

**DYNAMICS OF TRANSFORMATION OF  
AGRARIAN STRUCTURE IN SOVIET  
CENTRAL ASIA, 1920-1940** ✓

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before the examiners for evaluation.

  
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*Prem Lata*  
(PREM LATA)

## INTRODUCTION

The agrarian structure of an area is intimately related to the level and stage of development of a society. Land is the most important source of peoples' livelihood. The peasants are numerically the most predominant section of world's population. Their share to total population is much higher in the developing regions. Land was one of the first objects for the emergence of private property which caused the division of society into antagonistic classes. The different forms of the ownership of land and that of the other means of production, and the relations of production represent various stages of the development of human society. In fact, the study of the human history is essentially "a representation in a chronological order of successive changes in the means and relations of production".<sup>1</sup> The present study is based on this Marxist assumption that mode of production is one of the prime movers of history.

In a feudal society, the agrarian structure is marked by the poor agricultural performance resulting from low level of technology, individualistic farming with serf-landlord relations of production. This system of production prevailed in Russia before 1861. In this feudal agrarian structure

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<sup>1</sup> D.D. Kosambi, The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India (India, 1972), p. 10.



production is mainly done on subsistence basis i.e. to satisfy the immediate needs of the peasant household or of the village community and rarely for a wider market. However, the peasants are generally forced to produce some surplus which is claimed by the ruling groups consisting of landlords in a legalised and institutionalised way. The coercive forces, in the form of military strength and customs backed by the force of social conventions and judicial laws, are used to extract the surplus to maintain the non-productive class of society. The unwilling peasant who was being forced to produce to meet the economic demands of the landlords was kept under bondage through statutory laws in Russia during the centuries before 1861. The system guaranteed the feudal lords of the labour supply required for their estates which were granted by the crown in consideration of their military or civil services.

The essential cause<sup>of</sup> the breakdown of feudalism, as highlighted by Morris Dobb, was over exploitation of the labour force.<sup>2</sup> Because of this the serfs deserted the lords' estates in mass, and those who remained were a too few and too over-worked to enable the system to sustain itself. In short, the

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2 M. Dobb, The Studies on the Development of Capitalism, (London, 1963), p. 35.

internal contradictions, elements of instability within the system along with the ever increasing needs of the ruling <sup>class</sup> for more revenue led to its decline.<sup>3</sup> The growth of market towns and of trade also played an important role in accelerating the disintegration of this mode of production. Many of the factors responsible for the decline of feudalism in general were present in the pre-emancipation Russian agrarian system. Hence, there was a strong cry for reforms during those years. Tsar Alexander II, realising a need for the reforms, introduced them 'from above' without letting the peasants take their freedom by rising 'from below'. In 1861, the servile peasantry i.e. the serfs of Russia were freed in a major agrarian reform. But, both the emancipation of 1861 and the Stolypin reforms of the beginning of the present century failed to solve the peasant question and to improve agricultural performance substantially in Russia.

The major outcome of the above mentioned reforms was the economic stratification among the peasantry wherein some peasants became richer and other poorer. Though, majority of them became poorer and lost their land holdings altogether yet a small group of peasants succeeded in increasing the size

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3 Ibid., p. 42.

of their land holdings. This led to an increase in the proportion of those peasants who devoted themselves to production for the market by regularly hiring agricultural labourers. This resulted in the emergence of capitalistic relations of production in Russian agriculture.<sup>4</sup> Under capitalist development "agriculture is transformed from the privileged occupation of the top estates or the duty of the bottom estate into an ordinary commercial and industrial occupation."<sup>5</sup> The primitive implements of production and poor technology give way to improved technology based on machines. The relative size of the capitalist sector in agriculture was increasing during the first two decades of this century in Russia. The concentration of means of production including land in a fewer hands was increasing. This newly emerging peasant bourgeoisie was also introducing modernised farm machinery on a large scale. Different types of agricultural and credit co-operatives began to emerge. But before the capitalist development could mature in Russia, the Bolshevik revolution of November 1917, changed the relations

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4 V.I. Lenin, The Development of Capitalism in Russia, (Moscow, 1956), p. 315.

5. Ibid., p. 315.

of production completely. The new relations of production under socialist system were established in agrarian sector. The private ownership of land and that of other means of production was replaced by the ownership of state and that of collectives. The agricultural activity was organized on the basis of large scale social production through co-operative associations of the collective farms.

Most of the above-mentioned processes were operationalised in most of the Russian territories, but the earlier colonies of the empire specially the Asian regions had peculiar problems and processes which were specific to those areas. The early capitalist developments in Russia were being supported by the exploitation of these Asian regions. As A.G. Frank points out "the capitalist system that we know has never existed without colonialism/imperialism".<sup>6</sup> Lenin believed that colonialism or imperialism is the 'monopoly-stage' of capitalism.<sup>7</sup> When capitalism matures to a certain stage in a country, need is felt for new regions outside the country in order to use their economies for its own benefit.

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6 A.G. Frank, On Capitalist Underdevelopment (Oxford, 1975).

7 V.I. Lenin, Collective Works, Vol. I (Moscow, 1970), p. 55 & 73.

In other words, capitalism through its ties of commerce and force creates a system of a developed metropole and a periphery which it underdevelops considerably. Capital is exported abroad to backward countries to extract high profits under this relationship of capitalism and colonialism. In this system of relationship the dependent colonies are systematically kept under-developed. In Gunder Frank's words "underdevelopment is systematically and everywhere associated with -- in fact caused by -- colonization."<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, the problems of the underdeveloped peripheries are bound to be different from those of the developed metropolises. The Central Asian regions before the revolution were playing the role of the periphery for the Russian metropolises. The Russian capitalists under the Tsarist regime, were using the economy of Central Asia for their own purpose by keeping it industrially backward, by investment in cotton procurement and by underpaying the colonial labour. After 1917, this policy of colonial exploitation in Central Asia gave way to the Soviet policy of equal economic development of all the nationalities. The period between 1917 and 1940 was a period of intensive and extensive change in the agrarian history of the

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8 G. Frank, n. 6, p. 2.

region, wherein Central Asia by <sup>by</sup> passing the capitalist mode of production reached the socialist stage directly from the tribal-patriarchal and feudal relations of production. The initial steps in this direction were taken in 1920 and the changes took a formal and concluding shape by 1940. This formative transition period of 20 years i. e. between 1920-40 is the period covered in the present study.

### The Study Area

The term Soviet-Central Asia refers to four Soviet Central Asian republics; Uzbekistan, Kirgisia, Turmenistan and Tadzhikistan. These republics of Central Asia cover an area of about 1.3 million square kilometers. The area is in the heart of Asia and far away from any open sea. It consists of mainly deserts, steppes and oases with some mountainous areas. It spreads from the banks of the Volga and the Caspian sea in the west to the boundaries of China in the east. The vast steppes of Kazakhstan are in its north. The steppes of Kazakhstan have many geographical, ethnical and cultural similarities with Central Asian republics. For the same reason many a times Kazakhstan is also included in Central Asian republics. But the above statement about the similarities is only partially true. In fact, the northern part of Kazakhstan is more closely related physically and culturally to the

adjacent Western Siberia than to the rest of Kazakhstan. Only the southern part of the republic is closely akin to the Central Asian republics. Therefore, it is necessary to study the Kazakh republic separately in its entirety. The southern border of the Central Asian region has always been of great strategic significance for Russia as it touches the Muslim states of Afghanistan and Iran. The majority of the population of Central Asia is Muslim by religion. The Soviet Central Asians both culturally and ethnically are quite similar to the neighbouring countries. Climatically, the area is generally arid with significant variations in climatic and natural conditions. Being situated away from sea the area has continental climate i.e. very cold in winter and very hot in summer. Strong winds blow in the desert and semi-desert areas. Rainfall is very scanty. Much of the area receives less than 20 cms. of annual rainfall.<sup>9</sup> In some of its parts the rainfall is even much less. Except the mountainous areas, heavy snowfall is a rare phenomenon. Aral sea situated in the north freezes for four to five months during an year.

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P.H. Lydell, Geography of the USSR (America, 1970), p. 217.

Amu-Darya and Syr-Darya with their sources in the Pamirs and the Tien Shan respectively are the biggest rivers in the region. Berafshan, Chu, Murghab, Tedzhen, Atrek and Vakash are the other important rivers. But none of these flows into any open sea. All rivers either vanish in the sands or drain out into lakes. The area being highly arid, some of these even dry up in summer months. Only Amu and Syr flow into the Aral Sea. In short, water availability is too meagre and for that reason it is very precious. Thus, it is not an exaggeration to say that the history of Central Asia flows out of the "struggle for water". In spite of the scarcity of water the region supported developed agricultural civilisation based on irrigation since the remote past.

Possibilities of providing irrigation were not altogether absent. Since the revolution area under irrigation has expanded considerably. The agrarian life mainly nurtured on in the oases and in the valleys of the Amu and the Syr rivers. It, however, covers only a small portion of the total land surface of the region. Most of the area is under Kara-Kum desert and the high mountains of the Tien Shan, the Pamirs, the Altay and the Soyan ranges. Total arable area accounts for not more than four to five per cent of the total land surface.<sup>10</sup> wherever water is

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10 R.R. Shama, The Marxist Model of Social Change: Soviet Central Asia, 1917-1940 (India, 1979), p. 1.



available and surface not too sandy or rocky, the soils are adaptable to a variety of crops. Agriculture in Central Asia can be characterised into three types; grazing of livestock over almost whole of its dry areas, grain-farming in the moist parts and intensive irrigation farming of cotton, alfalfa, some grain and a variety of vegetables and fruit wherever good soil and water are available.

The ancient name of the region i. e. 'Turkestan' seems to be related to the fact that majority of the population settled in the area is of Turkic origin. About forty groups of diverse ethnic combinations constitute the population of the region. The prominent ones which are relatively larger in number and possess their own distinct language and culture are, Usbeks, Kazakhs, Kirgis, Turkmens, Karakalpaks and Tadshiks. Excepting Tadshiks all other groups belong to Turko-Mongoloid racial stock. The Tadshiks belong to the Iranian ethnic group. The Slar ethnic element also joined this amalgam of ethnic variations after the Russian conquest of the region. Economically more important classification of the Central Asian population was in terms of nomads and the sedentary before the revolution.

### Literature Survey

Before making an attempt to understand and comprehend the changes that came about in the agrarian structure of Soviet Central

Asia, it is of crucial significance to look at the studies those have already been conducted on this area with similar or allied objectives. Existing literature on the agrarian structure of Soviet Central Asia is very scanty. Though there are many general studies on Soviet economic system but in most of these works Central Asia remains untouched or receives only a sketchy treatment.<sup>11</sup> Whereas, the specific studies on Central Asia deal mainly either with the problem of Nationality policy or with the aspects related to ethnic, cultural and religious variations. Most of these features are difficult to understand and appreciate without knowing the various dimensions of the economy that provides the basic structure.

Detailed history of Russian agriculture has been written by many Sovietologists. Some of the important studies are by L. Volin, E. Strauss, Haynard and S.P. Trapsnikov. Volin gives an extensive statistical account of the changing agricultural mosaic over hundred years balancing these accounts by presenting his views on the peasant life.<sup>12</sup> E. Strauss has also written with a historical perspective. He reinforces his study with well organised statistical tables.<sup>13</sup> A comparatively recent

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11 Some of the studies are; Morris Dobb, Soviet Economic Development since 1917, Alec. Nove, An Economic History of USSR, London, 1969, New York, 1948.

12 L. Volin, A Survey of Soviet Russian Agriculture, USA, 1951.

13 E. Strauss, Soviet Agriculture in Perspective, Allen & Unwin, 1969.

work by S.P. Trapeznikov examines the theoretical bases of agrarian relations from the pre-revolutionary period to the present day.<sup>14</sup> This is a detailed study of the Soviet agrarian structure published in two volumes. But as stated earlier the agrarian structure of Soviet Central Asia<sup>faces</sup> region specific problems due to its backward and colonial background. These have not been properly dealt with in any of the the above mentioned works.

The studies done exclusively on the Soviet Central Asia are by Col. Wheeler and Devender Kaushik on general history of Central Asia.<sup>15</sup> These fulfil the need for a good history text book on this region. More specific studies on the region are by R.A. Pierce, Robert Conquest, A.G. Park, Richard Pipe, Alloworth and Valdayanath.<sup>16</sup> They deal mainly with the political aspects or the nationality question of the republics. The socio-economic structure of the region has generally been neglected in these studies.

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14 S.P. Trapeznikov, Leninism and the Agrarian Peasant Question, Progress Publishers, in two vols, 1976.

15 G. Wheeler, The Modern History of Soviet Central Asia, London, 1964. D. Kaushik, Central Asia in Modern Times, Moscow, 1970.

16 Details in the bibliography

Two important studies on the economic structure of Central Asia were published in 1967, one by V. Conolly and the other by Alec Nove and North.<sup>17</sup> Conolly highlights the impact of Soviet economic policies in this region strictly in the economic context only. The socio-political significance of these policies has not been discussed. Even more pertinent economic questions such as whether the economic and political relationship of these republics with the Central Russia are colonial/neo-colonial in nature or not, have been discussed by Alec Nove and North but not by Conolly. The role of the immigrants in the progress and transformation of Soviet Central Asia has also been scrutinised by the twin writers. The authors of the book have effectively brought out the role that politics played in bringing out the basic economic changes in the region.

A more comprehensive study taking into account the socio-economic and political dimensions of the changes in Soviet Central Asia after the revolution has been attempted by R.R. Shama.<sup>18</sup> The intrinsic relationship of the Soviet nationality

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17 V. Conolly, Beyond the Urals: Economic Development in Soviet Asia, London, 1967. A. Nove and North, Soviet Middle East, A Model for Development, London, 1967.

18 Shama, p. 10.

policy with the policy of regional economic development and the structural changes brought about in the process have been closely examined in this work. The author has very rightly taken the agrarian transformation to be the focal point of his analysis because the social structure of the region was basically rural and even after the economic transformation it continued to be so. A more indepth study needs to be done highlighting the agrarian structure and the dynamics of the transformation in this region. In order to improve political and general understanding of the history of the region a thorough enquiry, into the material conditions of the people, is essential. The present study is an endeavour in the same direction. The economic, political and cultural pursuits of a society cannot be compartmentalized; for a complete understanding a comprehensive approach is more desirable.

#### The Objectives and Hypotheses

Specific reforms in any particular context need to be related, as stated above, to the problems presented by the socio-economic and political set up in which these are sought to be implemented. The purpose of the study is to explore the results of the transformation to further socio-economic and political developments. Some of the questions which the author has tried to answer in this study are following:

- What were the structural and institutional changes that preceded this agrarian transformation?
- How was the resistance from the traditional Beks and Russian landlords overcome?
- How was the big gap between the formerly exploiting Central Russia and the exploited peripheral region bridged?
- To which socio-cultural changes did this material transformation lead the Central Asians?

The author has tried to answer the above which are some of the important questions, by testing the following hypotheses:

- That a radical and revolutionary transformation in land-man relations can alter the socio-economic structure of societies depending mainly on agrarian economy.
- That political equality among nations can only be meaningful when there is economic equality therein.
- That the orientation of the Soviet policy towards Central Asian agriculture was not different from the Soviet strategy implemented elsewhere.

### Source of Information

The author has mainly depended on secondary sources both in English and Russian language. The studies of Russian as well as those of other scholars have been consulted. The works of Marx, Engels and Lenin have been used in order to get a picture of the ideological basis of the Soviet agrarian policies. The proceedings of the CPSU Congresses have also been seen for the same purpose. Soviet newspapers, journals and their eastern editions have been consulted. The State document 'The Statistical Annual of the National Economy of USSR' has been used for statistical information. Separate statistical volumes of each Central Asian republic on the economy, culture and education etc. have been consulted for getting separate statistical data for each republic.

### Methodology

In general the historico-analytical method has been adopted. The study aims at finding conclusions from the time series data based on published information. With the help of secondary data and simple percentages the general pattern of the agrarian structure of this period has been shown. The pace and the extent of the collectivisation of the peasant households and thereby, their changing material conditions have

been shown through tables.

### The Plan of Study

The informations collected have been organised into five chapters. It is important to have an overall view of the traditional socio-economic structure of the study area before discussing the reforms of the twenties and the thirties; which brought fundamental changes in its agrarian structure. The traditional agrarian structure, though quite inefficient and backward yet it was supporting a somewhat stable political structure for centuries in this region. The various dimensions of the structure have been discussed in the first section of Chapter One. The coming of the Russians brought a few changes in the traditional set up. Under the Tsarist regime the economy of the region was being exploited to support the capitalist development in Central Russia. The forms of feudal and colonial exploitation, commercialisation of agriculture and the development of capitalist relations in agriculture have been discussed in the second section of the chapter.

More fundamental changes in century Asian agrarian sector took place after the socialist revolution. But before examining the actual changes; it is important to go through the ideological basis of the Soviet model for solving the



agrarian and the National-Colonial question in general. The theoretical outlines of the path selected by the Soviet government to develop the backward former colonies of the empire form the second chapter of the enquiry.

The initial steps in the direction of agrarian reforms were taken during the early years of the third decade of the present century. The land and water reforms of the twenties and their significance in preparing ground for more fundamental reforms of the thirties have been discussed in the third chapter.

Although, the land and water reforms of the twenties succeeded in making important alterations in the existing agrarian order, yet, far more radical changes were required for building a socialist agrarian structure. The reforms of the early phase could not solve all the socio-economic problems of the region. In the second half of the year 1929, Soviet government adopted a course for direct socialist reconstruction of agriculture. In Soviet Central Asia, the massive work of large scale collectivisation began in 1930. The important features, pace and methods of collectivisation in Central Asia form the theme of the fourth chapter of the study.

The study of the reforms is not being done in isolation. The socio-political and cultural dimensions of the reforms;

the changing material conditions of the peasants and an overall impact of the agrarian reforms is required to be seen in terms of entire social set up. An attempt has been made to <sup>analyse</sup> these in the last chapter.

## CHAPTER I

### THE PRE-REVOLUTIONARY AGRARIAN STRUCTURE

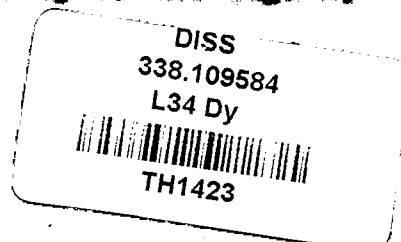
The study of agrarian structure centres around the problems of land and its utilisation for productive purposes; which involves an enquiry into the two basic aspects i.e., the productive forces, and the relations of production. The study of soil and of available arable land and other environmental factors, technological level and the cropping pattern etc. cover the productive forces. The institutional structure pertaining to the land distribution in terms of holdings and the system of land tenure and other relations of production cover the second aspect. The relations of production, the ownership of means of production and the level of technology available determine the basic mode of production of a society. Before the socialist revolution the agricultural land and other instruments of production were not socially or jointly owned. Though, in some tribal and in many ancient and medieval societies, legally land belonged to the tribal chief or to the sovereign alone, and there was no legal recognition of the right of private ownership of land. Yet, in practice it was concentrated in a few hands. The private ownership of these feudal lords was recognised by the customary laws. General level of technology used for agricultural purposes before the capitalist development was

very low which resulted in low productivity. The agricultural production, before the emergence of capitalism was largely meant for self subsistence as against the capitalist system where it is primarily for commercial purposes.

The Central Asian region of present day USSR was a typical of such areas in the pre-revolutionary days where means of production in the agricultural society were concentrated in a few hands and the levels of technology and of productivity were very low.

In the light of the above and in order to comprehend the pre-revolutionary agrarian structure in Soviet Central Asia, it is imperative to make a closer scrutiny of the following;

- i) the pattern of ownership of land and the system of land tenure;
- ii) the system of taxation and revenues on agricultural production;
- iii) the cropping pattern and the generation of surplus;
- iv) level and nature of technological and other inputs;
- v) the level of production of the supporting services and their relationship with the socio-economic and political set up of the region.



TH-1423

The Russian conquest of the region in the second half of the nineteenth century was an important political event in its history which affected not only the political but socio-economic set up of the region as well. Important changes were introduced by the Russians in the agrarian sector which formed the main and the most important sector of the Central Asian economy. Beside the political considerations, the Russians had some important economic motives in the region. The next section of the chapter deals with the analysis of these economic objectives of the Russian conquest. The forms of colonial exploitation, commercialisation of agriculture and the development of capitalist relations in Central Asian agrarian economy have also been examined.

### Political Situation

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the region had three independent political units; the Khanates of Bukhara, Khiva and Kokand. The Khans or Emirs who ruled over these states were hereditary rulers and their governments were tyrannical and oppressive in nature.<sup>1</sup> The political set-up

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Holdsworth, Turkestan in the Nineteenth Century (Oxford, 1959), p. 9.

of these Khanates was of feudal nature. Although, the control of the Khans in these states was quite stable and their rule provided internal centralisation till the Russian conquest, yet, it cannot be denied that they could hardly check the growing influence of the provincial governors.<sup>2</sup> The sovereigns had only nominal control over these provincial governors who were not only practically independent but also kept themselves constantly busy in waging wars against their neighbours and their sovereigns in order to expand the area of their influence and power. In fact, it is misleading to think that these states were 'nation states'. "People in general had no national consciousness in the modern sense of the term and had no feeling of allegiance to the sovereign except those who were immediate officials of the rulers."<sup>3</sup> The people had strong loyalties towards their tribes and the joint families; especially so among the nomads and semi-nomads of the region. The nomad population of the region hardly recognised any external power as their masters. It was difficult for them to think of themselves as being members of a whole nation.

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2 Ibid., p. 12

3 Ibid., p. 3

They did not call themselves as Kokandies, Khivans or Bukharans but could only associate themselves to the tribe they belonged. Among the sedentary population as well, the feudal loyalties were more important than national allegiance. Not only that the idea of nationality or of nation lacking among them but there was no notion whatsoever of frontiers as well. There were no fixed frontiers between the Khanates, and between the Khanates and the adjoining countries of China, Afghanistan and Persia.<sup>4</sup> The overtones of feudal and tribal allegiance in political sphere actually originated from their tribal, patriarchal and feudal mode of production.

The population of the three Central Asian Khanates was about four to five millions prior to the Russian conquest.<sup>5</sup> Among the Khanates Bukhara had the largest population of about three million, Kokand about one and a half million and Khiva had only half a million people. The major segment of the population was settled in the oases and in the river valleys.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Devender Kaushik, Soviet Central Asia in Modern Times (Moscow, 1970), p. 30.

Their main occupation was agriculture. The remaining population was comprised of nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes. They roamed about in the surrounding deserts and the mountainous areas and depended mainly on stock breeding though, to some extent, cultivation was also practised by them. Among the ethnic groups, the Turkmens were mostly nomads and carried on cattle breeding as their chief occupation. The Kirghis, another nomadic ethnic group, also had cattle breeding as their main occupation but agriculture was also widely practised by these people. From this and some other important factors Vaidyanth concludes that "there are historical evidences which indicate that in the distant past the Kirghis were basically sedentary agricultural people".<sup>6</sup> Some of the Turkmens also settled down as agriculturists during the nineteenth century. Similarly Uzbeks, though traditionally nomads, had settled down for sedentary agricultural pursuits before the Russian conquest. The Tadjiks were essentially sedentary people found mainly in plains engaged chiefly in agriculture and commerce.<sup>7</sup> However, some

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6 R. Vaidyanath, Formation of the Soviet Central Asian Republics (PPH, 1967), p. 17.

7 Ibid., p. 15.



of the Tadjiks also lived in mountains and practised both agriculture and cattle breeding. Kara-Kalpaks in the past were nomadic cattle breeders but gradually adopted mixed economy and by the time Russians came, agriculture had begun to play an important role in their economy.<sup>8</sup>

The process of settling down of the nomads was very rapid during the nineteenth century. By the end of the century less than one-fourth of the total population of the three Khanates remained nomadic. The process was so rapid that the proportion of nomads to total population in Turkestan declined from 84 per cent to 47 per cent during 1867 to 1877 and thereafter to 30 per cent by 1917.<sup>9</sup>

#### Land Ownership Rights

All land according to Shariat (the Muslim Canon law) belonged to the ruler. In other words there was formal absence of private property in land, and the principle of sovereign ownership of the ruler or of state was upheld. The land under cultivation, though part of the state ownership, was loaned out in perpetuity to whoever made it cultivable by making the necessary improvements. In practice, this

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8 Ibid., p. 19.

9 V.V. Barthold, as cited in R. Vaidyanath, n. 6, p. 49.

general principle was greatly modified. The rights of customary law i.e., adat and the actual conditions added many variations and complications to land rights. Besides, the basic presumption that land belonged to the state, there arose other categories of land ownership. Since irrigated land in Central Asia was very precious, many officials of the sovereign wanted their services and deeds of merit to be rewarded in the form of land allotments. This allotted and other gifted land became, for all practical purposes, the private property of the owners. Beside this, land was also given to religious institutions and personnels for their personal use. This land became the private property of these institutions. Thus, all available land could be categorized into three types:

a) Amiak Land - This land was under the direct ownership of the state. The bulk of cultivable and uncultivable land used both by the nomads and the sedentary population belonged to this category. The agricultural land under this category was given to the cultivators in return for a fixed obligation to the ruler.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> R. R. Shama, A Marxist Model of Social Change (India, 1979), p. 10.

b) Mulk Land or Tankiyah Land - This was free-hold private property arose from the gifts made by the sovereign for notable merits or rewarded for various services and obligations made to the sovereign or state.

c) Hakf Land - Land under this category belonged to the religious institutions and the religious boards. They had a sole administrative control over this.

The extent of land under each of these categories is difficult to assess. However, it has been noted that "in all three Khanates throughout the nineteenth century religious lands (waqf) and gift lands (mulk and tankiyah) increased".<sup>11</sup> The emirs and Khans constantly and considerably increased the mulk land in order to build their authority. Nasrullah, the emir of Bukhara is recorded to have made 3,000 such gifts.<sup>12</sup> Only about Bukhara that too about its eastern vilayets. Mary Holdsworth estimates that waqf land constituted about 24 per cent of the total land and she further adds that it was probably higher than the overall percentage for Bukhara and Kokand.<sup>13</sup> waqf land in Khiva is estimated to be 45 per cent of all irrigated land.<sup>14</sup>

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11 M. Holdsworth, n. 1, p. 13.

12 Ibid., p. 13

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid., p. 24.

The titles and rights to land were generally governed by shari; the customary law. The introduction of the other two categories of land rights, besides the State ownership; led to the formation of estates and the development of landlord peasant relationship of feudal nature.

### Land Revenue

The land tax was the major source of income for the Emirs or Khans of these States. However, a substantial portion of the mirka and yaqf land was exempted from taxes. The important land taxes were Kharaj and Tanap. The amount varied from one-tenth to one-fifth of the total output, on certain yaqf land it was one-third. This form of taxation was called tanap; in some areas the tax was levied in terms of money for per land unit which was called Kharaj. The payment of taxes was generally done in money though payment in kind was also prevalent simultaneously. The currency prevalent was called Tila and Tanka. Tila was in the form of gold coins.

### System of Tenancy

The sedentary population and the nomads had different land tenure systems. As the nomads generally moved about and worked in groups formed on tribe or clan basis, consequently,

their land rights were also regulated on tribal-patriarchal lines. The grazing land was held for the common use of the entire clan while the cultivators among them were allotted land according to the norms of a patriarchal tribe. The nomads largely followed the system of shifting cultivation as they kept moving from one place to another.<sup>15</sup> Share cropping system was most prevalent among the sedentary population. Several patterns of share-cropping were followed, depending on the variations in the five essential aspects of agriculture i.e., land, water, seeds, draught animals and labour. Implements of cultivation, being very primitive and easy to produce, were not taken into much consideration. The share-croppers were called the chairikam literal meaning being 'one-fourth'. This one-fourth system in share-cropping was most common. The cultivators used to provide their labour along with generally one bullock and some tools to the land-owners and in return get one-fourth of the total production. In case a cultivator did not possess a draught animal and could not provide for his food; he received at times one-fifth or even less than that of the total harvest.<sup>16</sup> If cultivator possessed both bullocks and his

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15 R.R. Shama, n. 10, p. 9.

16 M. Holdsworth, n. 1, p. 12.

food then only land and seed were given by the land owner, in such cases, the cultivator some time received even one-half of the total production.

In places one-fourth share of production in the form of land tax, and other expenses incurred on production were also deducted from the cultivator's share. Due to these deductions, the peasants sometime received only one-half of his actual share.

A co-operative method, known as Shirkat where animals were used jointly, was practised by some peasants. More than one household joined together to raise a pair of draught animals which sometimes consisted of even different animals and worked on the sharers' fields in turns.<sup>17</sup>

Although, peasants were free tenants, yet, they had to work for several days on the landlords' fields without getting anything in return. Not only on fields they also had to work for repairs and for the construction work of the landlords. Legally, the peasants were not bound to the land or to the landlord but due to acute shortage of available irrigated land, their mobility got restricted and they had to stay on with their exploitative landlords.

The landless peasants who worked as agricultural labourers and not share-croppers were called Haxi-lakar. They were hired by the land-owners for the whole year and were paid partly in kind and partly in cash. Part of the cost of production and part of taxes levied by the state were charged from them. In fact, main burden of the taxes fell mainly on the peasants; share-croppers or landless agricultural labourers. There was not much difference between the share-croppers and the landless cultivators in terms of their actual material conditions and the status. The evidences provided by Pahlen Commission showed growing degree of landlessness among the peasants. Holdsworth remarked that the process started much before the Russian colonization of the region and got further accentuated with the incoming of the Russian colonizers.<sup>18</sup>

### Irrigation

Water is very scarce thus, important in this region. According to ancient customary laws and Muhammadan Canon Law, the regulation of water rights and that of irrigation facilities were matters of great significance and water could neither be bought nor sold. It was to be distributed equitably. But in practice it often fell into the hands of some powerful individuals, some tribal, village or AYK elders, and not withstanding the Muhammadan Canon Law and custom, in reality

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

they did trade in water or unequally diverted it to the lands of the wealthy".<sup>19</sup> The poor were often deprived of it or were made to pay for it in money or labour.

Water being the most important element in the agricultural economy, specially in areas under the arid climatic conditions in Central Asia, special efforts were made by individual Khans to improve irrigation facilities. But these efforts could not keep up with the increase in the number of settlements and of population. Due to the constant state of warfare within the state and also with the neighbouring states the resources were generally diverted to these military operations. Irrigation channels were maintained by compulsory peasant service. The canals were fed with the water diverted from the Amu and Syr Darya. Besides canals, the water was drawn from Persian wheel wells operated by draught animals.

### Cropping Pattern

In Central Asia crop-rotation was practised on land under good irrigation. In Khiva, there were about two million acres of agricultural land.<sup>20</sup> This land was highly fertile and raised two crops annually. The leading crops of the area were

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19 Peter Lyashchenko, History of the National Economy of Russia, L.M. Herman, trans. (London, 1949).

20 S. Becker, Russia's Protectorate in Central Asia (Harvard, 1968), p. 170.



wheat, cotton, alfalfa, rice and barley. Fruits were also grown. Khiva was a grain rich area and it normally produced food surplus.<sup>21</sup> The northern districts of the state grew wheat and millets. In southern districts wheat, cotton and fruits such as melons, watermelons and mulberries were grown. By the end of the nineteenth century about 44 per cent of the cultivable land in the Khanate was under food crops and about 32 per cent under cash crops.<sup>22</sup>

Bukhara had similar crops of wheat, cotton, rice, barley, alfalfa and fruits etc. Wheat was most important crop in Bukhara but was largely meant for self-consumption. Western Bukhara, the richest agricultural area, generated food surplus in the Valley of Kashk-Darya whereas the Zhetysay Valley was known for cotton production. Cultivation was completely dependent upon irrigation in this area. Whereas, rainfall was quite adequate in the central part of Bukhara which had good farm lands and pastures. Cultivation of wheat and barley, and cattle raising were important economic activities in this area. The eastern part largely comprised of mountainous terrain, hence, not very suitable for cultivation. The Fergana Valley was the traditional grower of cotton in Kokand.

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21 Ibid.

22 N. Holdsworth, n. 16, p. 23.

The methods employed for cultivation were primitive and based on manual labour. The ploughing was done by qanab, a primitive wooden plough. The ploughing operation was usually repeated thrice and the ridges were built by the use of hand hoe.<sup>23</sup>

### Peasant Uprisings

The condition of the dshkans (peasants) in Central Asia even prior to Russian conquest was not very good. They were suffering under the oppressive measures of the baks (feudal governors of provinces) hans (tribal or clan chiefs) and hey (rich land and cattle owners). Therefore, peasant uprisings were a recurring feature throughout the nineteenth century. These were more frequent during the later part. The Kitay-Kipchaks rising, in Katta-Kurgan and Yangi-Kurgan areas in 1824-25, was mainly caused by the land hunger of the Nian-Kali tribe. The series of uprisings in 1880, 1885, 1888 and 1889 in these Khanates were mainly against the grain tax policy of the rulers.<sup>24</sup> However, the uprisings were on a small scale lacking extensive

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23 Lyshchenko, n. 19, p.

24 D. Kaushik, Central Asia in Modern Times (Moscow, 1970), p. 84-85. William Handal, The Soviet Far East and Central Asia (New York, 1944).

revolutionary fervor that could bring about significant changes in the social order. The reason perhaps was that "the bulk of the croppers were neither slaves nor entirely landless, generally, they retained the plot, on which their home was built, and their own wooden plough and work animals".<sup>25</sup> This sense of personal property generally tied them to their feudal lords and they resisted any basic change.

In short, the agrarian structure in Central Asia before the incoming of the Russians was mainly feudal though some forms of primitive communal land ownership in some backward areas and, outright slavery of the prisoners of war and of the poorest peasantry also existed. The feudal relationship, of course, was most-predominant. The tribal-patriarchal relationship had more importance among the nomads, and emphasis was laid on community or group life. Whereas the principle of collective ownership of irrigation facilities did not mean much to the sedentary population.

#### Changes Under the Colonial Rule

Though Russia had been interacting with Central Asia since very early times but it was from the sixteenth century

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25 Mandel, *ibid.*

onwards that this relationship became more intense. It was both political and economic in nature. Apart from the trade carried on through caravans, there were exchanges of diplomatic missions between Russia and the Central Asian Khanates of Khiva and Bukhara. The relationship got further strengthened during the seventeenth century when many Uzbek peasants, traders and artisans settled down in Siberia with the help of Russian government.<sup>26</sup> However, trading caravans operating between Russia and the Central Asian Khanates faced serious problems as these were frequently interrupted by the nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes of Kazakh steppes. These tribes, for long, had been a source of trouble for Russians in their border area. They not only disturbed trade between Russia and the Khanates but also used to sell Russian captives into slavery. In order to overcome these problems, Russians decided to capture this area and bring it under their strict administrative control in the eighteenth century. The possibility of opening the rich Kazakh land for Russian settlements was an added attraction. By the middle of the nineteenth century the Russian troops, after many military operations, had largely and effectively occupied the Kazakh steppes.

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D. Kaushik, n. 24, p. 32.

This put Russia in direct physical contact with the Central Asian Khanates. Even after the conquest of the Kazakh steppes, the problem of the disturbed border continued to persist. Though militarily the region had been conquered, but, it was very difficult to keep Kazakh nomads under control as they recognised no external authority except that of their own tribal chiefs. They continued their raids and disobedience and used to flee across the border to the Khanates for protection. The Khanates, because of their ethnic, religious and cultural affinities with the Kazakhs, were more sympathetic to them than to the Russians. Thus, the problem of insecure and instable border continued. Now, their further advance into the Khanates "in search of a stable border line was quite inevitable."<sup>27</sup> Britain, sitting very close to the region in its Indian empire, started taking keen political and commercial interest in Central Asia during the middle of the nineteenth century. This made the Russians realise the strategic and political significance of the region. Apart from political and military importance the region had wide economic importance as well.

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27 G. Wheeler, Soviet Central Asia (London, 1964), p. 53.

### The Economic Objectives of the Conquest

The need for establishing new markets for the promotion of Russian capitalist trade formed the main reason for the conquest of Central Asia.<sup>28</sup> Russia entered the capitalist phase of her history in the middle of the nineteenth century. However, the Russian bourgeoisie compared to other capitalist countries of Europe, was very weak and could not support the 'intensive' expansion of capitalism. So the Russian capitalists had to look for the possibilities of 'extensive' expansion of capitalism. The Russian defeat in Crimea closed the possibility of acquiring any new territories in Europe. It left them with the only possibility of expansion in Central Asia, <sup>st</sup> was already an important market for the surplus products of Russian light industry and an important source of supply of raw cotton for the most important industry of Russia.

Before the civil war Russia was getting cotton from America. The supplies got disrupted after the war and Central Asia assumed an increased importance as an alternative source of supply. Regarding the second important economic advantage of acquiring this region Balabanburg, a noted man of those days who held important assignments in the Ministry of Finance, wrote "the European market is closed to the Russian manufactured articles

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<sup>28</sup> As analysed by N.A. Khalifin cited in R.R. Shama, n. 10, p. 4.

due to the competition of almost every state in this region, as such willy-nilly Russia has to turn to the Asian countries for marketing its products.<sup>29</sup> Economic control over Central Asia thus, became 'a historical necessity' for Russian capitalism.<sup>30</sup>

Encouraged by a whole set of objectives the need for a secure frontier, the fear of the British aggressive designs, military glory and the economic necessity; imperial Russia decided to conquer the region during the middle of the 19th century. The economic objectives of the Russian conquest have been either over or under emphasised by various scholars and it has raised interesting controversies which need a separate discussion. A study of the nature of economic changes introduced by the Russian conquerors in this region would more effectively bring out their basic objectives. At the same time a detailed study of the various stages and plans of Russian conquest of the area is beyond the scope of the present study. In short, though, Russians had started their efforts in this direction as early as 1839 but did not get much success until 1856 when after the defeat in the

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29 As cited in R. Valdayanath, n. 6, p. 29.

30 P.I. Lyashchenko, n. 19, p. 355.

Crimean War the Tsarist government took up the task of conquering Central Asia more seriously. Russia captured three important cities of Central Asia; Andizhant, Turkestan and Chirchik in 1864.<sup>31</sup> Tashkent one of the most important cities of the region was conquered in 1865.<sup>32</sup> Some other important places as Khodzent, Ura-Tube, Dzhalak and Yangi-Kurgan were captured in 1866. Samarkand was annexed in 1868. Khiva was subjugated in the campaign of 1873. The battle of Gost-Tepe in 1881 resulted in the defeat of Turkmen tribe and the capturing of the Trans-Caspian region. The capturing of Merv and Kushka in 1885 completed the Russian conquest of Central Asia.<sup>33</sup> The Russian imperial designs were achieved by subjugating the entire region within a short period of twenty years. It shows that militarily the conquest of Central Asia for the Russian was an easy task. The Russian army did not face much resistance as Central Asian people were inexperienced in modern warfare and had only primitive weapons. Coupled with this, they had no co-ordination among themselves and did not overlook their

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31 R. Vaidyanath, n. 6, p. 30.

32 Ibid.

33 G. Wheeler, The Modern History of Soviet Central Asia (London, 1964), p. 567.



mutual differences and conflicting interests. Consequently, the military operation in Central Asia between 1847 and 1873 caused Russians only a few casualties with four hundred persons dead and 1600 injured.<sup>34</sup> Afterwards the emirate of Bukhara and the Khanate of Khiva were reduced in size and were given the status of vassal states. The Khans of the states had to surrender their right to conduct foreign relations which, now, was the prerogative of the Russian government. They had to agree to keep Russian political agents in their territories. Moreover, the Khans were made to grant special trade concessions to the Russians in their states. The territory of the Khanate of Kokand was entirely incorporated into the Russian empire. This newly acquired state was kept under the control of a Governor General of Turkestan. The Khanates of Khiva and Bukhara although remained under the overall supervision of the Governor-General of Turkestan yet, these fell outside his direct administrative jurisdiction, and retained a separate independent status. After bringing under complete control on foreign affairs and trade; the

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

Tsarist government followed the policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of the states. The people of Central Asia did not react much to the Russian take over of their region. As mentioned earlier, the concept of nation or nationality had little meaning to them at that time. Moreover, Russian presence was not completely unknown to them and there was hardly any popular reason to rally around and to oppose their presence after the military conquest.

In general, the Tsarist administration, did not interfere much with the basic social cultural and political institutions of the region. Russian capitalists, however, did introduce some important economic changes.

#### Colonization of the Region

The first important economic effect of the conquest of the region was, throwing it open for colonization by the Russians. Though initially only the Cossacks were settled in the area due to strategic and security considerations, but later on, the colonization movement became essentially a peasant movement and its objectives were mainly economic. In 1861, when the Russian peasants were emancipated they were given tiny plots of land in exchange for a heavy ransom. The uneconomic nature of the peasant holdings and prevalence of large scale rural unemployment due to a general increase in

population resulted in discontentment and revolutionary fervor among the Central Russian peasants. In order to overcome this economic difficulty that created a politically explosive situation, the Russian government started encouraging the weak and economically impoverished sections of the Russian peasantry to undertake colonization by settling on new lands. Besides, it was through these Russian settlers that the government could more easily consolidate its military gains in the region of total strangers whose loyalties to the Russian regime were always doubtful.

The influx of the Russian peasants into Turkestan inevitably led to a large scale confiscation of land from the indigenous population. The first peasant settlers, consisting of nearly 242 families from Central Russia, colonised the Semirechie oblast of Turkestan in 1868. The number of peasant settlers rose to 15,000 persons in 1882 and to 38,000 by 1889.<sup>35</sup> Around 1791 more families arrived in the province between 1891-92. Syr-Darya and the Fargana oblasts were also opened to the Russian peasantry after 1903. Syr-Darya,

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35 R. Vaidyanath, n. 6, p. 39.

Samarqand and Fargana oblasts became densely populated due to the incoming of the immigrants by the early years of the twentieth century. The total number of the peasant households in this area was 852,912 of which the immigrant households constituted 16,257.<sup>36</sup> The total area under cultivation amounted to 2,602,691 dessyatins, out of which the non-native peasants had 179,315 dessyatins.<sup>37</sup> The average size of the land holding of an immigrant agricultural household was estimated to be 10.8 dessyatins in 1916 as against the native households with only 2.9 dessyatins of land.<sup>38</sup> By 1915, the government had allotted about 3,963,000 dessyatins of land to the Russian peasants in the Semirechie oblast only.<sup>39</sup> The Russian population in Turkestan was estimated by the last Governor General to be 7.5 per cent of the total population.<sup>40</sup>

The natives, who hardly objected to the military seizure of the region, strongly opposed this large scale confiscation of land from the indigenous population. The nature of resentment was more serious in areas of sedentary

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<sup>36</sup> R.R. Shama, n. 10, p. 14.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> R. Vaidayanath, n. 6, p. 41.

<sup>40</sup> R.R. Shama, n. 10, p. 6.

population than those inhabited by nomads. The resentment was noted seriously even by the Palen Commission which concluded that little additional land could be made available for colonisation without arousing the hostility and resistance of the natives.<sup>41</sup> However, in areas of nomads the government ignored the opposition of the natives and effectively went ahead with land confiscation. In many places almost the entire land had been taken over from the nomads in the first decade of the present century. Due to this land confiscation drive, the nomads, who increasingly failed to find pastures for their cattle, began to die out of sheer starvation. It is estimated that between 1902-7 the Kirgic population fell by seven per cent and almost twenty per cent of their cattle died.<sup>42</sup>

#### The Increase in Cotton Production

The second major economic impact of the conquest was the emphasis laid by Russia on the expansion of area under cotton cultivation. Soon after the military venture, the Russian government started developing and exploiting the economic resources of this region. Settlement of the surplus and discontented peasant population in the region was one such

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<sup>41</sup> K. Palen, Mission to Turkestan (London, 1964).

<sup>42</sup> R. Vaidyanath, n. 6, p. 41.

effort. Growing more cotton in the region to meet the increasing need of raw material for Russian cotton industry was another. The region was known for its cotton cultivation since ancient times; though the quality of cotton grown in the area was not very high. Long before the Russian conquest, the region had been exporting raw cotton and cotton yarn to Russia. It has been estimated that about two-third of the total volume of its trade with Russia consisted of cotton export.<sup>43</sup> After the disruption of cotton imports from America, Russia started developing this region as an alternative source of cotton, and converted it into a 'cotton colony' of Russian capitalism, for the same reason it was also called the land of 'white gold'. Hence, the victory over Central Asia became largely a capitalist colonial conquest.

In 1888, the cotton export from Central Asia to Russia was only 873,000 poods<sup>44</sup> which grew to 4,960,000 in 1900 and to 13,697,000 poods in 1913.<sup>45</sup> The American variety of cotton was introduced in this region in 1880s. It soon became very popular as the yarn produced by this variety of cotton was

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<sup>43</sup> Shama, n. 10, p. 40.

<sup>44</sup> Poods - the Russian weighing measure is equivalent to 16.38 kg.

<sup>45</sup> P.I. Lyashchenko, n. 19, p. 546.

stronger and was more useful for large-scale textile manufacturing. The acreage under cotton cultivation increased from 41.4 thousand to 541.9 thousand desyatins of land during 1885-1915.<sup>46</sup> By 1911-12, 52 per cent of the total Russian needs of cotton for the textile industry was being met by the Central Asian cotton. The figure grew to 70 per cent in 1915 and to 73 per cent by 1916.<sup>47</sup>

However, it is important to note that this general increase in cotton cultivation was unequally distributed over the three Central Asian states. Turkestan in general and its Fargana Valley in particular could easily claim the biggest share. The Fargana oblast alone had nearly half of the entire cotton growing area of Central Asia. The entire cultivated area in the oblast was under cotton crop in 1915-16.<sup>48</sup> The Fargana Valley produced about 1,015,687 roads of cotton in 1892, 1,800,000 roads in 1894 and the production increased to 3,896,000 roads in 1900.<sup>49</sup> Lyschenko states that the cotton

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 611.

<sup>47</sup> Shama, n. 10, p. 8.

<sup>48</sup> P.I. Lyschenko, n. 19, p. 547.

<sup>49</sup> M. Holdsworth, n. 1, p. 20.

output in this one oblast alone accounted for nearly 80 per cent of the total production of Central Asia.<sup>50</sup> This led to an ever-specialised one-crop economy in Turkestan and it became completely dependent on Russia for its food grain requirements.

Cotton production increased considerably in Bukhara and Khiva as well but, it did not develop into the kind of 'ever-specialisation' that Fargana had arrived at. Total production of cotton in Bukhara increased from 410,000 roads annually in 1880 to 1,359,099 in 1890 and 2,624,000 roads in 1915. Khiva produced 50,000 roads of cotton in 1885, it reached 600,000 roads in 1910.<sup>51</sup> Just like Fargana cotton was the most valuable product of Bukhara and Khiva, contributing nearly three-fourth of the total value of export from each of these states to Russia.<sup>52</sup> However, the American variety of cotton that completely replaced the native variety by 1914 in Turkestan could not supplant the latter in Bukhara and Khiva. Bukhara continued to grow almost exclusively the native varieties of cotton till 1914 when American cotton began to

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50 As cited in Valdayanath, n. 6, p. 45.

51 Becker, n. 20, p. 183. Holdsworth n. 1, p. 20-26.

52 Ibid.



gain popularity in the area. The popularity of the new variety started a little early in the other Khanate. In Khiva, it became popular during the late years of 1890s and by 1914 about two-third of the total cultivated area had already come under this.<sup>53</sup> Not only that the Khanates were slower in picking up commercially more viable varieties, these did not even pay enough attention to cotton cultivation in their areas. Only five per cent of the total cultivable land was under cotton in Bukhara in the first decade of the present century, whereas, 50 per cent of the total cultivated area was raising grain. Even the Zhetysay Valley which accounted for about 80 per cent of the total cotton production of Bukhara; devoted 40 per cent of its cultivated area to wheat, and only 25 per cent to cotton.<sup>54</sup> According to Pahlen's estimates the total arable land in Bukhara was 2,900,000 dessyatins, of which 986,000 dessyatins, accounting for 34 per cent, were under wheat, and only 75,000 dessyatins, i. e. 2.6 per cent of total cultivated land was devoted to cotton

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53 Becker, n. 20, p. 183-4. The ratio between American and native varieties of cotton production in Bukhara in 1913 was 1 : 30. (The American variety accounted for 2,000 dessyatins of land while the native variety covered 60,000 dessyatins).

54 Ibid., p. 188.

cultivation.<sup>55</sup> Area under cotton cultivation covered 10 per cent of the total sown area in Khiva in 1880s and in early 1990s. Although, the area under cotton cultivation almost doubled by 1914 in the state but even then it covered only 16 per cent of the total arable land.<sup>56</sup> Whereas, in Fargana Valley, by that time, the area under cotton cultivation was about 36 to 38 per cent of the total arable land and in some parts of the Valley it was as high as 95 per cent.<sup>57</sup> The above mentioned figures show that both in Bukhara and Khiva wheat continued to predominate both in area under cultivation and the size of harvest, inspite of the comparative increase in cotton production over the last few years of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the present century. "Bukhara and Khiva unlike Turkestan remained self-sufficient in food and for the most part cotton was raised by small peasants as a supplementary source of income, rather than by specialised producers."<sup>58</sup>

The area under cotton cultivation increased without any direct administrative compulsion. It was achieved mainly

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55 Ibid., p. 189.

56 Ibid.

57 Valdayanath, n. 6, p. 45.

58 S. Becker, n. 20, p. 183.

through tax incentives, credit policy, high prices, better seeds, pest control and by applying other experimental ideas in cultivation. The rise in the price of cotton from 40 Kopeks to 4 Roubles and 15 Kopeks was quite lucrative to the peasants.<sup>59</sup> The tax incentives were also given to cotton growers to enhance cotton cultivation. A large number of cotton firms, banks and other credit institutions were encouraged to operate in the region. The local trading bourgeoisie and small middle local men played an important role in advancing the necessary capital to small peasants for cotton growing. The most important factor, which greatly accelerated cotton cultivation in the region, was the introduction of modern means of communication and transportation. Transport of Central Asian cotton to the industrial regions of Russia would have been impossible in the absence of these.

#### Development of Means of Transport and Communication

It was a prerequisite to develop the means of transport and communication in order to exploit the economic resources of the region. Until the Russian conquest the area was completely isolated from the rest of the world mainly due

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<sup>59</sup> B. Vaidyanath, n. 6, p. 45. Fn.

to the absence of modern transport and communication links. Big projects of rail-road construction began immediately after the conquest of Central Asia. The building of rail-roads was not only important from economic point of view but also had political and military significance. The initiative for this, therefore, came from the government. The Russian capitalist was yet not finding the border region secure for investment. The initial efforts in building rail-road network in Central Asia began in 1881. The Trans-Caspian Railway was completed in 1886; later on it was extended from Ash-Darya to Samarkand in 1888. The Trans-Siberian line linked this area with other parts of the empire. The most important rail line was Tashkent-Orenburg which connected Fargana Valley with European Russia in 1905. By 1915, almost all important cities of Central Asia were linked by railways. With the consolidation of Russian political control over Central Asia, the Russian private investors felt secure enough to invest their capital in the region. They started showing keen interest in the development of resources of Central Asia. The Russian private enterprises were investing money in various projects by the end of the nineteenth century. Several projects of rail-road construction had been financed by the private enterprises by 1915. The

Fargana and Bukhara railways were constructed mainly by Russian private enterprise.<sup>60</sup> Prior to the rail-road construction, roads for the transport of passengers and mail were also built.

The development of means of transport and communication in the region led to quick and regular movement of Central Asian cotton to the industrial centres of Russia. Hence, Central Asia assumed greater economic importance. The colonisation of the area by the Russians, overemphasis on cotton growing, and incoming of the Russian private capital in the region led to some important changes in the land relations as well.

#### Changes in the Relations of Production

The Tsarist government by an announcement in 1886 declared all land to be expropriated; keeping in conformity with the laws of Shariat, the land now belonged to the new rulers. After general seizure of all land, the land under use was distributed among the 'actual tenants'. The nomads were also accorded the right to make use of the land which was already being used for grazing purposes. Unoccupied land

was declared surplus and was set aside for colonial settlements. However, later on, most of the land belonging to nomads was also declared 'surplus' and was acquired for the same purpose. The land that came under the houses and shops etc. was given to the owners and was treated as their private hereditary property. Changes were also introduced in *yakf* land holdings, some legal restrictions were imposed on their owners.<sup>61</sup>

The new arrangements in land tenure system led to the following two important changes in land relations during the Tsarist regime;

- (1) the principle of hereditary private property in land was firmly established. The land could now be sold or bought freely. It has been assessed that by 1913 almost 90 per cent of the total irrigated land became the property of private owners.<sup>62</sup> Lyshchenko comments that through these changes in land rights the Russians transplanted 'new bourgeois agrarian conditions' in the region.

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61 Shama, n. 10, p. 10.

62 A.G. Park, Bolshevism in Turkestan (New York, 1957), p. 290.

- (ii) Another important impact of the changes introduced was the weakening of the traditional land owning class.

The Russians succeeded in breaking the large estates of the feudal aristocracy by distributing land among the 'actual tenants'. However, very soon, a new land owning class emerged within the native community. Since the price of land increased considerably due to the establishment of the principle of private property in land; it started getting concentrated in the hands of wealthy people. They were either village usurers or traders or some successful farmers and in some cases the remnants of the old landed gentry. The new land owners called hags started introducing capitalist relations of production. The concentration of land in a few hands was also the result of easy availability of credits on very high rates of interest. Under the system, the small peasants were often exploited by the local money-lenders who forced them to sell their land whenever they faced any economic difficulty or failed to pay the high interest rates.<sup>63</sup> Since

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63 Kaushik, n. 24, p. 69. According to an official figure cited, 25 per cent of the total peasant families in the Fargana Valley became landless as a result of sale or mortgage of land in 1914.

farmers were generally operating on a marginal basis such casualties became quite common. The high price of cotton also helped only the strongest group among them to expand their land holdings. By the time of the revolution, it has been estimated that big land-owners owning more than 10 dessyatins of land constituted barely three per cent of the total rural population but controlled about 32 per cent of the total arable land in Turkestan.<sup>64</sup> The middle peasants formed the largest group of about 81 per cent of the rural population and held only one-third of the total arable land. The average size of land holding of a middle peasant was 1.1 to 3.7 dessyatins.<sup>65</sup> This shows that the majority of the peasants in Turkestan were small land-holders who were struggling hard to keep these small plots to themselves.

In Khiva, the private land owned by the Khans and other feudals accounted for two-third of the total irrigated area. The state and *yuzi* had about one-seventh and it was only one-tenth of the total arable land that remained with the peasants.<sup>66</sup> In Bukhara, 65 per cent of the total irrigated

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64 A.G. Park, n. 62, p. 293.

65 Ibid.

66 D. Kaushik, *Socialism in Central Asia* (India, 1976), p. 55.



land was owned by the traditional feudal lords and 24 per cent was under yarlak.<sup>67</sup> It shows that feudal relations of production were more dominant among the peasants of the Khanates than among those of Turkestan. The Tsarist government succeeded, to a great extent, in introducing capitalist relations of production in the Governor-Generalship of Turkestan through direct administrative measures.

#### Land-Tax Reforms

The land revenue continued to be the main source of income in Central Asia under the Tsarist regime. However, the traditional system of land tenure was complicated that created many problems for the Tsarist government in the easy collection of land revenue. Abolishing the old complicated system, the Russians introduced a uniform and simpler system both of land tenure and of taxation. There were 25 and 55 different taxes levied on peasants, in Khiva and Bukhara respectively. A much simpler system of taxation was adopted in Turkestan - the area under the direct administrative jurisdiction of the Russian government. The traditional land taxes; Khaxai and Tamp, were combined as one tax. The nomads were required to pay Kibitka tax. This was a sort of tax charged on per tent basis from each household. The Zalmi tax

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67 Ibid.

on cattle was abolished. However, a wide spread abuse and corruption both on the part of native tax collectors and the Russian officials prevailed.

### Improvement in Irrigation

Efforts were made to improve irrigation facilities in Central Asia in order to exploit the economy more profitably. There was abundant land in Central Asia but without irrigation, thus of no agricultural use. A number of plans, to improve land by enhancing irrigation, were formulated but these achieved limited success. After bringing 3,800 desyatins of new land under irrigation, the total irrigated area reached the figure of 4,758,000 desyatins by 1910; of which Turkestan claimed 2,808,000 desyatins, Bukhara 1,600,000 and Khiva had 350,000 desyatins of irrigated land.<sup>68</sup> However, this large chunk of irrigated land covered only 2.6 per cent of the total area of Central Asia. Agriculture remained the main occupation of Central Asian people even during the Tsarist period. Nearly 80 per cent of the total population was engaged in agricultural pursuits in Turkestan. The percentage was even higher in

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68 P.I. Lyashchenko, n. 19, p. 548.

Bukhara and Khiva with 82 per cent and 95 per cent of the total population being of agriculturists respectively.<sup>69</sup> The pressure on scarce irrigated land was increasing during the last decades of the nineteenth century. Apart from the general increase in the population, the number of nomads, who were abandoning their nomadic life and were settling down on land, was steadily increasing.

#### Sedentarisation of Nomads

The nomadic population of Turkestan constituted nearly 84 per cent of the total population in 1867. Their proportion came down to 47 per cent in 1877 and on the eve of the Russian revolution they were not more than 30 per cent of its population.<sup>70</sup> Similar changes were taking place in the Khanates of Khiva and Bukhara. With the adoption of sedentary life and, due to other economic changes, the traditional clan and tribal divisions among the nomads were becoming unimportant, and new social stratification based on

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69 V.V. Barthold, The Cultural History of Turkestan, p. 121.

70 Ibid.

occupations started emerging. The new economic opportunities paved the way for the emergence of a class of moneyed aristocracy. This new aristocracy started dominating the other social groups by virtue of its superior economic position. It was through them that the rudimentary capitalist relations of production started penetrating into the villages of Central Asia.

#### Change from Self-Subsistence to Marketable Economy

The most important effect of the Tsarist economic policies was the change in the objectives of production. Earlier agricultural production in Central Asia was mainly for self consumption. The increase in cotton cultivation gave rise to market oriented agricultural economy. However, large production on capitalist basis did not take place as hired labour was not being used extensively. Although the money economy had clearly emerged but the crop-sharing system continued to be dominant in Central Asia. With the emergence of bourgeois capitalist characteristics in land relations, the land was getting concentrated in a few hands. It resulted in the loss of land from the marginal farmers and many small indebted peasants became completely landless.

### The Peasant Unrest Under the Dual Oppression

In fact, the peasants before the revolution were suffering under a dual oppression. The newly developed capitalist relations and the traditional feudal structure existed simultaneously in the region. The peasants were suffering from the colonial capitalist class and their own traditional feudal exploiters. There was great resentment among the native peasants against the large scale settlement of Russians on the so called 'surplus' land and on the land that was earlier used by the nomads for grazing purposes.

The tax burden was very high. Not only it fell mainly on the poor peasants, it was 50 to 150 per cent higher than that levied upon the population of European Russia.<sup>71</sup>

Under the military administration of the Tsarist Russia bribery and corruption were wide-spread. Most of the administrators appointed in Turkestan were generally corrupt and inefficient. The general discontentment acquired on alarming proportion and law and order situation began to deteriorate everywhere. Because of the increasing landlessness

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71 W. Mandel, The Soviet Far East and Central Asia (New York, 1944), p. 100.

among the peasants, food riots started by 1915-16. There were direct physical attacks by the native peasants on Russian colonisers. These were usually reported by the Tsarist administrators as 'crimes against law and order'. The situation became very explosive in 1916. Although, the immediate cause of the revolt of 1916 was the call for compulsory military service whereby the Central Asians were asked to serve behind the front line where Russian soldiers were fighting during the first world war, yet, the underlying causes were more important.

To conclude, the character of the rebellion clearly shows that the discontentment was basically due to the colonial policies of the regime, whereby, the natives had to bear various economic hardships. However, the resistance from the native peasantry against the colonial and feudal oppression was quite weak and unorganised.

## CHAPTER II

### IDEOLOGICAL BASIS OF THE AGRARIAN REFORMS : A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The agrarian structure and the general conditions of peasants of Central Asia underwent radical change after the revolution which established the Bolshevik rule in Russia. These changes were the outcome of a series of agrarian reforms introduced in Central Asia. These led to the total transformation of the agrarian relations.

The term 'agrarian reform' means any measure to alter agrarian structure for the improvement of agricultural production and the relationship of people to the land. The term 'land reform', sometimes used as its synonym, has a narrower meaning; it refers only to land tenure reforms i.e. changes in the form of land ownership and the tenancy reforms. Whereas 'agrarian reform', a wider term, encompasses all land tenure reforms together with those related to other institutional structures of agrarian economy, such as, credit, taxation, education, co-operatives, irrigation etc. The 'types of' agrarian reforms depend on the largeness or otherwise of the issues involved.

Need for agrarian reforms is generally felt when there are great disparities in income, wealth and power within a

given structure. The inequalities and monopoly control over land not only inhibits the chances of self improvement for the peasants but prevents the adoption of improved methods of production as well. Thus, the basic purpose of any agrarian reform is to check and reduce such inequalities and to improve the general agrarian infrastructure in order to enhance production. The socialistic aim of agrarian reform is to abolish "exploitation of man by man; where no one works for the profit of any other individual but only for himself and for the community at large."<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult to formulate a general theory of agrarian reforms because each of these needs to be related to the prevalent socio-economic, cultural, political and historical situation. Similarly, the purpose of a specific reform may vary due to different political, social and economic reasons. It may, however, be pointed out that these dimensions of reality are not exclusive and these do overlap. An agrarian reform, at a higher level is primarily a political issue. The political purposes of agrarian reforms are generally most decisive and vital. These, of

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<sup>1</sup> Russell King, Land Reform (London, 1973), p. 6.



course, are related to the socio-economic realities. The lot of the peasants is improved and social equality is demanded with a view to win over their political support. Thus, the economic performance becomes a crucial test of their political legitimacy. It is, therefore, of vital significance to emphasise that "fundamental to any analysis of the problem of the land reform is the fact that it is not so much an administrative or even economic, as it is an essentially a political process."<sup>2</sup>

Historically, the issue of the ownership of land always has maintained a close inter-dependent relationship with politics. The particular type of land tenure system constituted a significant determinant of the pattern of political power on the one hand, and was supported and perpetuated by a specific power structure on the other. The agrarian reforms are meant to modify the economic basis of politics. The inter-dependence of agrarian reforms and of politics is deeper in developing countries where agrarian economy has a significant role to play. The importance of

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2 A.G. Frank, Latin America: Under-development or Revolution (New York, 1969), p. 26.

agriculture has declined drastically in the economy of the developed countries, consequently, its political significance has also got reduced.

A basic and broad alteration in the agrarian structure cannot be brought about under private auspices. In order to be effective, the agrarian reforms require not only government sponsorship but need to be made obligatory as well. Moreover, the changes envisaged through the reforms have to be "drastic and rapid, otherwise they are bound to be perfunctory and ineffectual".<sup>3</sup>

All land reform policies in Russia were inseparably linked with the Marxist-Leninist ideology after the revolution. Thus, in order to understand and analyse the changes in the agrarian set-up of the Soviet Central Asia; it is essential to relate the process to the broader theoretical framework of the Marxist-Leninist ideology. It can be shown that within the given political system of the new Soviet state; it was required to modernise not only its European parts but the former colonies as well. The

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<sup>3</sup> Hung-Chao Tai, Land Reform and Politics (California, 1974), p. 19.

changes were well planned and well thought of. The basic aspects of the policy formulation were mainly two:

- (i) the Soviet nationality policy; and
- (ii) the socialist agrarian programme.

Therefore, in the light of above, it becomes essential to understand and comprehend the following:

- (i) That the agrarian reforms in Soviet Central Asia under the nationality policy of the Soviet Union had become a historical necessity;
- (ii) That the essential emphasis of the nationality policy was on the principle of self-determination;
- (iii) That the economic dimensions of the theory of self-determination were more emphasised than its political parameters;
- (iv) That through the reforms the colony-metropole relations were altered and were geared towards equal opportunities for economic growth; and
- (v) That the form of the agrarian reforms in Central Asia was in accordance with the Socialistic model.

The nationality question became an important issue in Russian politics in the beginning of the present century. The Russian empire, which covered almost one-sixth of the total land surface of the world, had about hundred different nationalities belonging to different races, ethnic groups, languages and religions.<sup>4</sup> However, the Tsarist government always gave the privileged and special position only to the Russians; specially so in its colonial regions. Therefore, Russia of those days was a 'prison of nations' rather than a multinational commonwealth. The oppression of national minorities led to the growth of nationalist movements all over the empire. Dissatisfaction of the major non-Russian nationalities against the Tsarist regime largely contributed to the success of the revolution of 1917. Immediately after the revolution, the centrifugal tendencies were very strong among the national minorities. The Bolsheviks had to confront this difficult task of keeping together the diverse parts of the empire when Lenin assumed power in November, 1917. However, the Bolsheviks were not unprepared to deal with the problem as they already had devoted enough attention to this.

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<sup>4</sup> According to the First All Russian Census taken in 1977.

The questions relating to nationalism were widely discussed among the Bolsheviks, and the main thinkers of this issue were Lenin and Stalin. According to Marxism, nationalism and the national state are the characteristics of capitalism, which, at its later stage, are bound to yield to class rivalries and to the international unity of the proletariat.<sup>5</sup> Marxism, in principle, is irreconcilable with nationalism; even if it is in its 'fairest' and 'purest' form. Marxists advocated inter-nationalism in place of nationalism of any kind.<sup>6</sup> Even to accept the proposition that "under some circumstances the economic interests of a society could coincide with its cultural divisions, was essentially contrary to the Marxist ideology".<sup>7</sup> However, this basic Marxist hostility of Rosa Luxemburg School, who was the chief exponent of the orthodox Marxist views on the nationality question, did not prevent Lenin from recognising the historical legitimacy of the nationality question in Russia.

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5 D. Beercher, The Bolshevik and the National Colonial Question (Paris, 1957).

6 V.I. Lenin, Collected Works (Moscow), Vol. VII, p. 145.

7 H. Pipes, The Formation of the Soviet Union (Harvard, 1970), 2nd ed., p. 22.

The Russians had oppressed the innumerable nationalities and had denied them their legitimate national claims. Lenin declared that the only way of showing disapproval to the Tsarist policy of national oppression was by recognising the right of the oppressed people to complete self-determination.<sup>8</sup> In its absence it was not possible to break away from the ill-reputed history of Tsarist period in the nationality sphere. Lenin felt that it was only by ensuring complete equality to all nationalities and by recognising the right of self-determination, the new regime could win the much needed faith of the non-Russian nationalities for keeping the country together. After Lenin's reply to Rosa Luxemburg's arguments; the marxists in general had started realising the importance of the national claims in certain areas.<sup>9</sup> Marx himself had favoured all those national struggles which were objective carriers of progress, and opposed the national movements of those nations which carried objective reaction.<sup>10</sup> To put it differently, the nationalist movements which could promote democratic development and thereby could provide the conditions

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8 Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. VI, p. 440.

9 Lenin, "Critical Remarks on the National Question", Collected Works, Vol. II, pp. 17-51.

10 D. Beerher, n. 5, p. 25.

for the growth of an independent and socially revolutionary working class were regarded progressive movements.

Marx and Engels did not include the non-European colonies in the category of the oppressed nations. Only the oppressed nationalities of Europe were put under this category. For them, the national and the colonial problem were in no way identical. The colonies formed purely an economic and not a political category for them.<sup>11</sup> Lenin eliminated this distinction between the European nationalities and the colonies in this regard. He stated that the national and colonial problems were one. He emphasised that everywhere in the world, in Europe as well as in colonies, the nationalist movements break the feudal order and bring bourgeois democracy that provides suitable atmosphere for the growth of proletarian socialism.<sup>12</sup> But Lenin unambiguously differentiated between the national claims of the oppressed nations and of the oppressing nations, and demanded the right of self-determination for the oppressed nations only.<sup>13</sup> Lenin's theory of self-

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11 Ibid., p. 25 ff.

12 V.I. Lenin, The Right of Nations to Self-Determination (Moscow, 1979), 7th Print, p. 26 ff.

13 Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. XVIII, p. 328.

determination clearly supported the right of the oppressed nationalities to complete political independence which could even mean their right to secede. But, it would be wrong to conclude that Lenin wanted or encouraged disintegration of the empire. He made this quite clearly saying, "we demand freedom of secession for the oppressed nations, not because we dream of economic disintegration or because we cherish the ideal of small states, but on the contrary we are in favour of large states and the closer unity and even the fusion of nations but on a truly democratic, truly international basis which is inconceivable without the freedom of secession".<sup>14</sup> He formulated this doctrine mainly to draw support for the revolutionary struggle against the Tsarist regime from the East European states and from the Tsarist colonial regions. He stressed the validity and need of self-determination during the initial stages of socialism. Whereas, during the later stages, he firmly believed that socialism would not only abolish the present division of mankind into small national states <sup>?</sup> though its policies of equal economic opportunities but a strong proletariat class having common economic interests would

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<sup>14</sup> Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. XVIII, p. 328.



ultimately merge them into one.<sup>15</sup> He, in fact, had firm hope that after socialist state's approximation of complete freedom of secession the actual secession in practice would be weak and rare. But what happened in reality in Russia was contrary to his expectations. Soon after the revolution the process of disintegration started; various nations, previously under the Tsarist regime started demanding the right to secede under this doctrine of self-determination. Stalin came to assist Lenin in order to rebuff these separatist tendencies primarily voiced by the bourgeoisie of these nations. He emphasised Lenin's earlier assertion that right to self-determination cannot be 'unconditional'.<sup>16</sup> Wherever the interests of nationality and that of the proletariat conflicted the former had to yield to the latter. More to this, Stalin stressed the need to view nationalism essentially in its economic perspective and stated that since the right to self-determination is not unqualified and unconditional, in specific circumstances it could also be refused.<sup>17</sup> Stalin, as the

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15 Ibid., Vol. XIV, p. 39-40.

16 Lenin, The Right of Nations to Self Determination, p. 20.

17 J. Stalin, Marxism and National Colonial Question, p. 64.

Commissar of Nationalities played a new role in this direction. He questioned the bonafide of the people who demanded the right. He believed that if this right was demanded by and granted to the bourgeoisie of a particular nation than there was every possibility of it being used against the interests of the proletariat; which would serve as an instrument of counter revolution. To check these counter revolutionary developments it was essential that the right should be accorded only if demanded by the proletariat of a nation. He further added that since economic interests of the proletariat were linked with the socialist state, therefore, there was no reason that under a socialist state the proletariat would demand such a right of secession from the state.<sup>18</sup>

In these circumstances, it was essential to prove to the masses of the non-Russian nationalities "that central proletariat Russia is defending their interests and their interests alone", and "this must be proved not only by resorting to repressive measures against the colonisers and the bourgeois nationalists, ----- but primarily by a consistent and well conceived economic policy."<sup>19</sup> The emphasis on real

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18 Ibid., pp. 69-70.

19 Ibid., p. 82.

equality, particularly in economic terms, among the nations henceforth became the essence of the party policy of the nationality problem. Therefore, the main objective of the policy became the liquidation of existing economic inequalities among the nations. It was firmly believed that the elimination of economic inequalities would make all bourgeois nationalist and separatist tendencies disappear.

In short, the Soviet nationality policy in practice meant;

- i) initial renunciation of all 'claims' and rights over non-Russian nationalities;
- ii) recognition of the right of these nationalities to exist and to decide as independent states;
- iii) insistence on the formation of voluntary political and economic union of these nationalities with Central Russia, and finally;
- iv) to achieve economic equality among the nationalities without which national or political equality was meaningless.

It was decided to provide extra economic aid and help to the backward nationalities so that these could catch up with the more developed Central Russian regions.

The political scene in Central Asian was very messy for quite some time after the Bolsheviks came to power in

November 1917. On the eve of the revolution the idea of nation or nationality, as stated earlier, did not mean much to the people of Central Asia. Whatever nationalist feelings prevailed at that time were mainly related to the economic needs and were largely devoid of any political comprehension. The lack of political comprehension was chiefly due to the prevalence of mass illiteracy in Central Asia. About ninety-eight per cent of the population was illiterate and a class of an intelligentsia hardly existed.<sup>20</sup> The 'Ulema' was the only organised Muslim party and this too, neither had much popularity among nor influence on the masses. In the beginning, even Ulema, did not seek any secession or political autonomy for Central Asians; it only desired cultural autonomy.<sup>21</sup> The people who became more active on the political scene of Central Asia immediately after the fall of the Tsarist regime were mainly immigrants. Although they accounted for only about four per cent of the total population but played a key role in the political situation.<sup>22</sup> They

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20 E.H. Carr, The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1923 (London, 1964), Vol. I, p. 330.

21 Ibid., p. 331.

22 Ibid., p. 331.

were economically better placed and politically and culturally more aware. Immediately after the February revolution a 'Turkestan Committee' was formed at Tashkent. Its members were mainly officials and supporters of the Provincial government. A Soviet of the workers and of soldiers Deputies was also formed. Both these bodies were exclusively of immigrants in composition. However, the Bolsheviks' position in Central Asia before the revolution was very weak. Among the few Communists present in the region, distinction between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks was hardly discernible. The First Congress of the Bolsheviks in this area was held in June 1918 with hardly forty delegates on it.<sup>23</sup> The interests of the Russian settlers in Central Asia were highly at stake after the fall of the Tsarist regime. In no case they wanted that political power in this region should go into the hands of the natives. Whereas, for the natives, the significance of the revolution chiefly meant breakdown of the Tsarist rule which would eventually lead to the breakdown of the economic exploitation by the Tsarist officials, and the immigrants. But they themselves were not in a position to launch a political opposition against the perpetuation of this economic exploitation.

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23 Ibid.

In October 1917, the Tashkent Soviet succeeded in overthrowing the Turkestan Committee which had held power in Central Asia after the February revolution. The Tashkent Soviet, although supported and represented the interests of the Central Asian proletariat in general, but, did not take up the problems related to the natives separately. Among the Central Asian proletariat the number of the natives was negligible. This comparative neglect of the interests of the natives encouraged the religio-political party Ulama to demand autonomy for the Central Asians. The demand was ignored.

Within a few weeks of Tashkent Soviet's taking over, the communications between Europe and Central Asia were severed off for about two years. During this period the Bolsheviks from Central Russia could not provide any guidance or help to the Turkestan Soviet. Meanwhile, the Turkestan Soviet indulged in many excesses and Russian chauvinism. They deviated, to a great extent from the Lenin's Nationality policy. The unrepresentative government of the Tashkent Soviet soon had to face active opposition from the native bourgeoisie. In December 1918, the opposition formed the Kokand government. The Tashkent government faced the challenge and after a severe fighting, defeated its rival and captured Kokand. The opposition's resistance to the new regime now took another

distorted turn by starting Basmachi movement. The excesses of the early unrepresentative government and the sacking of the Kokand government were general causes of this resentment. Communication lines between Central Russia and Central Asia were restored in 1919 and now, the Communists were in a better position to control the situation. The internal differences of the Basmachis and the weight of the Russian arms caused the defeat of the movement. After the resumption of the links with the region the Bolshevik leadership amended many wrongs done by the Turkestan Soviet and that lowered the popularity of the Basmachis. After their defeat, Turkestan was taken over effectively by the Bolsheviks. After sometime, Bukhara and Khiva with the help of the young Bukharan and the young Khivan parties were also taken over by the Bolsheviks.

Thus, it seems that in the context of Central Asia the right to self-determination did not mean right to secede. The political opposition or efforts in the direction of independent self rule were suppressed with the help of the Red Army. Moreover, since the demand for self-rule was mainly raised by the native bourgeoisie, the Bolsheviks were not obliged to accept it. The proletariats at that time were almost non-existent in Central Asia. The policy aspects were guided by

the practical necessity. Stalin frankly admitted that "the revolution in Central Russia is doomed without the assistance of the border regions which abound in raw materials, fuel and food stuffs."<sup>24</sup> Likewise, "the border regions of Russia in their turn are inevitably doomed to imperialist bondage without the political, military and organisational support of more developed Central Russia".<sup>25</sup> Infact, self-determination for the people of Central Asia applied more in economic sense rather than political. Since the native proletariats whose 'claims' or 'demands' could have been binding on the Bolsheviks were almost non-existent so there was no question of their expressing any desire for political independence. The self-determination, thus, could only mean the abolition of all national inequalities and the economic privileges of the Russians over the natives. The natives resented the economic privileges of the Russian immigrants more than their political power.

The mistrust of the native toiling masses against the Russians was removed through the policy of equal economic

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24 Stalin, n. 15, p. 78.

25 Ibid., p. 78.



opportunities. This was the basic objective towards which the Bolsheviks were working after 1919 in Central Asia. When in October 1919, the Central Government appointed a Commission to proceed to Turkestan to clear up the situation there, in no uncertain terms it was reminded that "the self-determination of the peoples of Turkestan and the abolition of all national inequality and all privileges of one nation group over another constituted the foundation of all the policy of the Soviet Government of Russia and serve as a guiding principle in all the work of its organs.... It is only through such work that the mistrust of the native toiling masses of Turkestan for the workers and peasants of Russia, bred by many years' domination of Russian Tsarism, can be finally overcome."<sup>26</sup>

One of the essential characteristics of the Soviet regime was democratic centralisation and providing leadership by the Bolsheviks at all levels. The regional political interests were subordinated to that of all union interests. The aim was to promote the non-regional, non-national and all union loyalties among the people. It was decided to fulfill the aim mainly through economic efforts. A clear-cut

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<sup>26</sup> Lenin, n. 6, Vol. XXIV, p. 810-11.

policy in this direction was formulated in the 10th party Congress which laid great emphasis on rendering help to the national minorities to eradicate their economic backwardness. Consequently, a well conceived economic policy for Central Asia was formulated to achieve political and economic integration with Central Russia. Lenin had cautioned to be more vigilant and careful in the case of Central Asia. He said that building of socialism in Soviet East involved 'greater risks' so comparatively a 'slower' but more systematic process should be adopted.<sup>27</sup> Accordingly, the local leaders of the party were advised to be more cautious and to follow policy of gradually drawing the native population into the general stream of socio-economic changes.

In the early years of Soviet power, Lenin had pointed out that economic reconstruction was impossible without a sound agricultural base. In 1906, Lenin had written, "by an agrarian programme we mean a definition of the guiding principles of social democratic policy on the agrarian question i.e., policy in relation to agriculture and the

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27 Lenin, n. 6, Vol. VIII, p. 199.

28 Lenin, n. 6, Vol. XXI, p. 505-6.

various classes, groups and sections of people."<sup>29</sup> Thus, Lenin viewed the agrarian question not only in relation to land and other productive forces but also with class relations in the country side and with the nature of society's economic system as a whole. Lenin, in his works, examined all the major aspects of agrarian relations. He studied the question of land as the main mean of production in agriculture. He showed the place and role of large scale agricultural production and the importance of machinery and technical progress for higher labour productivity in farming. He, thus, outlined the ways for the socialist transformation of agrarian relations.

Lenin's agrarian programme was hinged on the idea of forging an alliance between the working class and the working peasantry. It was needed not only for a complete victory of the socialist revolution over the bourgeois-democratic revolution but also for future economic reconstruction under a socialist state.<sup>30</sup> Only this policy based on all alliance between the proletariat and the working peasantry

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29 Ibid., Vol. VI, p. 109.

30 Lenin, "Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution", Collected Works, Vol. IX, p. 100.

could only fit into the concrete historical reality of Russia where an overwhelming majority of the people were agriculturists.

In his 'April thesis', Lenin emphasised the need for agrarian reorganisation, the confiscation of all lands belonging to the Tsarist state, church or landlords, as being the only mean of doing away with the medieval system of land-ownership.<sup>31</sup> The second suggestion was to nationalise all land in order to put a stop on the attacks from the landlords and the big bourgeoisie, and to take the revolution towards socialist gains.<sup>32</sup> His third major suggestion in this direction was the need to organise farming on a large scale basis. He deemed it necessary for the future development of agriculture on socialist lines.<sup>33</sup> The principle of co-operative farming was highly stressed in order to achieve this goal. Lenin showed how through the various forms of co-operation the peasant masses would gradually assimilate the ideas of socialism. He was aware of the fact that co-operation as such was not intrinsically socialistic, and

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31 Lenin, *Ibid.*, Vol. X, p. 190.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 191.

33 *Ibid.*, Vol. XX, p. 194.

that the co-operatives in themselves are no doubt collective capitalist institutions.<sup>34</sup> But he believed, when the state power passes from the hands of the bourgeoisie to those of the proletariat after the revolution, the co-operatives are bound to produce different results. Moreover, Lenin felt that this was the most accessible, advantageous and understandable way of going over from small scale individual farming based on private property and primitive methods to a large scale collective farming based on social property and advanced techniques of production.<sup>35</sup>

Lenin's doctrine and the analysis of the agrarian question was based mainly upon Central Russian rural conditions. No attempt was made to study the rural conditions of Central Asia separately. However, Lenin's analysis of the agrarian question as a whole provided a specific broad framework for the reconstruction of agriculture on socialist lines in Central Asia.

Apart from equalising the economic rights of the immigrants with the indigenous people, the basic tenet

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<sup>34</sup> Lenin, *Ibid.*, Vol. XXXII, p. 472.

<sup>35</sup> S.P. Trapeznikov, Lenin and the Agrarian and Peasant Question (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1976), Vol. II, p. 13 ff.

of the party's economic policy was to eliminate the tribal-patriarchal and feudal relations of production, and to encourage non-capitalist socio-economic development in the region. The structure of the theoretical framework on the 'current tasks of the party in the national question' was developed through the decisions of the 10th party Congress held in March 1920.

To conclude, since agriculture occupied most important position in the overall socio-economic set-up of Central Asia, therefore, any basic change in the economic structure of the region required a radical and revolutionary alterations in its agrarian sector. The agrarian reforms in Central Asia could essentially be formulated in accordance with the above mentioned broader socialistic agrarian programme accepted by the socialist state of Russia.

## CHAPTER III

## AGRARIAN REFORMS OF 1920s - A STEP FORWARD

As mentioned earlier, the level of political understanding among the people was very low and the concept of nation or nationality was almost non-existent in Central Asia. The revolution to the natives basically meant the breakdown of the Russian hold over their land and water resources. The economic parameters of the Bolshevik nationality policy which meant, among other things, redistribution and equalisation of the economic opportunities, thus acquired further significance in the context of Central Asian reality. Consequently, the liquidation of existing inequalities among the immigrants and the natives became the prime objective of the Soviet nationality policy immediately after the revolution in this region. Lenin had directed the Communists of Turkestan in 1920, "to wipe out all traces of great Russian imperialism and wage an implacable struggle against world imperialism".<sup>1</sup> He further added "in one way or another, by one's attitude or by concessions, it is necessary to compensate the non-Russians for the lack of trust, for suspicion and the insults to which the government of the 'dominant' nation subjected them to in the past."<sup>2</sup>

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1 Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. XXX, p. 838.

2 Ibid., Vol. XXXVI, p. 608.

The political chaos, that arose during the first two years after the revolution, led to economic disintegration and to the alarmingly low level of agricultural production. Coupled with this, the disruption of transport linkages with Central Russia, the then major supplier of foodgrains to Central Asia, caused wide spread famine and starvation. In order to reorganise the economic structure and to uplift the region along with achieving equality between the colonisers and the natives, there was a need of special efforts for the eradication of the patriarchal and feudal structures in the economy.

The agrarian reforms became an important instrument for achieving these objectives. The steps in this direction were taken in two phases during the 1920s. <sup>an analysis of the</sup> The following are of significance in order to comprehend the need, impact and nature of the reforms;

- i) the decline in agricultural production and acute shortage of food during the first two years after the victory of the Bolsheviks. Due to political uncertainty, breaking up of linkages with Central Russia and the wrong politics of the early Bolsheviks of Central Asia;
- ii) the setting up of the Turkestan Commission in 1919 and the beginning of the economic reorganisation and reconstruction;



- iii) the liquidation of national inequalities during the first phase of the reforms;
- iv) the eradication of the tribal-patriarchal and feudal relations of production during the second phase of the reforms and finally,
- v) the impact of the reforms on production and agrarian relations.

Land redistribution - the main objective of the reforms of the era, was not expected to solve all the problems of agriculture in Central Asia. But the Bolcheviks quite rightly believed that it would clear away the patriarchal and feudal forms of economy. Thus, it would eventually open the way for the development of co-operative farming for the building of future agriculture on socialistic lines. As an immediate gain, it would improve the lot of the poor peasantry. The principle of equalised land tenure is essentially a petty-bourgeois principle, Lenin repeatedly pointed out that equalised land tenure by itself, without a radical restructuring of agriculture along socialist lines, could not free the peasantry from poverty and hunger.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, the

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5 Ibid., Vol. XXVI, p. 258.

principle had broad support among the masses, therefore, the Bolsheviks did not reject it in the period of transition to socialism.

Decline in Agricultural Production During  
the Early Years after the Revolution

Already backward and low productivity level of agriculture further declined to a dangerously low level during the early years after the October Revolution. The early agrarian laws of the Soviet Government had little effect in Central Asia. For example, under the 'Decree on Land' of November 8, 1917 private ownership of agricultural land was abolished and it was accepted that land belonged to the tillers. Similarly, the 'Fundamental law on the socialization of land' promulgated on February 19, 1918 was enacted to encourage the organization of the collective forms. In reality, serious efforts were not made to distribute land among actual tillers till 1920. The immigrants continued and even in some cases enhanced their encroachments on the native lands. The Turkestan government was a silent spectator to these new seizures of land. Rudzutak reported that the European colonists had destroyed, at places the entire Kishlaks in 1920, and had appropriated

their lands.<sup>4</sup> The first decree on socialisation of land in Turkestan had already been promulgated in the year 1918. But due to the peculiar conditions of that period "it led to the confiscation of land from the native population, and its transfer to 'communes' or artels of Russian immigrants, often Kulaks. The law of socialization of land became a menacing instrument of colonisation of Turkestan."<sup>5</sup> The earlier policies of the Soviet regime effected in Turkestan also contributed to the decline of agriculture. The Turkestan government levied unbearable taxes upon the native peasantry during the period of war communism. It even used armed forces to confiscate the harvest. It further allowed plunders and added to the miseries of the natives "by permitting the Red army contingents to live off the land."<sup>6</sup> The nationalisation of entire cotton industry, during this period, irrespective of its size and structure covering even small enterprises with less than ten workers, proved counter productive. Moreover, no alternative measures were available

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4 As cited in A. Park, Bolshevism in Turkestan (New York, 1957), p. 298.

5 Zelkina, in R.R. Sharma, Marxist Model of Social Change, p. 69.

6 A.G. Park, n. 4, p. 298.

to manage the newly nationalised industries in the given situation. Similarly, forced acquisition of all available stock of cotton, including those of poor farmers, through decree of 1918 in Turkestan, added to the economic hardship of the native peasants. In addition to these negative policies of the government, the fights during the civil war period, destroyed crops and completely halted agricultural progress. These factors adversely effected agricultural development to a great extent. Many peasants left their farms altogether and went in search of better opportunities in other safer areas. Many others reduced their planted area to a minimum essential for their own subsistence. Just in two years, between 1917-19, the cultivated area declined from 8,878,494 acres to 3,186,186 acres in Turkestan. It is estimated that the number of peasant farms declined by 15 per cent and the arable land shrank by over 25 per cent.<sup>8</sup> The fall in agricultural production had actually started with the beginning of the First World War and it continued till as late as 1922. During this period of seven years between 1915-22 the irrigated land in Central Asia came down from

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7 Ibid., p. 298.

8 R.K. Sharma, n. 5, p. 103.

9,248,900 acres to 5,386,800 acres. In Turkestan proper the decline was from 6,523,400 acres to 3,212,300 acres.<sup>9</sup> The fall in the total irrigated area was to the tune of 64 per cent which was quite alarming.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, the livestock number in this region also came down from 18,819,402 heads of cattle in 1917 to only 6,555,940 cattles in 1923.<sup>11</sup> The total reduction in livestock population by 1919 was 54 per cent.<sup>12</sup>

The insufficient food grain production as a result of specialised crop pattern combined with the disruption of imports from Central Russia during the times of civil war caused extensive famines. By the winter of 1919, one half of the population of Turkestan was starving and at places entire villages had disappeared because the population either died or got scattered. The population of the villages had no milk or meat and their industries were without agricultural raw materials.<sup>13</sup>

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9 Lyashchenko, in Sharma, n. 5, p. 104.

10 Ibid., Sharma, p. 104.

11 Park, n. 4, p. 299.

12 Sharma, n. 10, p. 104.

13 Park, n. 4, p. 300 and Sharma, n. 10, p. 103.

As a consequence of prevailing poverty and starvation, the cotton growers of the region were compelled to return to 'the natural form of economy' i.e., production for self-consumption. This caused a serious decline in cotton production. The peasants were returning to the cultivation of food crops. However, the situation did not improve much inspite of this spontaneous shift of the farmers from cotton cultivation to food production. Even after the end of the civil war when the Bolsheviks had a better control over the region, the famine conditions were still prevailing. The famine situation persisted particularly in the years of 1920-21 and 1923. Nearly half of the population i.e., 400,000 persons, was still starving in Turkestan in 1923.<sup>14</sup>

Under these circumstances, the most important and the most urgent need was to revive agricultural production and to check its downward trend. The situation which arose due to total lack of perspective and unpreparedness of the early Bolshevik leaders to deal with the rural situation of Central Asia, was being amended in 1920. A letter of the

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14 A Uralets, "Golod v Fergane", Izvestia, March 20, 1923, cited in A.C. Park, n. 4, p. 301.

Central Committee of Russian Communist Party (August, 1920) addressed to all organisations of the Communist Party of Turkestan stressed the need of 'basic changes' in the agrarian structure of the region. Before attempting socialisation of agriculture, measures had to be devised to check disintegration of the agricultural economy. Efforts in this direction started with the appointment of the Turkestan Commission, and by the economic unification of the region under the Central Asian Economic Council.

#### The Beginning of the Economic Reorganisation

The Red army had cleared the approaches to Turkestan by the end of 1919. By now, the Soviet government had also strongly felt the need of 'the establishment of correct relations with the people of Turkestan'. The Central government appointed a high power commission on Turkestan in October 1919 by a joint resolution of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and the Council of the People's Commissars. The purpose was to clear up political and economic situation in Central Asia. The Turkestan Commission in June 1920 appointed another special commission to define precisely the primary task of the Communist Party in Turkestan. The Commission suggested the following two important measures on the economic front;

- 1) that the land which had been either arbitrarily seized by settlers since the revolution or that kept aside for future settlement by the former administrators should be redistributed among the natives.
- ii) the commission also recommended that all former members of the Tsarist bureaucracy and the supporters of imperialist policies should be expelled from Turkestan. The party members infected with colonialist mentality and Great Russian chauvinism were also demanded to be replaced.<sup>15</sup> All these elements in the Bolshevik ranks and administration were perpetuating feudal and colonial exploitation of the natives.

To these measures suggested by the special commission, Lenin added that "in order to improve relation between the immigrants and the natives the Russian Kulaks should be energetically broken up evicted and mastered".<sup>16</sup> The polit-bureau of Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik) accepted the special commission's recommendations and Lenin's suggestions.

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15 Ann Shukman, "The Turkistan Commission", Central Asian Review, Vol. 12, No. 1 (1964), p. 5.

16 Ibid., p. 5.



It adopted a resolution on Turkestan on June 29, 1920. The resolution concretised the Party's task in Turkestan. Prior to this the 10th party Congress, held in the beginning of 1920, had also adopted a resolution calling on the party members \*to help the people of the former Tsarist colonies in eliminating remaining injustices; to help them in every way possible to provide themselves with usable land necessary for human existence.\*<sup>17</sup> It was decided that the fundamental task of the party in Turkestan was to put an end to the patriarchal and feudal forms of economy, but as Lenin warned, it was not to be attempted immediately. In accordance with the decisions of the Politbureau, before the reforms began, more than thousand former Tsarist agents, police and other servants of the colonizers were expelled from Turkestan.<sup>18</sup>

With the adoption of the New Economic Policy by Central government, forced requisition of agricultural produce was abandoned in Turkestan and other parts of the country. Coupled with it, the adoption of the fixed tax in kind paved the way for enhanced agricultural production in

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17 The CPSU in Resolutions and Decision of Congresses, Conferences and CC Plenums, Vol. 2 (Moscow, 1970), p. 246.

18 V. Solodnikov, V. Gogolovskiy, Non Capitalist Development (Moscow, 1975), p. 48.

Central Asia. Economic integration of Central Asia was suggested in 1921 for more effective economic planning. It meant that Bukhara and Khiva should also come under the direct jurisdiction of the Turkestan Commission. The suggestion was not accepted immediately. It was after a lapse of two years in 1923, when Soviet regime consolidated its hold over the region more effectively, the economic unification of the region could be achieved. The Central Asian economic council was set up in March, 1923. It was responsible for the overall management of the economic affairs of all the three areas. An overall centralized control over the agricultural affairs of the country was introduced through a Federal Committee for Agrarian Affairs controlled by the People's Commissariat of Agriculture of the RSFSR and later through the Commissariat of Agriculture itself after the formation of USSR in 1923. The Federal Committee for Agrarian Affairs was the first central government agency in Central Asia. It helped the local Soviet bodies in the revival of agriculture.

Important efforts to check the downward trend of Central Asian agriculture and to create favourable conditions for its revival were initiated in 1921. Efforts were being made

to restore the much damaged irrigation system and decisions were taken to provide financial and technical help to the native peasantry and to revive cotton cultivation. The land and water reforms undertaken during 1921-24 further helped to put a stop to the disintegration of the Central Asian agricultural economy.

#### The Land and Water Reforms of 1921-24

The land reforms of the early phase were mainly aimed at clearing the colonial remnants from the agrarian economy. The Turkestan government passed a decree in March 1920 on land. Under it the government had ordered all the immigrants to return all land confiscated after the revolution to their former owners. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Turkestan on June 29, 1920 asked all its members to put an end to the hostility between the European and the native population, and to eliminate the patriarchal and feudal survivals. The 9th Congress of the Soviets of Turkestan, in September 1920, elaborated the reform measures and decided to go ahead with their first phase. The Congress decided to take away all land from the immigrant peasants seized after the revolt of 1916. It abolished private property in land and

directed the redistribution of the nationalised land. The first priority was given to the landless agricultural labourers and to the share-croppers in the distribution. The turn of the small peasants came after them. The rest of the land was used to organise Soviet farms, agricultural communes, organise Soviet farms, agricultural communes, artels and co-operatives etc. The right to cultivate land was given only to self tillers. Buying, selling, mortgaging, leasing out land or water were strictly prohibited. The immigrant peasants were deprived of all special privileges over natives in sharing the land or water. The peasants persecuted by the Tsarist government were rehabilitated. Further more immigration in the territory of Turkestan, and any seizure of the land of the natives were forbidden.<sup>19</sup>

The decisions of the Turkistan government were first implemented in the Semiechya oblast of Turkistan in 1921. The concentration of the colonizers was the heaviest in this area which created serious dislike and resentment among the natives against the Russian immigrant peasants. Syr-Darya and

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19 R.R. Sharma, n. 5, p. 106.

parts of Fergana oblast followed Semiechya in the implementation of reforms. The reforms were introduced in other oblasts such as Samarkand, Turkmen and the remaining uezds of Fergana in 1922. Nearly 182 thousand desyatins of land, accounting for about 18.5 per cent of the total cultivated area were confiscated in Fergana oblast. The figure for Syr Darya oblast was 159.5 thousand desyatins.<sup>20</sup>

The early land reforms were introduced at a slow pace in Bukhara and Khiva which came under full Soviet control only in 1920. Moreover, the problem of the Russian settlers occupying the land of natives was not very serious in these Khanates. The Central Revolutionary Committee of the Bukhara National Socialist Republic issued a 'Decree on land' on February 2, 1922. Through the decree the Bukhara government ordered the nationalisation of land, water, forests and other natural resources. A further order was issued to confiscate the Emirate land, waqf land and land belonging to the large land owners i.e., the milk land. It was decided to redistribute the confiscated land among the landless and poor peasants. However, the actual implementation of the Decree

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20      Ibid., p. 106.

was either very slow or remained just on paper. Most of the nationalised land remained in the possession of a few large owners due to political favouritism and wide spread evasion of the decree.<sup>21</sup>

In all, during the course of implementation of the reforms, a total of about 48,700 desyatins of land was redistributed among the native peasants of Turkestan. About 8084 large farms were given to the peasants. The standard unit of allotment was between two to five desyatins of land. It varied from one oblast to another.<sup>22</sup>

The implementation of the reforms suffered from some serious mistakes committed by its executors. For example; (1) enough agricultural equipments, seeds and draught animals were not distributed along with the land as these were in acute shortage. The poor peasants, after acquiring land under the reforms, had no source of getting the required implements and the other necessities. Thus, they were either unable to make use of the land for want of necessary equipments etc. or were forced to hand over their

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21 Park, n. 4, p. 327.

22 V. Solodnikov, V. Bogoslovsky, n. 18, p. 49.

share of land to the boys and immigrant Kulaks and themselves worked as share-croppers; (ii) the confiscated land was not given straight to the individual peasants. It was handed over to tribal and communal units for further disposition among the peasants. The tribal chiefs in many cases either utilised it for their own benefit or distributed it without observing the Soviet laws on the labour basis of land tenure. Therefore, the fruits of land reforms failed to reach the non-Russian masses properly.

To put Central Asian agriculture on a strong footing, settling down of the nomads was necessary. The problem required serious attention of the government. Although Turkmens had started settling on land much before the revolution but nomadism still persisted among the Kirghiz. The TsIK and the Turkestan economic council were devising a workable system of land tenure for the nomadic population of Central Asia. The Soviet Government transferred the farm steads and agricultural implements of the Russian immigrants to Kirghiz nomads in Semiechya region during the land reforms of 1931. It was hoped that they would settle down on the farms and give up nomadic way of life. But the new settlers worked on the land only for a winter season and again left their agricultural fields in summer in search of new pastures for

their cattle. Majority of them continued roaming about with their herds until the collectivisation.

Water reforms, during the first phase of the agricultural reforms constituted, mainly, the regularisation of the existing procedures and norms for water allocation. The purpose was also to do away with the common abuses such as bribery and favouritism etc. in the distribution of water. The water statutes of Turkestan government, enacted in February, 1921 and in 1922, created a legal base to curb these malpractices. Through these enactments water was made state property. These forbade the separation of the use of water from that of the land which it irrigated. The water codes defined the individual's right to irrigational water. The right was restricted to its 'labour use' only.

To make the reforms a success and to avoid the use of force, efforts were made to educate the masses, and to expose them to the purpose and scope of the reforms. Special expeditions of party workers were dispatched by the regional government. A 'Central Party Commission' was specially created to supervise the work on land reforms. Such commissions were created at oblast, uezd and volost levels as well.



Conferences of non-party peasants were held to propagate the scope and usefulness of the reforms. Friendly assurances, not only at the party level but also by the Turkestan government, were given to the people. The Turkestan Commission stated in September, 1921 that "let Russian peasants clearly understand that any talk of further immigration is a counter revolutionary fib. Let every dehkan strongly remember that in future no unauthorized grabbing will be permitted ... working peasants, dehkans start working for the revival of your ruined agriculture. There is no return to the past. The road in front of you, leads to peaceful development and strengthening of economy".<sup>23</sup>

In the final analysis, the reforms of the first phase had strong political effect. It abolished the privileges of the colonialist elements in the sphere of land ownership and land use. It cut the bonds of the Tsarist imperialism and transformed the former colonies into economically 'autonomous' Soviet republics. The Bolshevik Party and the Soviet government succeeded in abolishing national inequality in the

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23 Centre State Archive, Tashkent USSR, Document No. F., p. 29, as cited in R.E. Sharma, n. 10, p. 107.

agricultural economy of Turkestan, and had established political 'equilibrium'. The policy helped in making the natives accept the new regime and gave them reasonable ground to trust the intentions of the Soviet government. The reforms also helped in 'educating' the native masses and in sharpening their 'social consciousness'. Although, the reforms had strong political implications but its economic impact was limited. It did not help much in reorganising the agrarian relations among the natives. The reforms were mainly a governmental reversal of the colonial policies of the Tsarist regime. Despite so many decrees and regulations the principle of private property in land remained. The measures to divide land had not effected the interests of the native landlords. Therefore, the reforms failed to generate class struggle within the native society. A substantial section of peasants was still landless or had very little land. Feudal and semi-capitalist exploitation still persisted in the countryside. At best it can be said that the reforms only initiated the shaking up of the traditional society; static since long time. The land reforms with a wider scope effecting the estates of the local exploiters were undertaken during the next phase during 1925-29. Similarly, the water

reforms of the era also did not attempt to reform the water rights of the peasants; these only tried to remove the abuses in the existing order.

#### Land and Water Reforms of the Second Phase:

The 12th Congress of the Turkestan Soviets decided to abolish the estates and the exploitation by the feudal class of the natives, and to carry the land reforms into the predominantly native areas. The major chunk of cultivable land was still in the hands of the feudal lords. It was estimated that more than 1/3 of the all arable area in Uzbekistan was in a few hands.<sup>24</sup> The main objective of the reforms of the era was the elimination of the medieval forms of land ownership through nationalisation and the redistribution of land. However, as mentioned above, the equalised land distribution was not an end in itself for the Socialist government of the Soviet Union. In fact, the measures were used to deepen and aggravate the class struggle among the native peasantry. Secondly, by hitting at the very roots of the strength of the landlords i.e., confiscation of their land and wealth, they could be destroyed as a political, economic

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24 R.R. Sharma, n. 5, p. 112.

and social force in the villages. Thus, in the second stage, the reforms were aimed at deepening the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the Central Asian villages. Without reforms, the revolution could have no effect in the Central Asian Kishalks. However, the purpose was not just to set an unruly peasant war against the landlords but to attain an organised elimination of the feudal remnants from the agrarian structure without effecting the agricultural production and, by protecting the other agricultural accessories. Therefore, the Soviet government did not want to act without proper preparations. Necessary arrangements and preparation had to be made before an 'organised agrarian revolution' could be brought from above. Acting simply through force would have spoiled the whole work. A prolonged educational work was required in this direction. The idea of seizing land from the rich land owners was completely alien to the native peasantry as the class consciousness or class conflict had not deepened among them. The laws of the Shariat also did not allow the confiscation of the private property of another individual without his will. Therefore, in the first peasant regional congress held in 1917, it was decided that the Congress could not demand the redistribution of land

against the laws of Shariat.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the ties between the two were not only feudal but patriarchal as well and the hold of the beys and Mullas were still very strong over the native population.

The preparations were also needed to raise leaders and organizers among the natives to get a sympathetic hearing from the local population and to avoid unnecessary coercion and highhandedness in pursuing the programme of revolutionary redistribution of land and property. A special commission was appointed to work out the details of the proposed reforms. It was attached directly to the Central Committee of the all union Communist Party. Stalin himself was among its members. Other important members were Kalinin, Zelensky and A.G. Enukidze. The Commission presented its proposals in October 1924. It defined the nature and extent of the proposed reforms and gave detailed instructions for its execution. The tactical directions were given to minimise destruction of agricultural property while maximising the effectiveness of reforms.<sup>26</sup>

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25 E. Zelkina, cited in Sharma, n. 5, p. 84.

26 Text in Zelenski's report to the plenary session of the Party's Central Asian Bureau. A.G. Park, n. 4, p. 337.

The Soviet authorities were helped by a peasant organisation called Koshchi in getting peasants' support for the reform programme. This mass organization of the landless and poor peasants was already working in the direction of land redistribution. Land reforms became a major issue of Koshchi programme after 1923, and it adopted the slogan of 'full utilization of the exploiters land' and a complete reorganisation of the land holdings. The Koshchi was also taking measures based on direct action. It encouraged the peasants to take away land from the landlords forcibly and thus, helped in spreading class conflict and class antagonism among the peasants. The organisation enjoyed the tactical approval of the government for 'illegal seizures' of land. The popularity of Koshchi was increasing among the peasants. In Uzbekistan its membership during the years of reform had risen to 155,965 persons.<sup>27</sup>

The religion of the Central Asian people was also used as an instrument during these preparatory years. Though religion as such was attacked and indifference shown to it by the Soviet authorities but often Islamic laws and traditions were cited in support of redistribution.<sup>28</sup> The Islamic belief

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27 Sharma, n. 10, p. 115.

28 J. Kunitz, Dawn Over Samarkand: The Rebirth of Central Asia (New York, 1935), p. 190-

that land belongs to those who work on it was highly emphasised to support the Soviet programme of agrarian reforms. A group of Muslim devotees who approved the land reforms was organised and sent to the countryside to persuade the peasantry.

A statistical commission was appointed to collect all necessary information and to bring the statistical figures up to date. By the end of the year 1924, a preliminary survey of all land, agricultural implements and of livestock had been undertaken.

The completion of the national delimitation programme in 1924 further cleared grounds for the intensification of campaign for redistribution of land. The national territorial delimitation of Central Asia brought into existence several national republics in place of the former multinational political entities of Turkestan, Bukhara and Khiva. The formation of the new republics, autonomous oblasts of Central Asia was formally proclaimed on October 27, 1924. In the course of the implementation of the delimitation scheme 685,900 square kilometres of territory having a population of 1,468,724 persons of Central Asia was ceded to the Kazakh ASSR; which accounted for one-fourth of its territory and 18.1 per cent of its population. The rest of the area of Central Asia was divided

among the Uzbek and Turkmen SSRs, the Tadjik ASSR, and the Kirgiz and Kara-Kalpak Autonomous oblasts. The Kirgiz Autonomous oblast was elevated to the status of Autonomous Republic in 1926. In 1929 the Tadjik ASSR was separated from the Uzbek SSR and raised to the status of a union republic. The Kara-Kalpak Autonomous oblast elevated to the status of an autonomous republic was first included within the RSFSR and later, in 1936, once again was separated from it and was attached to the Uzbek SSR.

In November 1925, the Communist Party of Uzbekistan demanded immediate nationalisation of the land and water resources of the republic. The central executive committee of Uzbekistan in its extraordinary session decreed the demand in the same year. Consequently, all land, forests, water, and other natural resources within the confines of Uzbekistan SSR were declared to be national property. Any future purchase, sale, exchange or mortgage of agricultural property was forbidden. The pattern of redistribution of the land was set by another decree. Under the decree the expropriation of the following categories of land was ordered;

- 1) complete expropriation of the farms of non-labouring or absentee landlords;



- ii) partial seizure of land belonging to big peasants. The size of farms that could be retained was not uniform for all regions. It depended on the value and productivity of the farm land. Thus, the norm varied in different provinces and districts.
- iii) The agricultural land belonging to Muslim cultural and educational institutions was also confiscated.

Land under redistribution was allotted to poor and landless agricultural workers at the first place; tenant farmers and poor small holders came next in the order. The families of Red army men, elected officials, teachers and government functionaries also benefitted from the redistribution scheme. Even the low ranking clerics and small traders were taken care of.<sup>29</sup>

The implementation of the reforms was taken up very carefully. At first, three provinces of Fergana, Tashkent and Samarkand were selected for the implementation. These areas were taken up first because class hostilities

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<sup>29</sup> A.G. Park, n. 4, p. 337.

had aggravated to a considerable extent, and the required organizational network had been created therein. The reform work was put off in the remaining districts of Uzbekistan, formerly parts of the Khivan and Bukhara Khanates, until the end of 1926. It was done mainly due to inadequate preparations and unsuitable circumstances. Traditional leaders and patriarchal patterns were still quite strong in these areas and class struggles hardly visible. In Surkhan-Darya, Kashka-Darya and Khiva, the three outlying provinces of Uzbekistan where anti-Soviet feelings were quite strong; the reforms were put into practice only in the beginning of 1929. The agencies which carried out the actual execution of the reforms were land and water commissions, created by the Republic's Central executive committee in December, 1925. The Commissions consisted almost exclusively of party members specially with an over-whelming majority of city dwellers. However, efforts were made to enlist peasant cooperation at the local level. Local 'Committees of Assistance' from among the peasant population were formed. But in areas where anti-Soviet feelings were strong, it was difficult to get local peasants' support as in such areas they formerly refused to participate in the reform programme. The most difficult task in front of the Soviet regime was

to win over the support and willing co-operation of the middle peasantry. "As the middle peasant was central political and economic figure in the Uzbek village his support was essential to the success of reform programme."<sup>30</sup> In face of his opposition it would have been impossible to make the reforms a success. In the beginning the middle peasants were quite apprehensive of the Soviet designs. They feared that the Soviet government which was expropriating the beys' land at that time would rob away their possessions at a later stage. The government had to put in great efforts in reassuring the middle peasants that their property would remain intact. It was only after repeated assurances that the middle peasantry started taking part in the work of 'Committees of Assistance'. The co-operation of the poor peasants agricultural labourers and tenant farmers was achieved without much efforts. The only fear they had against the reforms was that in case the government did not implement these seriously like many other earlier decrees they would have to face the wrath of the landlords. In that case they would be deprived of their means of livelihood as a



30 J . Konitz, n. 28, p. 193.

punishment for co-operating with the government. However, with the intensified reform propaganda, the fear started loosing ground.

By March 1926, about 56,830 peasant households in Uzbekistan were provided with land taken from beys.<sup>31</sup> Nearly 4,629 landed estates in Uzbekistan were confiscated completely and excess land was taken away from 2,287 bey farms.<sup>32</sup> In addition to the confiscated land, plots were also distributed to 19,790 households from newly irrigated government lands.<sup>33</sup> About 555,685 desyatinas of vagf land was appropriated. In all, a land fund of about 21,855,641 desyatinas from all sources was created.<sup>34</sup> There were about 66,000 beneficiaries of land reforms consisting mainly of small and landless households.<sup>35</sup> Along with the land, other necessary equipments such as livestock, seeds etc. were also provided by the government for proper utilization of allotted

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31 Ibid., p. 187.

32 Solodnikov, Begosolovsky, n. 18, p. 51.

33 J. Kuntiz, n. 28, p. 187.

34 R.R. Sharma, n. 10, p. 118.

35 A.C. Park, n. 4, p. 345.

land. The earlier mistake of not taking care of the other necessities along with land was not repeated this time. In Uzbekistan 15,418 heads of cattle were distributed to the beneficiaries of the reforms. The peasants who did not get livestock were provided with a credit of 120 Roubles to buy them. About 389,174 roubles were distributed to buy agricultural implements etc.<sup>36</sup> In all, a fund of 10,000,000 roubles was set aside to be distributed to the farmers for the purchase of cattles, farm implements, seeds and building equipments etc.<sup>37</sup> The credit was given to the peasants on long-term basis. All these efforts resulted in a remarkable increase in the number of 'middle peasants' from 16 per cent in 1924 to 52 per cent in 1928.<sup>39</sup> However, even after the reforms only 50 per cent of the total landless peasants could be provided with land. Thus, a large number of peasants were still landless and many other small holders for want of other necessities were unable to manage their newly acquired lands.

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36 Sharma, n. 10, p. 118.

37 A. Park, n. 4, p. 345.

39 Sharma, n.10, p. 123.

The rich property owner, beys and Mullas were bitterly opposed to the reforms but inspite of their opposition, the reform work in Uzbekistan was carried out quite successfully. Although some beys tried to defend their property even through armed resistance but it failed to create any significant hindrance in the programme of the government. Apart from this, in many cases the beys adopted some other subtle tactics of resistance. They tried all possible tricks to evade confiscation. They cancelled their contracts with share-croppers or tenant peasants and claimed to be working on land themselves or introduced their tenants as their sons or grandsons. Some of them even divided part of their land among their tenants and share-croppers after having some secret understanding with them. Others tried to hide their livestock and agricultural implements or sold their equipments to poor peasants at low prices as that got them atleast something than nothing.<sup>40</sup> The land owning Muslim clergy tried to dissuade people on moral grounds and even scared them with the wrath of Muhamed if they tried to rob land from the 'rightful owner'.<sup>41</sup> But with the help of poor clergy,

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40 J. Kuntiz, n. 28, p. 177.

41 Ibid., p. 177.

careful planning, appropriate propaganda and efficient administrative machinery, the opposition was dissipated to a great extent.

The execution of the reform programme followed much the same lines in the Turkmen SSR. Although, land and water were nationalised in 1920 through a decree and access to water and land allotments was given to all male peasants with an age of more than sixteen years,<sup>42</sup> but, efforts were not made to put the decree into practice until the national delimitation of 1924. The Communist Party of Turkmenia demanded immediate implementation of the decree of the nationalisation of land holdings and water resources in 1925. The demand was made to abolish all traditional forms of land and water tenure, and to ensure these rights solely on labour basis. Following the decisions of the Communist Party of Turkmenia the Soviet government of the Republic, on September 24, 1925, ordered the confiscation of all agricultural land belonging to merchants, absentee landlords, Muslim clergymen, tribal chiefs and others who did not cultivate their land

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42 Doing away with the former tradition of restricting water rights to married peasants only.

themselves. Thus, the mulik and waqf property was ordered to be appropriated. To overcome the tribal communes' hold on the peasants, the government directed that while redistributing the confiscated land it should be handed over to individual peasants and not to tribal communes.

Like Uzbekistan, in Turkmenia also, the implementation of reforms did not cover the whole of the republic at the same time. In 1925, when the reform work was taken up seriously, its implementation was restricted to Merv and Poltovatsk districts only. It was postponed for political reasons in the districts which formerly belonged to Bukhara and Khiva. Only state owned land was distributed among the peasants in some areas such as Bairam Ali region. As in Uzbekistan, 'land and water commissions' were created to execute the reforms and the 'village land commissions' were formed to encourage local-co-operation and participation.

Under the reform work undertaken in the republic, farms of nearly 2289 agricultural households were liquidated. Farms of about 15271 households were reduced in size. A total land fund of about 58.6 thousand desyatins was created, out of which 15.6 thousand desyatins were given to landless peasants and 34.9 thousand to small holders.



This again established and strengthened the position of the middle peasants more than that of the landless peasants.<sup>43</sup>

In Kirgizia, the reforms were implemented in 1927-28. The beginning was made in the volosts at Ushsk and Jalal-Abad. About 622034 desyatins of land raised from all sources was distributed among 17 thousand landless and petty land-owners in this Autonomous Oblast.<sup>44</sup> The reforms were implemented little late on the main territory of Tadzhikistan ASSR. It coincided with the all out collectivization campaign and elevation of Tadzhik ASSR to the status of a union Republic in 1929.

Many areas, where the reforms were not implemented in early stage as political situation in the areas was unripe, the work was taken up between 1927 and 1929. But in many other remote parts of Central Asia the reforms were not implemented even till the end of 1929.

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43 R.R. Sharma, n. 10, p. 123.

44 Ibid.

### A Critical Appraisal of the Reforms

The agrarian reforms in Central Asia definitely produced more profound effects and changes than those effected by the October Revolution. The October Revolution had only effected the political institutions, the agrarian reforms shook the very roots of the society changing its socio-economic institutions. The Soviet government enhanced its prestige and consolidated its control among the Central Asian masses through these reforms. The party and government apparatus was strengthened in the rural areas. The middle peasant was won over by the government. The economic recovery in the market conditions of New Economic Policy was possible only with the strengthening of middle peasantry. The downward trend of Central Asian agriculture was posing a serious problem. After the reforms, there was a rapid increase in the area under cultivation and wider distribution of livestock and agricultural implements. The reforms benefitted the poor peasants immediately by ending the renting of land. In Uzbekistan alone the number of households which rented land dropped from 42.5 per cent to 5.6 per cent.<sup>45</sup>

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45 A. Park, D. 4, p. 351.

The dehkans of Uzbekistan before the reforms were paying a total of 2,660,000 roubles per year as land rent and now the burden was removed to a great extent.<sup>46</sup>

The position of the native Kulaks and the clergy was definitely undermined. The tribal and feudal patterns of production were given a serious blow; which was a necessary prerequisite for the socialist reorganisation of agriculture. However, the reforms did not completely destroy the 'capitalist' elements in the villages. The institution of private property was not seriously effected. The reforms involved just a transfer of some land from the feudal landlords to the poor peasants. Independent small and middle peasants continued to exist posing a possibility of being future Kulaks and exploiters. The danger was more serious in the light of the fact that many peasants were still landless and could easily become a prey to the exploitation of more wealthy peasants.

Finally, the increase in the number of small holdings was not conducive to the growth of agricultural production.

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46 V. Solodnikov, V. Bogoslavsky, n. 18, p. 55.

Full utilization of modern means of agriculture and an effective central planning were not possible under a system of small holdings. Many believed that the real problem that the Central Asian agriculture was suffering from was not land tenure system but irrigation, scientific methods and mechanization. All these needed consolidation of land holdings and not its distribution. At best, the land reforms could pave way for more fundamental changes in the agrarian structure and would serve as an instrument for sharpening the class struggle in the countryside. Infact, the reforms of the 1920s completed the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the Central Asian villages. Sometimes a new term is used to characterise the reforms -- "Revolutionary democratic". Revolutionary because the these radically altered the power structure based on feudal patriarchal relations and democratic as these followed the principle of equalised land tenure.

CHAPTER IV

COLLECTIVISATION OF CENTRAL ASIAN AGRICULTURE -  
A COMPLETE TRANSFORMATION

The agrarian reforms of the twenties did give a thorough shake up to the erstwhile economic structure of Soviet Central Asia. But these could not radically change the agrarian situation in the region. The reforms mainly touched only the institutional side of agrarian structure. The aspects related to the issues and problems of agricultural development were effected only to a limited extent. Agriculture continued to be technologically backward. Moreover, the changes in agrarian relations attempted through the reforms were not implemented effectively. The reform measures had hit the big land owners in a marked way and the confiscated land was provided to the landless batryaki. In spite of this, the farms using hired labour could not be totally eliminated. Even after the implementation of the reforms, more than ten thousand people were working as share croppers and agricultural labourers in Uzbekistan.<sup>1</sup> They were still paying about nine million roubles per year as land rent to small feudal lords.<sup>2</sup>

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1. V. Selodovnikov, V. Bogoslovsky, Non Capitalist Development and R.R. Shama, A Marxist Model of Social Change (India, 1979), p. 132.

2. Ibid., R.R. Shama, p. 132.

The size of the class of rural exploiters in Uzbekistan, comprised of nearly five per cent of the total peasant households. Their proportion was larger than that of the USSR as a whole where they accounted for four per cent of the total peasant families. The proportion of poor peasants also remained high at 43 per cent of total peasants in 1928.<sup>3</sup>

After the liquidation of big land owners, middle peasants began to dominate the rural scene of Central Asia. Generally, the situation was similar elsewhere in the country. A sample study conducted by R.R. Shama for three oblasts of Uzbekistan i.e., Tashkent, Fargana and Samarkand clearly shows that the middle peasants with land holdings ranging between one to seven desyatins constituted the major group accounting for 58.6 per cent of total households after the reforms. They were about 49.8 per cent of the total peasant households before the reforms.<sup>4</sup>

The productive capacity of these so called 'middle peasants' was limited. They were not able to use agricultural machinery extensively because their capacity for capital

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3 G. Wheeler (ed), "Collectivisation Campaign in Uzbekistan", Central Asian Review, Vol. 12, No. 1, p. 41.

4 Calculated from Table 4.2 R.R. Shama A Marxist Model of social change, 1979, pp. 119-20.

investment was limited. These small farms worked upon with primitive methods of agriculture were not capable of producing any surplus for market. The produce barely met subsistence needs. Lenin in this respect had already stated that "small farms cannot escape poverty, large and mechanised farms alone could increase agricultural production. Labour productivity can only be achieved under a collective economy. The economy of scattered small holdings can never produce satisfactory results."<sup>5</sup> However, it cannot be denied that the expropriation of big farms and its redistribution among the landless and poor peasants which resulted in the fragmentation of peasant households was historically inevitable. It created necessary grounds for further change in the agrarian relations on the socialistic lines by accentuating class conflict on the one hand and by undermining the social and economic predominance of the exploiter class on the other. But the transition period had to be very short otherwise the small commodity peasant farming could easily provide for the future come back of the exploiter class through the better off middle peasants.

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5 Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. XXVIII, p. 319.

A more fundamental change in the agrarian set up was required for raising agricultural production and for a complete transformation of the production relations. The way suggested by Marx and Lenin and subsequently followed by the Soviet regime was the transition from small scale industrial peasant farming to large scale mechanised farming. Lenin had strongly denounced the division of land into small holdings. He firmly believed that socialism had to be achieved through the development of agriculture as a large scale industry and by introducing co-operative collective movement among the masses of peasants. The urban proletariat, who formed the dominant class in the socialist reconstruction, had to be provided with sufficient agricultural surplus. It could be generated more easily under a collectivised and mechanised farming system.

Economically, the need for collectivisation of agriculture had two dimensions;

- i) raising the level of agricultural surplus to support massive industrialisation of the country planned by its leaders; and
- ii) to achieve considerable economic independence for the Soviet Union if it wanted to build 'socialism in one country'. It was realised that the collective



system of agriculture was more economical in terms of both labour and product.

Though, the total area under cultivation had considerably increased all over the country, but, the marketable agricultural surplus had not increased correspondingly, mainly due to the fact, that the fragmented holdings combined with the meagre resources and backward implements were not able to produce enough for the market. The productivity level in USSR by 1927 had only slightly exceeded the pre-war level; whereas in Uzbekistan at the end of 1927, the gross agricultural output was still only 76 per cent of 1914 level.<sup>6</sup> The generation and extraction of agricultural surplus, needed for an overall development of the new socialist society, could more easily be generated and extracted through a collective farming system closely controlled and planned by a central authority.

Soviet Union, could not have survived without a solid economic base and considerable economic independence. The economic independence of Soviet Union in Central Asian context meant self sufficiency in cotton. This could only be achieved with increased cotton production in Central Asia which required

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6 "The Collectivisation Campaign in Uzbekistan", n. 3, p. 41.

application of more modern methods of cultivation, more capital investment, development of irrigation facilities, mechanisation and central planning. Attempts in this direction were not likely to succeed in the presence of the agricultural economy based on small holdings. The problem could only be solved with collectivisation of cotton farms in Central Asia.

In terms of social relations, since the Soviet government was committed to the cause of creating a classless society, hence, there was a need to create a society where means of production were owned not individually but collectively. Although after the revolution land was nationalised and private ownership of land was abolished legally but in practice the peasants still had individual right over their holdings and were managing these plots independently. The agrarian reforms of the twenties in Soviet Central Asia did appropriate land from the big landlords but the measures had not seriously effected the institution of private ownership. Besides, it had created a number of new petty proprietors. Only through the collectivisation scheme these petty proprietors could be asked to surrender their personal holdings. It would have resulted in a definite break -- a serious blow to the institution of private property.

Politically, the future of the new socialist regime was dependent upon the economic strength of the country. Lenin had put it "perish or forge full steam ahead. That is the alternative put by history." In a situation where Russia was surrounded by hostile capitalist countries, economic self-sufficiency was the way to survive.

#### Early Decisions for Collectivisation

The Central Committee of the Communist Party and the Soviet Government on the basis of the recommendations of the sixteenth party congress, drew up the First Five Year Plan for the future economic development. This plan set forth the difficult task of turning USSR from an economically backward country into an advanced industrial nation in a relatively short period. The objective was also to establish firm economic foundations for the socialistic transformation of the Russian society. The success of the plan depended on the generation of adequate marketable surplus of food and other raw materials. To achieve this, it was decided to reorganise agriculture on collective basis. The development of the agrarian sector was deemed to be complementary to the industrial sector which was perceived to ensure economic strength of the country. Collectivisation in Central Asia

was linked with the agrarian policies followed in the whole of Soviet Union.

Although, the policy<sup>7</sup> set for agricultural sector was quite unambiguous, and by 1927 the future course of action had been decided quite clearly, but, the timing and place of collectivisation was still a big question awaiting decisive answers from the Soviet leadership. Lenin had repeatedly told his partymen that "socialism cannot be imposed upon peasants by force", only through "power of example" and "day today experience", gradually, can they be won over to socialist agriculture.<sup>7</sup> He believed, "joint cultivation is a difficult business and it would be madness, of course, for anybody to imagine that joint cultivation of land can be decreed from above and imposed on people."<sup>8</sup> In the eighth party Congress he warned his partymen against the use of force to achieve this objective, saying, "nothing could be gained through the method of coercion. To act through force would be to spoil the whole work."<sup>9</sup> Marx had also suggested "when we are in possession of state power we shall not even think of forcibly

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7 The Soviet Peasantry (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1975), p. 37.

8 Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. XXVIII, p. 152-53.

9 Ibid., Vol. XXIX, p. 211.

expropriating the small peasants, as we shall have to do in the case of the big land owners, our task relative to the small peasants consists, in the first place, in effecting a transition of his private enterprise and private possession to co-operative ones not forcibly but by dint of example and the offer of social assistance for this purpose."<sup>10</sup>

Apart from the advise, not to use force against the small peasants, Lenin clearly projected a long term programme of transforming small scale Soviet agriculture into large scale collective and state farming. Thus, the way showed by him was through gradual co-operation. He suggested that to begin with the task should be started with the simplest forms of co-operative organisations for the sale of farm products, supply of goods for the peasants and the credit co-operatives etc. Later on, these could be turned into large collective farms equipped with modern machines and employing the latest farming methods.

Although, the decision to initiate collective farming on large scale was reached in the 15th party Congress, but the First Five Year Plan clearly envisaged a slow and

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10 K. Marx and F. Engels, Selected Works, Vol. III, p. 470.

considerate approach in this direction. The decision to accelerate the pace of collectivisation was taken quite suddenly and without any previous warning by Stalin in December, 1929.

The Co-operative Movement in Soviet Central Asia

Several forms of agricultural co-operation preceeded the campaign of complete collectivisation of agriculture in this region. Co-operatives in the sphere of supply and marketing and in credit raising were more popular.

The supply and marketing co-operatives were simple forms of agricultural co-operation. Their function was easily understood by the peasants. In 1928-29 alone, the Tadjik peasants sold over 9 million roubles worth of goods to the state through these co-operatives and they themselves bought 600,000 roubles worth of goods.<sup>11</sup> The credit co-operatives also came up in Central Asia during the period of NEP. The credit co-operatives were encouraged by the government mainly to promote cotton cultivation. Since the economic resources of the government were limited and economic usefulness of the

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11 V. Seledvinikov, V. Bogoslovsky, M.1, p. 59.

societies for socialistic purposes was not much, thus the movement did not become wide spread.

Cotton growers' co-operatives and production co-operatives were organised after the decision was taken by the first conference of cotton growers in 1921. A decree on agricultural co-operation was issued by the Soviet people's Commissar of Turkestan on August 16, 1921. The system of contracts for the purchase of agricultural produce was popularised. Land improvement associations to solve water management problems and to improve water use relationships were also organised.

The co-operative movement in agriculture did not take off the ground before the completion of the first phase of agrarian reforms in Central Asia. The more comprehensive agrarian reforms undertaken during 1925-28 speeded up the growth of co-operative movement in the region. The rural landless labourers, who had received small plots of land but were not able to use it for want of necessary implements, got attracted towards the co-operative methods of farming. Nearly 63.8 per cent of the Uzbek peasant households joined various co-operatives by 1927. In Tadjikistan cotton growers co-operatives had united 44,100 farms by 1928-29.<sup>12</sup> The proportion

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12 Ibid., p. 60.

of households who joined co-operatives increased to 81 per cent of the total peasant households in Uzbekistan in 1929.<sup>13</sup> In the cotton growing areas of Turmenia, 80 per cent cotton cultivating households joined the co-operatives. The co-operative membership, however, was quite low in the cattle breeding areas of Central Asia. It generally remained 10 to 40 per cent of the total households.<sup>14</sup>

However, the co-operatives of collective production or communes, whereby the peasants were asked to pool their holdings into common pool and which was regarded as a higher form of the co-operative system, were not very popular among the Central Asian peasants. It meant a complete break up with the prevailing institutional structures. The collective farms, that came up during 1918-20, were established by poor farmers mainly to obtain the implements for production from the confiscated estates and the government subsidies. Some of these had been set up by the peasants to protect their land from confiscation. But all these early efforts of collective

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13 n. 7, p. 147.

14 Ibid.



farming collapsed when the new economic policy was introduced. After the land reforms, when the state offered various economic incentives to those farmers who organised themselves into collectives, once again, the peasants started pooling their holdings into collective farms. There were 832 collective farms in Uzbekistan in 1927.<sup>15</sup> But these were not very successful due to inadequate state assistance and number of other problems and shortcomings faced by collective farms of this period. The Central Asian peasants, however, had a good training in agricultural co-operation through other lower forms of co-operatives, and right from the beginning they had a long tradition of making common and collective use of water resources.

#### The Collectivisation Drive:

The all out collectivisation drive, as envisaged by Stalin, started little late in Central Asia as compared to some other parts of the country. The Central Asian republics were put in the 'third group' of areas where the process was to

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15 "Collectivisation Campaign in Uzbekistan", n. 3, p. 42.

be completed by 1933-34. The group included areas, where essential prerequisites for mass collectivisation had not been created to a satisfactory level. Though a beginning had already been made in late 1929, but actual work in this direction started only in 1930.

A plan for collectivisation in Uzbekistan was worked out by a special commission of the executive bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan. The plan was adopted on November 27, 1929. According to this plan it was decided to bring as many peasant families under collective farming that would be sufficient to supply 60 per cent of the total cotton production of the republic.<sup>16</sup> It was decided to keep a slow pace of collectivisation in the beginning but afterwards the decision was revised to a considerable extent. There were 2.6 per cent collective households on 1 June 1929 in Uzbekistan as against an average of 3.5 per

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D. Kanchik, Central Asia in Modern Times (Moscow, 1970), p. 237.

cent for the USSR as a whole. The percentage of collective households in the country as a whole nearly doubled by the end of 1929. Whereas, it could rise only up to 3.5 per cent of the total peasant households in Uzbekistan. The all union Central Committee started criticizing the Uzbek party for its poor performance on the collectivisation front. At the end of the year 1929, Stalin and Molotov tried to accelerate the pace in Central Asian republics. The slogan officially adopted by the Uzbekistan government was "catch up and overtake the advanced regions of the country in the rate of collectivisation". The proportion of collectivised holdings in Uzbekistan rose to 10 per cent in January, 1930;<sup>17</sup> the pressure was further increasing quite rapidly. Special targets were set for different oblasts and intensive efforts were made for collectivisation throughout 1930. The number of peasants had risen to 34.5 per cent by October 1930. The achievements of the collectivised farms were highly publicised among the peasants through rallies and demonstrations organised by the collective farmers themselves. This had a desired effect on those peasants who had not joined collective farms. Consequently, the proportion of farmers on

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17 "Collectivisation Campaign in Uzbekistan", n. 3, p. 45.

collective farms reached 56.7 per cent by mid-1931, and subsequently to 69.1 per cent by the end of the year.<sup>18</sup> Though the target set for Uzbekistan was only 27 per cent in the First Five Year Plan, but by 1932, 74.9 per cent of the peasant households had joined collective farms leaving the original target far behind.<sup>19</sup> The Kolkhozes i.e. collective farms by that date contributed nearly 84.4 per cent of the republic's total cotton production and the work of collectivisation had by and large been completed in the cotton growing areas of Uzbekistan.<sup>20</sup> The drive for collectivisation, which already had begun in the food growing and cattle breeding areas during the First Five Year Plan period, continued during the Second Five Year Plan. By the end of the Second Five Year Plan i.e. in 1937, nearly 95 per cent peasant families had joined collective farms covering about 99.4 per cent of the total cultivated area.

The task of collectivisation in the other republics of Soviet Central Asia was more difficult owing to the fact

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18 D. Kaushik, n. 16, p. 240.

19 Ibid., p. 240, and "Collectivisation Campaign in Uzbekistan", n. 3, p. 45.

20 Ibid.

that feudal and tribal survivals were stronger therein. Moreover, the problem of nomadism was more acute. The task of settling down of nomads had to precede for a successful completion of the collectivisation programme in these areas. Decisions to switch over to collective farming were taken in early 1930 in all other Central Asian republics.

In Turmenia only 1.7 per cent of the peasant households had joined collective farms by 1928. The collectivisation in the republic was done at a very rapid pace during 1930-32. By the end of 1932, nearly 73 per cent of total peasant families covering almost 87 per cent of the total cultivated area had started working on collective farms.<sup>21</sup> Like Uzbekistan, the figure shows that the main work in this direction had been almost completed by 1932. Similarly, the collectivisation of cotton growing areas in Turmenia as well, was organised more rapidly. By 1932, 90.1 per cent of the land under cotton cultivation was taken under the fold of collective farms.<sup>22</sup> The remaining work was completed during the next five years.

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21 Ibid., p. 241.

22 Ibid.

By 1937, 95.4 per cent of the total peasant households in the republic were collectivised. The collective farms covered 99.4 per cent of the entire arable land.<sup>23</sup>

Kirgizia started with a very low level of collective farmers i.e. 0.5 per cent in 1928. As mentioned before, the settlement of Kirgiz nomads was an essential pre-requisite for the collectivisation. Nearly 85 thousand Kirgiz families were settled on land during 1931-34. By 1930, only 28 per cent of the peasant families could be collectivised. Between 1931-32, the pace got momentum and nearly 66.2 per cent families were brought under collective farming programme. The collective farms covered 75 per cent of the total cultivated land. The remaining peasant families were collectivised during the second five year plan, and by the end of it, 1900 collective farms had covered 89 per cent of the peasant families, accounting for 97 per cent of the arable land. Subsequently, more families joined the collective farms and their proportion rose to 99.9 per cent of the total peasant households in 1941.<sup>24</sup>

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23 Ibid.

24 W.P. Zeida, K. Coates, Soviet Central Asia (London, 1951), p. 154.

Tadjikistan started with still a lower share of 0.2 per cent households working on collective farms. The pace throughout the First Five Year Plan period was slower in the republic compared to that in other republics. The figure of households working on collective farms grew to 41.9 per cent by the end of First Five Year Plan.<sup>25</sup> The main task of collectivisation in Tadjikistan, unlike other Central Asian republics, could be completed only during Second Five Year Plan. Almost 89.9 per cent of the peasant families had joined collective farms in 1937. These farms covered 98.3 per cent of all land under cultivation.<sup>26</sup> The following table shows the pace of collectivisation in various Central Asian republics between 1928-40. For a comparative study the figures of overall percentage for the whole of the USSR have also been given.

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25 S.P. Trapeznikov, Leninism and the Agrarian and Peasant Question (Moscow, 1976), Vol. II, p. 283.

26 Zeida and Coates, n. 24, p. 179.

TABLE 4.1

PERCENTAGE OF PEASANT HOUSEHOLDS IN COLLECTIVE  
FARMING

Year	Uzbekistan	Tadjikistan	Turkmenia	Kirgizia	USSR
1928	1.2	0.2	1.7	0.5	1.7
1929	3.0	-	-	-	-
1930	34.4	13.3	22.8	29.1	23.6
1931	68.2	28.3	59.7	35.7	61.5
1932	81.7	41.9	73.0	67.4	-
1937	95.0	89.9	95.4	89.1	93.0
1938	97.6	-	-	-	-
1940	99.8	98.7	98.9	99.4	96.9

Source: Based on data collected by A. Rahman Khan and D Ghai in Soviet Central Asia, and R. R. Sharma.

The Table 4.1 reveals that in 1928 an average of not more than one per cent households were working on collective farms in Soviet Central Asian republics. The figure was not much lower than that for the whole of USSR which was 1.7 per cent. Similarly, the pace of collectivisation in Central Asia was not slower than in the rest of USSR, except in Tadjikistan where it picked up momentum only during the Second Five Year Plan period. The pace of collectivisation was exceptionally



high during 1930-32 in Central Asia.

TABLE 4.2

THE RATE OF COLLECTIVISATION IN CENTRAL ASIA  
DURING 1 JANUARY TO 1 AUGUST 1931

Percentage of Collective Farms

Republics	By 1st January	By 1st April	By 1st June	By 1st August
Uzbekistan	36.7	56.0	64.2	65.2
Turkmenia	28.3	47.4	53.1	59.7
Kirgizia	25.5	32.5	35.3	35.5
Tadjikistan	14.7	42.0	48.9	54.2
USSR as a whole	26.4	42.0	48.9	54.2

SOURCE S.P. Trapeznikov in Leninism and the Agrarian  
Peasant Question, Vol. II, pp. 283-85

The above Table shows that within a short period of eight months i.e. January to August 1931 the share of collective farms increased by more than two times in Turkmenia and Tadjikistan. The maximum increase of 2.6 times in the collective farms was recorded in Tadjikistan as against Kirgizia which had lowest increase of 1.4 times. In all, by 1940, there were nearly 14000 state and collective farms in

Central Asia. These varied in size but the average area per farm was about 30 hectares of land.<sup>27</sup>

The Collectivization Campaign and the Mistakes Therein:

The figures above clearly show rapid pace of collectivization in Central Asia. It was certainly not in conformity with the Lenin's suggestion of gradual transformation and careful planning. A very little planning was done by the Soviet government to work out a suitable strategy of collectivization in Central Asia. To achieve the high targets the methods and techniques generally followed were persuasion, propaganda and economic incentives. Bands of agitators, theatrical troops and orators were sent to Central Asia. Fiercely attacks were made on Kulaks, Mullas and hays. Appeals were made to the poor and middle peasants to join the collective farms which suited their individual and class interests. However, the period of preliminary propaganda was too short and the training of the organizers was not adequate. This led to the use of force. Often, the peasants were forced by

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<sup>27</sup> Shania, n. 1, P. 135.

various methods to join the collective farms. They were threatened with stoppage of water and other supplies or with other punitive actions in case they refused to join the collectives. The peasants in many villages of Bukhara oblast were threatened with such measures if they declined to join the collective farms.<sup>28</sup> Over zealotness among organisers of the campaign also resulted in various distortions.<sup>29</sup> They used to talk big with the farmers and made reckless promises.<sup>30</sup> The Central Committee of the party was quite aware of the mistakes being committed in the wake of collectivisation in Uzbekistan, Turkmenia, and other Central Asian areas. It directed the local organisers to introduce collectivisation in accordance with the degree of preparedness of the poor and middle peasants for it.

#### Resistance to Collectivisation:

Even with the use of force and the punitive measures, the campaign organisers of the collectivisation movement in

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28 D. Kaushik, n. 16, p. 238.

29 A story told by a peasant in the village of Donjor quoted by J. Kunits (in Dawn over Samarkand), reveals such over zealous efforts made by the organisers, p. 191.

30 J. Kunits, *ibid.*, p. 102.

Central Asia did not succeed in implementing the programme smoothly. Strong resistance was offered by the Kulaks, hays, Mullas and the middle peasants. The rumours such as "our women will be forced to remove their veils and will be collectivised by the government" or "the collectives will be forced to raise only cotton. No bread grains or rice will be permitted to be sown. The government will starve us to death", were circulated.<sup>31</sup> The Kulaks and hays even put up armed resistance. There were 333 cases of criminal assault on the peasants of collectives in Uzbekistan alone in 1930.<sup>32</sup> At various other places the Kulaks openly came out with arms against the Soviet government. They took help from old Basachi bands in this armed resistance. The situation became more serious due to the fact that grave mistakes had been committed by the Soviet authorities in the dekulakisation process. At several places even middle peasants figured in the Kulaks lists. Such mistakes hardened the attitude of the middle peasant against collectivisation. The resistance against the programme was even stronger among the nomadic population. The cattle rearing

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31 Ibid., p. 194.

32 Kaushik, n. 16, p. 236.

nomads slaughtered their cattle and they themselves fled abroad. They, in some cases, even put up armed resistance to escape collectivisation. The resistance of the nomads led to an enormous reduction in the livestock population throughout Central Asia. Before the revolution the region had considerably more livestock per head of population than the Russian empire as a whole.<sup>33</sup> Kazakh and Kirgizia, which had 20 per cent of all Soviet sheep and goats in 1928, lost more than five-sixth of their herds during the years of First Five Year Plan.<sup>34</sup> Between 1928-33 other Central Asian republics and West Siberia lost almost 45,000,000 sheep and goats accounting nearly for four-fifth of their total stock.<sup>35</sup>

#### The Elimination of Kulaks as a Class:

An important purpose of collectivisation policy was to completely eliminate the Kulak class. In the early years of NEP the Soviet government, in its anxiety to increase production, overlooked the 'class principle'. Many Kulak and

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33 V. Conolly, Beyond the Urals (London, 1967), p. 89.

34 N. Jassy, The Socialised Agriculture of USSR (California, 1951), p. 633.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 633.

big families of Central Asia prospered during these years. In many cases the credit distributed by the government was utilised by this class. However, during the land and water reforms of the second phase not only did the Kulaks and big lose most of their land but they were also refused credit. Moreover, their tax liabilities were stepped up. In 1927-8, the agricultural tax on small holdings was more than halved while the already high tax rate on large holdings was more than doubled. At this time 90 per cent of state credit was being provided to poor farmers as against 46 per cent in 1925-6.<sup>36</sup> After the reforms the number of Kulak and big households in Uzbekistan had come down to 4.5 per cent of the total peasant households.<sup>37</sup> Now, a decision was taken to totally eliminate them by converting their land holdings into state farms.

Measures were also taken to eliminate their political and social influence. The party sought to remove Kulaks from local Soviets and other village organisations. The Kulaks were also denied entry into the collective farms so that they may not harm the scheme from within.

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<sup>36</sup> "The Collectivisation Campaign in Uzbekistan", n. 3, p. 43.

<sup>37</sup> Shama, n. 1, p. 132.

The Role of Machine Tractor Station (MTS):

The mechanisation of agriculture was an essential part of the collectivisation programme. The Machine Tractor Stations were set up and owned by the state to provide tractors and other agricultural machinery to the collective farms. These became centres for imparting technical and other required knowledge regarding cultivation to collective farm peasants. Each MTS served a number of collective farms. These had to enter into an annual agreement with MTS for undertaking various farming operations that required the services of MTS. Apart from providing technical help and modern machinery, the political department attached to MTS gave political guidance to collective farmers. The political department helped the collective farmers to understand the nature of the new socialist mode of production, drove the Kulaks and other hostile elements out of the collective farms. Besides persuasion, education and instruction, the political department applied coercive methods against those farmers who tried to break the rules of the community living, shirked work or neglected their social duties. Thus, the MTS served as a very effective organ of state control in the implementation of production plans in agriculture.

The MTS started functioning in Central Asian republics in 1929. The following year there were six MTS with 36 tractors in Uzbekistan. The number increased to 48 MTS with 2,389 tractors and to 67 in 1932 with 2,899 tractors.<sup>38</sup> By 1933, there were seventy-eight MTS in Uzbekistan and twenty-seven in Turkmenistan.<sup>39</sup> By the end of the second Five year plan mechanisation of agriculture had covered almost entire cultivated land in Uzbekistan. The number further increased to 163 MTS with 18,267 tractors which served about 94 per cent of all cultivated farms in 1937 in Uzbekistan.<sup>40</sup> By the end of 1939, the number of MTS grew to 189 in Uzbekistan and 54 in Turkmenia.<sup>41</sup> There were 53 MTS with 3,984 tractors in Kirgizia in 1937. The MTS numbered 45 with 3217 tractors in Tadzhikistan in that year.<sup>42</sup>

There was bitter resistance to the MTS from the Kulaks and clergy who tried to create distrust towards machinery among the peasants and asserted that mechanisation was not possible in the cultivation of cotton. But inspite of the

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<sup>38</sup> "The Collectivisation Campaign in Uzbekistan", n. 3, p. 48.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>40</sup> D. Kauchik, n. 16, p. 240.

<sup>41</sup> Shama, n. 1, p. 134.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.



intense propaganda by the Kulaks and hays against the tractors, the backward peasants of Central Asia could not be stopped from getting enchanted and were drawn to these. In fact the presence of tractors contributed largely to the triumph of collectivisation in Central Asia despite the tactlessness and inefficiency on the part of many organisers. In the beginning, the peasants were suspicious of its novelty but soon were lured by the advantages it offered.

#### The Role Played by Urban Workers

A large number of urban workers were called upon to assist the local functionaries in the collectivisation campaign in Central Asia as the urban working class had rendered help to the peasants in the collectivisation in other parts of the country. About 25,000 industrial workers with sufficient organisational, political and technical experience were sent to the countryside in 1924, to assist the peasants. The Central Asian Bureau of the party made an appeal in Pravda, urging textile workers of the central regions to help the cotton growers of Uzbekistan in the reconstruction of agriculture on socialist lines.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, the workers of

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<sup>43</sup> The Appeal was made on August 20, 1929.

Uzbekistan were also urged upon to help the peasants by the Uzbek Party in October 1929. Twenty-six brigades comprising of 458 skilled workers from Central Russian regions came to Uzbekistan. They signed an agreement with the cotton growers of Uzbekistan in November, 1929. Under this agreement both sides promised to help in increasing production. The workers pledged to give to the Uzbek peasants political, organisational and economic help in managing the newly organised collective farms. Beside the regular six brigades sent from Central Russia, many other industrial enterprises adopted different areas in Central Asia. Some of the industrial workers remained in their areas for a long time while the others used to stay in the Kishlaks for four months at the time of sowing and harvesting. They worked in the Kishlaks as secretaries of Party cells, chairman of village Soviets and of collective farms, functionaries of various directive organs, and conducted a general task of setting right relations with the middle peasant and of eliminating the enemies of the socialist reconstruction. They also introduced a spirit discipline, organisation and devotion among the collectivised peasants. They organised study groups and courses to train local personnel for the collectives. Although rumours were spread that industrial workers had been sent to take away land from the

native peasants to hand it over to Russians, but inspite of such rumours, they continued to play their positive role quite effectively. Thus, the role played by the industrial workers in collectivisation was obviously very significant.

Efforts to Consolidate and Strengthen  
the Collective Farms

The accelerated pace of collectivisation created a large number of collective farms which lacked experienced and trained personnel. The necessary implements were also in short supply. For the successful completion of the collectivisation programme, immediate efforts were required to improve management and efficiency of the collective farms. The all Union Central Committee adopted a number of resolutions aimed at strengthening the collective farms in 1931-32. In 1931, the payment on piece-work basis substituted that for the day. Majority of the collective farms in the Fargana Valley switched on to this method of payment. The new system produced good results immediately, as it gave more incentive to work to the peasants. More turn out of work was recorded in the collective farms where the new method of payment was adopted. Another problem faced by the collective farms was the problem

of pilferage. An all union law was passed on August 7, 1932 which made the stealing of Kolkhoz property a crime punishable by death.

The consolidation of collectivisation also meant giving the collective farms a definite organisational shape. The task was done by the Second All Union Congress of Foremost Collective Farmers held in February 1935. The Congress adopted the Rules for Artels which in the present context meant co-operative or collective farms. The model rules adopted by the Congress reflected the experience gained so far. The main provisions of the rules were the following:

- i) Land was declared to be the property of all people but its use was allowed only by the artels or collective farms for ever free of any rent. However, the artels were not permitted to sell, buy or rent land.
- ii) The other means of production such as draught animals, agricultural implements, seeds and buildings needed for farming were to be owned collectively.
- iii) The ownership of modern machinery like tractors and harvesters did not stay with the collective farms. This was vested with MTS organised and regulated directly by the government.

- iv) The ~~AKSAs~~ were authorised to allocate private plots of land to its members on household basis. The upper limit of such plots was regularised by the rules. Such plots varied between one quarter to one hectare in size.
- v) Personal dwellings, a small number of productive cattle, poultry and minor farm implements were not pooled into collective ownership.
- vi) A limited amount of services of collectively owned draught animals could be made available on payment for use on private plots.
- vii) All persons of the age of 16 or more could become members of the collectives subject to the approval through the General Meeting. There was membership fee as well. Non members could only be employed by the farms if they possessed some special qualifications as being agricultural scientists or engineers.
- viii) The General Body comprising all members was the highest administrative authority. It elected the Chairman and the members of the Board of Management for day today affairs.

ix) The remuneration for all agricultural operations were made on piece-work basis. Rates of remuneration were fixed for each separate job in terms of labour days. An incentive of 10 per cent increase in the remuneration was given to those peasants who exceeded the average performance of the artels.

The collectivisation of Central Asian agriculture provided a definite break from the past. Within a short period of 10 years the Soviet Central Asian agrarian structure was completely transformed. The backward tribal and feudal relations of production were replaced by more productive socialist relations of production. It paved the way for non-capitalist path of development in Central Asia skipping the capitalist mode of production. It also increased tremendously the level of agricultural mechanization. Before the revolution the peasants of Central Asia knew only primitive ploughs. Now, there were nearly 80,000 tractors in 1941. The backwardness of the region's agriculture was eliminated to a considerable extent. The irrigation network was improved and enlarged, whereby the irrigated area in Central Asia increased by over 35 per cent in this period.<sup>44</sup> The cotton production during

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44 R. R. Shamsa, n. 1, p. 222.

this period rose by more than three times.<sup>45</sup> However, rise in other agricultural items was not that phenomenal.

Rise in grain production was marginal. From a gross output of 3,384 thousand metric tones in 1913 it grew only to 3,613 thousand metric tones in 1940.<sup>46</sup> Increase in other agricultural product was also considerably low in comparison to the growth rate of cotton production. This clearly shows that the policy of cotton expansion in Central Asia was continued. It is important to note in this context that increase in cotton production was mainly achieved by greatly increasing the acreage under its cultivation. The upheavals of mass collectivisation and the peasant hostility it aroused had adversely effected the Central Asian agricultural production which was compensated mainly by increasing acreage. As mentioned before, the livestock breeding was the most effected sector of agriculture. The number of cattle in Uzbekistan fell from 1,486,700 in 1928 to 916,200 in 1932.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 221.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., Table A-2, p. 222.

<sup>47</sup> "Collectivisation Campaign in Uzbekistan", n. 3, p. 50.

Gross output of meat production fell from 674 thousand metric tones in 1913 to 401 thousand metric tones in 1940.<sup>48</sup>

Collectivisation also had adverse effect on the small scale home industries of the region. The peasants had largely been the raw material suppliers and buyers of handicrafts. Due to collectivisation and industrialisation programme of the Soviet regime, the links between the two could not be maintained. Many of them had to either become the industrial proletariat or to enter the collective farms as agricultural workers.

Lastly, one may say that by two successive endeavours i.e. land-water reforms and the collectivisation of agriculture, the Soviet regime worked hard to create a new society in Central Asia.

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<sup>48</sup> Shams, n. 1, Table A.2, p. 222.



## CHAPTER V

AGRARIAN RECONSTRUCTION AND THE PROCESSES AND  
PATTERNS OF MODERNIZATION IN SOVIET  
CENTRAL ASIAN SOCIETY

Apart from the economic advantages, the agrarian reconstruction in Soviet Central Asia in 1920s and 30s brought about some basic structural changes in the overall social set up of the native society. This was an outcome of the direct co-relation that exists between the economic institutions on the one hand and the social structure on the other. Since agrarian set up is at the base of diverse social structures, any change in the former is bound to produce corresponding alterations in other structural variables of society. Highlighting the social utility of land reforms it must be understood that the "land reforms have their significance in the national plan not only as a precondition for raising productivity in agriculture, but primarily as a mean of shattering the foundations of the old class structure of a stagnating society."<sup>1</sup>

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1 G. Myrdal, Economic Theory and Underdeveloped Regions (Great Britain, 1981), p. 81.

Thus, the land reforms primarily serve as an important instrument to stir up the social structure in order to overcome the cultural lag; one of the pre-conditions for removing economic backwardness. Changes in the agrarian institutions lead to the process of modernization and to the basic alterations in the social set up. At the same time, the reorganisation of the social and cultural milieu is a pre-requisite for economic development and for creating helpful conditions for economic transformation. Thus, the role played by the two i.e. the economic and social forces is complementary to one another and these are inter-linked in a bidirectional way. And that explains the dynamic relationship that exists between the 'super-structure' and the 'basis'. This requires a synthetic approach; main emphasis being on the analysis of economic bases in relation to the super-structure. The process of economic changes can also be greatly influenced by making alterations in the super-structure at certain critical points in a desired direction.

The Russians, although, under the Tsarist regime conquered the region and were using its economy for their own benefit but the society and economy of Central Asia remained largely static. Almost the entire population was illiterate, living in a backward tribal-feudal and colonial set up. They

were largely unaware of the processes of modernisation that had come about in the western society. However, after the economic innovations of the 1920s and 30s, there were marked changes in the socio-cultural institutions of Soviet Central Asia. This can generally be termed as the process of modernisation in the Central Asian society. The term 'modernisation' here means the complex process of economic, social, cultural and psychological changes those began in the western society in the late 18th century. "The primary effects of modernisation are reflected in such tangible changes as economic development, industrialisation, urbanization, lower level of fertility and mortality, ~~higher levels of fertility and mortality,~~ higher levels of education, a redefinition of the status of women and also a number of more subtle and difficult to define changes involving personal aspirations, values and attitudes."<sup>2</sup>

In the light of the above it is important to comprehend the processes of modernisation in Central Asia in relation to the changes introduced in its agrarian system by the Soviet

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2 Cyril E. Black, The Dynamics of Modernization (New York, 1966), Chapter 1.

regime and the resultant social alterations that came about . An attempt has been made to understand the diverse aspects of the patterns and processes of social change in Soviet Central Asia during the early phase of Soviet regime i.e. between 1920-40. The enquiry covers three basic dimensions of the process of modernisation:

- i) The nature of changes affecting diverse social structures.
- ii) Institutional adjustments to make agrarian reconstruction smooth and effective and;
- iii) changes in the institutional set up resulted from the process of agrarian reconstruction and other economic innovations.

#### The Eradication of Mass Illiteracy:

One of the most important problems of the Central Asian society which was keeping it backward was the illiteracy and ignorance of its people. The disturbances caused by the civil war, by the Hamaschia and the famines, greatly effected the already poor and backward economic conditions in Central Asia. The Soviet government which was committed to the cause of ensuring economic equality among all its republics had to

seek measures to improve the economic conditions. Development of education could greatly help in breaking down the social rigidities and to promote a greater degree of social mobility and flexibility favourable to economic growth. "Education can play an important role in modernising the values, attitudes and institutions".<sup>3</sup> An improved and wide spread system of education would have greatly helped specially in a situation where majority of the people were uneducated. Therefore, in order to accelerate the process of socio-economic change, deliberate and revolutionary changes in the educational system of Soviet Central Asia were introduced by the Soviet regime.

Apart from changing the attitude of the people, for the smooth functioning of the new economic set up, the government needed technically qualified personnel to handle the new land tenure system and to carry out the work of land reforms. By removing the very financial basis of the old educational system run by religious institutions, the agrarian reforms were used to undermine their influence.

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3 G. Myrdal, Asian Drama, Vol. III, Chapter 29.

The Soviet education policy enforced in Soviet Central Asia during the late 1920s along with the programme of land and water reforms was mainly designed to ensure the success of the socio-economic innovations.

The immediate need was to provide at least minimum education to the masses in the region to make the stipulated programme of regional economic development a success. The Soviet government undertook the programme of adult education in the early years of 1930s. Considerable resources were devoted to abolish illiteracy in the countryside.

A ten year plan of adult education was adopted in Turkmenia and Uzbekistan. It envisaged the eradication of adult illiteracy by 1934-35. The programme was undertaken at a rapid speed during the early years of collectivisation. The existing staff in the schools was quite inadequate to cope up with the massive task. Thus, the work had to begin by training, though hastily and insufficiently, the members of the party staff and other helpers. These groups of educators faced stiff opposition from local conservatives, more so, for the programme of educating the adult women. However, "the continuing pressure of the authorities and the gradual shift of social attitudes slowly began to take effect,

and by 1939 at least two-third of the native women had achieved some degree of literacy".<sup>4</sup> Apart from imparting the skill of reading and writing to the adults, various technical courses were undertaken by the young party workers to help the peasants to understand and operate the modern means of agriculture. About one thousand volunteers took part in a mass campaign to wipe out illiteracy. They were called Kultrokhois. In a short period of two years between 1930-31, more than two million people were taught as to how to read and write.

Compulsory primary education was introduced in July 1930. The traditional Muslim schools were replaced by secular ones. By early thirties the new Soviet secular schools had completely replaced the old religious schools operated by the Muslim clergy or the New Method schools run by the Jadidists. According to 1939 census, 4.2 per cent of the people of Uzbekistan, 3.4 per cent of Kirgizia, 2.9 per cent of Tadji-kistan and 4.9 per cent people of Turmenia had received

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<sup>4</sup> A. Nove, J.A. Newth, The Soviet Middle East (Great Britain, 1967), p. 70.

atleast seven years schooling. The all union average for this period was 8.3 per cent; not much higher compared to that of the Central Asia republics.<sup>5</sup> However, the concentration of the school educated people was more in the urban areas where the European population dominated. The rural secondary educational programme of five to seven years of education, was yet to cover a large section of the population especially of the females in 1940. The primary education of four to five years duration had been imparted to a comparatively larger proportion of rural population.

Although, an overall position of higher education was very poor during the early phase of the Soviet regime but, a definite beginning had been made. The first state university was set up in Tashkent in 1920. Along with the land reforms, Central Asian Scientific Research Irrigation Institute was established in 1926. A similar Agrarian Research Institute was set up in 1927. In 1928, a teachers training institute was started in Samarkand and a year later Cotton

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5 Ibid., p. 70.



Irrigation Polytechnical Institute was set up in Tashkent. A medical institute was attached to Tashkent state university in 1930. Similar institutes were opened in other republics of Central Asia during Second Five Year Plan period. By 1941, there were about 47 institutes of higher learning and technical education with a total strength of about 28,000 students in the region.<sup>6</sup> The number of students in higher education in Central Asian republics and Kazakhstan rose from four thousand in 1927 to 37.9 thousand in 1940.<sup>7</sup> In terms of total population their number grew from 0.3 per thousand population in 1927 to 2.3 per thousand in 1940. Average for the USSR as a whole was of 4 per thousand.<sup>8</sup> Taking a combined figure of students who were studying in secondary and higher educational institutes the increase was still higher. Nearly 22.1 thousand students were studying in these institutes in Central Asia in 1928.<sup>9</sup> Their number

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6 R.R. Shama, A Marxist Model of Social Change (India, 1979), p. 200.

7 D. Lane, Politics and Society in USSR (London, 1970), p. 442.

8 A. Nove, J.A. Newth, n. 4, p. 80.

9 Shama, n. 6, Table A-8 and A-9, p. 225.

increased to 278.1 thousand in 1941.<sup>10</sup> Though they accounted for only 1.67 per cent of the total population but, the increase was not an insignificant achievement especially in the initial period of twenty years.

Thus, the education of various kinds and levels raised the cultural level of the rural population. More and more literate and educated people appeared in Kolkhoz villages by the end of the collectivisation drive. The general rise in the level of literacy in the republics between 1927-40 was phenomenal and highly impressive. The 1920 census shows that 95.5 per cent of the population of Central Asia was illiterate, whereas 1939 census reports that 79.8 per cent of the population was able to read and write.<sup>11</sup> But as mentioned earlier, the towns with their predominantly Russian population had a larger proportion of literate population in the early period of Soviet regime. The natives and the rural population in particular, still had a long way to cover. Secondly, almost the entire skilled men and women power required to build up the economy of these areas still

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10 Ibid., p. 225.

11 Figures cited in V. Shevtsov, The State and Nations in the USSR (Moscow, 1980), p. 102.

had to come from outside."<sup>12</sup> In 1941, out of the total 47,500 degree holders and specialists employed in the region, only 11 per cent were natives.<sup>13</sup>

### The Emergence of New Intelligentsia

Central Asian society till the revolution was dominated by a group of religious elite. The traditional intelligentsia called the Khadimists stood for the preservation of Islamic orthodoxy. They controlled all educational and socio-cultural institutions. The traditional religious elite with a complete hold on educational institutions could manipulate the minds of the masses. They opposed cultural influence and all these reforms which were meant to modernise the native society. To control the minds of the masses, they opposed secular education and tried to check zealously any move for change including that emerged from within the fold of the traditional society. The class character of the traditional intelligentsia represented the church and feudal interests as the leaders mainly belonged to the Muslim clergy, the landlords and the wealthy merchant class.

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12 A. Nove, J. Newith, n. 4, p. 70.

13 Ibid., p. 70.

In spite of the bitter opposition from the traditional elite class, the new reformist elements did emerge from within the native society. The new reformists came to be known as Jadidist intellectuals. The Jadidists tried to modernize the static native culture and more specifically its educational structure. These intellectuals tried to fight against the religious fanaticism by spreading and encouraging secular education through new schools of European type. Apart from the rigorous efforts for replacing the purely religious and scholastic system of education by secular education; they projected a number of other problems which were particularly relevant to their society. These intellectuals came from the native middle class and the trading bourgeoisie. However, due to their own limitations, arising from the lack of conceptual understanding of the existing situation, they failed to question seriously the institutional and ideological bases of their society. Actually, they clung to an ideology of 'romantic revivalism' and worked for the syncretization of the new and old values. The Jadidists failed to evolve a potentially viable agency of

progressive social change".<sup>14</sup> Though they enjoyed a sizeable support among urban professional classes but had no following whatsoever in the rural areas.<sup>15</sup> They were quite weak and ineffective on the organisational level as well. The Khadivists continued to dominate the scene, more so, in the light of the fact that they were being backed by the traditional ruling class.

Another smaller group of intellectuals, influenced by the Russian cultural traditions, worked for 'drawing nearer' the Russians and the natives. They favoured the setting up of the Russian native schools and tried to popularise these among the natives. These intellectuals also did not enjoy much support among the natives, though they did play an important role in bringing about cultural awakening among their people.

Immediately after the revolution an attempt was made to split the ranks of the clergy - the most vocal class of the traditional intelligentsia. Efforts were made to

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<sup>14</sup> Shama, n. 6, p. 25.

<sup>15</sup> R. Vaidyanath, The Formation of the Soviet Central Asian Republics, (PH, India, 1967), p. 54.

win over the poorer priests to the side of the socialist reformers. Especially, on the eve of the agrarian reforms, the poorer section of the clergy was turned into supporters of the new economic innovations. This helped in minimising the resistance to the reforms. The Soviet regime in the beginning followed a policy of slow alienation of the native elite instead of making a direct attack on them. Their alienation was achieved through a definite programme of class differentiation, a radical programme of the agrarian reforms and the modernisation of the traditional educational system. The appropriation of their property during the agrarian reforms eroded the very economic basis of power and influence of the landed aristocracy.

A new basis was laid for the emergence of a new socialist intelligentsia. The tasks, aims and functions of the elite were redefined on the socialist lines. In the beginning there was a great difficulty for the intelligentsia in reconciling their militant nationalism of the Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism with socialist ideals. However, slowly, through persuasion, vital institutional changes and by spreading modern and secular education, the difficult

task was accomplished. The modern system of education opened up wide opportunities for social advancement of the poor people. At the same time it helped in reducing the gap between masses and the intelligentsia and thus, helped in transforming the structural composition of the latter. The efforts towards the achievement of economic equality and equal opportunities, helped in countering the negative influence of the traditional intelligentsia among the masses.

#### The Settlement of the Nomads

One of the most important features of the Central Asian society, before the revolution, was its segregation into nomads and the sedentary population. The settling down of the nomads was one of the important goals of Soviet policy. The Soviet regime believed that agriculture was a higher and more desirable economic activity than pastoralism. The tribal and feudal remnants among the nomads could be eliminated only by freeing them from the stronghold of the tribal chiefs called beys and khans. The tribal genealogical ties were fundamental to the tribal social and political order. Meaningful change in the existing

order could only be brought through altered economic conditions. Their settlement on land was an act in the desired direction. The class of the tribal chiefs was economically liquidated to achieve the same. Even from the administrative point of view, it was difficult to control the scattered nomads. Effective administrative control could only be exercised over the sedentary population.

In Central Asia the present republics of Kirgizia and Turkmenia were the most important areas of the nomads. Although, a process of sedentarization of the nomads had already began by the end of the 19th century due to the economic developments which took place under the Tsarist regime, but the transition was very slow. The process got accelerated after the revolution through the conscious efforts of the Soviet regime. During the years of collectivisation, the sedentarisation of the nomads was undertaken quite rigorously, as it was necessary for the agrarian programme. The tribal leader were directly attacked during the collectivisation campaign as their land and animals were taken away. And the nomads were asked to join the collective farms. It was decided to liquidate the boys and manads in Kirgizia as they were found dangerous for "they used their material wealth and clan survival



to incite national and clan antagonism and engaged in anti-Soviet activities and aspired to disorganise the construction of Socialism.<sup>16</sup>

The Communist Party of Kirgizia in 1931, decided to settle about 85,000 nomadic and semi-nomadic households in the next four years. Nearly 1,730,000 roubles were spent on the task in the year of 1931 alone.<sup>17</sup> A large amount of the money spent was used for building villages and houses for the nomads. Considerable success had been achieved in the direction by the beginning of 1934. Similarly in Turkmenia the movement for the stabilisation of nomads assumed a mass character by the end of 1931. A huge amount of about 369,700 roubles was spent for this purpose.<sup>18</sup>

There was much resentment among the nomads against their stabilisation in the initial stages of the drive. Consequently, massive destruction of cattle took place

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16 G. Wheeler (ed), "The Stabilization of Nomads", Central Asian Review, Vol. VII, No. 3, p. 221.

17 Ibid., p. 225.

18. Ibid.

in Turmenia and Kirgizia in 1929-30. Moreover, in the beginning, many clan chiefs managed to operate from within the Kolkhozes. The rapid pace and bad management of the collective farms in the earlier stages caused resentment among the nomads, and the boys and managers played up their feelings. The clan affinities could also not be broken effectively for quite some time. In the initial stages, many nomad Kolkhozes constituted themselves on the clan basis and they still had strong clan loyalties.

The following practical steps were taken by the government during the second half of the 1930s to solve these problems;

- i) economic and technical help was given to nomad Kolkhozes so that they may successfully run these farms.
- ii) The Kolkhoz farmers were purged of the undesirable elements with the help of the political departments of the MTS.
- iii) The settled nomads and semi-nomads were exempted for a period of two years from supplying their quotas of grain and from other obligations towards the state.

The stabilisation of nomads - a direct consequence of the collectivisation programme completely reorganised their economy and made substantial changes in their living pattern. Apart from bringing changes in their food habits and clothing style, the transition greatly facilitated cultural and educational work among them. The old distinction between agriculturist and purely cattle breeding nomads became less acute. The agricultural activity was extended to waste lands formerly used by the nomads.

#### The Emancipation of Women:

Nowhere the impact of modernisation on Central Asian society was as striking as it was in the case of the position of women. Traditionally, women had a considerably low status within the family as well as within the entire social order. They were deprived of all rights and were kept ignorant and isolated from the outer world. The feudal households kept them inside the house walls and under a thick veil. Women were called with derogatory phrases such as those having "long hair and short brains". Son was treated like 'wealth' while daughter 'a burden'. The Muslim cannon law shariat and customary law adat fully

sanctioned the complete subjugation of women. The Islamic law considered wife to be 'impure' and the daughter as 'an alien burden' meant to be sold like 'cattle'. Whereas men were regarded as 'younger gods'. Before the court of law, witness of two women was treated to be equal to that given by one man. The regulations of Islam were not strictly followed by the poor peasant households. Because, for economic reasons, it was not possible to keep women strictly behind the walls, more so among the nomads. Even then, their overall position was much inferior in comparison to that of men. In nomadic system, where strict isolation and veil were not possible, although women enjoyed greater freedom than their settled sisters yet they were nowhere near men in terms of rights and status.

In the new socialist order women had an equal and active role to play. She was taken as an active builder of the new society by equally participating in social production. Lenin hoped that women, freed from illiteracy, organised in the economic life of the community and drawn out of the narrow domestic circle, would play their part in politics. In the very first month following the October Revolution, the Soviet government abolished all those old laws which humiliated women and denied them equal status with men. However, the feudal values of

regarding women as inferior beings were deep rooted in the Central Asian social ethos. Just by the adoption of new laws, complete and genuine emancipation could not be ensured. It needed more practical and sustained efforts.

In 1920s, efforts were made in this direction through a campaign of education and propaganda. Masses were being educated and enlightened on this subject. Even women themselves were to be educated before they could understand the need and meaning of their emancipation. In the beginning the Russian women communists took the lead. Soon afterwards the local women started boldly challenging the old order inspite of the fact that they were often threatened and even at times murdered by the local reactionaries.<sup>19</sup>

Major role in women's emancipation was played by the land and water reforms in Central Asia. Whereby, contrary to the Muslim custom, thousands of women were given land to run farms. In the beginning, in view of the society's age old isolation of the sexes, special

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19 F. Halle, Women in the Soviet East, Margaret Cree, Tans (London, 1938), pp. 175 ff.

women clubs, boarding schools and artels etc. were opened. Only later on when attitude towards women slowly began to change that these were merged with common organisations. Collectivisation further changed the position of women by giving them economic independence and thereby equality in society and family. At first, special women agricultural artels were organised so that they could be saved from the fierce opposition of the supporters of the old values. In Uzbekistan, in 1930, there were 1665 such all women artels embracing nearly 53,000 women.<sup>20</sup> Special female brigades were also organised within the common farms. There was 16,000 such female brigades which employed about 34000 women in Uzbekistan.<sup>21</sup> Gradually, the number of women working with men on the farms increased. By the end of 1930s they were drawn into production on a large scale and their emancipation became a mass phenomenon.

Apart from offering them opportunities for economic

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20 G. Wheeler (ed), "The People of Central Asia and Kaza Kuistan: Their Transition to Socialism", Central Asian Review, Vol. XI, No. 3, (1963), p. 229.

30 Ibid., p. 229.

independence, the social practices, which degraded and enslaved them in the past, were fought against by the builders of the new socialist society. A campaign against the veil called parandiza, was started in the late 20s. Meetings were organized by the authorities to induce women to throw away their veil. In a meeting organized in March 1928 at Osh, 110 Kirgiz women belonging to the families of the party members discarded their veil.<sup>22</sup> There was great resentment among men against such actions of their women. They generally forced them to resume the veil and sometimes even women on their own used to resume it. Women who seriously worked for the removal of veil were at times murdered by their people. "In Uzbekistan in 1929, twenty-one women were murdered in a period of four months" for the same reason.<sup>23</sup>

The central executive committee of Uzbekistan on March 7th, 1927, passed a resolution, titled 'Protection of women who have laid aside parandiza, demanding legal action against those who insulted or assaulted unveiled women. Though no such decree was passed but renewed

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22 G. Wheeler (ed), "The People of Central Asia: Social Customs", Central Asian Review, Vol. VII, No. 3 (1959), p. 215.

23 Ibid., p. 215.

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efforts were made to persuade people to change their opinion of opposing these women. With the changed economic condition, rise in the level of literate persons and constant propaganda, the resistance slowly died out and by 1940, women in Central Asia were no longer veiled.

Another social evil called Kalyan or bride price, which reduced women to a position of a cattle, was also attacked by the authorities. The practice of demanding bride price was legally prohibited. Polygamy and marriage of women under eighteen years of age were forbidden by law. However, these legislations did not effect the situation much in the beginning as it was not easy to break these social practices which were deep rooted in the socio-cultural milieu of the native society.

Rise in the educational level of women greatly helped in raising their status within the family as well as outside. An increasing number of women started participating in public affairs. The women's participation in public affairs such as elections, and the number of women officials were rapidly increasing. "The village Soviets of Turkmenistan had only 3 per cent of women members in 1926, by the very next year



their number doubled and since then it has greatly multiplied.<sup>24</sup> By 1934, the number of women who voted had risen above 60 per cent of total women voters in villages and above 90 per cent in towns.<sup>25</sup> The number of elected women to the village Soviets also increased considerably during this transitional period. The number of women holding responsible posts was also increasing. In 1930, the position of the Vice-Chairman of the central executive committee of Uzbekistan was occupied by a woman and the committee had nine women members in all.<sup>26</sup> Women in important public offices were producing satisfactory results. Thus, the Central Asian men had to slowly accept their fitness for high or even the highest posts. The growing social activities of the Central Asian women and their advancement to the positions of responsibility were the unmistakable signs of modernization of the static Central Asian society.

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<sup>24</sup> F. Halle, Women in the Soviet East (London, 1933), Margaret Green, Trans., p. 268.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 269.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

Changes in the Family Organisation and Cultural Practices:

The social and cultural institutions in any society are generally controlled by the group of people who control the means of production. They use these institutions to perpetuate that mode of production which benefits them. Before the revolution, the traditional social and cultural institutions propagated and inculcated among their members such social values and customs which catered to the needs and ideals of patriarchal and tribal feudal society. General economic backwardness, ignorance of the masses and the pre-dominance of Islam were the factors which dominated the pre-revolutionary social relations.

With the coming of the Soviet regime and its conscious efforts and the changed economic conditions helped in eradicating the old social and cultural patterns of the society. These were replaced by the socialist patterns which conformed to the needs and ideals of a socialist order and helped in the building of new socialist society. Cultural revolution was recognised as an integral part of the socialist revolution. Without cultural transformation it was difficult to sustain the tempo of material development and of economic growth.

The agrarian reconstruction of the 1920s and 1930s eroded the economic basis of the existing social order. Changes in the economic structure were bound to lead to important alterations in the socio-cultural make up of the society because of the direct and definite correlation that exists between economic patterns and socio-cultural institutions.

Cultural changes during this transitional period were more manifest in towns than in rural areas. In addition to it there were also class differences in the level of modernisation of the people. Party members and the new intelligentsia were quick to adopt new ways and trends. The level of acculturation and modernisation of the industrial workers was higher and more rapid than among the cultivators of Central Asia. Similarly, the customs associated with the inferior position of women disappeared more rapidly among the nomad women than among oasis women, due to their better adaptability to the new situation.

The socio-cultural pattern of the Central Asian peasantry; the most numerous class of the society, was highly effected by the radical reorganisation of the agrarian structure. The practice of having settlements on clan basis broke down after the land and water reforms which considerably

diminished the influence of the tribal aristocracy and of the feudal lords. The class of tribal aristocracy and of feudal lords got further adversely effected with the creation of Kolkhozes after the collectivisation campaign. The old Kishlaks were rebuilt and new Kolkhoz settlements were constructed in formerly uninhabited areas. The new settlements had wide straight streets instead of the narrow twisting alleys of the old type. The houses faced the streets instead of an inner courtyard as practiced earlier. However, in the new Kolkhoz settlements of the former nomads Yurts (nomad tents) continued to exist side by side with the permanent houses. The strict division of the house into two parts -- an outer for visitors and inner for women found in the old villages was no longer being observed.<sup>27</sup>

The breaking up of the large joint families and the development of extended conjugal families were the most important feature of the transitional period. Earlier, it was common for all married brothers to live together or for

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"The People of Central Asia and Kazakhstan: Their Transition to Socialism", n. 20, p. 228.

all married sons to live with their parents. The oldest man in the family used to be its dictator and used to control the family budget. Family property used to remain undivided under the control of the family head. The concept of private property and of joint ownership were both attacked by the Soviet regime. Beside the law against the private ownership of land and of other means of production, the payment of wages was being made on individual basis under the Soviet policy of collectivisation. It became difficult for the family head to control the family income in this new situation. Consequently, large families began to break-up. Although, the practice of small nucleated family had not started, yet its size became smaller. Father was no longer an undisputed master. The average number of members in a new family unit was generally between twelve and fifteen, though in some cases the number exceeded much beyond this limit.<sup>28</sup>

According to the old social custom prevalent in Central Asia, the young men and much less the young women, were not free to express their choice in the selection of their spouses.

The marriages were arranged entirely by the parents without bothering about the wishes of those to be married. The boys and girls were married at an early age when they were generally incapable of expressing any preferences. Now, the new laws fixed the minimum age of marriage at 18 years and forbade the payment of bride-price. Both these measures helped the young people in having a greater say in the decisions regarding their marriage, and the parental authority lessened in this regard. Though they were not given full freedom, but now they could usually accept or reject the matches arranged for them. Forced marriages were becoming less common. Forbidding the payment of bride-price and higher age limit for marriage made the sons less dependent on their parents. However, women were still not given freedom in this matter.

There were changes in the dress, style, food habits and in other cultural activities. But, on the whole, the survivals of the past were still unusually strong in the cultural sphere of the people of Central Asia. After the introduction of the new educational system and an intense propaganda against the old tribal and feudal values it took more than two decades before the desirable results could be achieved.

Religion: The Major Obstacle in the Way  
of Modernisation

In Central Asia, the Islamic religion practised by the Mullas and Ishans was the dominant force working for conservatism. It opposed and obstructed all efforts for the modernisation of the society. The Mullas and Ishans had also used religion to resist Russian and then Soviet regime. In spite of this, immediately after the revolution, direct attack on the religion was not made. In fact, Lenin following the policy of caution and extreme carefulness with regard to the Muslims of Central Asia, went to the extent of saying that Mullas would be allowed to co-exist with the new political organisations.<sup>29</sup> The Muslim religious institutions and madf lands were not touched by the government till the land and water reforms of mid-1920s. However, the practices of the Muslim religion were quite at odds with the demands and ideals of the reconstruction of the socialist society and economy. Typical Soviet opinion about the Muslim religion was that "Religion is a superstition which

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29 Cited in R.R. Shama, n. 6, p. 215.

keeps people backward, look at the Arabs and Persians where religion has gotten them, they are poor and ignorant. To achieve progress we must not allow religion to interfere, though, religion should not be persecuted, because it does help some people in facing life."<sup>30</sup>

It was only during the wake of land and water reforms in mid-1920s that the qaaf land was liquidated because it was through such institutions that conservative Muslim clergy was creating difficulties in the process of modernisation of the society and in its economic development. Another important instrument in the hands of the native clergy was Muslim Shariat and adat laws, through these they were exercising an important hold over the socio-cultural set up of the society. These Muslim laws were replaced throughout Central Asia by a uniform Soviet laws in 1927. The schools run by the religious institutions were discontinued, the mosques were closed, the property of the priests appropriated pilgrimages to Mecca and Medina were forbidden.<sup>31</sup> Finally,

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<sup>30</sup> R. Pipes, "Assimilation and the Muslims", in A. Inkeles and K. Geiger (ed), Soviet Society (1961), p. 589.

<sup>31</sup> Benigsen and C. Lemerrier, Talash in the Soviet Union (1967), pp. 149-52.



a majority of the religious leaders was liquidated during the purges of 1932-33.<sup>32</sup> The influence of religion among the inhabitants of the Kolkhozes was very strong during the earlier years of the formation of the collective farms. But, slowly, due to the working pattern and policies pursued in the collective farms, its influence progressively declined. The declining influence of religion paved the way towards the acceptance of new ideas, innovations and towards the scientific world-outlook.

Increasing Urbanization and Industrialization of the Region:

Extensive urbanisation resulted from the rapid industrialization of Soviet Central Asia. It also brought radical changes in the life of the peasantry. The level of industrial growth between 1913-40 in Turkmenia, Kirgizia, Uzbekistan and Tadjikistan was 6.7 times, 9.9 times, 4.7 times and 8.8 times respectively. The rate of growth in large-scale industry was 8 times in Turkmenia, 3 times in Uzbekistan and as high as 83 times in Kirgizia. The growth rate of large-scale industry for USSR as a whole was only 5.7 times between

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32 E. E. Bacon, Central Asians Under Russian Rule (New York, 1966), p. 174.

1913-35.<sup>33</sup> However, inspite of the high growth rate the Central Asian republics remained industrially backward. The figures do not highlight the real situation because the starting point for industrial growth was almost from zero. The entire basic infrastructure for industrial development was created in 1930s.

Another important factor to be remembered is that though industrial growth was significant during this period yet, the overwhelming majority of working population of the region remained agriculturists as revealed by the following Table.

TABLE 5.1

PERCENTAGE OF THE WORKING POPULATION ENGAGED IN DIFFERENT SECTORS IN 1939<sup>34</sup>

Republic	Industry Building Transport	Agriculture
Uzbekistan	14.3	70.8
Kirgizia	13.9	70.9
Tadjikistan	10.9	75.3
Turkmenia	20.3	59.1

33 David Lane, Politics and Society in the USSR (London, 1970), p. 443 and N.R. Shama, n. 6, p. 166

34 Figures from the 1939 census data cited in A. Nove and J. Newth, n. 4, p. 41.

The industrial growth in Central Asia was not achieved through "harsh exploitation of the peasant producers", it resulted, "partly as a matter of deliberate policy and partly to meet requirements of the Soviet economy (by which) investment resources were directed towards the economic and cultural development of the areas in question."<sup>35</sup>

The general standard of living of the people of Central Asia rose immensely as a result of the rapid industrial growth and increase in agricultural output. These were caused by the satisfactory implementation of the first two five year plans. The raised standard of living was reflected in an increase in the selection of food stuffs. Sugar, sweets, macaroni and other products of the food industry became common and the demand for fruit and vegetables grew.<sup>36</sup> Textile clothing and factory made foot-wears replaced home made articles.

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35 Ibid., p. 123.

36 "The People of Central Asia and Kazakhstan: Their Transition to Socialism", n. 20, pp. 227 ff.

Thus, the agrarian reforms of the two decades opened up many avenues for bringing about fundamental alterations in the socio-cultural and economic fabric of the society. The institutional constraints on the growth and development of the society were effectively removed.

### SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

In the nineteenth century Soviet Central Asia was an area where nature was harsh, technology backward and the institutions were rigid. The society was overwhelmingly rural and extremely poor. The agrarian economy was based on feudal relations of production and was in a state of stagnation. The agricultural techniques were primitive where no significant changes had taken place for centuries. Socially, the region was under the influence of the orthodox religious system of Islam. The religious orthodoxy was being used to perpetuate the then existing system, and to check the inflow of new ideas that would have effected the system.

After the region was conquered by the Russians in the middle of the 19th century, no attempt was made by the conquerors to fundamentally alter the socio-economic structure of the society. The economy of the region was used to serve the industrial development of Central Russia. The region was taken as a possible alternative source for cotton supply to Russian textile industry especially after the drying up of the traditional American source of cotton imports after the civil war. The Central Asian territories before the revolution were playing the role of the

periphery for the Russian metropolises, and the policy of colonial exploitation was being followed. Subsequently, the colonial rule of Tsarist Russia gradually did bring about some economic changes which had far reaching impact. These were mainly the development of transport particularly of railways, immigration of a large number of peasants from Central Russia into the region and the development of cotton cultivation to supply raw material to the Russian textile industry.

The impact of Russian colonialism did not effect the region uniformly as the political set up introduced by the Russians itself was not uniform. Of the three Khanates, Kokand and some other territories were directly incorporated into the Russian empire as Turkestan Governorate General, while titular sovereignty of the vassal states of Bukhara and Khiva was recognised. The impact of Russian colonialism was lesser in the semi-independent Khanates of Khiva and Bukhara as compared to areas which had been directly annexed by the Tsarist regime. The socio-economic structure remained virtually static in Bukhara and Khiva except for the extension of railways and telegraph lines therein. The inequalities in the land distribution and the existing land tenure system remained

untouched in the whole of the region. Though, more cotton was grown but, it did not improve the lot of the small cultivators.

After the revolution, when the Bolsheviks replaced the Tsarist regime in Russia, the policy of colonial exploitation of the region was abandoned and it was decided to introduce fundamental changes in its agrarian structure to improve the productivity level. The changes were in tune with the Marxist-Leninist ideology and the nationality policy followed by the Soviet government after the revolution. The focus of the nationality policy was to achieve economic equality among different nationalities of USSR. Although, politically, the nationality policy established the principle of self-determination for the nationalities but, in practice its economic parameters like ensuring economic equality etc. were more important than its political contours. Thus, the new regime was committed to the cause of economic development not only of its European or more advanced parts but also of the former colonies.

The Socialist agrarian programme followed by the Soviet regime, envisaged collectivised large scale mechanised farming. The right of private property in

land and the small holdings had to give way to state or collectively owned big farms under the socialist programme of agricultural development. However, Lenin advised to be very careful and extremely cautious in effecting this transformation in Central Asia. Specially while dealing with the middle peasantry, it was advised not to use force and make haste but to follow a policy of gradual transformation.

The Soviet government started introducing important reforms in the agrarian set up of the region early in 1920s. The Bolsheviks were quite occupied with the objectives of legitimisation and consolidation of Soviet political system during this period. The land and water reforms of the first phase, <sup>which</sup> struck at the privileged position of the Russian settlers, had strong political impact. These helped in making the natives accept the new regime by giving them reasonable ground to trust it.

The reforms of the second phase between 1925-30 produced more profound effects and changes. The native feudal class was attacked through these reforms. The land of the native landlords and of the clergy and their privileged position were taken away. The confiscated land was redistributed among the landless and poor



peasants. The reforms immediately benefitted the poor peasants and strengthened the position of the middle peasantry. This helped in checking the down-ward trend of agriculture. These reforms, by sharpening class consciousness and by aggravating class interests, paved way far more fundamental changes. The reforms can, thus, be termed as 'revolutionary-democratic'.

However, the fragmentation of holdings caused by the reforms of the 30s could not enhance agricultural production. It needed central planning and mechanisation of agriculture, collectivisation of agriculture provided the required institutional change in the agrarian structure. The collectivisation of Central Asian agriculture undertaken during 1930s was a definite break from the past. Within a short period of ten years the production relations and the agrarian structure of the region was completely transformed. The backward tribal-feudal relations of production were replaced by more productive socialist relations and these paved the way for non-capitalist path of development skipping the capitalist stage. However, the pace of collectivisation was quite rapid and it faced considerable resistance from the native feudal and conservative elements. In order to overcome

this resistance the methods of intensive propaganda, mass education and in some cases even force were used.

By the end of 1940 the changes in the agrarian structure greatly helped in improving agricultural production. It led to considerable increase in acreage under cultivation, but more rise in cotton production was recorded than that of other agricultural crops. The level of agricultural mechanisation also increased tremendously in Soviet Central Asia after the reforms.

The changes in the basic and the main sector of Central Asian economy greatly influenced the overall set up of the society. The land reforms served as an important instrument to stir up the static social structure. Simultaneously, the changes introduced in the social and cultural milieu at the right points, also helped in the success of land reforms and the other new economic innovations. Outcome of the agrarian reforms of the two decades was the modernisation of the Central Asian society by spreading mass education, emancipation of women, sedentarisation of the nomads, modernisation of social and cultural practices and freeing the society from the orthodoxy of the traditional religious intelligentsia. Even after this, some of the old values

and social practices persisted. In short, during this transitional period an important beginning had been made towards the total transformation of the society.

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