

THE HISTORY OF THE UZBEK NATION: FORMATION AND CONSOLIDATION

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In the second half of the nineteenth century, with the transformation of Central Asia into a colony of Tsarist Russia, Russian capital entered the region and a national bourgeois stratum emerged. With the financial support of this stratum, the Jadid movement appeared on the historical stage and marked the beginning of the Uzbek people's history as a nation. Subsequently, the establishment of Soviet power and the policy of national-territorial delimitation had a significant impact on the process of nation formation. After Uzbekistan gained independence, the process of development as a nation acquired a new content and direction.

The Jadid movement and the beginning of national history. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, local intellectuals who had studied in European countries with the economic support of the national bourgeoisie came to realize the necessity of profound reforms in Turkestan. With the aim of enlightening the population, they initiated the opening of schools, the publication of newspapers and journals, and the raising of public awareness, thereby fostering a sense of national identity. These activities constituted the initial stage in the formation of the Uzbek people as a nation. The spiritual, educational, and political activities of the Jadids consolidated broad strata of society and encouraged them to live with a sense of responsibility for their homeland.

After the Bolsheviks came to power, an appeal was addressed to the peoples of the Eastern colonies. "Under the leadership of the Bolsheviks, the proletariat overthrew Tsarist and bourgeois Russia from power one after another. Power in Russia was transferred into the hands of the working people led by the proletariat. Now you too are free from colonial oppression. In your own land, you have the right to establish whatever form of government you desire" [1] — as stated in a written address by V.I. Lenin. Inspired by this appeal, the Jadids of Turkestan began efforts to establish a unified national state. However, this national awakening in historical Turkestan alarmed the Soviet authorities, and the central government developed an ideological concept of Leninist national policy directed toward the peoples of the region.

National-territorial delimitation in Central Asia and its consequences. In order to retain control over governance, the Bolsheviks carried out national-territorial delimitation in Central Asia in 1924 [2]. This policy led to the artificial division of the historically formed ethnic communities and the established historical space of the region. As a result, the unified Turkestan and its integral cultural heritage were fragmented under the pretext of national affiliation, and the traditional bonds of historical unity were disrupted. The negative consequences of this policy became even more evident after the collapse of the USSR and the emergence of independent states.

The consolidation of the term "Uzbek" and the prohibition of tribal names. Following national-state delimitation, the Republic of Uzbekistan was established, and the name "Uzbek" was assigned to its people. The use of clan and tribal names was prohibited. In official documents and public life, the mention of tribal names such as Qarluqs, Chigils, Oghuz, Kipchaks, Turks, Ming, and Qongirat was strictly forbidden. Through local and central press as well as the education system, the term "Uzbek" was promoted as a common national designation, and this policy was placed under strict supervision by the party and the state. Only researchers were allowed to study tribal names within the framework of academic research.

The doctrine of class ideology and the construction of a socialist nation. Soviet authority divided a unified people into class strata and transferred governance to the poor. The main idea of this policy was expressed in directive documents as follows: "As long as power is in the hands



of the poor, they must rise to the level of a national class and acquire the right to be called a nation. With the disappearance of class antagonism within nations, hostile relations between nations will also gradually disappear. Until this is achieved, the poor cannot rise to the level of a nation. The Uzbek nation is not an exception in this regard" [3] — as stated in the directive documents of the Soviet authorities. In addition, through the collectivization of agriculture, private property was abolished and collective farms were established. Property owners and middle peasants were eliminated as a class, and this policy was implemented largely by representatives of the local population.

The role of culture and literature in the formation of national identity. Artistic creativity played an invaluable role in endowing the term "Uzbek" with an ethnic meaning. For example, Abdullah Qodiriy's novel "O'tgan kunlar" ("Bygone Days") was significant not only for its artistic merit but also for its major political importance in consolidating the term "Uzbek" in an ethnic sense. In the novel, the lifestyle, customs, and moral qualities of the settled population referred to as "Sart" are depicted as those of an Uzbek family. This contributed greatly to fostering respect and affection for the Uzbek people in the hearts of readers and to the formation of a positive meaning of the term "Uzbek" [4].

In conclusion, the formation of the Uzbek people as a nation was a complex and multi-stage process. The national awakening initiated by the Jadids took a different direction under the influence of Soviet ideological policy. Although national-territorial delimitation undermined the unified history and cultural heritage of Turkestan, it also contributed to the transformation of the term "Uzbek" into a general national designation and to ethnic consolidation within the republic. By the 1940s, the process of the consolidation of the Uzbeks as a nation had largely been completed. After Uzbekistan achieved independence, broad opportunities emerged for the revival and renewal of national thinking, culture, and traditions rooted in historical foundations.

During the Soviet period, the Uzbek people passed through a complex and contradictory path. On the one hand, repression and ideological pressure forced people to live in constant anxiety, while on the other hand unprecedented growth occurred in the fields of education, science, and culture. Historical trials such as the Second World War and the "cotton affair" accelerated the process of national self-awareness and ultimately created the conditions for the formation of the Uzbek people as an independent nation. This period became an important historical stage that demonstrated the resilience, diligence, and tolerance of the Uzbek people.

In the early years of Soviet rule, the most capable national cadres were subjected to repression, which forced the broad masses to live under constant fear and pressure. Nevertheless, under the influence of targeted propaganda, the population continued to work with hope for the future. Researcher G. Ubiria notes in his work that the population of Uzbekistan at that time "considered the USSR as their homeland, and Uzbekistan as its integral part" [5].

When fascism posed a threat to humanity, the Uzbek people could not remain indifferent. The war years further united Uzbek soldiers in the struggle for the liberation of their homeland and strengthened their national pride. At the same time, the population remaining on the home front demonstrated unprecedented perseverance. The launch of industrial enterprises relocated to Uzbekistan, the adoption of orphaned children, and the selfless labor of women revealed the great moral qualities of the people.

In her book, M.M. Urolova emphasizes: "Our women did not allow our towns and villages, left deserted as their husbands went to the front, to fall into ruin." "...this exemplary tolerance was an ethno-cultural heritage inherited from ancestors over many centuries" [6].

Achievements in education and the tragedy of "cotton monoculture." Alongside repression, the Soviet authorities paid significant attention to education and science. Schools were opened throughout the republic, and literacy among the population increased sharply. By the 1960s, more than sixty higher educational institutions and the Academy of Sciences were functioning in



Uzbekistan. Free access to education and medical care became perceived by the general population as an ordinary reality.

However, the policy of “cotton monoculture” in the economy led to serious consequences for the Uzbek people. Toxic chemicals used in cotton fields caused significant harm to public health, especially to women and children. Nevertheless, the Uzbek people continued the process of formation as a nation.

The development of a unified literary language played an important role in the formation of the Uzbek nation. The elimination of dialect fragmentation and the creation of common national linguistic norms brought people closer together. The national language served as a means of uniting individuals across the entire nation. The compilation of scientific and terminological dictionaries in various fields demonstrated the full formation of the Uzbek language as a national language. As a result of these processes, the sense of national identity strengthened. Whereas earlier censuses recorded individuals under various ethnic group names (Kipchak, Qurama, Turk), later they increasingly began to identify themselves simply as Uzbeks.

From the second half of the 1980s, economic and political crises began in the Soviet Union. Campaigns such as the “cotton affair” and the “Uzbek affair,” initiated by the central authorities, represented attempts to discredit the Uzbek people. This policy undermined the trust of the Uzbek population in the Soviet state and the Communist Party and became one of the factors that contributed to the disintegration of the “red empire.” Ultimately, the Soviet system itself was drawn into a deep socio-economic, political, and spiritual crisis and collapsed.

In conclusion, having passed through the severe trials of the Soviet era, the Uzbek people reached a high level of national self-awareness. Achievements in education and science, unity during wartime, the development of language and culture, and the struggle against injustice contributed to their formation as a nation. The transition from the level of a people to that of a nation was completed through the establishment of firm state borders, the recognition of the state language, the formation of a national mentality, and the rise of civic consciousness. The granting of state language status to Uzbek on October 21, 1989, and the proclamation of Uzbekistan’s independence on August 31, 1991, became the logical culmination of this long and arduous historical process. The emergence of the Republic of Uzbekistan on the world map became the decisive factor in the final formation of the Uzbek nation.

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