

## EMIR SAID ALIMKHAN'S LIFE IN AFGHANISTAN AND HIS ATTITUDE TOWARD THE INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT IN BUKHARA

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**Annotation:** This article examines the life of Bukhara's last Emir, Said Alimkhan, during his years in Afghanistan and his attitude toward the independence movement in Bukhara. Particular attention is given to his material and moral support for the activities of the *qorboshis* (local resistance leaders).

**Keywords:** Emir Said Alimkhan, independence movement, Emirate of Bukhara, Fort Fatu, Kabul, Ibrokhimbek, Mulla Abdulkahhar, Amanullah Khan.

Thanks to independence, we now have the opportunity to become acquainted with rather objective information concerning the reign of the last Manghit Emir, Said Alimkhan, in Bukhara (1910–1920/1921), as well as various aspects of his life in exile and his personal circumstances (1921–1944). Yet, it is increasingly evident that what we know and comprehend about this period is but a drop in the ocean. As we study new research works that incorporate fresh data, we once again witness that the history of our homeland is extraordinarily rich and filled with diverse events. Following the war, the disoriented Alimkhan, along with other members of the dynasty who had been held captive in Bukhara, eventually came to Afghanistan. The Afghan government allocated the Hussain Kavt Garden for Emir Alimkhan and his companions, and set a salary of 12,000 Afghanis for the Emir. His residence was first established in the Khashim Khan Garden, then, a year later, transferred to the Muradbek Fortress. Four months afterwards, Emir Alimkhan's headquarters was moved to the Khashmat Fortress. Ultimately, he settled in the "Qal'ai Fatu", located 11 kilometers from Kabul. To ensure his security, the Afghan government prohibited the Emir from leaving the fortress. In cases of necessity, a special detachment was appointed to escort and protect him. This measure was essentially designed to sever Emir Said Alimkhan's contact with the outside world<sup>1</sup>.

In early 1921, Amir Said Alim Khan appointed Ibrahimbek Devonbegi as the Supreme Commander of all his forces in Bukhara. Davlatmandbek Devonbegi was designated as his deputy in Eastern Bukhara, while Mulla Abdulkahhar assumed the same role in Western Bukhara. Togay Sari, who was active in Korgontepa, was a brave and loyal comrade of Ibrahimbek, and the latter often relied heavily upon him.

At the age of thirty-one, when Ibrahimbek entered the struggle, he set himself the principal goal not only of cleansing the soil of Bukhara from the Red Army but also of restoring the overthrown Emirate and returning the throne to its former ruler, Said Alimkhan. For this reason, from the very first days of his campaign, he enjoyed the full material and moral support and encouragement of Emir Said Alim Khan<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Nurettin Hatinoğlu. Türkistanda son türk devleti Buhara emirliği ve Alim Han. – İstanbul: Ötüken, 2016. – S. 117.

<sup>2</sup> Ражабов Қ. Туркистон қўрбошилари. – Тошкент: Фан, 2022. – Б. 197-201.

In 1920–1921, within a short period, Ibrahimbek Qorboshi gathered more than ten thousand troops and, after clearing the provinces of Kulob and Baljuvon of Red Army forces, sent his envoys to Said Alimkhan in Kulob. “At that time, Ibrahimbek Devonbegi himself advanced toward the provinces of Karategin and Darvoz, launching an offensive and seizing both territories.” Following these victories, Said Alimkhan also warmly received other envoys sent by Ibrahimbek. Pleased with his commander’s “zeal and bravery,” he elevated him to a higher rank. In early 1921, Said Alimkhan appointed Ibrahimbek Devonbegi as the Supreme Commander of all Bukhara’s forces.

After these events, Ibrahimbek advanced into the Hisor province. “Marching toward the upper part of Hisor, he repeatedly confronted the enemy, fought battles, and captured military equipment. He established this province as his center of operations. He then carried out movements in Boysun, Guzar, Sherabad, and Karshi, which formed the upper part of Dehnav province<sup>3</sup>.”

In his memoirs, Emir Said Alimkhan also wrote the following about Ibrahimbek: “For seven years Ibrahimbek fought against the Bolsheviks for the sake of the Muslim people and for this humble servant of Allah. During the battles he demonstrated acts of heroism and continuously kept me informed of their outcomes<sup>4</sup>.”

In one of his letters to Ibrahimbek, Emir Said Alimkhan extolled him as a “loyal and courageous leader, mullah, beg, biy, devonbegi, commander, artillery chief, and ghazi.” According to Said Alimkhan, he even held negotiations with the Afghan government in order to send reinforcements to Ibrahimbek. Unfortunately, by that time the Afghan government no longer provided any military units at the Emir’s disposal, since a treaty of friendship between Afghanistan and Soviet Russia had already been signed.

Said Alimkhan’s favor and patronage toward Ibrahimbek are also mentioned in other sources. For instance, the Turkish researcher Ali Bodomchi, in his book “1917–1934: The National Independence Movement of Turkistan and Enver Pasha. The Qorboshis,” notes that Ibrahimbek attained many high ranks under Said Alim Khan, and that during the Emir’s residence in Eastern Bukhara he relied on fearless and valiant figures like Ibrahimbek in the struggle against the Soviets. According to the book, “Ibrahimbek Laqay is among the most prominent figures of the final stage of the Turkistan national independence struggle. Already during the Emir’s reign he had begun inflicting defeats on Russian forces, and in a short time gained great fame ... His total forces numbered more than eight thousand<sup>5</sup>.”

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<sup>3</sup> Амир Саййид Олимхон. Бухоро халкининг ҳасрати тарихи. Форсчадан А. Ирисов таржимаси. – Тошкент: Фан, 1991. – Б. 19-20.

<sup>4</sup> Амир Саййид Олимхон. Бухоро халкининг ҳасрати тарихи. Форсчадан А. Ирисов таржимаси. – Тошкент: Фан, 1991. – Б. 19.

<sup>5</sup> Ali Bademchi. 1917–1934. Turkistan Milli Istiklal Hareketi. Korbashilar ve Enver Paşa. – Cild I. Istanbul, 1975. – S. 501.

However, Shahabiddin Yassaviy notes that although Ibrahimbek was a courageous figure, he also tended to act hastily in resolving certain issues, which sometimes led to mistakes. Characteristically, while carrying out Emir Alimkhan's orders, Ibrahimbek showed disrespect toward Ghazi Enver Pasha and Fuzayl Makhdum<sup>6</sup>.

Following the movements in Gijduvan, Ibrahimbek believed that favorable conditions had emerged for Alimkhan's return to Bukhara. He therefore dispatched a delegation of eight people from Bukhara to Kabul, to the court of Amanullah Khan, requesting that the Emir of Bukhara be allowed to return. Meanwhile, Enver Pasha sent a letter to Said Alim Khan, noting that although they had attacked Baysun, the territory had not yet been fully secured. For this reason, he emphasized, the Emir should not return to Bukhara. Amanullah Khan, who in any case opposed Said Alimkhan's return, used the arguments in Enver Pasha's letter as grounds to prohibit it.

On 4 August 1922, Enver Pasha was killed in Baljuvon, located in Eastern Bukhara. His contemporary Davlatmandbek also fell on the battlefield. Both were buried at the shrine of Khazrat Sultan. News of the Emir's intended return to Bukhara reached the Russians, who moved to prevent it. By mid-1922, Russian forces, armed with artillery and tanks, launched a campaign against the forces of the Emirate. Ibrahimbek fought valiantly against them<sup>7</sup>.

After Amanullah Khan invited Said Alimkhan to Kabul, the Russians began to act with greater confidence. When the Emir of Bukhara arrived in Kabul, Amanullah declared that he would remain politically non-aligned. Nevertheless, he entered into friendly relations with the Russians<sup>8</sup>. The Afghan government gradually expanded its relations with Russia. It came to regard Russia's enemies as Afghanistan's enemies as well, considering Russia the sole friend of the Eastern peoples and of Afghanistan, and viewing the British colonizers as their common enemy. In the early period of his stay in Kabul, Said Alimkhan advised King Amanullah of Afghanistan to keep his distance from the Russians. However, Amanullah disregarded this counsel and strove increasingly to strengthen his relations with Lenin. The continuation of this policy later led the Afghan people to declare Amanullah a *kafir* (infidel). Amanullah Khan's initially sincere and cordial attitude toward Said Alimkhan gradually cooled. He even forgot his earlier promises, reducing both the salary and the allowances allocated to the Emir<sup>9</sup>.

From the very first days of his arrival in Afghanistan, Said Alimkhan, with the help of a group of his representatives and at his own expense, purchased a quantity of weapons and ammunition from British India, Iran, and Afghanistan. The arms acquired from the Emir's personal wealth were sent to Bukhara. These were initially delivered to Mulla Ibrahimbek and then distributed among other mujahideen. When Amanullah Khan, through his spies, learned that Said Alimkhan was sending weapons to Bukhara, he ordered Afghan border guards to prevent the transfer of arms across Afghan territory into Bukhara. Thereafter, the weapons dispatched by the Emir were

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<sup>6</sup> Shahobiddin Yassaviy. Turkiston achchiq haqiqatlari. 2-nashri. – Istanbul, 1984. – S. 154.

<sup>7</sup> Ahat Andican. Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Türkiye ve Orta Asya. – Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2009. – S. 89.

<sup>8</sup> Саййид Мансур Олимий. Бухоро – Туркистон бешиги. – Бухоро: “Бухоро” нашриёти, 2004. – Б. 89.

<sup>9</sup> Ahat Andican. Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Türkiye ve Orta Asya. – Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2009. – S. 84.

confiscated at the border. At times, the seized arms were resold by the Afghans to the Bukhara independence fighters at double the original price<sup>10</sup>.

In this situation, efforts were made to place the Emir of Bukhara under even tighter guard and to keep him effectively in captivity. Emir Alimkhan, accompanied by his guards, was not allowed to travel more than 11 kilometers beyond the Fatu fortress. Only during the summer and winter seasons was he permitted, with authorization from the Afghan government, to visit Pagman or Jalalabad. Unable to send assistance to Bukhara and constrained in captivity, the Emir sought solutions on all fronts. One such attempt was to present to Nadirshah a crown adorned with large and precious diamonds, in exchange for permission to continue sending weapons to Bukhara<sup>11</sup>. The crown, decorated with gemstones of such value that several city fortresses could have been purchased with it, was accepted, and only then was permission granted once more to dispatch arms from Afghanistan. Nevertheless, Afghan border guards continued to seize the shipments under various pretexts. Meanwhile, Ibrahimbek persisted in his struggle against the Russians but suffered greatly from shortages of weapons. During the day, transporting arms across the border was prohibited. Thus, Ibrahimbek's comrades would hide in the mountains and launch night attacks on the Russians, capturing their weapons as spoils<sup>12</sup>.

Emir Alimkhan lived in exile with a deep longing for his homeland. His appeals to return to Bukhara were rejected by the Soviet leader, Joseph Stalin. Towards the end of his life, Alimkhan's eyesight weakened and he fell seriously ill. On April 28, 1944, after a prolonged illness, Emir Said Alimkhan passed away at the age of 63 in Qal'ai Fotu. Although far from his homeland, Emir Alimkhan never abandoned his determination to resist the enemy. For seven years, he directed from Kabul the forces fighting against the Russians in the western, eastern, and northern provinces of Bukhara. However, his aspirations ultimately remained unfulfilled.<sup>13</sup>

Emir Alimkhan was buried in the Shahidani Islam cemetery near Kabul. At the initiative of his sons, a mausoleum was built over his grave and a marble tombstone was erected. The inscription on the marble reads:

"This sacred place belongs to Emir Said Alimkhan, son of Said Abdulahadkhan, son of Emir Said Muzaffarkhan, son of Said Nasrullokhkan, son of Emir Said Haydarkhan, son of Emir Shohmurodkhan, son of Emir Doniyolkhan — the seventh ruler of the Manghit dynasty, who once reigned in Bukhara Sharif. In the tenth year of his rule, Bukhara Sharif was occupied by the Bolsheviks, and he became an exile in neighboring Afghanistan, where he found refuge. He lived

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<sup>10</sup> Gülseren Doğan. 1917-1924 yılları arasında Türkistan milli devletleri. – İstanbul: Elazığ, 2018. – S. 94.

<sup>11</sup> Саййид Мансур Олимий. Бухоро – Туркистон бешиги. – Бухоро: "Бухоро" нашриёти, 2004, – Б. 111.

<sup>12</sup> Nurettin Hatinoğlu. Türkistanda son türk devleti Buhara emirliği ve Alim Han. – İstanbul: Ötüken, 2016. – S. 124.

<sup>13</sup> Ensar Göçmez. Afganistan'dan gelen göçmen Özbekler'in sosyo-kültürel ve dini hayatları üzerine sosyolojik bir araştırma (Hatay ili Ovakent beldesi örneği) – Selçuk Üniversitesi, Yayınlanmış yüksek lisans tezi, Konya: 2009. – S. 51.



here for twenty-three years and departed this world in the year 1363 AH at the age of sixty-three. May the Almighty embrace his soul with mercy. Amen!”<sup>14</sup>

When Emir Said Alimkhan left the capital in September 1920, he was compelled to abandon not only the state treasury but also his harem in the city. The remainder of his relatives, numbering 118 in total, were captured by the Russians in Khoja Orif (present-day Shofirkon) and placed under house arrest in the Khurjun madrasah of Bukhara<sup>15</sup>. Among them were Alimkhan’s three children, who also fell into captivity. The Bolsheviks subjected his three sons—Said Sultankhan, Said Shokhmuradkhan, and Said Rakhimkhan—as well as his two nephews, Said Rakhmatullo and Said Sayfiddin, to various forms of torture<sup>16</sup>.

After the Red Army and the Bolsheviks entered Bukhara, the three innocent sons of the Emir were forced to stand in the Devonbegi Mosque from three o’clock at night until eleven o’clock in the morning. At eleven, the Russians dressed the captive sons of the Emir in clothes inscribed in Persian and Uzbek with phrases such as: *“Alimkhan is a tyrant,” “He does not want a republic,” “He forces the people into slavery,”* and *“Be grateful that you are liberated.”* They were then paraded through the bazaars and streets. However, this act backfired on the Bolsheviks: upon witnessing such humiliation of the children, even those segments of the population who had previously opposed the Emir began to sympathize with and support him<sup>17</sup>.

Meanwhile, Emir Alimkhan and his attendants, having departed for Afghanistan to wage war against the Russians and to procure arms, remained unaware of the fate of his family—his sons, uncles, and mother—who had been left behind in Bukhara. In July 1923, under a decision of the Bukhara People’s Soviet Republic government led by Fayzulla Khodjayev, Emir Said Alimkhan’s mother Toraoyim, his wives Shamsiyaoyim, Totioyim, Muharramoyim, Musharrafoyim, Muborakoyim, and Khursandoyim, his daughters Xosiyatoy and Saodatoy, his uncles Mir Muhammad Siddiq ibn Muzaffarkhan, Mir Nosir ibn Muzaffarkhan, and Mir Abdulazimxon ibn Muzaffarkhan, his sister Shohoy, his biological mother Davlat Bakht, and other close relatives—a total of 51 individuals—were sent to Afghanistan via Termez of their own accord<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Саййид Мансур Олимий. Бухоро – Туркистон бешиги. – Бухоро: “Бухоро” нашриёти, 2004, – Б. 126.

<sup>15</sup> Qarang: Ражабов Қ. Бухорога қизил армия босқини ва унга қарши кураш. – Тошкент: Маънавият, 2002. – Б. 29-31.

<sup>16</sup> Ahat Andican. Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Türkiye ve Orta Asya. – Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2009. – S. 95.

<sup>17</sup> Naci Yengin. Buhara Emirliği Türkistan ve Enver Paşa. – Istanbul: Bilgeoğuz, 2010. – S. 150-151.

<sup>18</sup> Qarang: Ражабов Қ. Бухорога қизил армия босқини ва унга қарши кураш. – Тошкент: Маънавият, 2002. – Б. 30.

The Emir's three sons, however, remained in Russian captivity. Fayzulla Khodjayev sent a letter to Amir Alimkhan stating: "If you cease fighting against the Russians and stop supporting the mujahideen, we will send your three sons to Afghanistan. Otherwise, they will remain with us." In this way, Khodjayev sought to compel the Emir to abandon the struggle.

Yet Emir Alimkhan understood that this was merely a ruse of the Russians and that Fayzulla Khodjayev had written the letter under their pressure. He therefore chose to continue the fight. In response to the letter, he wrote: "Thousands of my children have remained in captivity in Bukhara at the hands of the Russians. You wish me to abandon the war in exchange for my three sons. For me, there is no difference between my own three children and the many who remain in Bukhara. If we are victorious, both my sons and the rest will be saved. For me, the most important goal is to liberate Bukhara and Turkestan from the Russians."<sup>19</sup>

Even after three months of physical and psychological punishment, Emir Said Alimkhan's children continued to be held under house arrest in Bukhara. In 1922, they were taken to Moscow, where the princes were placed in the Bukhara Educational Home<sup>20</sup>. There, they were given communist instruction. The Bukhara Educational Home in Moscow, as well as the Workers' Faculty of the Uzbek Pedagogical Institute, later produced many prominent artists, among them Mannon Uygur, Yetim Babajonov, Hikmat Latipov, Lutfulla Narzullaev, Sadi Tabibullaev, Abror Hidayatov, Sora Eshantorayeva, Zamira Hidayatova, and Tursunoy Saidazimova. Among these talented students was Maryam Yakubova (1909–1987), a native of Bukhara and later named People's Artist of the Uzbek SSR in 1955. As a member of the drama circle, she studied alongside Prince Shokhmurad Olimov, son of Emir Alimkhan, and they often performed together in various plays. According to Yakubova's recollections, she studied together with two of the Amir's sons—Sultan and Shokhmurod<sup>21</sup>.

The eldest son, Sultankhan, who was disabled in one leg, was imprisoned and died there. The youngest son, Abdurahimkhan, who had openly expressed his hatred toward the Soviet regime, was accused of espionage in 1937 and executed<sup>22</sup>.

The fate of the middle son, Shokhmurad, unfolded differently. Whether under pressure from the Soviet authorities, persuasion from his friends, or the insistence of his beloved, Javhar Bashiyeva, his article titled "*From the Son to the Former Amir of Bukhara*"<sup>23</sup> was published in the June 16, 1929, issue of *Izvestiya* as proof of his renunciation of his father. In this piece, Shokhmurad openly disavowed his father. Thereafter, the path to a "bright future" was opened to him. He enrolled in a military school. His mother, Muharram Oyim, repeatedly appealed to the Soviet

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<sup>19</sup> Naci Yengin. Buhara Emirliği Türkistan ve Enver Paşa. – Istanbul: Bilgeoğuz, 2010. – S. 150-151.

<sup>20</sup> Иноятов С., Алауов А. Бухарский дом просвещения в Москве. – Навои, 1996. – С. 17-30.

<sup>21</sup> Qarang: Ёкубова М. Даврим ва даврам (хотиралар). Тузучи: Т.Ёкубова. – Тошкент: Фафур Фулом номидаги нашриёт-матбаа ижодий уйи, 2019. – Б. 100-103.

<sup>22</sup> Хайдаров Ф. Последний Эмир. – Самарканд: Зарафшан, 2017. – С 23.

<sup>23</sup> "Известия" (Москва). 16 июня 1929 г.

Embassy in Kabul to obtain permission to meet her son Shokhmurad, who was then studying in Moscow. However, when Muhammad Azizkhan sought such a meeting in 1933, the military school replied on Shokhmurad's behalf, refusing with the statement: "*We have received Soviet education.*" After graduating from the military school, Shokhmurad Olimov resided at Apartment 7, House 23, Korolenko Street, Moscow, and took a position as an engineer at a military factory. He later continued his studies at the Military Engineering Academy in Moscow. During the Second World War, he fought on the frontlines and was awarded several orders and medals. In 1944, he was severely wounded and lost one of his legs. After the war, he returned to the academy where he had studied, working there as a military specialist, eventually rising to the rank of general. According to the recollections of his wife, Lidiya Mikhailovna, he would sometimes weep when remembering his parents. General Shokhmurad Olimov passed away in Moscow in 1985.

We present below, for your consideration, an article published in the 16 June 1929 issue of *Izvestiya*.

*To the Former Emir of Bukhara, from His Son*  
(Open Letter)

We present to the reader a son's letter addressed to his father.

The father — the former Emir of Bukhara — ruled the Emirate with the support of the Russian Tsarist regime and had long been a loyal servant of the White Tsar. Driven from Bukhara by the working people, he spent an extended period as an émigré in unknown parts of Afghanistan. Recently, he proclaimed war against Soviet power, and simultaneously, bands of *basmachi* (insurgent bands) intruded into our territory near the city of Garm<sup>24</sup>.

The son — A. Shokhmurad — stands on an entirely different front. He is a student at the Moscow Workers' Faculty. Having heard of his father's new yet futile undertakings, he writes, as a "former son," his "first and last" letter to his father. We are publishing this document, which is rare in the history of humankind. It demonstrates how the force of socialist ideas has come to influence even a representative of the monarchical family that once politically subjugated Bukhara.

"I am writing to you the first and last letter of my life. In truth, I had not intended to write at all, for I wished that there be no connection between us. Yet the recent events have compelled me, with the very blood of my heart, to write this letter to you.

In 1917, for the first time in human history, the world was divided into two camps: the camp of capitalism and the camp of socialism.

By 1918, when your tyranny had reached its peak, the Registan was filled with the blood of those poor peasants and wretches whom you had condemned to poverty, who at last dared to rise against your ruthless oppression. Meanwhile, you were absorbed only in your pleasures and indulgences. Although we were father and son, we would see each other but once a year. The rest of the time, we three brothers lived with our mothers in the company of women. You did not even know whether you had sons. I could not understand these things then (I was only nine years

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<sup>24</sup> Garm — a "village, locality." At that time, it was the center of the Karategin beklik. Today it is a village in the Rasht region of Tajikistan.

old at the time), but my mother's sorrowful stories became imprinted upon my memory with vivid clarity.

In 1920, the despotic regime in Bukhara — a semi-colonial and mercilessly reactionary government — was overthrown. Your government, composed of mullahs and wealthy men, likewise collapsed. The Emirate of Bukhara died. In its place came another order — the power of the people. We were taken under the care of the newly established Bukharan People's Soviet Republic. It nourished us, raised us, and clothed us".

In 1923, together with the sons of workers and peasants of Soviet Bukhara, we were sent to Moscow to study. After Central Asia was incorporated, the Bukharan Soviet Republic, along with the Turkmenistan<sup>25</sup> (Turkistan) Autonomous Soviet Republic and the Kharezm Soviet Republic, entered the USSR on equal terms and together formed the Uzbek SSR. Not only you, but the very Emirate of Bukhara, which had been directly subjugated by the Russian autocratic regime, perished. Bukhara has changed, it has been renewed. Now there is no longer any violence or oppression. Ignorance and illiteracy are being eradicated there; new schools are multiplying, in which tens of thousands of children of farmhands and working people are learning to read and write and to study various sciences. Under the skillful leadership of the Bolshevik Party, the national economy is being consolidated and is advancing toward a new society — the society of communism.

For six years now, I have been studying in Moscow, the political and economic center of the entire Union. I have studied at the Workers' Faculty. Living together with my comrades at the faculty, I joined the collective of the great Soviet society. I began to hate you. I consider that I have never had a father at all, and I advise you, too, to forget that you have a son. Yet there is something else: an unfamiliar yet warmly familiar face. He has been reborn as a new human being — one who speaks a new language, views life in a new way, and lives as a new person.

The world is divided into two poles.

The revolutionary movement is gaining strength not only in the West but also in the East: the poor of China are rising against the oppression of imperialism. The Indians are rising against their colonialism and are defending their independence. All over the world, sparks of revolution are flaring up and will burn away everything harmful.

Imperialism sets nations against one another. It deceives them in order to turn them completely into its colonies.

And you, a rabbit driven from its burrow, a slave of imperialism, under the protection of the traitorous government of Bacha-i Saqao, want to attack Soviet Tajikistan in order to cross into Bukhara. You need this to destroy Soviet power there and to restore once again the Emirate of Bukhara. The only difference is that before you squeezed the people's lifeblood and shared it with the Russian Tsar, but now you want to do so with worldly England, eternally hungry and

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<sup>25</sup> In the letter, Turkmenistan is mentioned deliberately. However, this actually refers to the Turkistan ASSR.

The Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic (in Russian: *Uzbekskaya Sovetskaya Sotsialisticheskaya Respublika*) was one of the republics that formed part of the Soviet Union. The Uzbek SSR was established in February 1925 on the territories of the Turkistan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, the Bukharan People's Soviet Republic, and the Kharezm People's Soviet Republic — primarily in the regions inhabited by Uzbeks



predatory. This will not happen. Soviet power exists in Tajikistan and will always exist. Soviet power was not established so easily that it could be destroyed so easily by any exiled tyrant.

In 1920, when leaving Bukhara, you sowed the seeds of the basmachi throughout Eastern Bukhara, but their last remnants were completely destroyed by the Red Army composed of workers and peasants, and by the national units — the Red soldiers. Yet again, basmachi bands have begun to appear on Soviet lands. But this time, too, the Red Army will annihilate these bandits who deceive the people. Behind Soviet Tajikistan stands the great Soviet Union with its population of 140 million. And behind the USSR stand the working class of the West and of the entire colonized East.

These are my last words to you. We part completely. If fate, against my will, should bring us together, then it will mean we meet as enemies.

Your former son, A. Shokhmurad<sup>26</sup>.”

So, what were the reasons for writing this letter?

First of all, during nearly seventy-five years of the Soviet state’s existence, false propaganda and agitation were constantly in full swing. Shokhmurad graduated from a military school and dreamed of entering the academy. Everyone knew that such a prospect would never smile upon the son of the former Emir, who was considered an enemy of the Soviet state. There are various assumptions. From an early age he had been a member of Soviet society, raised with Soviet ideology — and what else could be expected of a communist? Some sources say that he acted under the urging of his fellow students. In any case, by writing this letter Shokhmurad renounced not only his father, but also his entire childhood, his history, and even the homeland where his umbilical cord blood had been shed. In reality, to expect loyalty to the nation from people raised under communist ideology was a mistake.

Although Emir Alimkhan’s departure from Bukhara was due to inevitability, leaving his children in the hands of the enemy cannot, of course, be justified. Yet what kind of society was it that forced children to renounce their own father? What kind of state was it that even used children as a weapon? This letter was delivered to Alimkhan by the Afghan ambassador in Moscow. After reading it, Alimkhan simply smiled at the ambassador and said, “I do not believe my son wrote this letter.” The Russians had only one purpose in dictating this letter—reminding the Amir that they held a weapon to restrain him and demonstrating that they could use it at any moment. It can be said that one of the reasons behind composing this letter in Shokhmurad’s name was the Emir’s appeals, sent through his envoys during 1927–1928, urging the population of Bukhara to rise against the Bolsheviks. No matter how ignorant and bloodthirsty the Emir might have been portrayed in Soviet terms, it is difficult to believe that a son would send such a letter to his own father. Let us each ask ourselves a simple question: what did the overthrow of the Emirate by the Red Army actually give to the ordinary people of Bukhara? After the Amir was deposed, did the impoverished population suddenly become wealthy, or were all problems solved at once? Naturally, these words will not appeal to Russophiles. Perhaps the abolition of the Emirate was indeed justified. However, the fact that the Bolsheviks carried this out through the Jadids resulted in our nation’s disunity for

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<sup>26</sup> Сын бывшего, бухарского эмира – своему отцу // “Известия” (Москва). 16 июня 1929 г.

decades, compelling us to seek traitors among our own. After the fall of the Emirate, the primary task of the Soviet state became discrediting the Amir and persuading the remaining population to accept this view. In some sense, they did succeed in this endeavor. Even today, the fact that our truthful history does not please certain “individuals” is evidence of this.

Emir Alimkhan sustained his livelihood in Afghanistan through the trade of karakul pelts and the income generated from his jewelry shop. A portion of the profits from this trade was deposited in banks in British India. Unfortunately, on numerous occasions, funds entrusted to reliable representatives were misappropriated, squandered, or embezzled.

In conclusion, the cunning policy pursued by Soviet Russia in the Turkistan region, particularly toward Bukhara, further intensified the prevailing atmosphere of discontent within the country. As a result, a people lacking internal unity were ultimately transformed into a colony by the Russians. Even within the activities of the *qorboshis* (local resistance leaders), this inability to unite and the prevalence of mutual distrust worked to Russia’s advantage. The independent Bukharan People’s Soviet Republic likewise failed to achieve its goals. Several congresses were convened in the country, but they yielded no tangible results. Consequently, it was once again the ordinary population that suffered. What is encouraging, however, is that the history of our homeland, the deeds of our ancestors, and, in particular, the life of Emir Said Alimkhan are now being studied not only in Uzbekistan but also in various other countries, revealing new dimensions of the last ruler of Turkistan.