

The 1933 Uprising

# Soviet-Chinese Collaboration in Eastern Turkistan - II

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*The recent thaw in relations between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the now-defunct Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) has clearly shown that they have some mutual interests and common goals. One of the mutual concerns is their shared worry over the Islamic nationalism that has emerged on Russian-controlled land inhabited by various Turkic ethnic groups in Western Turkistan. The Chinese leadership clearly fears that this contagion could also spread into Eastern-Turkistan, another Turkic Muslim region under its control. In the first part of the article, the writer gave a historical account of uprising of the people of Eastern Turkistan in 1933 against Chinese rule. He concludes his story by showing the Soviet-Chinese collusion in crushing the Muslim revolt and concludes that the similarity of the famous historical uprising to today's situation is that the Soviet and Chinese governments have collaborated once again against the movements for freedom and independence in Eastern Turkistan.*

Anyhow, the IRET delegation had brought with them the bags of solid gold, silver, diamonds, rubies, and emeralds; enough to be carried on five horses as payment for military purchases, such as tanks, cannon, and a variety of guns and rifles. As a side note, it's important to mention here that the riches the delegation brought with them were collected as donations from young and old, poor and rich volunteers that rushed to collection offices to help the establishment of the IRET. The people of Kashgar wanted to see the survival and liberation of their country from the grasp of foreign occupation. They believed in their national and religious duties toward their native homeland-Eastern Turkistan.

The five-man delegation re-

turned from Tashkent with 'empty hands filled with promises' to Simkhana, a town bordering with West Turkistan, where they met with Khoja Niyaz Haji who had been waiting for them. The envoys gave him their report which was kept strictly confidential, and finally they all returned together to Kashgar on April 1, 1934.<sup>16</sup>

### Soviet Union's Private Agreement

According to a letter written by Khoja Niyaz to Muhammad Emin Bughra, the Commander of Chief of the Khotan army and one of the most important leaders of the 1933 rebellion, another agreement had been reached between him and the USSR without any knowledge of the IRET Cabinet Members, including the

Prime Minister, Sabit Abdulkabi.<sup>17</sup> The letter stated: "We need heavy military equipment, including fighter planes, tanks, and cannon. We cannot get these from other neighbouring countries. The Soviet Union has now agreed to our needs only if we accept the '12 point private agreement'. However, you have to be confident that we can change those conditions after we liberate our country." Despite Bughra's warning to Haji that accepting their conditions would jeopardize his homeland's future, he did not heed Bughra's warning at that time.<sup>18</sup>

Khoja Niyaz eventually signed a 12-point agreement with the Soviet Union without any authorization from his fellow Cabinet Members. By virtue of this 12 point agreement, all trade exchanges with British-India and Afghanistan would be stopped; business would be conducted with Russia only. All foreign manpower would be replaced with Soviet educator and military experts.<sup>19</sup> This 12 point agreement and the 8 point resolution of the IRET's parliament eventually rejected Haji's 12 point agreement.<sup>2</sup>

Khoja Niyaz Haji did not get any of the military equipment, because the Soviet authorities were stalling in order to gain some negotiation time with Sheng Shih-tts'ai, who had been offering them more concessions

than Haji. Moscow's special envoy, Apresoff, wanted Haji to join Sheng Shih-ts'ai's government in Urumchi rather than remain alone in power and independent. In fact, Sheng Shih-ts'ai had invited Khoja Niyaz to Urumchi, offering him a high position within the government, but Haji adamantly refused it.

#### Red Army in Eastern Turkistan

In January 12, 1934, Ma Chung-Ying's army attacked Urumchi and four days later captured its airport. The capital city, Urumchi, was surrounded. In the south, the situation was very critical and complicated; the newly proclaimed IRET and its allied armed forces were fighting Shing Shih-ts'ai's forces, which were also fighting against the Tungan-Chinese Muslim-army. This led Sheng Shih-ts'ai to turn toward the Soviet Union for help.

According to a reliable source, Soviet commanders had sent two groups of a total of 5,000 soldiers on horseback, which were referred to as the "Altaisky" and "Tarbaghataisky" armies, along with 30 aircrafts, 5 tanks, and more than 20 armored vehicles<sup>21</sup>; equipment the likes of which Eastern Turkistanian people saw for the first time in their life. The Soviet Tarbaghataisky army were positioned in the north and the Altaisky army in the south. They headed with full power on land and in air attacking relentlessly, destroying everything in their path. As a result of heavy Soviet assistance, the IRET was crushed by Sheng Shih-ts'ai.

Khoja Niyaz Haji was still free and alive and like a 'lion of the high mountain, might still be able to bring his people together. However, Sheng Shih-ts'ai used an old Chinese tactic which would 'separate the lion from the mountain'. He invited Khoja

Niyaz to Urumchi. In addition to Russia's military pressure, Apresoff arrived in the city of Aksu and also urged Khoja Niyaz to accept Sheng Shih-ts'ai's invitation and offer to work with him as Vice-Chairman. Khoja Niyaz finally accepted the invitation upon condition that the Soviet leaders guarantee that Urumchi's governmental power would be shared with him without any future troubles. He also accepted the invitation because he trusted Apresoff—the Soviet-appointed Chief ambassador and General Consul to Urumchi.

Khoja Niyaz arrived in Urumchi on October 12, 1937. One month later, his assistant, General Hamid Khan, along with battalion of 200 horseman also joined him. However, unbeknownst to Khoja Niyaz, all offices and departments of important positions were filled with Soviet advisors; there was no position of authority open to Khoja Niyaz Haji. He was not a mere symbolic figure in Sheng Shih-ts'ai's parliament, but was under his control and custody. "The lion was removed from his mountain."

Later on, Khoja Niyaz Haji was isolated by the KGB and Sheng Shih-ts'ai's agents and his position within the government was terminated.

Khoja Niyaz and a few of his friends were invited to a ceremonial banquet for Gomindung's envoy Ching-Lefoo, and as they left, later on, they were arrested and immediately put in jail. His 30 body-guards were also captured and disarmed. While this was going on, some 800 local Turkic intelligence people were also arrested without any given reason.

After a week in jail, Khoja Niyaz was finally given permission to see visitors. He met with

Ziyavuddin and told him, "I trusted Apresoff and relied on his guarantee, now look what Sheng Shih-ts'ai has done to me. I'm his prisoner. Go tell Apresoff of my predicament." Ziyavuddin met with Apresoff and told him of Haji's situation to which Apresoff had replied, "I had no idea of this. I'll have to check this out.

Come see me after tomorrow," although he was well aware of the situation. When Ziyavuddin returned two days later, Apresoff was nowhere to be found and was replaced with a new General Consul who had no knowledge of the dealings between Apresoff and Haji.<sup>22</sup>

Sheng Shih-ts'ai kept Khoja Niyaz in jail from October 12, 1938 to December of 1939, approximately 14 months, after which he issued a death sentence for Khoja Niyaz, along with 108 other people, by a 'secret court commission' that included several KGB agents. According to the memoirs of She-Youenpoo, who worked as a translator and secretary to this 'secret court commission,' "This death sentence was carried out after receiving Moscow's approval." In actuality, Khoja Niyaz was strangled to death in his cell.<sup>23</sup>

#### Moscow's Two-Sided Policy

Soviet leaders were interested in Eastern Turkistan right from the time of the Russian Czar, Peter the Great, who considered control over this area essential in order to gain rule of the entire Asian Continent.

But ever since the middle of the nineteenth century, the Russians have done everything possible to prevent Eastern Turkistan from enjoying independent status. In doing so, they have hoped to rule it someday and see to it that Western Turkistan (the Soviet Central Asian Republics)

does not also entertain ideas of independence like those Eastern Turkistan displayed in 1933.

Interviews with Turkistanian veteran immigrants living in the United States, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia, give testimony that further supports the fact that the IRET did not collapse, but was simply crushed by the collaboration between Chinese General Sheng Shih-ts'ai and the Soviet Union. In that action, the Soviet army, along with the Chinese and Tungan army, had massacred thousands of Turkic Muslims in Eastern Turkistan in 1934.

Moscow always pursued a two-sided policy toward Eastern Turkistan, and continues to do so. In this century alone, Eastern Turkistan's leaders struggle for independence, like Khoja Niyaz (1933) and Ahmed Jan Qasim (1944), have often relied on Russian promises for aid. But instead of assistance, the Russians replace the interests of the people within the region with their own. These policies have cost some hundreds of thousands of Turkistanian lives.

History has repeated itself again, but in a different way; the present uprisings in Eastern Turkistan are conducted without violence; there are no weaponry involved. Chinese military suppression supported by the Russian leaders upon Muslim groups in Eastern Turkistan could alienate some of the Middle-Eastern nations, especially Turkic and Muslim nations that China has been attempting to develop relations with, in recent years. Such nations are particularly important to China at a time when relations with most Western nations and Japan have quieted down since the incident of Tiananmen Square, in Beijing. Furthermore, with the advance in technology in communications, Asian and

Western diplomats in Beijing will be closely following the events in Eastern Turkistan. Human right organizations are also closely recording any acts against humanity that occur in the People's Republic of China.

(Concluded.)

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