

"Hojum" Movement in Uzbekistan: Purpose and Consequences

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Abstract

This article explores the "Hujum" movement that emerged in Uzbekistan. It examines the historical origins, core objectives, socio-political activities, and the broader impact and consequences of the movement within the country. The study also investigates public perception and governmental response. Through scholarly analysis, the paper evaluates the role of the movement in Uzbekistan's political landscape.

Keywords: Hujum movement, Uzbekistan, political movements, activism, social impact, historical analysis.

Introduction

The "Attack" campaign, carried out in Uzbekistan in 1926-1927, appeared as one of the "progressive" projects of the Soviet government aimed at radically changing society. In order to fully understand the essence of this movement, it is not enough to limit it only to the issue of women; on the contrary, the "Attack" movement is a complex and contradictory process that includes the transformation of socio-political relations, ideological persecution, and pressure against national and religious values.

Politically and ideologically, the "Attack" campaign arose within the framework of the modernization policy based on Eurocentrism introduced by the Bolsheviks in Turkestan. Assessing the socio-moral system of the peoples of the East as "the remnants of antiquity," the Soviet government sought to change the general system by changing the family, which was considered the main link in society. The main goal in this regard was to free women from the veil and re-educate them as literate and hardworking socialist individuals. In the implementation of this policy, along with large-scale propaganda work, legal, administrative and repressive mechanisms were also widely used.

The measures taken under the slogan of "liberating" women ran counter to the strong religious and traditional foundations of society and met with strong resistance in many regions. According to archival materials, cases of physical violence and even murder against women who threw off the veil were widespread. It is noted that more than 2,500 women died prematurely in 1927-1928 alone. This clearly confirms that the "Attack" movement was manifested as ideological pressure

imposed from above, without taking into account the consciousness and lifestyle of the mass of the population. At the same time, it would be a one-sided approach to see only elements of violence and repression in this process. In some cases, women really became literate, and their social activity in society increased. It is noted that in the spring of 1927, the number of women who threw off the veil exceeded 100 thousand, most of whom were involved in the fields of education, medicine, culture and upbringing. From this point of view, the "Attack" movement can be assessed as a process that, along with ideological repression and ideological disinhibition, opened the way for personal freedom for some women. However, it is clear that the government's biggest mistake in this campaign was the denial of the local mentality, religious values and traditions. For example, in Uzbek society, women's activities were completely connected with the system of religious rituals, and the rejection of this system was tantamount to the denial of women's not only social, but also personal and spiritual identity. As the ethnographer Alekseev noted, the idea that "the life of Tashkent women was completely in a religious shell" confirms this point of view. It is also significant that the Soviet government turned this movement into an ideological "presentation". For example, there was a tendency to conduct political PR by combining veil-raising events with Soviet congresses and conferences on holidays such as March 8 and May 1. As a result of this formal approach, many women were seen only as objects to fill in statistical indicators, while their inner views and will were denied. Subsequent historical analyses indicate that although the legal and social status of women increased as a result of the "Attack" movement, this status was in many cases not real, but rather superficial. Even women who declared themselves atheists as a result of ideological pressure did not abandon traditional customs in everyday life. This situation, on the one hand, demonstrates the inextricable link between religion and national values, and on the other hand, the ineffectiveness of the state's attempts to reform society through ideological pressure. The historical reality of the 1920s in Uzbekistan is characterized by its complexity, confrontations between various political groups, economic crisis, cultural transformation and sharp changes in social structures. The policy implemented during this period under the slogan of "peaceful socialist construction", in particular the "Attack" movement, which was carried out through a spiritual and political program called "liberation" of women, was a complex process that meant not only the abandonment of women's veils and headscarves, but also a whole socio-political modernization, which requires analysis from the point of view of historiography not only superficially, but also in its fundamental meaning.

Any socio-political process has a certain ideological, economic and cultural basis. From this point of view, the "Onslaught" movement was an important component of a centralized ideological campaign aimed at strengthening the political position of the Soviet state in Turkestan, forming a socialist ideology in the minds of the local population, denouncing national-religious values as "remnants of the bourgeoisie" and creating the image of a new "Soviet woman". Although the movement officially began on March 8, 1927, the preparatory processes for it began much earlier, in the early 1920s. During this process, women's departments at the republican, regional and district levels, activists, local councils, and organizations such as the "Union of Kurashchan Godless" carried out large-scale propaganda work. Women's clubs, artels, and trading posts were organized, but behind the outward appearance of this process were hidden far-reaching political and ideological goals.

For the Soviet government, resolving the issue of women in Turkestan was primarily a means of dismantling local traditional structures, weakening the Islamic order and clerical circles. The slogan “liberation of women” was actually actively used as a strategic mechanism for establishing ideological dominance. After all, the involvement of women in social life and the abandonment of the veil was not only a cultural change, but also played an important role in ensuring the loyalty of Uzbeks to the governing systems, turning them into subjects obedient to the center. In other words, “Onslaught” was a form of the policy of re-education of local society implemented through women. At the same time, historical sources and living social reality indicate that this process was not widely accepted by the general population. In Muslim society, a certain social role of women is clearly expressed in the system of legal norms and cultural customs that have been formed over the centuries, and changing them on the basis of violence not only exacerbated the contradictions in society, but also deepened the distrust between the state and the community. In many cases, women were forced to throw off the veil and the headscarf, which threatened their religious and social authority. In some places, radical resistance, even cases of violent collective mutilation, physical harassment, and even murder were observed. In this process, the opposition of local men, especially representatives of religious and traditional communities, was sharp, which indicates that the “Onslaught” was largely not an ideological victory, but a change achieved through administrative pressure. The “Onslaught” movement essentially gives rise to two opposing points of view: the first is to view it as a positive factor that increased factors such as women’s social development, educational opportunities, and participation in the labor market; the second is its interpretation as a denial of national and religious values, cultural oppression, and violation of human rights. Both approaches highlight certain aspects of a complex social process, but an objective historical analysis should seek to fully encompass the event by synthesizing them. After all, the “Onslaught” remained in history as an experiment carried out through radical and administrative methods to modernize society. At the same time, it cannot be denied that this movement served as a key stage in shaping the social role of women in society in Uzbekistan. For example, if by 1939 the number of women workers in industry amounted to 41 percent of the total workforce, this marked the beginning of the feminization process in the country's economy. The involvement of women in political structures as people's advisors, their active participation in the fields of education and medicine can be considered one of the long-term positive consequences of the “Onslaught”. However, due to the fact that this development did not occur on the basis of women's inner will and personal choice, but rather on the basis of ideological violence carried out from above, it became a model of modernization specific to a totalitarian system, not to civil society.

The “Khujum” movement is a unique and contradictory socio-political phenomenon in the history of Uzbekistan in terms of its content and essence. Although this movement was carried out under the guise of liberating women from the veil, its main goal, practical approaches and consequences were closely linked to the ideological and economic interests of the state. Although the official interpretation of this movement was “to recognize women as human beings, to give them the right to education and work”, in practice it was accompanied by large-scale violence, coercion and human rights violations. On March 8, 1927, the day the “Khujum” officially began, party figure Akmal Ikramov wrote in the newspaper “Pravda Vostoka”: “However, it is difficult to talk about real women's freedom as long as the veil is preserved. If the veil is not removed, it will be difficult

to resolve other issues.” It is clear that the burqa was interpreted not only as clothing, but also as a “symbol” of all the problems in society, and through it an ideological movement against the entire traditional way of life began. In other words, the fight against the burqa was transformed into a fight against culture. From this point of view, the goal of the movement was to reshape not only women, but the entire spiritual and mental structure of society. Akmal Ikramov also says in his speech: “Economic development, agricultural and industrial growth require additional labor force. This force is women.” Here, “women” are not mentioned as citizens, but as workers. So, the real interest behind the movement was to expand labor resources. Historian Dilorom Alimova also has her own point of view on this issue, according to which: “Industrialization and collectivization required women to be involved in work. And in order to achieve this, it was necessary to abandon the burqa.” The conclusion is that this movement, on the one hand, served as a response to the demands of the state's economic policy, and on the other hand, it also responded to the aspirations of local progressive women for freedom. This idea is also confirmed in her research by Marianne Kamp, one of the leading experts on the history of Central Asia. She writes: “The party was not prepared to liberate women from the veil. This idea was initially put forward by local intellectuals. They had been advocating for the removal of the veil for many years, but religious fanaticism was an obstacle in their way.” According to Kamp, the “Attack” movement was not an ideological pressure from above, but rather a further stage of local modernization movements. At the same time, the “Attack” movement took thousands of victims. Kamp notes that between 1927 and 1930, at least 2,000 women and men were executed for removing the veil or for calling on others to do so. These tragic figures show that the movement met with strong opposition in society. In particular, reports that women in many cases became victims of violence were also reflected in Pravda Vostoka. For example, the newspaper writes: “In the village of Shahrikhan, a woman and her husband were killed for removing their veils.”

Journalist Jahongir Azimov concludes in his analysis: “For many women, giving up the veil was not a freedom, but a source of danger.” This opinion shows a deep gap between the ideological slogans of the movement and its real consequences. At the same time, the movement also had positive aspects. Opportunities for women to study, work, and engage in political activity expanded. Dilorom Alimova writes: “The attack was not just about clothes. It was a step towards self-awareness and personal spiritual freedom.” This idea is consistent with the words of Abdurauf Fitrat in his work “Family”: “First of all, a woman needs education and upbringing. Because she educates the nation.” The “Khujum” movement was not just a matter of removing the veil, but a process of socio-spiritual changes in the entire society. It has its struggles, tragedies, and achievements. A one-sided view of it would be a betrayal of historical truth. For this reason, “Khujum” is a painful but unforgettable lesson in history.

Historical truth shows that the ideological policy implemented during the “Hujum” movement was carried out using violent administrative methods, without taking into account local conditions, the spiritual and psychological state of the people, and the roots associated with religion and culture. This led to radical resistance in society, spiritual problems, and, in a certain sense, a state of social maladjustment. The loss of the traditional position of men and the forced socialization of women led to the restoration of traditional gender inequality in society in a new form. Thus, formal equality was replaced by actual inequality. The “Hujum” movement was a turning point in the historical processes regarding women's issues in Uzbek society. It sought to form a new socialist

consciousness, rejecting local cultural and religious structures, and carried out an important social transformation in society. However, the method of this transformation, the violent and top-down nature of the approach to it, turned it into a rootless, ideological construction within the people. Nevertheless, the “Khujum” remains a complex phenomenon that must be studied as a painful but central stage in the history of Uzbekistan, determining the position of women in society.

The “Khujum” movement carried out in Uzbekistan in the 1920s and 1930s was a comprehensive state policy aimed at changing the social position of Eastern women, increasing their activity in society, and adapting them to the “Soviet” way of life. Although this movement had an outwardly liberal appearance, such as throwing off the veil, equality with men, literacy, and employment, its inner essence embodied a mechanism of Soviet ideological control aimed at dismantling the existing Islamic and traditional system through gender relations.

Analyzing the essence of this process, researcher Marianne Kamp argues that “the main goal of the Aggression movement was not to abandon the veil, but to involve women as a workforce in economic processes and through them to seal the new Soviet way of life.” Kamp’s argument exposes the movement’s hypocrisy by linking the concepts of freedom and modernization promoted by it to economic interests. Although “women’s freedom” served as an external symbol, in reality, behind this symbol were the political and economic needs of the state. At the same time, historian Dilorom Alimova and politician Akmal Ikramov also support this point of view, noting that “the demand for cheap labor in the conditions of industrialization and collectivization processes was satisfied by freeing women from the veil.” The strength of these ideas is that they explain historical processes not with an ideological, but with a pragmatic approach. However, it should be recognized that in this case the movement was not viewed from the perspective of human rights and the deep spiritual and cultural concept of “freedom” was bypassed. In turn, historian R.Kh. Aminova interprets the “Attack” as a positive historical process, noting that “women regained control over their bodies and lives.” In her opinion, the movement served to shape women as personal subjects. This point of view is based on such spiritual points as enlightenment, self-awareness, and “recognition as a person.” However, the idealization in this position is very strong. Aminova seems to have not fully covered the real social situation, since she took into account less cases of violence, resistance, and killing. In contrast, A. Chernolutsкая notes that in 1927-1928 in Uzbekistan alone, more than 2,500 women activists were executed. This shows that rather than the positive consequences of action, it is a complex process that includes the tragedies it brings.

On the cultural-ideological front, researcher O.V. Khan sees the “Onslaught” as a process of assimilation into the wider public through cinema. In his opinion, “women began to appear on the screen not only as mothers or housewives, but also as active subjects with an independent position in society.” In particular, films such as “Minaret of Death” (1925) and “Muslim Woman” (1925) played a central role in shaping the image of a new woman. While this idea was interesting and revolutionary, it should be noted that these depictions were often ideologically determined from the center, denying the thoughts and desires of women in real life. For example, the independent woman in the film was often a constructive heroine in accordance with Marxist theory in Moscow, and the voice of local women was rarely heard in it. The “social” expression of the Onslaught – that is, the activities of the “Red Yurts” – is also full of its own contradictions. Mitin and Stepankov call these yurts “centers of struggle against illiterate everyday life” and describe them as “points

of propaganda working against Islamic culture and customs.” When this argument is critically approached, one can conclude that anti-Islamic propaganda was used as a camouflage in the work related to enlightenment and hygiene. More precisely, “social propaganda” was a form of extinguishing cultural independence in the places. Thus, the goal of the “Attack” movement was not to liberate women, but to adapt them to the new Soviet system, mobilize them as an economic resource, and limit local values - Islamic customs and cultural institutions. In this process, the slogan of “freedom” was implemented through violence, ideological coercion, and cultural assimilation. Its consequences were correspondingly contradictory: on the one hand, literacy increased, employment opportunities expanded; on the other hand, thousands of women were deprived of their lives and their traditional personal security. Thus, the “Onslaught” was not only a desire for freedom, but also a social transformation carried out through ideological violence.

The 1920s–1930s of the history of Uzbekistan and Central Asia in general should be assessed as a clash of political modernization, ideological transformation, and violent changes in the social environment. The “Onslaught” movement implemented by the Soviet government during this period was a set of radical measures aimed at radically changing the traditional lifestyle, dress codes, and social status of women. Its goal was not only to “liberate” women, but also to adapt the entire local society to a new socialist model. The “Onslaught” was a political movement built on the principles of modernity, atheistic ideology, atheism, and total centralized control, but at the same time it also embodied mass violence, cultural pressure, and collective resistance.

First, it is necessary to pay attention to the socio-political environment in which the “Attack” movement emerged. After the October Revolution, the Soviet Union, which included various nationalities, was faced with the task of creating a new model of citizenship. Reconsidering the role of women in this model was not only an ideological but also an economic necessity. The transformation of the large population of illiterate and excluded women into the labor force was of strategic importance for the development of the socialist economy. Especially in regions with a strong gender hierarchy, such as Central Asia, the idea of “liberating” women was used as an ideological measure. The outward appearance of this measure - a mass struggle against the burqa and the involvement of women in public life - is its appearance, but its inner essence is a geopolitical project aimed at ideologically reshaping society.

Secondly, the “Attack” was not just a movement to rid women of their veils, but an ideological attack directed against the Islamic religion, ancient customs, and the system of traditional gender relations. In Islam, women’s participation in public life is limited by certain Sharia norms. The veil and the niqab, as a form of covering a woman’s private parts, have been an integral part of the system of etiquette in society for centuries. Therefore, throwing off the veil was perceived not only as an external appearance, but also as a violation of internal religious discipline. This process was met with strong resistance from the local population, in particular from the clergy, scholars, and traditional communities. This resistance, in turn, led to bloody events - physical violence, the killing of women, and the deepening of the conflict between the local elite and the center. The ideological paradigm of the “Attack” process does not emphasize gender equality, but rather the ideology of socialist labor. A woman was re-imagined not as a homemaker, a person who raised children and adhered to religious norms, but as a worker, an activist loyal to the party, and an ideological propagandist. To achieve this change, the state government mobilized all ideological and administrative resources. In particular, special clubs, literacy courses, artels, and craft training

institutions were organized for women. At the same time, propaganda against religion and traditions was intensified, and there was an attempt to destroy religious consciousness through slogans such as “religion is opium” and “Islam is a source of oppression.” Large-scale mass propaganda, involving the means of art and literature, from the “Red Houses,” also played a significant role in this activity. Thirdly, the scale of violence and administrative pressure during the “Attack” was large. According to scientific sources, more than 2,500 women who threw off the veil were killed in Uzbekistan in 1927-1928. These figures show not only the violent nature of the movement, but also its sharp contradiction with the consciousness and way of life of the local society. In some cases, women who threw off the veil were “whitewashed” by their parents, divorced by their husbands, and isolated in the neighborhood. In this process, the personal tragedies of women - the stories of victims such as Surmakhon Shermatova, Nurkhon Yuldashkhujayeva, and Ainabibi Zhalganbayeva - demonstrate the serious social rifts that this movement caused for society.

However, it is not enough to evaluate the “Attack” movement only from the point of view of violence and ideological pressure. It also had positive results. This is due to the increase in the level of literacy of women, their participation in production, their acquisition of professional qualifications, and the emergence of a new social stratum in urban societies - the “Soviet woman” class. By 1939, the share of working women in the republic’s industry had reached 41%, and the number of women people’s advisers exceeded 10 thousand. They actively participated in schools, hospitals, and party structures. This situation undoubtedly gave impetus to the reshaping of gender relations in society. Fourth, the overall impact of the “Attack” movement, when viewed in a historical context, is manifested in two directions: social development and the extinction of cultural identity. Although the participation of women in social life in society increased, a chauvinistic attitude and a prejudiced approach to national and religious traditions prevailed in this process. The state confused the fight against the burqa with the fight against religion, and as a result, the “new regime” appeared in the public consciousness not as freedom, but as ideological oppression. This policy often aroused radical resistance in the minds of men in society, and women's freedom was perceived not as a personal, political choice, but as an attack on cultural dignity.

The “Hujum” movement is the most complex, contradictory, and at the same time a triumph and a tragedy of the process of social modernization and cultural assimilation in the history of Uzbekistan. It contributed to a certain extent to ensuring the socio-economic activity of women in Uzbek society, but since it was carried out on the basis of administrative pressure, violence, and cultural neglect, it is appropriate to assess it as a political process that left deep wounds in society. “Hujum” is an example of ideological prejudice, not gender equality. From the point of view of historiography, the analysis of this movement is of great importance not only for understanding the past, but also for understanding the historical causes of today's gender problems.

In conclusion, although the “Attack” campaign yielded significant results in terms of raising the status of women in society, actively involving them in social processes, and familiarizing them with education and labor, its implementation method, which was fraught with violence, coercion, and ideological discrimination, is historically considered a contradictory and tragic process. Through this policy, the cultural codes of the local people based on Islam were denied, and the

social mentality was not taken into account. This, according to historians, became the source of long-lasting contradictions between modernity and traditionalism in Eastern societies.

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