

IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC REFORMS IN THE TURKESTAN ASSR UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF NAZIR TURAQULOV

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Abstract: This article examines the contributions of Nazir Turaqulov, a prominent statesman and one of the key reformers of socio-economic and agrarian policies in Central Asia, during the early years of Soviet rule in the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. The study analyzes the role of N. Turaqulov in the implementation of land and water reforms, the transformation of rural social life, and the broader agrarian policies of the Soviet regime in Central Asia.

Key words: agriculture, agrarian policy, reform, Turkestan, land policy, socio-economic conditions, Turkestan Autonomous Republic.

Introduction

Today, New Uzbekistan has secured its rightful place in the global community, and within the country, the foundations of a democratic system are being established alongside the formation of a civil society. Since gaining independence and sovereignty, Uzbekistan has undergone profound transformations, revealing the complex and multifaceted nature of building a new, democratic, and humanistic society. A glance at world history shows that every nation has advanced primarily through spiritual unity and a strong national ideology. In our country, which is currently on the path toward constructing a new life and joining the ranks of developed nations, the issue of national ideology holds paramount importance. It is evident that today the world is

witnessing intense competition and confrontation of interests. The processes of globalization bring humanity unprecedented opportunities, yet they also generate unforeseen challenges. Threats to national identity and spiritual values are increasing. Attitudes of self-centeredness, a superficial approach to labor and family, and consumerist mindsets are being subtly imposed on people, particularly on the youth. As President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev rightly emphasized: “National history must be created with a national spirit. Otherwise, it will not have an educational impact”.

Literature review and methodology. The authors of works produced in the 1920s - N. Turaqulov, T. Ryskulov, and G. Safarov—were direct witnesses and participants in the historical events that took place between 1917 and 1924. In the second issue of the Voennaya Mysl journal, published in 1921, a piece titled “The Fergana Problem” (Ferganskaya problema) was published under the pseudonym “Darvish” by Nazir Turaqulov. In this article, the author analyzes the dire conditions in Fergana at the time, highlighting the harsh mistakes made by Soviet authorities in implementing food policies and exposing the tragic situation faced by the local population[1, 108–118].

In a pamphlet authored by G.I. Safarov, who was a member of the Turkestan Bureau (Turkbyuro) during this period, significant information is provided about the economic and political state of Turkestan, the establishment of Soviet power in the region, and its violent policies. The pamphlet also covers the overthrow of the Turkestan Autonomy government formed in Kokand and the subsequent armed resistance movement that arose in the valley. G.I. Safarov emphasized that the October Revolution in Turkestan was primarily carried out by the Russian population, while the local population remained largely uninvolved in these events [2, 184].

A report on the economic life of the Turkestan Republic, prepared by a group of specialists, holds significant importance in highlighting the economic issues of the Turkestan region [3]. This report presents crucial statistical and

official data concerning various sectors of the national economy and living conditions of the population in the Turkestan region, particularly in the districts and cities of the Fergana Province.

Discussion and results. The transformations that took place in society during the 1920s were closely tied to the broader changes occurring in the social, economic, political, and cultural spheres of the time. Political developments during this period had a direct impact on various aspects of socio-economic life. Following the establishment of Soviet power in Turkestan [4, 334–340], the Bolshevik agrarian policy aimed to abolish private ownership of land and replace small peasant farms with collective agricultural enterprises [5, 278–287]. The Decree on Land, issued on October 26, 1917, stated: “In carrying out the great agrarian transformation, until a final decision is made by the Constituent Assembly, the following peasant mandates must serve as a guideline everywhere” [6, 35]. The peasant mandate declared: “The right to private ownership of land is permanently abolished; the sale, purchase, lease, mortgage, or any other form of transfer of land is strictly prohibited” [7, 114]. Following the nationalization of land, the economic conditions that enabled the expansion of large landholdings were eliminated. This measure aimed to reconstruct agriculture on a socialist basis. It involved restricting and eventually eliminating the rights of wealthy peasant households—referred to as “quloq”—and promoting the collectivization of individual peasant farms.

From the earliest days of the October Revolution in Uzbekistan, agrarian reforms began to be implemented. On November 8, 1917, the Decree on Land was published in “Nasha Gazeta”, the official organ of the Central Committee of the Turkestan Communist Party. Subsequently, on December 9, 1917, the People's Commissariat for Land Affairs in the Turkestan region issued a decision prohibiting land transactions, which was then put into practice. In the early years of Soviet rule, institutional reform of the agrarian sector was of decisive importance for the development and stabilization of Central Asia's

economy and the social life of its population. In fact, in the initial period of reforms, as the influence of the landowning class grew, the Soviet authorities faced a critical challenge: strengthening the agricultural sector. As part of this effort, and under the leadership of Nazir Turaqulov—who held key positions in 1921–1922—a process was initiated by the Turkestan Communist Party to establish the “Qo‘shchi” (“Olzorlar”) Union, based on the participation of peasants. The goal of this organization was to socialize the countryside by uniting all working peasants into a single political and socio-economic body aimed at solving pressing rural issues. During his tenure in these positions, Nazir Turaqulov demonstrated loyalty to the Soviet government and the Bolshevik Party. However, he failed to adequately recognize the legitimacy of the Turkestan Autonomy Government and the independence movement in the Fergana Valley, ultimately supporting their suppression [8, 334–340]. Nazir Turaqulov frequently traveled to various provinces of the republic in an effort to understand the nature of the emerging challenges facing the new government. He actively participated in congresses, spoke at meetings, and held discussions with workers, Red Army soldiers, and peasants.

In the 1920s, with the establishment of Soviet power in Turkestan, Nazir Turaqulov stood at the forefront of socio-economic, cultural, and political reforms. During this period, large-scale land and water reforms were implemented in the region. The essence of these reforms lay in the nationalization of land and the organization of communal and state land users based on the redistribution of large private landholdings.

The process of land nationalization began in present-day Turkestan. The agrarian reforms implemented between 1917 and 1920 constituted the first stage of agrarian transformation in the region. The second stage commenced with the land and water reform of 1920–1922, which aimed to eliminate the consequences of the colonial land policies enforced by the Russian imperial government. For instance, in March 1919, two state farms (sovkhozes) were

established in the Fergana Valley based on the expropriated estates of large landowners. In April of the same year, the first agricultural commune was formed. In total, 10 state farms were established in the region [9, 91].

Alongside large-scale changes in land use, the Soviet government also implemented water reform. Private irrigation enterprises in areas such as Khujand, Nau, and Digma were nationalized. Water pumps and other irrigation infrastructure were primarily brought under state ownership. From that point forward, the distribution of water resources was managed by the rural poor. The regulation and oversight of water supply systems were carried out by the Councils of Workers and Soldiers Deputies as well as the Councils of National Economy.

From July 19 to October 22, 1920, Nazir Turaqulov served as Chairman of the Turkestan ASSR. During this period, he was closely involved in matters related to land and water reforms. Under his leadership, particular attention was given to issues concerning nomadic populations and their resettlement. At the plenary session of the Turkestan Regional Committee of the Communist Party held on February 23, 1920, the issue of land and water was comprehensively discussed. The resolution adopted at the session recommended that the Turkestan Central Executive Committee establish special commissions for each district where lands had been confiscated from nomads before the October Revolution. These commissions were tasked with defining land allotment norms for the resettled population, specifically for productive use. The Regional Committee regarded the primary objective of the next phase of land and water reform as equalizing land and water use rights between the Russian settlers and the indigenous local population by reallocating land exceeding the standard from the resettled populations to the native inhabitants. This principle became the legal foundation for all subsequent legislation related to land and water reform. Underlying this Communist policy was the intent to restrict the economic influence of the Russian “quloq” households and to bring the native population

closer to the Soviet regime, thereby reinforcing Soviet authority at the local level.

In September 1920, the 5th Congress of the Turkestan Communist Party and the 9th Congress of Soviets of the Turkestan ASSR adopted specific resolutions regarding the implementation of land and water reform. Consequently, on December 14, 1920, the Turkestan Central Executive Committee approved the “Regulation on Land Management of Nomads, Settled Population Settlements, and Cossack Villages in the Turkestan ASSR.” This document defined the procedures for land use and allocation. To determine the directions of the land reform, preparatory work was carried out at the end of 1920 and the beginning of 1921. Following this, provincial, district, and volost-level soviet congresses were held, where concrete tasks for implementing the reform were outlined. Additionally, numerous conferences, rallies, and meetings of working people were organized to address the upcoming reforms. Furthermore, territories for implementation were identified, “non-working” farming households were registered, and the fundamental principles for land redistribution were developed.

From May 1921 to June 1922, when Nazir Turaqulov served as Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the Turkestan ASSR, he gave significant attention to issues related to peasant cooperatives alongside other matters concerning the structure of the state. He was directly involved in drafting legal documents regulating agrarian relations. Under his leadership, on March 15, 1922, the Central Executive Committee of the Turkestan ASSR adopted the “Regulation on the Peasants’ Union (Qo‘shchi).” Upon its ratification, the union was declared a professional-political organization representing the rural proletariat and semi-proletariat masses in villages and settlements [11, 90]. According to the regulation, the primary political goal of the “Qo‘shchi” was to mobilize the poor for the construction of Soviet power and to combat all forms of oppression. Its immediate economic objectives included the unconditional

implementation of the food and agricultural programs and the improvement of living standards for the working people. Notably, in a short period, the “Qo‘shchi” union became the most widespread organization in Northern Turkestan. On June 20, 1923, the first district congress of the “Qo‘shchi” was held in Khujand, attended by 100 delegates from all primary branches. The congress played a significant role in strengthening the union. Particular attention was paid to the development of cotton growing, as it contributed to increasing the market orientation of peasant farms. At the initiative of the union, wheat was supplied to every cotton farmer under preferential credit terms [4, 354]. One of the key tools employed by the union to strengthen its position in the economy was private trade, which expanded significantly during the early years of the New Economic Policy. In the Samarkand region, nearly 10,000 permits were issued for trading agricultural and handicraft products. The freedom of trade allowed the more affluent strata of the population to exploit market conditions for their benefit. They took advantage of the food crisis by raising prices for bread and other goods, and by establishing or leasing trading enterprises.

Nazir Turaqulov understood the necessity of accounting for the lack of a working class in Turkestan during the development of agrarian reform mechanisms. The issue was that, at the outset of the reforms, not only had feudal relations remained intact in rural areas, but also the influence of local beys (landowners) and Muslim clergy over the peasant masses was still significant. Therefore, it was essential to pursue a more flexible and cautious policy regarding the peasantry in rural areas compared to the central regions of the country. A portion of the Turkestan party and Soviet workforce did not fully grasp the essence of the New Economic Policy (NEP). Turaqulov, on the other hand, was a professional economist for his time and consistently advocated for new ideas and initiatives. Moreover, he was very close to the people and possessed a deep understanding of the social problems between the wealthy and

impoverished strata, the stratification of society, and the many subtle causes underlying these divisions.

Thus, taking into account numerous socio-economic factors, the region's post-war development was carried out primarily through small-scale peasant farming, despite the persistence of semi-feudal land relations and primitive agricultural technology. However, as the political situation in the region stabilized, the Soviet government began to exert more active influence on social processes. They pursued two main directions: 1) strengthening labor-based peasant farms while minimizing, as much as possible, the exploitation of workers by wealthy landowners; 2) gradually introducing new forms of agricultural organization. For instance, according to reforms implemented in the Konibodom district, 847 peasant households received land totaling approximately 979 desyatinas, while an additional 557 farming households were granted small land "supplements" from the remaining land fund. In total, 1,404 farming households were allocated land [12]. During the implementation of the land and water reform, large landowners—including Russian settlers and local beys—were dispossessed, and many were expelled from the district. As a result of the reform, both feudal and capitalist forms of landholding were abolished, and the land rights of local and Russian peasants were equalized, which carried significant political importance.

Between 1918 and 1920, the number of collective farms steadily increased due to state support. Starting from 1924, the Soviet government began preparatory work for implementing land and water reforms in Uzbek villages of Turkestan. From this period onward, the fragmentation of Turkestan began.

Conclusion. In conclusion, the initial experience of implementing the land and water reform was not without serious mistakes and significant costs. Nevertheless, it represented an important stage in dismantling the old land relations. The reform held major political significance, as it equalized the land rights of the Russian and local populations, thereby eliminating another remnant

of the colonial past. From the earliest days of Soviet rule in Turkestan, the struggle against the landowning class in the countryside began. From 1918 onward, the large landowners—primarily Russian colonialists—and wealthy elites had their lands and equipment confiscated. However, under the conditions of widespread armed resistance to the Soviet regime, this process could not be implemented on a wide scale. Overall, historical experience shows that the socio-economic consequences of the reforms carried out in the Central Asian regions during the early Soviet period were profound. These socio-economic reforms in Turkestan, particularly the land and water reform, were directly led by Nazir Turaqulov. His role as a reformer and initiator in establishing new governance and economic administration institutions during the most complex period of transition remains an invaluable legacy for the present and future generations of the peoples of Central Asia.

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