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REFLECTIONS ON THE CAMPAIGNS OF TSARIST RUSSIA IN CENTRAL ASIA

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Central Asia is the most precious pearl in the Russian crown.
I.A. Vyshnegradsky, Minister of Finance of the Russian Empire

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Turkestan is famous throughout the world as a paradise-like land, and Uzbekistan is the heart of this region. In particular, the Achaemenids held the land in subjugation for 200 years, the Greco-Macedonians for 180 years, the Arab Caliphate for 200 years, the invaders of Genghis Khan for 150 years, and the Russian Empire (the tsarist government) together with the Soviet state for 130 years. [H. Ziyoyev 2001, p. 6] The life of Turkestan in the late 19th and early 20th centuries corresponds to a complex socio-political and spiritual situation. None of the empires that have ever existed tried as hard as the Russian Empire and its successor, the red empire, to instill in the local population a belief in the rightness of their deeds. Even the great Mongols did not humiliate the religion of the local population as the Russian Empire and the Soviet state did.

Over its history of several thousand years, our ancient people has endured many hardships. One of these difficult periods was the era of the invasion and colonial rule of Tsarist Russia. In Soviet times, this invasion and colonialism were concealed from the people and from students behind such phrases as “the annexation of Central Asia to Russia” and “Central Asia under the protection of Russia.” All literature, textbooks, and manuals were adapted to these phrases.

Only the independence we have gained made it possible to create and study our true history. The white and black spots of our history have been uncovered. During the 130 years of Tsarist Russian colonialism and the subsequent Soviet tyranny, “…what misfortunes and calamities did not befall our people.” Like all invaders, they pursued a policy of destroying our people’s spiritual, cultural, and historical heritage and depriving them of it. The words of the Russian tsarist general Skobelev confirm the policy they pursued: “To destroy a nation, it is not necessary to exterminate it; it is enough to destroy its culture, art, and language, and it will soon decline by itself.”

Even in those complex and terrible years, our people, striving for freedom and liberty, managed to preserve their national thinking, customs, way of life, and ancestry. It was proven once again that only “a people that knows its history and draws spiritual strength from it” is invincible.

Knowing both the noble and the tragic history of our people not only gives strength to our citizens, especially young people, but also strengthens their sense of patriotism.

The ancestors of the Turkic peoples witnessed sixteen great empires in the past: the Great Hun, the Botu Hun, the European Hun (a Turkic state founded in Europe by Attila in the 4th century AD), the Kökturk, Avar, Khazar, Uyghur, Karakhanid, Ghaznavid, Great Seljuk, Khwarazmian, Golden Horde, Great Timurid, Baburid, and Ottoman empires. In this regard, it should not be forgotten that the Russians were part of the Mongol-Tatar state for three hundred years. [Majid Khasaniy 1997, p. 2]

An analysis of the scholarly literature shows that the following aspirations of the Russian Empire toward Central Asia are characteristic:

First aspiration – It should be particularly emphasized that the Russian government’s dream of conquering Turkestan was constant: it began in the period of the early Russian principalities and intensified during the period of the Golden Horde khanates, which served as a bridge between the

Russian principalities and Turkestan. During this period, ties between the people of Turkestan and the Russian principalities became considerably more active. There is evidence that in the first half of the 14th century there were many Khwarazmian and Bukharan merchants in Nizhny Novgorod [Grekov 1995, p. 53]. Russians also had residences in Sarai, the capital of the Golden Horde. This led to close contacts with Central Asian merchants.

Second aspiration – Having conquered the Kazan, Astrakhan, and Siberian khanates in the second half of the 16th century, the Russian tsar Ivan the Terrible began to cast covetous eyes on the Central Asian region, which was famed as a land of fabulous wealth. This was clearly evident in the activities of the envoys led by Anthony Jenkinson, a representative of the organization known as the "Muscovy Company." According to the sources, Anthony Jenkinson and his agents stayed in Bukhara from April 1558 to September 2, 1559, and held talks with Abdullah Khan II. While Abdullah Khan II, a capable and renowned representative of the Shaybanid dynasty, was interested in obtaining information about the military potential of Russia, England, and Turkey during his talks with the Russian envoys, the envoys sought to gather as much information as possible about Bukhara's economic and socio-political situation and its international relations [Jo'rayev N. 2000, pp. 27–28].

In later periods as well, the Russian state conducted a number of secret embassy missions, in particular those of Ivan Khokhlov in 1620, I. Pazukhin in 1669, and A. Daudov in 1675. Russian sources record that there were 9 envoys in Central Asia in the 16th century.

Third aspiration – Russia's preparation for the conquest of Central Asia was begun by Peter I at the beginning of the 18th century. The internecine wars and conflicts among local factions that intensified in the 18th–19th centuries, the division of Turkestan into three independent khanates, the contradictions among them, and the escalation of wars led to the growth of religious fanaticism. This situation allowed religious leaders to gain a certain standing in society and, in the name of Muslim moral norms and Islam, to blindly resist any innovations in science and culture, which fueled religious dogmatism. As a result, the economic and cultural life of the peoples of Turkestan fell into decline.

Fourth aspiration – In 1835, the Orenburg Governor-General V.A. Perovsky addressed a special letter to Emperor Nicholas I in which, by providing false information that the Khiva Khanate had long been hostile and was plundering trade caravans, he incited the emperor and stated that it was necessary to wage war against the Khiva Khanate. He also accused the Khiva Khanate of lack of culture, backwardness, and savagery (in 1717, Bekovich-Cherkassky set out on a campaign toward Khiva to carry out the decree of Peter I. Thanks to the extremely cautious and astute policy of the Khan of Khiva, Shergozi Khan, Bekovich-Cherkassky and the "cultured," "highly intelligent" Russian envoys were brought to a terrible plight. On August 29, 1717, Mikhail Zamonov, Kiryak Ekonomov, and Bekovich-Cherkassky were stripped and beheaded, and their heads were hung up in the Khiva bazaar).

Fifth aspiration – Tashkent, Aulie-Ata, and Chimkent were captured, the Bukhara and Khiva khanates were subjugated, and the Kokand Khanate was abolished. It would be correct to associate this period with the reign of Emperor Alexander II (1855–1881).

Sixth aspiration – In 1882, the Transcaspian Region was established, and Colonel Ionov occupied the Pamirs with his detachment. The Turkmens of the Merv oasis were accepted as subjects and annexed to Russia [Majid Khasaniy 1997, p. 59].

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that the above threats have been considered only superficially and require more in-depth study.

According to world experience, social, political, cultural, and educational factors underlie the emergence of Jadidism, which developed in a national direction while drawing ideological strength from the resistance movements of the peoples of the East against despotism that took the form of Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism. The doctrine of enlightenment occupies a leading place in the scholarly legacy of Jadids such as Mahmudkhoja Behbudiy, Abdurauf Fitrat, Abdulla Avloniy, and Cholpon. A distinctive feature of the development of the idea of enlightenment in Turkestan is that it was closely linked with the patriotic national movement that emerged as a result of the policy of conquest. It is precisely this feature that essentially distinguishes Jadidism from the Pan-Islamist and Pan-Turkist movements widespread in Eastern countries in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In terms of their goals, the Pan-Islamist and Pan-Turkist movements put forward the idea of the unity of the entire Islamic world or the entire Turkic world, and by their nature expressed the idea of Asia-centrism. Enlightenment was the leading principle of the national democratic doctrine in liberating the homeland from slavery and dependence. Therefore, its propaganda covered all spheres of socio-political life, such as science, culture, history, religion, and politics. The aim of these comprehensive measures was to accelerate the dynamics of progressive changes in national thinking, to form democratic thinking, and to bring about its transformation in practical life.

In the words of the historian Hamid Ziyoyev, talented people are not met at every step. A ruler of such intelligence, insight, courage, patriotism, and organizational skill is born once in a hundred years. The independence of the homeland was secured three times – in 900, 1370, and 1991 – and is inseparably linked with the names of I. Somoniy, A. Temur, and I. Karimov. However, it must be specially noted that the independence of the homeland is not tied to one, two, or three people. The contribution of the whole nation is enormous here: Shiroq, Tomyris, T. Malik, J. Manguberdi, A. Temur, the representatives of the Jadid movement, and others.

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