

## CHAPTER II

### THE RELATIONS BETWEEN RUSSIA AND CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES BEFORE THE COLLAPSE OF SOVIET UNION

This chapter will explain about the history of relationship between Russia and Central Asian Countries before the collapse of Soviet Union. The explanation will be divided into two different periods, the first is the Russian period in Central Asia and the second is the Soviet Union period in Central Asia. Before get to the history of relations between Russia and Central Asia, writer have to explain the history of civilization of Central Asia so the next explanation will be easier to understand.

#### A. The History of Civilization in Central Asia

Central Asia is the land where world civilizations existed since ancient times. The region was the crossroad for invaders, a place of historic evidence of nomads and settled people, and the area of migrations from the era of Scythians in the eight century B.C to the era of Mongols and Uzbeks in the thirteen to sixteenth century. So many states fought each other endlessly in this region. This land was populated by many different races and religions.<sup>1</sup>

There are very few information appeared about Central Asia region in the books or articles. There are two main reasons that can explain this phenomenon. The first is there were no real country that can be identified in Central Asia until early 1990s. The second reason is this area was closed off from any foreign actors. This was happened because the western part of Central Asia was controlled by Soviet rule and the eastern part was part

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<sup>1</sup> Roudik, Peter (2007). *The History of The Central Asian Republics*. Greenwood Press (Westport; USA), p.1

of China. There are five Central Asian Countries that used to be part of Soviet Union rule. One of them is Tajikistan that Persian speaking, and the other four are Turkic which are Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. The eastern part of Central Asia was the autonomous region of Xinjiang. Central Asia is a region that already witnessed various historical event. Many religion has pass through this region, such as Islam, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, etc.<sup>2</sup>

The Scythians were believed as the people who lived in the region for the first time around 8<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C.E., they exhibited a lot of nomadic characteristics of Central Asia. The Scythians were divided into two groups, which were the royal and the ordinary. This people did have kings, but most of them end terribly. Their system of succession seem did not work very well. So there were many amount of instabilities within these Central Asian kingdoms or khanates. In the 5<sup>th</sup> century the Scythians were declined because of other nomadic groups. It is common for a nomadic groups or empires to last for a relative short periods. The other reason beside the civil war and internal rifts is that the nomadic people will splits when they reach their success. Some of them choose to live in cities in order to rule and they began to lose their heritage, ideology, and values of the nomadic people.<sup>3</sup>

In the following centuries after the decline of the Scythians, there were two important or great empires in Central Asia, which were the Xiongnu and the Uyghurs. The Xiongnu arrived around 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.E., they were the ancestors of the Huns. The Xiongnu came and started to challenge the Chinese that also have interest in the region at that time. There were many disputes about trade and land between the Chinese Empire and the nomads groups in the region at that time. The Chinese Empire which was ruled by Han dynasty at that time, conducting some agreements with the Xiongnu people and the

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<sup>2</sup> Rossabi, Morris (2016). *Central Asia: A Historical Overview*. Asia Society. Retrieved on July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018 from <https://asiasociety.org/central-asia-historical-overview>

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*

agreement seem worked to resolve the conflicts and disputes between the Chinese and the Central Asian nomadic groups for quite some time. The Xiongnu was overwhelmed by the Uyghurs around the 8<sup>th</sup> century, they were the first important Turkic group in Central Asia. They played an important role in linking the West and the East. Uyghurs also conducted trade across Eurasia. They became the road between the West and the East in trading and also in exchange of cultures. Around 840, the Uyghur Empire collapsed because of divisions or separation between the nomadic and sedentary groups.<sup>4</sup>

In the 13<sup>th</sup> century the Mongols came to Central Asia to conquest and they gained their power in the region. The Mongols taken all the characteristics of Central Asian nomads and take it to the higher level. They were very interested in trade, in this era Europeans arrived in China for the first time through the Mongols. The actual reason of the Mongols to conquest this land is because the Moslem weakness in this region. So they came to make Islam stronger in Central Asia. The Mongol empire later collapsed because of the internal rifts.<sup>5</sup>

## **B. The Russian Period in Central Asia**

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Russian Empire started to take a serious step to conquest the Central Asia after some unsuccessful attempts in earlier period. There were a huge increase of Russian movement to this area in that period of time. This movement was driven by various geopolitics and economic factors. In 1860 the Central Asia region was really conquests by the Russian Empire. The Russian Empire leaders started to conquer the government or the leaders in Central Asian Region because of their armed opposition towards the Russia in the expansion towards Kazak steppe which already underway to the north of Tajikistan. At that century, Russia seen Central Asia as a good opportunities

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Islam, Arshad (2016). *The Mongol Invasions of Central Asia*. International Journal of Social Science and Humanity, Vol. 6, No. 4, p.318

for them and could give many benefit for the Russia if they conquest it. The reason was because Central Asia region has a convincing economic potential due to its potential as a cotton supplier and also the region has a good geographical position as it located in the middle of Asia and Europe continent.<sup>6</sup>

The power of Russian Empire in the Central Asia at that time was not gained easily. There were some rebellions or oppositions that came from the local people that were grouped in various tribes or Khanate in 19<sup>th</sup> century. For example the rebels or revolts by the Kazakhs in 1840s and the revolts among the oases of Central Asia during 1860s. The revolts and rebellions were continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These rebellions and revolts were completely overcome by the Russian Empire in nearly 1928.<sup>7</sup>

A big and important step was taken by Russia in 1866 by capturing the Tashkent from the hand of Quqon Khanate or Kokand Khanate. Then in the following year, the Tashkent became new capital of the new Governorate General of Turkestan which also included some surrounding territories that known as Tajikistan in the present time. In the following year, Russian Empire was managed to strengthen its position in Central Asian region trough military occupation. Russian Empire also managed to annex the remaining of the Quqon Khanate in 1876.<sup>8</sup>

Russian Empire left the Central Asian to their custom but began to taxing them. At this period, Russian also started to growing cotton in Central Asia in order to fill the market for lack of cotton during the US civil war, Russian began encouraging local people to work on agriculture. Russian

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<sup>6</sup> Hays, Jeffrey (2016). *Russian Rule in Central Asia*. Facts and Details. Retrieved on July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018 from [http://factsanddetails.com/central-asia/Central\\_Asian\\_Topics/sub8\\_8c/entry-4516.html](http://factsanddetails.com/central-asia/Central_Asian_Topics/sub8_8c/entry-4516.html)

<sup>7</sup> Rossabi, Morris, op. cit.

<sup>8</sup> Hays, Jeffrey, op. cit.

Empire received cotton and other raw materials from Central Asia.<sup>9</sup>

From 1896 to 1916 almost 1.5 million Russian moved to Central Asia and about two-thirds of them staying in Central Asia. The increasing number of migration from Russia to the Central Asian was caused by the extension of the Trans-Aral Railway to the Tashkent in 1906. In 1916 the Russian was fighting the Great War for their Eastern Orthodox fatherland. In this war they tried to persuade the Muslims of Central Asia to fight for them. The Muslims refused and rebelled against the Russian Empire. The Russian reacted by sending their military towards the Muslim villages and killing around ten thousands peoples. In respond to the attack done by the Russian, the Turkic Muslims attacked the Russian settlers and killing many Russian. In 1917 many of the Russian were slaughtered, around 80,000 Russian somehow made their way to return to Russia. The Muslims, led by Dzhunaid Khan developed a guerilla force to fight in order to reclaim their land.<sup>10</sup>

### **C. The Soviet Period in Central Asia**

In November 1917 the Bolsheviks gained its power in Russia. Basically the Bolsheviks were opposed the empire ideologically. The Bolsheviks were led by Lenin who has an orthodox ideology. There was a civil war in the Russia at that time between the Bolsheviks and the anti-communists. Lenin tried to gain supports from the Muslims population in Central Asia in this civil war, but he failed and some Muslims population of Central Asia were joined the anti-communist side. There were also some Central Asian people who fought beside the Bolshevik's Red Army against their old Tsarist enemy.<sup>11</sup>

The Bolsheviks were successfully managed to won the civil war against the anti-communist in Russia Empire and

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<sup>9</sup> Smitha, Frank (2014). *Central Asia under The Russians, to 1936*. Macrohistory and World Timeline. Retrieved on July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2018 from <http://www.fsmitha.com/h2/ch09sr.htm>

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

managed to take the governmental system in Moscow. The Bolsheviks government treated the Central Asian people really well. The Central Asian people were granted by food, promised of land reform and tax relief. The Bolsheviks also shown their high respect to the Muslim culture in Central Asia. They returned any objects including the Muslims sacred books that has been looted by the Russian Empire during the tsarist time. This strategy seems worked very well, some Central Asian joined the Communist Party and granted with the local positions of leadership. In Moscow the Bolsheviks divided Central Asia into three Republics, those are Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR), the Kyrgyz SSR, and the Uzbek SSR.<sup>12</sup>

In 1927, Josef Stalin came into power in Moscow. Under the leadership of Stalin, the Soviet started to took a harder approach towards the Central Asia in order to develop the socialism ideology faster. Soviet Union closed all religious building such as mosques, churches, and synagogues in order to campaign the secularism in Central Asia. Stalin also banned the Sharia courts and conducted a brutal punishment against resistance in Russia and Central Asia. Under the Stalin, Soviet did a purged inside the communist party, they remove all people that they considered as traitor. This was also happened in Central Asia. In Central Asia SSR, there are many communists were executed by the Soviet government.<sup>13</sup>

The local government of Central Asian Countries at that time cooperated intimately with the communist in making policies aimed to change the traditional society of Central Asia. The Soviet Union was very repressive in Central Asia, their goal was to build Central Asia into a cotton-growing region. In terms of politics and ideology, the goal of Soviet Union in Central Asia were to exterminate religion, educate the people, promote Russian as the common language in Central Asia, and the Soviet Union also aimed to alter the indigenous traditions and ideology with the communist values. The number of Russian population in Central Asian region was rise rapidly. They dominated the

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

industrial section, key position in governmental system, and also key position in the party.<sup>14</sup>

Before the control of Soviet Union in Central Asia, there were no clear borders in Central Asia. The Central Asian people were grouped by the religion together, loyalty towards a certain leaders, and language that always changing and never defined clearly. There was no sense of nationhood or even ethnicity. This condition change in the era of Soviet rule. In the era of Soviet Union, ethnicity started to be defined rigidly as the borders. Many groups were also provided with history, tradition, and culture by the Soviets that suited to the Soviet ideology.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Hays, Jeffrey (2016). *Early Soviet Period in Central Asia*. Facts and Details. Retrieved on July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018 from [http://factsanddetails.com/central-asia/Central\\_Asian\\_Topics/sub8\\_8d/entry-4518.html](http://factsanddetails.com/central-asia/Central_Asian_Topics/sub8_8d/entry-4518.html)

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*