

### 3. State Formation in the Soviet Era, 1917 to the 1960s

From the second half of the nineteenth century, Central Asia was inexorably subjected to internal developments in the Russian Empire. The hectic, often controversial process of modernisation that commenced in Russia under Alexander II, continued under Stolypin and finally took the form of socialist revolution in 1917 could not have affected this region in a more dramatic way. If modernisation is viewed as the transformation of a traditional society that commences 'once the leaders of a society have decided to adapt their existing institutions and values to modern functions'<sup>1</sup> then the natural questions to ask are: who were the real leaders in the Central Asian societal milieu? How resistant did traditional institutions prove to be vis-a-vis elements of modernisation, such as industrialisation, territorial unification, universal education, administration and legal principles? Why did this adaptation not take the conventional linear form of moving from an agrarian to an industrial society? This chapter, which is chronologically set in the period from 1917 to the 1960s, deals with the peculiarities of Tajikistan's movement towards the Soviet form of modernity, concentrating on the initially violent character of the process and its inherently contradictory features.

#### The Russian Revolution and Turkestan

While the Russian conquest, and the innovations that followed, resulted in the establishment of lasting peace and significant improvement in living standards in the region, it all came at a high price for the indigenous population. They acquired the status of second-grade people in their own land.<sup>2</sup> The imperial regime's administrative, legal, educational and land reforms, initiated in Turkestan under governor-general K. P. von Kaufman (1867–82), were aimed primarily at strengthening and maintaining Russian supremacy; all other goals were secondary. Once a certain degree of stability was achieved in the region and Turkestan became incorporated into the all-Russian economy, there was no compelling need for the tsarist government to press on with reforms, especially in the political field. During his tenure as chairman of the Council of Ministers

---

1 Cyril E. Black, 'Inner Asia and Modernisation: The Problem', in *The Modernisation of Inner Asia*, ed. Cyril E. Black (Armonk, NY, and London: M. E. Sharpe, 1991), p. 19.

2 For one of many examples, see the anecdotes in: A. I. Iakovlev and S. A. Panarin, 'Protivorechiia reform: Araviia i Turkestan', *Vostok*, No. 5 (1991), p. 117.

of the Russian Empire (1907–11), P. A. Stolypin delivered a clear message that the Russians were not prepared to share their monopoly on power with the native population in Central Asia.

Ultimately, however, the empire found it difficult to cope with the social forces it had inadvertently unleashed in Turkestan. First, the ever-growing class of local entrepreneurs, industrialists and intellectuals grew more and more vociferous in its demands for equal rights with Russians. Whereas in 1906 they had asked only for religious freedom, the return of expropriated lands and the creation of a Muslim religious administration in Tashkent,<sup>3</sup> in 1916, for the first time, an explicit demand for independence and the establishment of a sovereign state of Turkestan was made public at the Congress of Nationalities in Lausanne.<sup>4</sup> Second, Russian rule failed to weaken traditional institutions, such as *adat* (customary law), *shari'a* (Islamic law) or the patriarchal family; in fact, indigenous social control<sup>5</sup> at the grassroots level gained from the Russian Government's recognition of local men of authority as its representatives. While proclaiming allegiance to the tsar, many traditional leaders were disposed to pursue their own agenda in crisis periods and incite the masses against Russian rule, as happened in 1892 in Tashkent with *qozi* Muhitdin and *ishon* Abu-l-Qasim—'hitherto notable amongst the natives for their loyal speeches and declarations'.<sup>6</sup>

The imperial government did not manage to create a solid social base amongst the indigenous population. Two worlds coexisted in Turkestan: one of Russian settlers and administrators, the other of the local inhabitants; interaction between the two was minimal. By 1917, this coexistence had acquired overtones of open hostility. The tsarist regime was no longer in a position to ameliorate economic difficulties in Turkestan, nor could it resort to intimidation in order to maintain the status quo, for its army and police were in complete disarray.<sup>7</sup> The Russian Empire entered 1917 with its economy, armed forces and moral foundations badly shaken by the continuing war in Europe. Turkestan was no

---

3 Carrère d'Encausse, *Islam and the Russian Empire*, p. 77.

4 Hambly, *Central Asia*, p. 228.

5 In this book, 'social control' is used as a neutral term 'to cover all social processes to induce conformity ranging from infant socialisation through to public execution'. See: Stanley Cohen, *Visions of Social Control: Crime, Punishment and Classification* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), p. 2.

6 Barthold, *Sochineniia*, Vol. II, Part 1, p. 374.

7 During winter–spring 1917, the number of deserters from the Russian armed forces rose almost fivefold, from 6300 a month to a staggering figure of 30 900. See: N. N. Golovin, 'Voennye usilia Rossii v mirovoi voine', *Voenna-istoricheskii zhurnal*, No. 4 (1993), p. 29. Arrest and dismissal of officers by the rank-and-file soldiers were the order of the day and, as the military commander of the Samarkand *oblast* reported, there were evident 'tremendous decay of discipline in the regiments and general licentiousness of soldiers'. See: D. I. Soifer, 'Bolshevistskie voennye gruppy Turkestanskogo voennogo okruga v 1917g.', in *Voennye organizatsii partii bolshevikov v 1917g.*, ed. Iu. I. Korablev (Moscow: Nauka, 1986), p. 252.

exception to the generally catastrophic state of affairs in the Romanovs' realm. The political situation had become highly volatile in the general-governorship by 1917.

Both Russians and the indigenous population of Turkestan welcomed the abdication of Nicholas II and the establishment of the Provisional Government on 27 February 1917. The Russians anticipated a quick end to the war and an easing of the economic crisis; the locals hoped to achieve the right to self-determination. Arguably, the short period of spring to autumn 1917 was a time of an unheard-of level of freedom in Russia, and particularly in Turkestan. More than 70 political parties and organisations were operative throughout the former empire,<sup>8</sup> including a variety of reformist (*jadid*) and conservative Muslim groups, united in Shurai Islamiya (the Islamic Council) and Jamiyati Ulama (the Assembly of the Clergy) respectively. In May 1917, the First All-Russian Muslim Congress was held in Moscow. The majority of its 800 delegates, one-third of whom represented Central Asia, voted in favour of federation with Russia, with territorial self-rule for each nationality.<sup>9</sup>

The Russian Provisional Government, dominated by constitutional democrats, socialist revolutionaries and Mensheviks, was reluctant to share power with local elites in Turkestan. It retained the anti-native attitudes of the tsarist regime and, moreover, preserved the old administrative structures. Governor-General Kuropatkin issued a decree in March 1917 that stipulated that the proportion of Russians in local legislative bodies must not be lower than 50 per cent.<sup>10</sup> One month later, an official of the Executive Committee of the Provisional Government made a comment to the effect that 'the revolution has been waged by Russians; that is why the power is in our hands in Central Asia'.<sup>11</sup>

In 1917, only the Bolsheviks appeared to have a positive solution to the nationality question. Their Seventh All-Russian Conference in April confirmed the right of nations to self-determination, but made it conditional with the supreme interests of the proletariat's struggle for socialism,<sup>12</sup> thus creating a space for political manoeuvre. A sizeable part of the native intelligentsia in Turkestan found the Bolshevik doctrine attractive, since it promised equality with Russians and an accelerated pace of social progress. As Alexandre

8 *Borba kommunisticheskoi partii protiv neproletarskikh partii, grupp i techenii v posleoktiabrskii period* (Leningrad: Izdatelstvo Leningradskogo universiteta, 1982), p. 5.

9 Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917–1923* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 77.

10 *Pobeda Oktiabrskoi revoliutsii v Uzbekistane: Sbornik dokumentov*, Vol. 1 (Tashkent: Izdatelstvo AN UzSSR, 1963), p. 30.

11 Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, 'The Fall of the Czarist Empire', in *Central Asia: A Century of Russian Rule*, ed. Edward Allworth (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 218.

12 S. V. Kuleshov, *Velikii Oktiabr i torzhestvo leninskoi natsionalnoi programmy partii* (Moscow: Vysshiaia Shkola, 1987), pp. 72–4.

Bennigsen has noted, 'their Marxism was vague, if not unlearned. Their aims were twofold: reformist vis-à-vis traditional Islam and nationalist vis-à-vis the creation of independent Muslim polities free from Russian domination.'<sup>13</sup> The Bolsheviks, in turn, regarded Muslim socialists as a useful means of spreading the party's influence in Central Asia.

The second half of 1917 was characterised by a further decline of authority in Turkestan. Organs of the Provisional Government coexisted and competed with various self-proclaimed Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies whilst the bulk of the indigenous population stood aloof from the political struggle.<sup>14</sup> In the end it was precisely Bolshevik and left-wing socialist revolutionary influence in the army that secured victory over the Provisional Government throughout Turkestan in October 1917.<sup>15</sup>

Nationalist elements in Turkestan were too weak and fragmented to challenge Russian supremacy, and inevitably had to decide which side to support in the Russian Civil War. The idea of preserving the old state of affairs did not appeal to them, and finally the bulk of the national intelligentsia either joined the Turkestan Communist Party (TCP) or at least remained neutral in respect to its activities. After the Red Guards quashed the short-lived Kokand Autonomy in February 1918 and the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (TASSR) was promulgated on 1 May 1918, Soviet power became the single most important force in the region.<sup>16</sup> All alternative political organisations, including Shurai Islamiya and Jamiyati Ulama, were disbanded, and even Muslim soviets (*Musovdepy*) were merged with district Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies (*Raisovdepy*) because, according to the TASSR Government, there could not be 'division between Russians and Muslims in Soviet Turkestan'.<sup>17</sup> The adoption in October 1918 of the TASSR Constitution, which emulated Soviet Russia's basic laws, and placed its defence, foreign affairs, communications, transport, industry and finances under Moscow's jurisdiction, underlined the process of Turkestan's integration into the Soviet realm. It received further impetus with the end of fighting in mainland Russia in 1920; henceforth the vast territories of Turkestan, which included northern Tajikistan, shared all major perturbations of the communist experiment in full measure. The patterns of War Communism, wholesale nationalisation, the New Economic Policy (NEP), industrialisation and collectivisation in Khujand and Isfara did not differ much from those in Tambov or Donetsk.

---

13 Bennigsen and Wimbush, *Muslim National Communism in the Soviet Union*, p. 22.

14 *Pobeda Oktiabrskoi revoliutsii v Uzbekistane*, Vol. 1, p. 266.

15 Soifer, 'Bolshevistskie voennye gruppy Turkestanskogo voennogo okruga v 1917g.', pp. 249–50.

16 As the White General Denikin noted, 'by the Summer of 1918 the whole Turkestan *okrug* had been captured by the Bolsheviks with the assistance of Hungarian and German prisoners-of-war settled there'. See: Gen. A. I. Denikin, 'Ocherki Russkoi smuty', *Voprosy Istorii*, No. 2 (1995), p. 106.

17 *Pobeda Oktiabrskoi revoliutsii v Uzbekistane: Sbornik dokumentov*, Vol. 2 (Tashkent: Izdatelstvo AN UzSSR, 1972), p. 481.

## The Downfall of Bukhara

The situation was quite different in the Bukharan Emirate. The two revolutions of 1917 had a very modest impact on this country. Soviets were organised exclusively in Russian settlements there, and generally kept a low profile. In November 1917, there were only three Bolsheviks in Bukhara.<sup>18</sup> Emir Alim Khan's main concern was the increasing activism of the *jadid* movement, which demanded liberal reforms, particularly in the sphere of education. In April 1917, the most active *jadids* were arrested and flogged, and their leaders—most notably, Fayzulla Khojaev—sought asylum in New Bukhara and Turkestan. With the triumph of the Bolsheviks in Turkestan came an opportunity for the *jadids* to implement their reformist program. In September 1918, some 200 radical *jadids* created the Bukharan Communist Party (BCP); two years later its membership exceeded five thousand.<sup>19</sup> Fayzulla Khojaev, though not a member of the BCP, was included in the Turkestan Commission (Turkkomissiia)—the plenipotentiary body established by the Russian Communist Party and the Russian Government in March 1919 to supervise and coordinate all party and state activities in the region.<sup>20</sup>

The first attempt to overthrow the emir and install *jadid* authority in Bukhara took place in February 1918 when F. I. Kolesov, chairman of the Turkestan Government and an ardent Bolshevik, arrived in Bukhara with 500 Red Guards from Tashkent only to find that Fayzulla Khojaev's promise of mass popular revolt against Alim Khan was a bluff. He had to retreat, and for more than two years, Bukhara was allowed to live in relative peace. Whenever the question of sending additional troops and resources to Turkestan was raised, Lenin invariably opposed it: 'Your demands for personnel are exorbitant. This is ridiculous or worse than ridiculous if you imagine that Turkestan is more important than the Centre or Ukraine ... In my opinion, Frunze asks for too much. We should capture Ukraine first, let Turkestan wait and get by somehow.'<sup>21</sup> In the summer of 1920 the wait was over. On 28 August, forces of the Turkestan Front under the command of Mikhail Frunze attacked the Bukharan Emirate, and by 2 September had taken control of its capital city and northern and central districts. An easy victory was guaranteed not only by the technical superiority of the Red Army;<sup>22</sup> as had happened many times before, the constituent principalities showed little desire to fight side-by-side with the emir. Only the city of Bukhara offered

18 Vladimir Medvedev, 'Nechaiannaia revoliutsiia', *Druzhba Narodov*, No. 1 (1992), p. 145.

19 *Istoriia Tadzhikskogo naroda*, Vol. III, kn. 1 (Moscow: Nauka, 1964), p. 90.

20 Ishanov, *Rol' kompartii i Sovetskogo pravitelstva v sozdanii natsionalnoi gosudarstvennosti uzbekskogo naroda*, pp. 91–2.

21 V. I. Lenin, *Sochineniia*, Izd. 4, Vol. 51 (Moscow: Izdatelstvo politicheskoi literatury, 1965), pp. 89–90.

22 The taskforce of the Turkestan Front comprised 7000 infantry, 2500 cavalry, 40 cannons, 230 machine guns, 10 armoured vehicles, five armoured trains and 11 planes, and was opposed by the emir's 8300 infantry, 7600 cavalry, 23 cannons and 16 machine guns. See: Khudoiberdyev, *Boevaia druzhba, rozhdennaia Oktiabrem*, p. 79.

fierce resistance. Alim Khan fled to Dushanbe. On 6 October 1920, the Bukharan People's Soviet Republic was proclaimed, and Fayzulla Khojaev became the head of its *jadid*-dominated government.

The deposed emir failed to gather any considerable forces around him in Dushanbe. His position was thoroughly weakened by intermittent clashes between local warlords; in December 1920, the strongmen of Qarotegin rebelled against him. Consequently, the Soviet Hisor Expeditionary Corps, formed in November 1920 to gain control over Eastern Bukhara, managed to resolve this task by the spring of 1921. Alim Khan fled to Afghanistan, and the Extraordinary Dictatorial Commission was set up in Eastern Bukhara to act as a supreme administrative organ on behalf of the Bukhara People's Republic. Similarly, the Military-Political Trio was empowered by the TASSR to rule in the Pamirs.

The Tajiks of Eastern Bukhara initially welcomed the Red Army soldiers. They knew nothing about communism, and the majority of them had not even heard about the dramatic events of 1917; what they understood and cared about was that the oppressive rule of the emir and his Uzbek warlords was over. The isolated, self-sufficient peasant communities in Eastern Bukhara strove for autonomous existence according to ancient traditions in a peaceful environment, with as little state interference as possible. Of course, these hopes could not eventuate under the new regime. The Dictatorial Commission appointed revolutionary committees (*revkoms*) to each of the five *vilayets* of Eastern Bukhara, and these began to requisition food, confiscate private and *vaqf* (belonging to the mosques) lands and mobilise people for public works. In European Russia, the 'arrogant, often abutting on malversation activities of *revkoms*, indulgence in bribery, drinking and other excesses'<sup>23</sup> caused a large-scale peasant revolt led by A. S. Antonov between autumn 1920 and summer 1921. In Central Asia the defensive reaction of the indigenous population took the form of the so-called *basmachi* movement.

## The Resistance in Central Asia

The interpretation of the *basmachi* as mere gangs of 'counter-revolutionary feudal elements' who favoured 'political banditism in combination with criminal activities'<sup>24</sup> cannot hold, for the movement at its height had an undoubtedly mass character and pursued definite political goals, centred mainly on the preservation of the old economic and social orders. It even managed to form a provisional government in Ferghana in August 1919. It is equally hard to corroborate the

---

23 P. A. Aptekar, 'Krestianskaia voina', *Voенно-istoricheskii zhurnal*, No. 1 (1993), p. 50.

24 V. I. Abylgaziev, 'Iz istorii borby narodov Turkestana za vlast Sovetov', in *Boevoe sodruzhestvo sovetskikh respublik. 1919–1922* (Moscow: Nauka, 1982), pp. 175–6.

notion that ‘the struggle between the Basmachi and the Soviet Russian troops was not between Communists and anti-Communists, as in Russia, but between Russians and Moslems’.<sup>25</sup> The Ferghana Provisional Government was formed as a result of an alliance between an eminent *basmachi* leader, Madamin Bek, and a former tsarist officer, Monstrov, commander of the Russian Peasant Army—an alliance that ‘enjoyed support from merchants and townspeople of both nationalities’ and survived ‘both Monstrov’s death in January 1920 and Madamin’s surrender in March of the same year’.<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, in late 1920 indigenous conscripts made up almost 33 per cent of the regiments of the Turkestan Front that fought the *basmachi*.<sup>27</sup> At the risk of oversimplifying, it seems that the main conflict stemmed from protests by the predominantly peasant society of Turkestan against any attempts at radically reforming existing economic patterns and concomitant rules of social behaviour. Ideological, religious and nationalist considerations were of secondary importance in this context. The successes and defeats of Soviet power in its struggle with the *basmachi* were directly linked to its agrarian policies.

During 1918–19, *basmachi* forces in the Ferghana Valley, including northern Tajikistan, numbered 7000 fighters, but by the spring of 1920 their ranks had swollen fourfold.<sup>28</sup> The Soviet authorities began to realise that they could not succeed by purely military methods, and opted for some social and economic concessions. The Sixth Congress of the Turkestan Communist Party (in August 1921) stressed that the abolition of mandatory food requisitions, cessation of looting by the Red Army, a broad propaganda campaign, nativisation of the local administrative bodies, and the especially cautious implementation of land reform, which ‘absolutely did not affect peasants of average wealth [*seredniaki*]’, had been instrumental in undermining the *basmachi* movement.<sup>29</sup> The arrival of reinforcements from Russia and the endorsement of a general amnesty enabled the Soviet authorities to deal a final blow to the *basmachi* in Turkestan in 1922, when from February to October, 119 of 200 *basmachi* groups dissolved or surrendered,<sup>30</sup> and the rest were annihilated or moved elsewhere.

The situation in Eastern Bukhara (modern-day southern Tajikistan) had distinctive features. The euphoria caused by the collapse of the emirate quickly gave way to popular resentment of marauding Red Army units and the new dictatorial organs that they supported. In the summer of 1921, the local population began to create paramilitary formations and demand the withdrawal

25 Michael Rywkin, *Russia in Central Asia* (New York: Collier Books, 1963), p. 57.

26 Martha B. Olcott, ‘The Basmachi or Freeman’s Revolt in Turkestan 1918–24’, *Soviet Studies*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 3 (July 1981), p. 356.

27 Khudoiberdiyev, *Boevaia družba, rozhdenaia Oktiabrem*, p. 37.

28 *Grazhdanskaia voina v SSSR* (Moscow: Voennoe izdatelstvo, 1986), pp. 128, 357.

29 *Inostrannaia voennaia interventsia i grazhdanskaia voina v Srednei Azii i Kazakhstane*, Vol. 2 (Alma-Ata: Nauka, 1964), pp. 686–9.

30 A. I. Chugunov, *Borba na granitse. 1917–1928* (Moscow: Mysl, 1980), p. 118.

of the Red Army. Unlike in Ferghana, these formations acted exclusively as self-defence forces, and very seldom operated outside their parochial territories. Each of them was headed by a local strongman: a former *bek*, mullah, tribal chief or village elder. They offered resistance both to the Soviet authorities and to Alim Khan's guerrilla units. In Turkestan in 1922, the Soviet state had been able to enforce social control through established agencies, such as the ramified communist organisation, numerous garrisons linked by railroad and the hierarchy of elected soviets that began to replace *revkoms* in 1919; but Eastern Bukhara was completely devoid of those attributes. The nominal incorporation of some strongmen into the Soviet structures<sup>31</sup> by no means meant the strengthening of Soviet power in Eastern Bukhara. By the end of 1921, in the absence of an overarching state authority, the whole country had slipped into anarchy and violence.

In Eastern Bukhara, Ibrahim Bek and other *basmach*i leaders relied upon the remnants of the Bukharan Government as well as local kinship and patronage networks.<sup>32</sup> During the anti-*basmach*i campaign here the influx of civil authorities, and the use of village self-defence units and irregular troops, some of whom were former *basmach*i, resulted in the disruption of local power networks.<sup>33</sup> Another factor disrupting local power structures was the Soviet and *basmach*i use of famine relief as a tool in their respective struggles, with the Soviets distributing food 'according to political criteria' and the *basmach*i also using the redistribution of food as a reward for communities that were loyal to them.<sup>34</sup> In the struggle between the *basmach*i and the Soviets in Eastern Bukhara, 'the population's allegiance depended on the ability of different actors in satisfying its most basic needs'.<sup>35</sup>

The Red Army was also fighting against Enver Pasha's guerrillas, who were operating from Afghanistan with the emir's blessing and with British money and supplies. Ibrahim Bek, a chief of the Uzbek Loqay tribe, raided adjacent Tajik districts,<sup>36</sup> and periodically assaulted both Soviet and Enver Pasha's troops.

31 In July 1921, Davlatmin-bek (formerly *bek* of Kulob) and *ishan* Sultan (a noble from Gharm) were appointed to head *revkoms* in their respective territories.

32 Beatrice Penati, 'The Reconquest of East Bukhara: The Struggle against the Basmachi as a Prelude to Sovietization', *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (2007), pp. 522, 533. Penati notes: 'The presence of Bukharan Emirate government personnel in Soviet power structures complicated the fight against the *Basmachi* as some bureaucrats were collaborating with the *Basmachi* or passively resisting engaging in activities directed against the *Basmachi*' (see: *ibid.*, p. 527).

33 Penati, 'The Reconquest of East Bukhara', pp. 521–2, 532–4.

34 Penati, 'The Reconquest of East Bukhara', p. 532.

35 Penati, 'The Reconquest of East Bukhara', pp. 521–2, 532–4. This pragmatism of the common people, as described by Penati, is echoed by Nourzhanov's description of the *Basmachi* leadership: 'the *Basmachi* were excellent politicians, and changed allegiances and ideological platforms to offer their communities the best chance of survival.' See: Nourzhanov, 'Reassessing the *Basmachi*', p. 61.

36 Even before 1917 the Loqay terrorised and plundered their Tajik neighbours and pushed them out of the Yovon Valley. Some 25 000 Loqay nomads enjoyed the emir's favour and were a kind of *bête noire* for the rest of the population in Eastern Bukhara. See: Karmysheva, *Ocherki etnicheskoi istorii iuzhnykh raionov*

In mountainous districts, such as Mastchoh, Darvoz and Qarotegin, villagers blocked and fortified narrow roads, and ambushed all strangers, irrespective of their origin or party affiliation. In lowlands where people could not effectively resist more or less large armed units, they either met the stronger party's demands for supplies and booty or joined its ranks to avenge their relatives. Most commonly, they migrated abroad: 206 800 people, one-fourth of Eastern Bukhara's population, left their homes, predominantly in south-western and western districts, during 1920–26.<sup>37</sup> All in all, the situation in Eastern Bukhara in that period bears a striking resemblance to that in Tajikistan in 1992. In both cases it was not the state (the Soviet or the emir's) that offered the populace a viable strategy for survival, but rather an assortment of local strongmen who were in a position to guarantee (or deny) livelihoods, and to organise defence.

Red Army commanders indiscriminately labelled all their adversaries *basmachi*; Enver Pasha's soldiers called themselves *mujahideen*; but the local population itself employed neither of these terms in reference to their militias. Instead of ideological, political or religious markers, they used the name of a specific warlord for identification purposes: Fuzail Makhsum in Gharm, Dilovarsho in Darvoz, Yuldosh Sohbnazar in Hisor, Asror Khan in Mastchoh, and so on.<sup>38</sup> In late 1922, there were 250 self-defence paramilitary groups in Eastern Bukhara. They comprised 5000 people,<sup>39</sup> recognised no supreme authority, and fought ferociously against any intruder.<sup>40</sup> The thoroughly reinforced Red Army regiments had destroyed the emir's forces in Eastern Bukhara by the summer of 1923, but the task of subduing local strongmen proved far more difficult.

In February 1922, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party decreed that in order to cope with the *basmachi* in Bukhara it was imperative 'to make concessions to the local population, particularly to return the confiscated *vaqf* lands, restore traditional courts and pardon moderate elements of the *basmachi*'.<sup>41</sup> In 1923, Eastern Bukhara became exempt from land tax and received substantial credits and shipments of consumer goods from Russia. In November 1923, selective land and water reform was carried out in the Loqay district, which benefited the majority of the local inhabitants at the expense of the late emir's estate. Soon after, a conference of Loqay *ulama*

---

*Tadzhikistana i Uzbekistana*, pp. 97–8, 154–6.

37 Kamol Abdoullaev, 'Central Asian Emigres in Afghanistan: First Wave 1920–1931', *Central Asia Monitor*, No. 5 (1994), p. 19.

38 Sadykov, *Istoricheskii opyt KPSS po stroitelstvu sotsializma v Tadzhikistane*, p. 92; *Istoriia Tadzhikskogo naroda*, Vol. III, kn. 1, pp. 122–3.

39 Khudoiberdyev, *Boevaia druzhba, rozhdennaia Oktiabrem*, p. 94.

40 It is estimated that between 1922 and 1924 in Kulob and Gharm alone 5528 people perished and 2912 were wounded at the hands of fellow Muslims Ibrahim-bek and Enver-pasha. See: A. I. Zevelev, Iu. A. Poliakov and L. V. Shishkina, *Basmachestvo: Pravda istorii i vymysel falsifikatorov* (Moscow: Mysl, 1986), p. 179.

41 Muminov, *Istoriia Uzbekskoi SSR s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei*, p. 323.

issued a judgment to the effect that, on the one hand, Soviet power was not in contradiction with Islamic norms, and on the other hand the *basmachi* could not be regarded as defenders of the faith.<sup>42</sup>

Two well-organised campaigns that combined military, political and economic measures brought Eastern Bukhara under Soviet control during 1925 and 1926. This region was spared the horrible excesses that accompanied the strengthening of communist rule in Ukraine and Kazakhstan. Still, any serious crisis, such as the bad harvest in 1925 or the attempt at mass collectivisation in 1929, would cause the resurgence of armed resistance.<sup>43</sup> In Eastern Bukhara, 'although Soviet in name, the local authority structure remained unchanged from the pre-revolutionary period, traditional leaders merely assuming the new Soviet titles'.<sup>44</sup> This situation precluded the implementation of socialist reforms in southern Tajikistan, but at the same time negated any possibility of an all-out anti-Soviet uprising. Fuzail Makhsum in 1929 and Ibrahim Bek in 1931 managed to assemble only 150 to 200 warriors in what are considered the two last outbursts of the *basmachi* movement in Tajikistan.<sup>45</sup> A certain Sufi dignitary summed up the hopelessness of their enterprise when he appealed to Makhsum: 'Fuzail, don't fight against the Red Army, because you have neither a state, nor arms. How can you possibly fight such a big and strong power ... If you die in this war you will die an ass. You are not going to become a *shahid*.'<sup>46</sup> The pacification of Eastern Bukhara was nearing its end, and the period of Soviet transformation and adjustment was about to commence.

## Governance

The Soviet authorities in Eastern Bukhara, due to the absence of educated locals to recruit as cadres, had to exercise central rule through a small number of 'poorly-supervised local agents'.<sup>47</sup> And some of the 'new' local Soviet officials were in fact the same old local authority figures. Certain local leaders joined the Bolshevik side as they saw an opportunity to use the Soviet 'power structures' as

---

42 Vladimir Medvedev writes that '[i]t was one of the first sentences passed on the resistance movement. Shortly, a similar kurultai took place in Bukhara, and 113 religious authorities signed and sealed a proclamation which denounced the insurgents and called upon the populace to render assistance to the Red Army.' See: Vladimir Medvedev, 'Basmachi—obrechennoe voinstvo', *Druzhiba narodov*, No. 8 (1992), p. 156.

43 Not surprisingly, in 1932 only 38.5 per cent of all peasant homesteads were collectivised in Tajikistan, compared with 60 per cent throughout Central Asia. See: Sadykov, *Istoricheskii opyt KPSS po stroitelstvu sotsializma v Tadzhikistane*, p. 263. In remote mountain areas collective farms were not established until 1936.

44 Olcott, 'The Basmachi or Freeman's Revolt in Turkestan 1918–24', p. 363.

45 *Istoriia Tadzhikskogo naroda*, Vol. III, kn. 1, pp. 212, 260.

46 Medvedev, 'Basmachi', p. 156.

47 Barnett R. Rubin, 'Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery: Causes and Consequences of the Civil War in Tajikistan', in *Post-Soviet Political Order: Conflict and State Building*, eds Barnett R. Rubin and Jack Snyder (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 149.

a vehicle to promote their own interests.<sup>48</sup> The Central Commission for Struggle against the *basmachi* complained that as of the late 1920s the local power structures were mostly untouched and that the local Soviet bureaucracy was ‘colonised’ by former bureaucrats of the Bukharan Emirate.<sup>49</sup> Another aspect of ‘colonisation’ concerned not former bureaucrats of the Bukharan Emirate, but powerful local figures. In Tajikistan, wealthy local elites were able—assisted by their local patronage networks—to be elected to serve in Soviet institutions, especially at the rural district level. This even led to factional fighting, power struggles and abuse of power by those in positions of authority. The Soviets noticed this problem and worried that ‘clans’ would successfully integrate themselves within the Soviet bureaucracy.<sup>50</sup> In the former Bukharan Emirate the Kremlin encountered particular difficulty transforming the local power structures into Soviet institutions, unlike elsewhere, where the transformation was from tsarist to Soviet.<sup>51</sup> As for Tajikistan, Moscow finally found the educated class needed as bureaucrats with the 1929 addition of the northern urban centre of Khujand to the Tajik SSR.<sup>52</sup>

## Patterns of Economic Development

Overcoming the ‘economic inequality’ of the peoples of Central Asia was always regarded in Moscow as an important element of its nationality policy in the region. Theoretically, the aim was to achieve similar levels of socioeconomic development throughout the Soviet Union by eliminating what was referred to as the grim legacy of tsarist rule in non-Russian regions<sup>53</sup>

48 Schoeberlein-Engel, *Identity in Central Asia*, p. 23.

49 Penati, ‘The Reconquest of East Bukhara’, p. 526. See also: Bergne, *The Birth of Tajikistan*, pp. 60, 66.

50 Penati, ‘The Reconquest of East Bukhara’, pp. 526–7. A contemporaneous traveller to the region, E. E. Kisch, quoted a Soviet official regarding local authority figures: ‘In many districts the clergy and the *kulaks* have taken the Soviet apparatus into their own hands. Some of them have even joined the Party and exercise their corrupt reign of terror in the name of the Soviet, extorting registration fees, levying taxes, and coolly pocketing the money.’ See Egon Erwin Kisch, *Changing Asia* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1935), pp. 36–7, as quoted in Navruz R. Nekbakhtshoev, *Clan Politics: Explaining the Persistence of Subethnic Divisions in Tajikistan: Comparative Approach* (Master of Arts Thesis: Duquesne University, 2006), p. 50.

51 Penati, ‘The Reconquest of East Bukhara’, p. 526. For example, public works projects required the cooperation of a traditional authority figure in order to mobilise the labour.

52 Rubin, ‘Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery’, p. 149. As for the highest levels of leadership, during the first years of the Tajik SSR (from 1929) Pamiris and Garmis dominated the top positions of power. During the purges of 1937 an ethnic Russian was appointed as first secretary; and then, from 1946, with the appointment of Bobojon Ghafurov, all the first secretaries were from Khujand. See: Idil Tuncer Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict: A Comparative Study of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan* (PhD Thesis: Indiana University, 2007), pp. 101–2. Rubin provides a less subtle analysis, characterising the 1930s as a period of ‘Russification’ in Tajikistan, with an ethnic Russian first secretary and large-scale purges of cadres. See: Rubin, ‘Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery’, p. 149.

53 Adapted from: P. M. Alampiev, *Likvidatsiia ekonomicheskogo neravenstva narodov Sovetskogo Vostoka i sotsialisticheskoe razmeshenie promyshlennosti* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo AN SSSR, 1958), pp. 22–6.

- narrow specialisation of the economy in producing food and raw materials
- absence of heavy industry
- one-sided and primitive structure of industry
- extreme technological backwardness of industry and agriculture
- lack of infrastructure and transport networks
- absence of a native working class
- general cultural 'backwardness' of the population.

In practice, however, considerations of pragmatism and expediency determined the course of economic modernisation in Central Asia. As Geoffrey Jukes has pointed out:

[I]ndustrialisation is not merely an act of social policy; for it may make little *economic* sense to establish industry in a border area, remote from central markets, perhaps vulnerable to invasion, possibly poorly endowed with raw materials, or with a labour force which is difficult to train because of backwardness, language difficulties, or the lack of an industrial tradition.<sup>54</sup>

Other experts often put special emphasis on geostrategic factors, such as the proximity of China, as a reason the Soviets sought to support economic modernisation in Central Asia.<sup>55</sup>

It appears, however, that it was the internal logic of the Soviet Union's economic development that affected the course of modernisation in Central Asia most profoundly. Tajikistan apparently was in the category of territories less suitable for rapid industrialisation. In 1926, Moscow set up the Permanent Expedition for Exploring Productive Forces of Tajikistan (PEEPFT), which almost immediately arrived at the conclusion that 'we cannot talk about modernisation of industry in Tajikistan, because there isn't any, it is an agricultural country'.<sup>56</sup> The expedition implemented an impressive amount of work and finally came up with a set of guidelines as to how exactly the republic's economy should be developed in the future. Its main recommendations included<sup>57</sup>

- establishing mining industry, hydro-power generation and cotton-growing as priorities

---

54 Geoffrey Jukes, *The Soviet Union in Asia* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1973), pp. 39–40.

55 Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, *Decline of an Empire: The Soviet Socialist Republic in Revolt* (New York: Newsweek Books, 1982), p. 112.

56 A. G. Ananiev, 'Promyshlennye vozmozhnosti TASSR', in *Narodnoe khoziaistvo Tadzhikistana* (Dushanbe: Izdatelstvo Gosplana TASSR, 1926), p. 179.

57 *Problemy Tadzhikistana. Trudy i Konferentsii po izucheniiu proizvoditelnykh sil Tadzhikskoi SSR*, Vol. 1 (Leningrad: Izdatelstvo AN SSSR, 1933), pp. 11, 21, 23–6, 130.

- setting up basic industry and infrastructure with the help of a workforce and materials imported from the European Soviet Union
- dividing Tajikistan into several economic zones with particular production specialisation
- rapid restoration and expansion of the irrigation network.

This blueprint was in compliance with the All-Union economic strategy promulgated at the Sixteenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1930<sup>58</sup> and remained valid well into the postwar period. The Kremlin invested generously in the development of Tajikistan,<sup>59</sup> and in 1932 the share of industry in the republic's economy reached 22 per cent, compared with 6.6 per cent four years earlier.<sup>60</sup>

The Soviet modernisation of Tajikistan, which was conceived and implemented as a process of forced industrialisation *par excellence*, brought about two fateful developments as early as the mid 1930s. First, it destroyed a local economic mechanism that organically combined handcrafts and cottage industries on the one hand and modern factory production on the other. In the 1920s, the traditional sector of the economy, based on private and cooperative ownership, was growing at an impressive rate in Turkestan, registering a 42–45 per cent increase in the number of those employed annually, and accounting for 34–37 per cent of industrial output in the region.<sup>61</sup> In the early 1930s, all private and family-owned enterprises in Tajikistan were closed or nationalised; the share of cooperatives in industrial production had decreased to 15.3 per cent by 1940 and stabilised at 3 per cent in the postwar period.<sup>62</sup> Large state-owned factories emerged as the backbone of the republic's economy (Table 3.1).

**Table 3.1 Dynamics of Industrial Output in Tajikistan, 1913–40 (1913 = 1)**

Year	All industry	Large industry*
1913	1.0	1.0
1928	0.98	8.2
1932	1.4	43.7

58 The congress's resolution stated in particular that 'industrialisation of the country can no longer rest solely on the Southern coal-metallurgical base [that is, Donbass]', hence 'the Congress deems it necessary to begin accelerated development in eastern territories (the Urals, Siberia, Kazakhstan, Central Asia) of industries based on local sources of raw materials (non-ferrous metallurgy, textile industry, etc.)'. See: *KPSS v rezoliutsiakh i resheniakh s'ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK*, Vol. 4 (Moscow: Izdatelstvo politicheskoi literatury, 1970), pp. 441–2.

59 Centralised financial transfers in Tajikistan's budget (1926–30), measured by subvention as a percentage of the republican budget: 1926 (84.4 per cent); 1927 (92.2 per cent); 1928 (79.9 per cent); 1929 (72.6 per cent); 1930 (78.5 per cent). Source: M. N. Nazarshoev and M. A. Solomonov, *Sotsialno-ekonomicheskoe razvitie Tadzhikistana* (Dushanbe: Izdatelstvo TGU, 1989), p. 10.

60 A. Rahmatulloev and S. Mukhtorov, *Ocherkhei ta'rikhi Tojikistoni Soveti* (Dushanbe: Maorif, 1989), p. 93.

61 V. N. Uliakhin, 'Mnogoukladnost v sovetskoi i zarubezhnoi Azii', *Vostok*, No. 5 (1991), pp. 132, 134.

62 *Narodnoe khoziaistvo Tadzhikskoi SSR v 1979g* (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1981), p. 72.

1937	5.1	183
1940	8.8	324

\* For the year 1913, large industry includes enterprises with 30 or more workers; for later years, it comprises factories subordinated to All-Union and republican industrial ministries.

Source: *Narodnoe khoziaistvo Tadjikskoi SSR* (Stalinabad: Gosstatizdat, 1957), p. 16.

### According to Sergei Poliakov, in Tajikistan

city-based industrial production was completely dependent on drawing settlers from the ... industrially developed regions of the country, whereas development of rural areas was based on local human resources. But in terms of qualitative characteristics the latter were not prepared enough to guarantee smoothness and efficiency of the process of industrialisation.<sup>63</sup>

In 1938, migrants from the European part of the Soviet Union accounted for 46 per cent of the entire workforce in industry, construction and transport in Tajikistan.<sup>64</sup> Despite constant attempts on the part of Soviet authorities to increase indigenous representation in these areas, the problem was never satisfactorily resolved.<sup>65</sup> The main reasons for such a state of affairs were not the absence of vocational training facilities, poor command of the Russian language or limited supplies of food and housing in the cities; it was rather caused by the persistence of traditional values and attitudes in Tajik society, whereby industrial labour was not regarded as a very respectable occupation. A sociological study conducted at a number of industrial enterprises in Tashkent revealed that as late as 1985 there were dramatic differences between Russians and Central Asians in terms of work ethics and preferences (Table 3.2).

63 S. P. Poliakov, 'Sovremennaia sredneaziatskaia derevnia: traditsionnye formy sobstvennosti v kvaziindustrialnoi sisteme', in *Krestianstvo i industrialnaia tsivilizatsiia*, eds Iu. G. Aleksandrov and S. A. Panarin (Moscow: Nauka, 1993), p. 183.

64 M. I. Irkaev, ed. *Kommunisticheskaia partiia v bor'be za formirovanie i razvitie rabocheho klassa v Tadjikistane* (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1967), pp. 75, 82.

65 For instance, in 1979 ethnic Tajiks still constituted a mere 10.9 per cent of industrial workers—almost three times less than the figure for Russians. See: *Naselenie Tadjikskoi SSR. Po dannym Vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1979g* (Dushanbe: TsSU TSSR, 1980), p. 47.

**Table 3.2 Comparative Behavioural Parameters of Workers in Central Asia**

	<b>Russians</b>	<b>Central Asians</b>
1.	Prefer to be employed in industry or construction.	Prefer to be engaged in the non-productive sphere of activities (retail trade, public catering, health, education, culture) and agriculture.
2.	Amongst industrial specialisations, prefer machine-building, metallurgy and metal-working.	Amongst industrial specialisations, prefer textiles, tanning, footwear manufacturing and food processing.
3.	In terms of contents of labour, prefer industrial-type professions with the use of machinery.	In terms of contents of labour, prefer handcraft-type professions where individual manual skills are important.
4.	Professional roles of men and women differ insignificantly. Women are more attracted than men by professions that require higher education.	Professional roles of men and women differ considerably. Women are less prone to work in public sector and prefer labour-intensive jobs that do not require higher education.
5.	When selecting profession or employment, are guided by their own inclinations, mass media and conspicuous advantages of a given enterprise (convenient location, high salary, and so on).	In similar situations, take into consideration opinion, or follow example, of elders, relatives, or generally pursue established lifetime patterns; pay great attention to value attributes of a job (prestige, perceived usefulness to the community, status conferred, and so on).
6.	Are less interested in socialisation at work. Prefer to carry responsibility and be paid for individual performance.	Attach great importance to socialisation at work. Prefer collective forms of labour, value mutual assistance and support. Are sensitive to interpersonal relations in a team.
7.	Do not pay attention to the national affiliation of colleagues.	Prefer to work and socialise in a mono-ethnic environment.
8.	Prefer democratic forms of management. The authority of leadership is related to its businesslike qualities. As a rule, assess its performance critically.	Accept authoritarian style of leadership. Managers and higher-ups enjoy greater authority. Strive for dominance in a team.
9.	Are demanding in terms of conditions and contents of labour.	Are less demanding in terms of conditions and contents of labour.

Source: O. I. Shkaratan and L. S. Perepelkin, 'Ekonomicheskii rost i natsionalnoe razvitiye', *EKO*, No. 10 (1988), pp. 18–19.

The Soviet system offered no substantial incentives to technical personnel and skilled workers employed in more sophisticated branches of industry. Additionally, it strongly encouraged the influx of indigenous cadres into bureaucracy, academia, arts communities and other non-productive spheres. It has been observed that such a skewed arrangement in Tajikistan was made possible due to the fact that

practically all national income produced in the region is utilised in the non-productive sphere, and expenditure on national economy is footed by the Centre. This 'benevolent' economic regime provides for the level of life comparable with that of the population of the industrialised regions. Henceforth, as a rule, indigenous people choose agriculture or the services sector to work in.<sup>66</sup>

Consequently, not only were opportunities for inter-ethnic socialisation 'below the expected level for an otherwise "integrated international work force"',<sup>67</sup> but eventually a binary pattern of settling began to evolve in Tajikistan, whereby the two largest distinctive groups of the populace—industrial and white-collar workers living in some 70 cities and towns, and peasants inhabiting 3500 villages—differed from one another quite substantially in a whole range of parameters: ethnic composition, culture, religious observance, level of education, and even language.

The salient ethnic division of labour quickly became a characteristic feature of Tajikistan's economy. Its dualism also found reflection in the fact that right from the start the economy was geared to meet the needs of the All-Union markets. From the 1940s to the 1980s, republican authorities controlled only one-tenth of the volume of industrial output in their territory;<sup>68</sup> generally, it was up to central ministries in Moscow to determine what and how much should be produced in Tajikistan. As one Tajik scholar cautiously remarked in the early 1970s, industry in that republic 'is characterised by the lack of correspondence between production profiles of a significant number of enterprises and the structure of demands of the republic and adjacent districts'.<sup>69</sup> The level of economic integration amongst regions in Tajikistan remained low. Soviet planning practices resulted in paradoxical situations—for example, in the 1960s, three-quarters of the republic's light industry was located in the northern Leninobod *oblast* and the bulk of its output, primarily textiles, was exported to other Soviet republics; at the same time, the southern regions had to import fabrics from European Russia, more than 4000 km away.<sup>70</sup> Similarly,

---

66 Rustam Narzikulov, 'Dvulikii Ianus v serdtse Azii: nekotorye itogi 70-letnego razvitiia sredneaziatskikh respublik v sostave SSSR', *Vostok*, No. 5 (1991), p. 125.

67 Michael Rywkin, 'The Impact of Socio-Economic Change and Demographic Growth on National Identity and Socialisation', *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (1985), p. 87.

68 *Narodnoe khoziaistvo Tadzhikskoi SSR*, p. 13; *Narodnoe khoziaistvo Tadzhikskoi SSR v 1988 godu* (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1990), p. 163.

69 R. K. Rahimov, ed. *Tadzhikistan: ekonomicheskii rost i effektivnost* (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1972), p. 38.

70 H. M. Saidmuradov, ed. *Narodnoe khoziaistvo Tadzhikistana v period formirovaniia ekonomicheskikh predposylok razvitogo sotsializma* (Dushanbe: Donish, 1985), pp. 95–7.

the textile combine at Uroteppa had to import 95 per cent of raw materials from Uzbekistan, although nearby districts could have provided an almost unlimited supply of cotton.<sup>71</sup>

The 'predilection in Soviet planning towards overconcentration and monopoly production (i.e., localising all of the USSR's output of a particular product at one or a few production sites)<sup>72</sup> is a well-known phenomenon. The pronounced emphasis on cotton-growing in Tajikistan was caused by two major factors: a) optimal climatic conditions,<sup>73</sup> and b) Moscow's relentless efforts to achieve self-sufficiency in this strategic commodity.<sup>74</sup> Generally, this task had been accomplished by about 1950, when the Soviet Union gathered five times more raw cotton than imperial Russia had in 1913.<sup>75</sup> The 'cottonisation' of Tajikistan resulted in a dramatic decline of staple crops and a growing dependence on food imports from other parts of the USSR.<sup>76</sup> Until 1958, cotton enjoyed very favourable terms of trade compared with other agricultural products. In the early 1950s, for instance, grain and meat producers in the USSR would receive less than one-seventh of the world price, whereas the government purchased cotton at a rate that was 30 per cent above the international price.<sup>77</sup> As a result, Tajikistan's agricultural income grew impressively. The fixed capital of the republic's *kolkhozes* (collective farms), which included houses, cinemas, hospitals, kindergartens and other institutions of social infrastructure on top of the productive base, increased fifteen-fold between 1940 and 1958.<sup>78</sup> Between 1954 and 1955, the state budget allocated funds for the construction of 38 schools in Tajikistan; at the same time, 119 schools were built using money from local collective farms.<sup>79</sup> The labour-intensive character of cotton cultivation<sup>80</sup>

71 Abdulqodir Holiqzoda, *Ta'rikhi siyosii Tojikon az istiloi Rusiya to imruz* (Dushanbe: Self-published, 1994), p. 96.

72 Andrew R. Bond, 'Russia Coping with "Cotton Crisis"', *Post-Soviet Geography*, Vol. 35, No. 5 (1993), p. 330.

73 In terms of soil characteristics and temperature regime, Tajikistan, especially the Vakhsh Valley in the south, 'is unparalleled by any other cotton-growing locality in the USSR'. See: R. Dilovarov, *Istifodai oqilonai zamin* (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1991), p. 15.

74 The importance attached to this problem by the Bolshevik regime, even at times when its very existence was threatened by civil war, can be illustrated by the fact that of 600 decrees issued by the Soviet Government from November 1917 to August 1918, 42 dealt directly or indirectly with matters pertaining to cotton production in Turkestan. See: M. Khamraev, *Deiatel'nost' Kommunisticheskoi partii po razvitiu irrigatsii v Tadzhikistane* (Dushanbe: Donish, 1972), p. 95.

75 V. Ahmedov, *KPSS v borbe za intensifikatsiiu khlopkovodstva* (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1976), p. 319.

76 For example, in 1928 Tajikistan produced 4.391 million centners of cereals and 371 000 centners of cotton (one centner equals 100 kg). Thirty years later, cereal production had dropped to 1.871 million centners, while cotton had surged to 4.212 million centners. See: *Tadzhikistan za gody Sovetskoi vlasti* (Dushanbe: Statistika, 1967), p. 79.

77 Azizur Rahman Khan and Dharam Ghai, *Collective Agriculture and Rural Development in Soviet Central Asia* (London: Macmillan, 1979), p. 25.

78 M. Irkaev and P. Safarov, *Rol' Kommunisticheskoi partii v prevraschenii dehkana v aktivnykh stroitelei sotsializma* (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1968), p. 176.

79 *Rezoliutsiia X s'ezda Kommunisticheskoi partii Tadzhikistana* (Stalinabad: Tadzhikgosizdat, 1956), pp. 5–6.

80 The first combine harvesters appeared on cotton plantations in Tajikistan in 1961 and accounted for a meagre 2 per cent of that year's yield. See: *Kommunist Tadzhikistana*, 26 January 1962. An anonymous expert referred to agricultural methods and techniques practised in Tajikistan as being those of the eighteenth

helped to absorb the consequences of high population growth. During the first three decades of its existence as a Soviet state, Tajikistan offered plentiful corroboration to the following conclusion made for the entire region:

The attainment of prosperity in the Central Asian republics has not come through the classical path of industrialisation. The industrial progress of the region has no doubt been very substantial, but rapid growth in agriculture has been a key element in their progress. A distinctive and related feature of their experience has been the continued predominance of the rural sector ... What the Central Asian republics experienced was rapid agricultural growth leading to a rising standard of living in the rural areas and the consequent absence of pressure to move out of the rural society.<sup>81</sup>

The specialisation in cotton was complemented by a spectacular increase in yield per hectare due to the introduction of new long-stapled varieties, implementation of massive irrigation schemes and use of chemical fertilisers.<sup>82</sup> Even in the late 1980s the republic continued to have the best yields in the USSR and was not far behind the main world cotton producers.<sup>83</sup> While it is true that cotton production in Tajikistan became 'the focus for the development of a large economic complex embracing many industrial sectors: irrigation; production of agricultural machinery; production of mineral fertilisers and toxic chemicals; the cotton refining, oil producing, paper manufacturing and—to a lesser extent—sewing and knitting industries',<sup>84</sup> it is important to remember that this complex never presented a viable manufacturing entity capable of guaranteeing the republic's balanced independent development. It was meant, first and foremost, to provide 'USSR, Inc.' with deficit materials—a design 'logically stemming from and imposed by the strategy of the [Soviet] command-administrative system that favoured creation of agricultural and raw-material enclaves in the national economy'.<sup>85</sup> Throughout the Soviet period only 4 to 5 per cent of Central Asia's cotton was processed locally; the rest was dispatched to the European part of the USSR, where more than 70 per cent of the country's output of cotton textiles was generated.<sup>86</sup> Apart from raw cotton and cotton fibre, Tajikistan exported a variety of ores and ore concentrates—most notably, rare earths, zinc, lead,

---

century. See: *Problems of the Peoples of the USSR*, No. 11 (1961), p. 66.

81 Khan and Ghai, *Collective Agriculture and Rural Development in Soviet Central Asia*, pp. 102–3.

82 *Tadzhikistan* (Moscow: Mysl, 1968), p. 81.

83 *Kommunist Tadzhikistana*, 25 May 1991.

84 Igor Lipovsky, 'The Central Asian Cotton Epic', *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (1995), p. 534.

85 Ia. T. Bronshtein, "'Soizmeriat' vklad respublik i ee vozmozhnosti', *EKO*, No. 11 (1989), p. 29.

86 Boris Z. Rumer, 'Central Asia's Cotton Economy', in *Soviet Central Asia: The Failed Transformation*, ed. William Fierman (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1991), p. 83. Although starting in the second half of the 1960s Tajikistan's economy showed a perceptible tendency towards diversification based on the growth of the processing industry, even in 1989 the share of finished goods in the republic's net material product (NMP) did not exceed 46 per cent. See: M. R. Boboev, *Ekonomicheskoe razvitie respublik v usloviakh rynka* (Dushanbe: TadjikNIINTI, 1991), p. 2.

mercury, silver and gold. In the 1940s, rich uranium deposits in the Leninobod *oblast* began to be exploited. Production of fissile materials at the mammoth VOSTOKREDMET plant situated in the town of Chkalovsk played a crucial role in the success of the Soviet nuclear program.<sup>87</sup>

One cannot but agree with Aziz Niyazi's statement that 'the Soviet regime, though established by force, nevertheless greatly stimulated the economic development of Central Asia'.<sup>88</sup> In the prewar period, Tajikistan registered an average annual industrial growth of 9 per cent, and progress in the production of basic commodities continued.<sup>89</sup> The initial great surge in the industrialisation of Tajikistan slowed markedly, however, in the 1950s.<sup>90</sup> As a result, in 1960 it remained the second least-industrialised republic in the Soviet Union (after Moldova) as far as the structure of employment was concerned: only 18.2 per cent of those employed worked in industry compared with the USSR's mean of 35 per cent.<sup>91</sup> All the same, the suggestion that comparatively low levels of urbanisation and industrial participation could serve as indicators of inappropriate economic development and inadequate standards of living<sup>92</sup> should be treated with a degree of caution. The peculiar economic system that had emerged in Tajikistan was the result of Moscow's deliberate policy of the All-Union division of labour, and for quite a few decades this worked satisfactorily, considering that 'the nationalities of Soviet Central Asia had achieved living standards, insofar as these may be expressed by wages, health and educational opportunity, somewhat lower than those of the European USSR, but a great deal higher than those of their independent neighbours'.<sup>93</sup> Its continuous functioning, however, depended on two crucial factors: a) the centre's ability to transfer the amount of resources necessary to meet the demands of the growing population of the republic in exchange for raw materials, and b) the availability of natural conditions, especially fertile land and water, to sustain extensive growth of the cotton-based economy.

---

87 *Izvestiia*, 13 August 1993.

88 Aziz Niyazi, 'Tajikistan', in *Central Asia and the Caucasus after the Soviet Union: Domestic and International Dynamics*, ed. Mohiaddin Mesbahi (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), p. 168.

89 *Tadzhikistan za gody Sovetskoi vlasti*, pp. 40–1, 48–9.

90 Boris Z. Rumer, *Soviet Central Asia: A Tragic Experiment* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), p. 54; *Narodnoe khoziaistvo Tadzhikskoi SSR*, p. 17.

91 Narzikulov, 'Dvulikii Ianus v serdtse Azii', p. 122.

92 Alastair McAuley, 'The Central Asian Economy in Comparative Perspective', in *The Disintegration of the Soviet Economic System*, eds Michael Ellman and Vladimir Kontorovich (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 138–42.

93 Jukes, *The Soviet Union in Asia*, p. 48.

## The Transformation of Society

In 1897, only 0.5 per cent of the Tajiks in Eastern Bukhara were literate,<sup>94</sup> but after the creation of a national republic Tajikistan registered spectacular progress in literacy, even in comparison with its richer Central Asian neighbours.<sup>95</sup> Compared with a literacy rate of about 20 per cent in Iran, Turkey and the Indian subcontinent, in Tajikistan complete literacy was claimed by the late 1950s.<sup>96</sup> In 1940, in Tajikistan there were six tertiary education institutions and 30 colleges, with 8262 students, 74 per cent of whom were being trained to become teachers.<sup>97</sup> That year allocations to education programs accounted for 39.5 per cent of all outlays from the republic's budget.<sup>98</sup> In the early 1960s, the number of tertiary students per 10 000 of population was 131 in Tajikistan, 71 in France, 24 in Turkey, 18 in Pakistan and two in Afghanistan.<sup>99</sup>

The unprecedented social mobilisation achieved in the course of the communist experiment throughout the USSR was instrumental in turning the latent and degenerating Tajik *ethnie* into a proto-nation. It hardly mattered that the whole mobilisation process had been conceived to serve the ultimate goal of building a communist society devoid of class, national or state distinctions. What mattered in the 1920s and 1930s was that the Tajiks acquired a common and concrete political goal—that is, the establishment of the Tajik socialist nation. The populace may not have cared about socialism per se, but large sections were forced to take up political activism, and consequently considered themselves members of a great Tajik community that transcended traditional local affiliations—previously the privilege of a handful of intellectuals.

The usual triad of Bolshevik mobilisation and penetration methods (industrialisation, collectivisation, cultural revolution) was augmented by women's emancipation and mass resettlement in Tajikistan. It was a cold, pragmatic consideration that

to provide women with unconditional access to suffrage, and to all elective or appointive, as well as legislative and administrative, offices in the land, would not just challenge the traditional male monopoly of

---

94 Asimova, *Iazykovoe stroitelstvo v Tadjikistane*, p. 14.

95 From 1926 to 1939, the rate of literacy among Tajiks increased from 3 per cent to 67 per cent. See: Iu. A. Poliakov, 'Vozdeistvie gosudarstva na demograficheskie protsessy v SSSR (1920–1930e gg.)', *Voprosy istorii*, No. 3 (1995), p. 127.

96 Khan and Ghai, *Collective Agriculture and Rural Development in Soviet Central Asia*, pp. 18–19.

97 Calculations based on: *Narodnoe khoziaistvo Tadjikskoi SSR v 1965g* (Dushanbe: Statistika, 1966), pp. 227–8.

98 *Ocherki istorii narodnogo khoziaistva Tadjikistana* (Dushanbe: Donish, 1967), p. 309.

99 *Tadjikistan za gody Sovetskoi vlasti*, p. 177.

the political arena; it would immediately and decisively undermine the position of traditional political elites—tribal chieftains, village elders, and notables.<sup>100</sup>

The emancipation campaign (*hujum*) launched in 1926 envisaged the abolition of women's seclusion, their promotion to party and state structures, and generally the creation of a climate of equal opportunities for both sexes. In Tajikistan in 1925, 99.4 per cent of women were illiterate; 10 years later 35.7 per cent of all students in primary and secondary schools were girls.<sup>101</sup> Indigenous women, erstwhile confined to the family hearth, made up almost 80 per cent of the labour force in Tajikistan's light industry by 1937.<sup>102</sup> Numbers of female members of the CPT grew from three in 1925 to 1016 in 1932.<sup>103</sup> In 1928, 957 women worked in *selsovets*—22 times more than during 1925–26.<sup>104</sup>

Following incorporation into Russia, Central Asia experienced a demographic explosion at the turn of the twentieth century, when the natural population growth rate rocketed from 0.3 to 2.5 per cent every year.<sup>105</sup> In Tajikistan rural overpopulation began to be felt in the late 1920s, especially in northern Tajikistan and Gharm. Two waves of resettlement took place between 1926–29 and 1933–37 whereby some 30 000 peasant families from Gharm, Uroteppa (Istaravshon), Panjakent, Gorno-Badakhshan, Hisor, Kulob and Ferghana, as well as those returning from Afghanistan, were forcibly moved to develop virgin lands in the Qurghonteppa *okrug*, only sparsely populated by Uzbek nomadic tribes.<sup>106</sup> This major demographic undertaking was presented by the Soviet authorities as 'rectifying the historical injustice emanating from the Emirate's feudal policy towards the Tajik people, which had been pushed into the mountains'.<sup>107</sup> In reality the forcible resettlement of people to the south of Tajikistan was primarily to facilitate the construction of irrigation works and the production of cotton. The Soviet resettlement policies in the Qurghonteppa Province (including the Vakhsh Valley) were clearly part of its strategy to boost agriculture, particularly cotton. The result in the Qurghonteppa region was the construction of thousands of kilometres of irrigation canals as part of the Vakhsh Valley irrigation system that started in 1931. After this time numerous groups and individuals arrived in the region to work on the construction of the canals

100 Gregory J. Massell, *The Surrogate Proletariat: Moslem Women and Revolutionary Strategies in Soviet Central Asia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 142.

101 *Velikii Oktiabr i raskreposhchenie zhenshin Srednei Azii i Kazakhstana (1917–1936)* (Moscow: Mysl, 1971), pp. 177, 440.

102 *Istoriia Tadzhiiskogo naroda*, Vol. III, kn. 1, p. 286.

103 Rakowska-Harmstone, *Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia*, p. 100.

104 *Velikii Oktiabr i raskreposhchenie zhenshin Srednei Azii i Kazakhstana*, p. 235.

105 V. I. Bushkov, 'Tadzhikskii avlod tysiacheletia spustia', *Vostok*, No. 5 (1991), p. 76.

106 *Istoriia Tadzhiiskogo naroda*, Vol. III, kn. 1, pp. 191, 308.

107 Ibron Sharipov, *Zakonomernosti formirovaniia sotsialisticheskikh obshestvennykh otnoshenii v Tadzhiikistane* (Dushanbe: Donish, 1983), p. 79.

and in the cultivation of cotton.<sup>108</sup> Border issues also played a role in population transfers, as, starting in the early 1930s, tens of thousands of households in southern Tajikistan were moved by the state to southern frontier regions to assist in securing the Afghan–Soviet border regions.<sup>109</sup> The policies of resettlement into the valleys, which make up only 7 per cent of the territory of Tajikistan, resulted in the density of the population exceeding the capacity of the land to support that population. Niyazi notes that in the 1920s approximately 70 per cent of the population of Tajikistan was living in the foothills and mountains. The contemporary situation has been reversed and now 70 per cent of the population lives in the lowlands.<sup>110</sup>

\* \* \*

In the 1920s and 1930s, the Tajik *ethnie* was revitalised and underwent processes of mobilisation, territorialisation and politicisation. At the beginning of this century it seemed that the Tajik ethnic community was close to losing its demographic and cultural continuity. The communist leadership in Moscow deemed it necessary to preclude such a development and created the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic. Its sovereignty may have been ephemeral, its boundaries artificial, but it did provide the Tajik *ethnie* with an institutional basis for transformation into a modern nation.

The socioeconomic development of Tajikistan in the first half of the twentieth century was an extremely uneven and controversial process. Over a surprisingly short time, Tajikistan achieved remarkable progress in improving standards of living, literacy, culture and emancipation for women. In a sense, however, it was a Pyrrhic victory, for these successes did not reflect the real growth of productive forces in Tajik society. Stalin's leadership was of the opinion that 'the triumph of socialist construction in Turkestan is completely dependent on the *rapid* solution of the literacy problem of the indigenous population',<sup>111</sup> and it allotted huge resources to the development of non-productive spheres in the region. Consequently, the upkeep of the relatively overinflated stratum of intellectuals, doctors, teachers and other professionals in Tajikistan was entirely up to the Kremlin's discretion. The depth of cultural changes across Tajik society also remained rather equivocal.

---

108 Christian Bleuer, 'State-building, Migration and Economic Development on the Frontiers of Northern Afghanistan and Southern Tajikistan', *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, Vol. 3 (2012).

109 Botakoz Kassymbekova, 'Humans as Territory: Forced Resettlement and the Making of Soviet Tajikistan, 1920–38', *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 30, Nos 3–4 (2011).

110 Aziz Niyazi, 'Migration, Demography and Socio-Ecological Processes in Tajikistan', *JCAS Symposium Series*, Vol. 9 (2002), pp. 169–71.

111 Andrei Vydrin, 'Fitrat, Polivanov, Stalin i drugie', *Zvezda Vostoka*, Nos 5–6 (1994), p. 156.

By the same token, economic development of the republic was regulated by the current needs of the centre, and not by considerations for the long-term prosperity of the Tajik people. Investment occurred primarily in those branches that promised quick returns and provided the All-Union industrial complex with raw materials: cotton-growing and mining. Although a number of sophisticated machine-building, electro-technical and chemical enterprises had been set up in Tajikistan, modern industry remained largely alien to it, because they employed primarily non-indigenous workers and their profile had nothing to do with the requirements of the republic. Such a grotesque economic mechanism could exist and be reasonably efficient only when state socialism in the USSR was in its prime and the Kremlin was able to carry out its role as a universal planner, provider and distributor. The relationship between the Soviet state on the one hand and the institutions of Tajik society on the other, which forms the centrepiece of Tajikistan's modern history, will be discussed in detail in the chapters that follow.