, and linguistics.

For example, geologists identified rich oil and gas deposits in the Aral Sea and the steppes of Kazakhstan, and archaeologists studied the layers of ancient culture in Samarkand and Bukhara. However, since all scientific developments served the interests of the center - Moscow, local needs were often ignored.

The Soviet government promoted women's liberation in Central Asia. As part of the "offensive" campaign that began in 1927, women were encouraged to remove the veil and take an active part in public life. As a result, women's rights to education expanded, they began to actively participate in the labor market, and were appointed to political positions [5].

However, this process had both positive and negative consequences. On the one hand, the social status of women increased, and on the other hand, these reforms, which were carried out in a way that contradicted local customs, created social contradictions in society.

During the Soviet period, the cultural heritage of Central Asia was evaluated in two ways:

On the one hand, great figures such as Amir Temur, Alisher Navoi, and Ulugbek were scientifically studied, and their works were published.

On the other hand, religious heritage and Islamic values were marginalized as "antiquity". Most mosques and madrasas were closed, and many manuscripts were destroyed or stored in secret funds.

As a result of this policy, although the historical memory of the people was partially interrupted, at the same time, efforts to preserve national identity intensified.

Central Asian cities changed dramatically during the Soviet era. Tashkent, Alma In Almaty, Ashgabat, Dushanbe and Bishkek, new districts and industrial zones were built based on modern architectural designs. The transport system, railways and roads were expanded.

As a result of the influx of Russian-speaking residents into urban life, a multinational social environment was formed. On the one hand, this brought modern life, on the other hand, it increased the social stratification of the local population. Local cadres were rarely appointed to high positions, and the main leadership remained in the hands of Russian cadres sent from the center.

Although the Soviet state officially promoted "internationalism" and "equality of nations", in practice a colonial mindset prevailed. The language and culture of local peoples were secondary, and the Russian language reigned as the "language that unites fraternal peoples".

Ideological control was strict, and all literature, theater, cinema and the press had to conform to the standards of "socialist realism". Dissent and independent expression were severely persecuted. Thus, the Soviet era also left a deep mark on the social consciousness of the peoples of Central Asia.

The Soviet era was aimed at the unilateral development of Central Asian agriculture. As a result of excessive emphasis on cotton cultivation, restrictions were introduced at the expense of wheat, vegetables and other food products. The lives of local farmers were tightly controlled, and the implementation of the state plan was mandatory.

As a result, such an ecological disaster as the drying up of the Aral Sea occurred. A significant part of the waters of the Amu Darya and Syrdarya rivers were diverted to irrigate cotton fields. This process had a negative impact not only on nature, but also on the health of the population: dust storms, shortages of drinking water, and the increase in diseases became widespread problems.

As a result of the industrialization policy, many industrial enterprises were built in Central Asia. However, this process often turned into a raw material supply base for the center. Complex machine building, high technologies were mainly located in large cities of Russia, and Central Asia was given light industry, food production and cotton processing enterprises. Many workers were brought to industrial enterprises from other regions of Russia. This labor migration significantly changed the demographic composition of the region, the number of Russian-speaking residents increased, and national personnel were often forced to work in lower positions.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the Soviet leadership drew artificial borders between the Central Asian republics. As a result, ethnically mixed territories were divided into different republics. For example, the Fergana Valley was divided between the Uzbek, Kyrgyz and Tajik republics. This policy was based on the principle of "divide and rule". Later, during the period of independence, these artificial borders caused numerous ethnic conflicts, disputes over water and land resources.

The Soviet authorities sought to eliminate religious institutions. Thousands of mosques and madrasas were closed, imams were persecuted. The religious education system was completely abolished. However, Islamic values continued to exist among the people in a hidden form.

At the same time, starting in the 1940s and 1950s, the state allowed religion to be under control. For example, the Religious Office operated in the "Barokhon Madrasa" in Tashkent. This Soviet state was presented on the international stage as a mask of "religious freedom", but in practice religious life was sharply limited.

During the Soviet era, sports became an important part of social life. Cities such as Tashkent, Almaty, Ashgabat became major sports centers. The Pakhtakor football club, and Central Asian athletes who participated in the Olympic Games (for example, Uzbek boxer Rufat Riskiev) made the region known throughout the USSR.

In popular culture, Russian-language cinema, theater, and musical works dominated. At the same time, national pop art also developed, but it had to be enriched with "socialist content".

During the Soviet period, significant changes occurred in the lifestyle of the Central Asian population. Collective housing (multi-story "Khrushchevka"), communal kindergartens, children's camps, and a system of labor leave were introduced.

Although this process introduced elements of modern life, it clashed with local family values and customs. The Soviet way of life gradually merged with national traditions and formed a new social culture.

Conclusion And Discussion

The Soviet period left a complex, contradictory mark on the civilization of Central Asia. On the one hand, this period was a period of modernization, new scientific and technical progress, on the other hand, it was a period of erosion of national values, and restrictions on religious and spiritual life. Today, independent Central Asian states are analyzing the Soviet legacy, seeking to develop its positive aspects and eliminate its negative consequences.

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