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The Genesis of The Public Services System in Uzbekistan During the Soviet Era and The Reflection of Problems in The Population's Life (Based on Household Services and Public Catering Institutions)

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Abstract: This article analyzes the formation of the household services and public catering system in Uzbekistan during the totalitarian Soviet regime, focusing on its functioning, government programs, the plans established in these programs, and the contradictory outcomes of their implementation. The study also compares the performance of these sectors with that of other Union republics, using scholarly literature, periodicals, and archival documents.

Keywords: household services system, public catering institutions, “socialist” lifestyle, handicrafts, program, Union republics, plan, sector, indicators, kitchen, researcher, staff deficiency.

Introduction: It is well known that during the Soviet era, a series of programs and plans were developed in line with the idea of creating a “socialist lifestyle” or building a “socialist city.” The main idea behind these efforts was to improve the daily living conditions and labor environment of the population. In this context, the focus was on improving the household life of the people. In fact, the household services system had a profound impact on the economic, political, and cultural aspects of life in socialist society.

In 1921, the “Turkestan Handicraft Union (Turkpromsoyuz)” was established. After the dissolution

of the Turkestan Handicraft Cooperative in 1924, a handicraft department was created under the "Uzbekselkredpromsoyuz" organization. This department later became the organizational bureau of the Uzbek Handicraft Cooperative. However, this body did not operate for long. By October 1925, the "Uzbek Handicraft Union (Uzpromsoyuz)" was formed. This organization engaged in activities related to the production of agricultural materials, cultural-household services, leather goods, textile-knitting-sewing works, recycling waste materials, transportation, metal and wood processing, and selling handicraft products.

In general, after the formation of the Uzbek SSR, the main issues of the population's household services were addressed by three systems: the Uzbek Handicraft Cooperative Council, the People's Commissariat of Local Industry, and the Uzbek Disabled Cooperative Council.

According to archival documents, by the late 1920s, the situation of artisans and handicraftsmen in Uzbekistan was considerably backward compared to neighboring republics. There were unsatisfactory efforts in supplying the system with qualified personnel, and specialists who did not speak Uzbek and were deemed "useless" were sent to the republic, while local personnel training was not organized.

In the following years, the name of the system management underwent several changes. For instance, in 1932, the "Uzbek Handicraft Council," in 1934, the "Uzbek Handicraft Union," and in 1938, the "Uzbek Handicraft Council" were reorganized. In 1944, it became the "Handicraft Cooperative Directorate" under the Council of People's Commissars of Uzbekistan, and in 1950, it was re-established as the "Uzbek Handicraft Cooperative Council." In 1960, the activities of the Uzbek Handicraft Cooperative were terminated.

In 1962, the "Uzbek Household Services Directorate" was formed under the Ministry of Local Industry. By 1966, the household services system in the republic began functioning as a separate ministry.

During this period, if we look at the system's activities in terms of collective farms, in 1966, there were no permanent household services institutions in the 115 collective and state farms in the republic. In the Andijan region, two collective farms had no household services institutions, and in 10 collective farms, only one or two types of services were available. In the Bukhara region, 19 collective farms had no household services institutions, and 65 collective farms had 1-2 types of services. Similarly, in the Samarkand region, 6 collective farms had no household services workshops,

while 53 collective farms offered one or two types of services.

MAIN PART

The Soviet government, aiming to meet the material and cultural needs of the population in their daily lives, set a number of measures, making it one of the essential tasks of state policy to transform the sector into a large-scale mechanized network.

By the 1970s, efforts were made to strengthen the system's material and technical base, but the household services system could not fully meet the demands and wishes of the population. For example, in 1974, no collective or state farm in the Syrdarya region had a centralized order reception point. In the Jizzakh region, 14 out of 50 state farms lacked permanent workshops, and 23 had only services such as hairdressing and shoe repair.

By the mid-1970s, in the Kashkadarya region, 64 out of 148 collective and state farms had household service institutions, while 21 farms had one type of service, and 13 had no workshops at all. The household service institutions in the region were mainly located in 2-3 farms in the Guzar and Dehkanabad districts, as well as in five farms in the Koson, Chirakchi, and Karshi districts.

By the 1970s-80s, the development of the sector increasingly became characterized by the administration's bureaucratic approach, and instead of well-researched and scientific plans, the sector's expansion became driven by administrative decisions. As a result, Uzbekistan lagged significantly behind other republics in terms of economic and social indicators, ranking among the lowest in the Union. This negative trend was exacerbated by demographic factors. During this period, the growth rate of national income dropped from 41% at the beginning of the 1970s to just 17% in the early 1980s.

In the field of household services, Uzbekistan was among the lowest in the Union republics. For instance, between 1981-1985, the development rate of household services decreased. In particular, the level of services provided to rural populations was 1.6 times lower than for urban residents. Additionally, chemical cleaning services were 3.3 times lower, laundry services were 5.1 times lower, and shoe repair services were 2.6 times lower than the Union average.

Overall, the number of household service institutions in Uzbekistan grew from 8.4 thousand in 1965 to 13.4 thousand in 1970, 16.2 thousand in 1975, 20.4 thousand in 1985, and 26.9 thousand in 1990. In 1990, the per capita service in the household service sector amounted to 40.2 rubles, which placed Uzbekistan at the bottom among the Union republics.

The public catering system, as a part of the service sector and an integral part of people's daily lives, also played an important role. Public catering institutions have a long history, and in shaping their modern forms, it is essential to acknowledge that, historically, tea houses in urban markets, residential neighborhoods, and other public spaces were established for travelers, guests, and passersby. In addition to tea and bread, a variety of sweets and fruits were sold, and meals were prepared for the customers.

In the Soviet era, the government sought to use traditional tea houses as a tool to promote their ideas to the public, organizing lectures and reading newspapers and magazines. From the late 1930s, the activities of the public catering system began to change, and their number gradually increased year by year. For instance, in Tashkent, the number of restaurants and canteens increased from 32 in 1924 to 47 in 1938, 51 in 1939, and 103 in 1940. However, by 1940, there were only 4 catering institutions for every 10,000 people in Uzbekistan, which was below the standards in other republics like Georgia (5), Azerbaijan (7), Latvia (5), and Estonia (5).

In the 1960s, due to the insufficient attention given to the development of the public catering system, strengthening its material and technical base, constructing new buildings, and addressing the relevant issues of public catering institutions in several regions of the republic, the cafeterias in factories and plants in the republic had 11 people per seat instead of the 6 people per seat set by the Union standards.

During the Soviet government years, a number of actions were undertaken to build public catering institutions in residential areas and strengthen their material and technical base. However, over the years, sufficient attention was not paid to establishing and developing public catering institutions in many large organizations, educational institutions, and rural areas, nor to solving the existing problems.

The problems in the sector were also reflected in the research of several scholars of the time. For example, in R. Kh. Shodiyev's research on the activities of the public catering system, it was found that among the respondents: 48.1% used the public catering system daily, 15.5% used it occasionally, 7% did not use it at all, and 11.2% used cafeterias, cafes, and restaurants on their days off. Furthermore, in this study, 24% of respondents preferred to use public catering institutions outside of their organizations, and when asked why they did not use the cafeterias at their workplaces or residences, 64% of the respondents cited the low quality and high cost of food.

In the 1970s in Uzbekistan, the public catering system

for the population, including cafeterias, cafes, and restaurants in organizations, educational institutions, and industrial enterprises, was at an unsatisfactory level. According to the set standards, 180-250 seats per 1,000 workers were required, but many educational institutions and enterprises did not meet these requirements. For instance, in medical and polytechnic institutes, there were only 140 and 60 seats in the cafeterias for 4,000 students, respectively.

CONCLUSION

In addition, the public catering enterprises were criticized for preparing food that did not meet the local population's needs during national holidays. Specifically, the preparation and sale of products made from flour and confectionery items in several trade and public catering enterprises in the republic during the Nowruz holiday were harshly criticized by the Ministry of Trade of Uzbekistan. As a result, all trade and public catering enterprises were banned from purchasing, preparing, and selling dishes that symbolized the Nowruz holiday in the future.

In general, while the Soviet government expanded and improved the public catering system as part of promoting the idea of the "socialist lifestyle," on the other hand, certain conveniences were created for the population in this regard. However, even though a portion of the population used the services of public catering institutions, this process did not spread as widely as in other Union republics. One of the main reasons for this was related to the Uzbek people's mentality. It is well-known that the majority of the local population in Uzbekistan has traditionally preferred to spend their free time with family and enjoy lunch or dinner at home.

On the other hand, the existing public catering institutions' activities did not fully meet the population's demands. In many public catering institutions, the preparation of food, adherence to sanitary and hygiene standards, and the pricing did not align with the expectations and needs of the population.

Thirdly, the financial resources available to the population were insufficient for dining in restaurants, cafes, and cafeterias. Furthermore, the gradual introduction of traditional national dishes alongside European-style food in these public catering institutions led to an increase in their usage over time.

In a context of poverty and authoritarianism, the development of domestic service institutions, which had become an integral part of the population's lifestyle, progressed somewhat slowly. The changes made in the household service system did not come from the population's needs and requirements or the local characteristics of the regions. More importantly,

the issues related to the formation of the sector's infrastructure and staff training were not sufficiently addressed.

As a result, among the Union republics, the indicators of the development of household service institutions in the country significantly dropped.

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