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Role of the Communist University of Workers of the East in Training Managers for the RSFSR Autonomous Regions during the 1920s

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Abstract: The author examines the activities of the Communist University of Workers of the East (KUTV) at the initial stage of its establishment and development as a leading party university. The purpose of the article is to analyze the organization of the educational process, the content and features of the general education of the party nomenclature of the national regions of the largest Union republic – the RSFSR. Based on the newly identified documents and materials, the author highlights the problems of student admission, their national composition in the 1920s, and the approaches of the university staff to determining the content and methods of education, taking into account the level of training of representatives of different nationalities. Through their research, they found that the difficulties of the KUTV work were also associated with the need to take significant measures for improving students' health and organization of everyday life. They also show the contribution of the university to the socialization of people from different ethnocultural regions, and their provision, nutrition, and education. Their conclusion is that the KUTV was a key link of party education in ensuring indigenization and provision of the management system with trained specialists, as well as the formation of ethnic elite is an important subject in to nation-building and Soviet transformations.

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Keywords: party nomenclature, national regions, ethnopolitical elite, ethnoelites, indigenization, educational process

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Роль Коммунистического университета трудящихся Востока в подготовке управленцев для автономий РСФСР в 1920-е годы

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Аннотация: Исследуется деятельность Коммунистического университета трудящихся Востока (КУТВ) на начальном этапе его становления и развития как ведущего партийного вуза. Целью статьи является анализ организации учебного и воспитательного процесса, содержания и особенно

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стей общеобразовательной подготовки партийной номенклатуры национальных регионов крупнейшей союзной республики – РСФСР. На основе вновь выявленных документов и материалов освещаются проблемы набора студентов, их национальный состав в 1920-е гг., подходы сотрудников вуза к определению содержания и методов обучения с учетом уровня подготовки направленных на обучение представителей разных национальностей. Установлено, что сложности работы КУТВ были также связаны с необходимостью принятия существенных мер по оздоровлению, организации быта и повседневной жизни студентов. Показан вклад вуза в социализацию выходцев из разных этнокультурных регионов, их обеспечение, питание, воспитание. Делается вывод о существенном вкладе КУТВ в качестве ключевого звена партийного образования в обеспечение коренизации и насыщение системы управления подготовленными специалистами, а также формирование этноэлиты как важного субъекта нациестроительства и советских преобразований.

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Ключевые слов: партийная номенклатура, национальные регионы, этнополитическая элита, этноэлиты, коренизация, учебный процесс

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Introduction

Relevance. The vicissitudes of the formation of the RSFSR ethnopolitical elite in the 1920s were due to the multilayered nature of the Soviet modernization experience, and its positioning at various stages of this process was part of the social restructuring and adaptation of traditional societies in the new administrative-territorial and political space. In literature there recurs the thesis about the Bolsheviks' forced recruitment of the traditional elite representatives loyal to the authorities, indigenization, and the center's unparalleled control over all groups and generations of national leaders and societies. This thesis should be supplemented by the examination of the sources of recruitment, organization, and essence of training of national cadres to lead the self-determined autonomous regions. This allows clarifying the content and characteristics of the process of forming the party nomenclature of the national regions of the RSFSR, the largest union republic, the importance of party education for the development of the republic's governance system, and the role of the ethnoelite as a subject of nation-building and Soviet reforms.

Soviet national policy envisioned the establishment of a new system of power and governance, providing the working titular population with every opportunity to participate in it. However, the core of the national elite in the early Soviet period was diverse in terms of educational and political training, as well as social origin. The extreme shortage of educated and trained personnel prompted the authorities to actively incorporate into Soviet and local party structures those representatives of the titular population who demonstrated commitment to the Bolshevik program, recognized the Bolshevik victory in the military-political confrontation, and demonstrated willingness to participate in the management, although not necessarily having a proletarian or poor background. Their number was insufficient, which led to a policy of indigenization, attracting people from working and poor backgrounds who were in dire need of general education and ideological and political training. It was the Communist University of the Workers of the East (KUTV), which along with other party educational institutions addressed this task. This university operated from 1921 to 1938.

Elaboration of the problem. The history of the Communist University of the Workers of the East in the USSR was examined within the paradigm of the dominant version of

nation-building, including the key facts and events from the history of party education¹. Currently, the examination of the KUTV history stems from the need to rethink and expand the unique Soviet experience in the training of personnel for the ethnopolitical elite of the USSR and the states now known as the Global South. The historiography focuses primarily on the general characteristics of the organization, its structure, stages of its development, the specifics of the university's work and its faculty, and the role of the KUTV in the training of personnel for Asian and African countries under the guidance of the Comintern². Some information regarding the history of training of national staff and their role in nation-building can be found in the studies devoted to Soviet nation-building, indigenization processes, and the USSR's participation in the training of personnel for other countries³.

At the same time, the description of the KUTV training of people, many of whom became part of the national elite of the union republics and autonomous regions of the RSFSR and the USSR is fragmentary. Thus, R.Sh. Kharunov highlighted the training of personnel for Tuva in the courses of the *khoshun*⁴ staff. He concludes that almost all 200 graduates became Tuva's party elite and by the mid-1930s had assumed leading positions in the republic⁵. E.P. Mamysheva revealed some information about four Khakass students and rightly noted the difficulties in finding out the exact number of students of a certain nationality, as well as in studying their personal files⁶. Some information about the training of Kazakh students at the KUTV was given in a publication by M. Amandossova and A. Ventsel⁷. The role of party educational institutions in the training of national cadres is also highlighted using examples of other regions⁸.

¹ L.S. Leonova, *Istoricheskiy opyt KPSS po podgotovke partiinykh kadrov v partiinykh uchebnykh zavedeniakh. 1917–1975* [Historical experience of the CPSU in training party cadres in party educational institutions. 1917–1975] (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo MGU Publ., 1979); V.D. Solovey, "Institut krasnoi professury: podgotovka kadrov istorikov partii v 20–30-e gody [The Institute of Red Professors: Training Party Historians in the 1920s and 1930s]," *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, no. 12 (1990): 87–98; O.V. Metel, "The socialist academy of social sciences: essay of the history (1918–1919)," *Herald of Omsk University. Series Historical Studies*, no. 1 (2017): 184–191, <https://doi.org/10.24147/2312-1300.2017.1.184-191>

² E.V. Panin, "Communist University of the Toilers of the East," *Izvestiya MGTU MAMI* 2, no. 4 (2013): 201–206; O.A. Shashkova, M.A. Shpakovskaya, "The Communist University of the Toilers of the East (KUTV): Its Establishment under the Comintern in 1920s–30s," *Herald of an Archivist*, no. 3 (2018): 704–716, <https://doi.org/10.28995/2073-0101-2018-3-704-716>; A.Kh. Daudov, E.P. Mamysheva, "The Communist University of the Toilers of the East. 1921–1938: A Look through a Century," *Modern History of Russia* 12, no. 2 (2022): 372–384, <https://doi.org/10.21638/11701/spbu24.2022.207>

³ D.A. Amanzholova, "Soviet Federal Project and the Collisions of Nation Building in the 1920–1930s," *RUDN Journal of Russian History* 23, no. 1 (2024): 30–40, <https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-8674-2024-23-1-30-40>; A.N. Steblyanskaya, M.P. Vasiev, "Role of Soviet Specialists in Formation of Higher Education System of the PRC: the Case of Northeast Agricultural University in Harbin," *RUDN Journal of Russian History* 24, no. 4 (2025): 643–660, <https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-8674-2025-24-4-643-660>

⁴ *Khoshun* is an administrative unit, analogous to a district.

⁵ R.Sh. Kharunov, "The training of specialists for Tuva in courses of "Khoshun" workers in the communist university of the eastern toilers," *Vestnik of Tuvan State University*, no. 1 (2013): 58–61.

⁶ E.P. Mamysheva, "History of Khakassia in persons: graduates of the communist university for workers of the east (1921–1938) (problem statement)," *Historical and Social Educational Idea* 7, no. 5 (2015): 61–64, <https://doi.org/10.17748/2075-9908-2015-7-5/2-61-64>

⁷ Amandossova M., Ventsel A. Preparation and Selection of Kazakh students in the Communist University of the Workers of the East // *KazNU Bulletin: Kazakh studies*. 2024. T. 112. № 1. P. 128–137.

⁸ I.G. Ivantsov, "System of party education in the USSR in the 1930s (Based on the North Caucasus materials)," *Bulletin of the Adyghe state university. Series Region studies: philosophy, history, sociology, jurisprudence, political sciences and culture science*, no. 4 (2010): 99–105; E.V. Tufanov, I.N. Kravchenko, "Party formation as an element of the formation of the national party-state nomenclatura in the 1920s–1930s (based on materials from the North Caucasus)," *Scientific Thought of Caucasus*, no. 1 (2018): 34–39, <https://doi.org/10.18522/2072-0181-2018-93-1-34-39>

The purpose of the article is to reveal the specifics and nature of the organization of educational activities during the years of the KUTV formation, its contribution to the restructuring of the social space of political power, and the development of the RSFSR ethno-political elite. The purpose is achieved on the basis of new sources, mainly unpublished, on the organization of the educational work at the KUTV.

Source base. The primary source is archival materials which previously were not introduced into scientific use (reports, memoranda, minutes of meetings of the governing and educational-methodological bodies of the Communist University of the Workers of the East, and other materials) found in the Comintern collection (F. 532) of the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History. The sources also include journalistic publications, periodicals, and reference materials of the 1920s.

Organizational development of the university and national composition of students

In November 1921, the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) recognized the need for specialized training of party cadres “who know well the theory and practice of communism” for all areas of work⁹. For this purpose and in order to provide assistance to the Comintern in promoting communist ideas in the countries of the East, the Communist University of Workers of the East was established.

The KUTV was subordinate to the People’s Commissariat of Nationalities, and after its abolition to the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the RSFSR, which in 1922 approved the university’s charter stipulating that the university “is under the ideological guidance of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks), it trains workers of the eastern, contractual, union, and autonomous Soviet republics, autonomous regions, labor communes, and ethnic minorities for working in the field of communist theory and practice.”¹⁰ In 1927, a new charter for the KUTV was approved, under which the state-funded educational institution was financed by the Central Executive Committee of the USSR and was entitled to special funds from publishing activities, revenues of labor communes, and university farms in the countryside¹¹. In 1922–1923, at the KUTV there was a preparatory department and first and second years of the three-year course. Besides, a lecturers’ group in natural sciences was trained, and new students were admitted. In 1923, a university-type natural sciences pedagogical faculty was opened. The Soviet sector, taking into account the level of student preparation, consisted of a main group and a lecturers’ group (in social sciences and natural sciences), created in 1921–22, and from 1926 – instructor and seminar groups¹². The KUTV had laboratories, social science and natural science classrooms, history of technology classroom, an institute for scientific research in biology, as well as libraries, a club, structures engaged in scientific research, a publishing house, a commission for the guidance of students’ practical work outside the university, and intra-university public organizations of students and staff, as well as a hospital¹³.

⁹ *Kommunisticheskaia partiia Sovetskogo Soiuza v rezolyutsiiakh i resheniiakh s`ezdov, konferentsii i Plenumov TSK (1898–1988)* [The Communist Party of the Soviet Union in resolutions and decisions of congresses, conferences and Plenums of the Central Committee (1898–1988)] (Moscow: Politizdat Publ., 1983), 453.

¹⁰ Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial’no-politicheskoi istorii (thereafter – RGASPI), f. 532, op. 5, d. 8, l. 1.

¹¹ RGASPI, f. 532, op. 1, d. 32, l. 5–6.

¹² Ibid., d. 11, l. 1.

¹³ Ibid., d. 5, l. 2.

In early 1922, of the 407 students 222 were enrolled in the two-year courses, 127 in the one-year courses, and 14 in the lecturers' group. Among them were Avars, Kashgarians, Tajiks, Mingrelians, Teleuts, Lithuanians, Dagestanis, and French (one person each); Hindus, Kazikumuks, and Ukrainians (two people each); Karachays, Ingush, Votyaks, Turkmen, and Kalmyks (three people each). There were 4 Mordvins; Lezgins, Georgians, Chechens, and Buryats (five people each); Crimean Tatars, Taranchi, and Karelians (6 people each). There were also Azerbaijanis, Turks, Chuvash, and Balkars (7 people each); Mari, Chinese, and Abkhaz (8 people each). There were 10 Zyrians; Uzbeks and Turks (11 people each), Bashkirs and Jews (13 people each), Russians and Kirgiz (14 people each), Koreans and Persians (16 people each), as well as 25 Armenians, 35 Ossetians, and 97 Tatars. In total, 7 people were illiterate, 8 were literate only in their native language, 47 men and 6 women were home-educated and self-educated, 219 men and 21 women had primary education, 66 people had an incomplete secondary education, 6 people had an incomplete higher education, 6 men and 1 woman had a higher education. In total, there were 454 male students (including 389 single), and 80 female students (including 49 single and 3 widows), aged from 16 to 36 years¹⁴.

The data on the number of students vary, apparently due to the fact that the students who were poorly prepared dropped out. In 1922, 59 students were enrolled in the natural science courses. 82 graduated from the KUTV instructor school. In December 1922, there were 672 students at the KUTV¹⁵. According to a report, some applicants "who had the unconditional right to do so" did not receive even the minimum preliminary training at the party school. At the same time, "the multinationality did not lead to any conflicts based on nationality," though it complicated the work due to differences in educational levels and problems with teaching staff. There was also noted "colossal working capacity of the students". Of the 476 students, 375 completed the course; all of them went on to study at the subsequent courses, as they were considered to become "good workers."¹⁶ The need to expand the training of party cadres and organize a single educational system led to the creation of the KUTV branches in Tashkent, Baku, Irkutsk, Saratov, and the North Caucasus in 1923, with a less complex curriculum. In total there were 17 such branches¹⁷.

As of February 1, 1924, at the KUTV there were studying 857 men and 153 women aged from 17 (11 people) to 31 and older (47 people). The level of training, social background, and party membership varied. Among the communists, one became a party member before the revolution; three were party members from 1917, 19 from 1918, 42 from 1919, and 101 from 1920. Of these, 410 had graduated from Soviet party schools, 550 had no general education whatsoever. 308 had elementary education; there were 152 others. 426 had no training in Russian, 514 had elementary education in Russian, there were 70 others¹⁸.

In 1924, virtually all nationalities of the RSFSR and several union republics were represented among the students (see Table 1).

¹⁴ RGASPI, f. 532, op. 8, d. 2, l. 7, 9.

¹⁵ Ibid., f. 17, op. 60, d. 237, l. 11–25.

¹⁶ RGASPI, f. 532, op. 8, d. 2, l. 1–2.

¹⁷ Ibid., op. 11, d. 12, l. 2.

¹⁸ Ibid., f. 17, op. 34, d. 425, l. 18.

Table 1

Composition of students of the Communist University of Workers of the East in 1924 by region

	Men	Women
North Caucasus		
Chechens	31	
Karachays	18	1
Kabardians	18	1
Ossetians	27	8
Avars	12	1
Lezgins	12	1
Abazins	2	
Mingrelians	2	
Balkars	15	3
Dargins	1	
Nogays	3	
Kara-Nogays	1	
Kazikumuks		1
Kumyks	5	
Laks	2	
Circassians	13	
Transcaucasia		
Adzharians	5	
Armenians	23	5
Georgians	5	1
Turki	22	
Turks	5	2
Central Asia		
Dungans	1	
Karakalpaks	1	
Karakirgiz	6	
Kirgiz	47	7
Persians	6	
Turkmen	31	3
Uzbeks	57	5
Uighurs	19	
Volga region		
Bashkirs	20	5
Kalmyks	14	1
Mari	10	9
Mordovians	14	6
Tatars	74	27
Chuvash	16	5
Crimea		
Tatars	19	7
Northern Autonomous Regions		
Votyaks	10	1
Komi	10	1
Karelians	3	
Meshcheryaks	1	
Permiaks	1	

Table 1, ending

	Men	Women
Siberia		
Altaians	8	1
Buryats	52	10
Mongols	10	
Khakass		1
Yakuts	16	
Foreign	Total	Including
	159	Arabs, Bulgarians, Greeks, Koreans, Chinese, Persians, Hindus, Turks, Japanese
Miscellaneous		
Jews	10	5
Poles	18	17
Russians	18	17
Ukrainians		1
Gypsies	1	

Source: RGASPI. Fund 17. Op. 34. D. 425. L. 24.

Note: Classification and ethnonyms are cited according to the source.

The major group of students was admitted for the training of employees at the volost and uyezd levels. The instructor group, with courses in politico-educational, economics, and administrative-legal subjects, trained personnel for the people's commissariats, councils of national economy, and other structures of management of the national economy. The lecturers' group trained students for working in Soviet-party schools in the eastern regions of the USSR. In the initial period, the KUTV, like other educational institutions, focused on admitting students, organizing the educational process, and creating living conditions for students. The initial six- to seven-month courses were soon replaced with three-year courses, and from 1929 with four-year courses. Upon completion of training, a thesis defense procedure was introduced. The KUTV also began training staff for higher educational institutions. To this end, in 1927 there appeared postgraduate training programs in philosophy, economics, party history, and history departments. The principles of national equality and class approach were crucial, but they proved difficult to adhere to.

Features of organizing the educational process

It should be noted that people entering communist universities "were not accustomed to systematic intellectual work" and lacked "theoretical training; their knowledge was very poor."¹⁹ Therefore, the task was set to find methods for better understanding and mastering the curriculum. Lectures could not be the main form of classes. Given the shortage of teachers, especially those with knowledge of Oriental languages, as well as shortage of literature, teaching and visual aids, classes were held in study groups.

The literacy rate among workers and peasants from various "socio-economic backgrounds" was low everywhere. Among applicants from ethnic regions, there were very few members of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) or the Russian Communist Youth League (Komsomol) founded in 1918. The system of the training of national cadres was based on accumulated experience due to the small number of students and the shortage of

¹⁹ A. Ryndich, "Chetyre goda raboty sovpартshkol [Four years of work of Soviet party schools]," in *Sovpartshkoly i komvuzy* (Moscow–Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo Publ., 1926), 6.

teachers able to train in national languages. Thus, by early October 1922, a preparatory course of 210 people was formed from the initially organized 6-week short-term course. Taking into account the level of language knowledge, including Russian, it was divided into 10 study groups: 4 international, 3 Bashkir-Uzbek-Kirgiz-Tatar (BUKT), 1 Mongolian, 1 Azerbaijani-Persian-Turkish, and 1 Turkmen. Later, 13 Adzharians arrived, but due to the shortage of teachers to train in their native language, they were distributed among the existing study groups, and some were sent to the Tiflis party school. Three so-called BUKT study groups were soon reshaped, one of which was dissolved (like the Mongolian one), and the best students from the others were selected. The curriculum included such subjects as political economy, economic geography, mathematics, the Russian language, physical chemistry, biology, Western history, Russian history, introduction to Oriental studies, history of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks), history of the development of social forms, historical materialism, and Soviet construction.

At methodological meetings of teachers, it was noted that interest in studying increased with the use of data on local conditions, life, and nature in the regions. This prompted the development of summer assignments for collecting materials on site and increased students' interest in studying. Due to the students' poor knowledge of Russian, of great importance were group readings and excursions to Vorobyovy Gory in biology, physics, chemistry, and mathematics (which obviously involved firsthand acquaintance with flora and fauna, basic calculations, etc.), as well as discussions and presentations by more advanced students. Although there was shortage of printed materials on the history of the development of social forms, the teachers discovered in the students "the beginnings of understanding of the historical process." However, most applicants were considered low-performing; only a few attended Soviet party schools, but they studied diligently. Of the 329 applicants, there remained 206. The Russian language classes proved unsuccessful due to their club-like organization and the students' heavy workload in natural science and mathematics. 54 students attended the lecturing course; they were divided into three groups: the main group (25 people), the economics group (23 people), and the history group (6 people). In the 1922–1923 academic year they completed the course, and 17 were employed as research staff, 10 were transferred to the third year, and the rest were sent to work²⁰.

The university staff had a difficult time. It was noted in a report as follows:

Fights, swearing, and theft were quite common. Although studying attracted them, few of them studied outside of class hours²¹.

High attendance rates were achieved through strict measures, including expulsion.

There was no discipline in the dormitory; some students constantly complained about the impossibility of studying in such conditions.

However, after six months, dramatic changes occurred. Educational and organizational work bore fruit. Student clubs and groups began to take independent decisions: "Knowledge is needed by the backward peoples of the East and our own country," and since "the Soviet government spends funds on education and maintenance," everyone must "study diligently," attend all classes, "no shouting or fighting should be allowed in the dormitory, so as not to interfere with anyone who wants to study, and anyone who interferes with their studies

²⁰ RGASPI, f. 532, op. 8, d. 11, l. 4–7, 11, 14, 33, 20, 26.

²¹ Ibid., l. 3–7.

should be brought to justice”; no talking should be allowed after midnight, and anyone caught stealing should be expelled²².

One of the reports noted as follows:

A Balkar or Turkman who has been at the university for some time and is able to continue his studies is much more valuable as a future employee than someone new from a region, so the number of students who continued their studies and work increased. Initially the university's structure was flexible – in addition to courses and groups, there were created sectors. 264 students graduated from the language sector, 118 of them were seconded, 100 were retained for the short-term course, and the rest were retained for the main and lecturing summer courses²³.

The teachers succeeded in fostering interest in studying “through the use of data on local conditions,” using specific examples of everyday life and natural environments. Due to students' poor knowledge of Russian, the curriculum had to be mastered through group readings and discussions; more advanced students prepared reports. Ideological and political training, which required the mastering of not only history of class struggle but also economic and philosophical issues was difficult, as it required developed abstract thinking. 8–12 hours per week were allocated for political science; the rest of the time was taken up by general education subjects. However, in the Turkic and Azerbaijani sectors the course was unsuccessful, as it was difficult to tell students “about class struggle in the West” due to a lack of geographic knowledge, gaps in chronology and country examples, and the lecturers who were often students from the lecturers' group were poorly trained. Thus, at economic geography lessons, there was taught, among other things, geography of the republics in the most important sectors of the national economy; the history group studied the economic situation in Russia at the end of the 17th and early 19th centuries, the Decembrist movement; at the lessons of Western history, they studied the industrial revolution in England, the history of the revolutionary dictatorship of the sans-culottes, its rise and fall. In the Turkic and Azerbaijani study groups the political economy course failed. The study of the history of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) was more successful, but it became clear that it was necessary to teach history of national parties, including socialist ones, in the regions from which the students came. They showed great interest in the history of colonial and national issues, demanding their inclusion where it was not included in the curriculum, as well as in Oriental studies. M. Sultan-Galiev lectured in the so-called Turkic sector, but he was “far from punctual” in his attendance, and as a result, the course was not completed (“as it often happens with people's commissars, neither Comrade Sultan-Galiev nor Comrade Guseinov, despite repeated requests, submitted either a program or an annual report”). The university needed instructors with knowledge of Uzbek and Kirgiz (Kazakh) languages, as the students were dissatisfied with the classes taught in Tatar²⁴.

As F.I. Drabkina, the head of the main course indicated in the report for the 1921–1922 academic year, out of 335 students divided into the highest group, Group A, and the lowest, Group B, 186 completed the course, 22 were transferred to natural history courses, and the rest dropped out. The students in the lowest group lacked “mental work skills”, and in 2–3 months they “learned to work a little” to study certain subjects. Political economy, Russian history, and the history of class struggle were taught separately for them, while the remaining subjects were studied together with Group A. 134 hours instead of 40 had to be allocated to Russian history, 112 instead of 40 to class struggle, and 118 instead of 50 to political economy. It was planned to study Oriental studies in study groups, but “due to

²² RGASPI, f. 532, op. 8, d. 11, l. 22.

²³ Ibid., l. 74–75.

²⁴ Ibid., l. 11, 66–67, 70.

a lack of study group leaders,” they had to be abandoned. The “colonial question” was “disrupted due to a conflict between Comrade Safarov²⁵ and the audience, after which he refused to continue lecturing.” M. Pavlovich²⁶ cut short this course considerably, replacing his lectures with student reports, which greatly disappointed the audience. Due to the lecturer’s illness and absence of study group leaders, the course in economic geography of the RSFSR was significantly shortened. Meanwhile, of particular interest were colonial, national, and religious issues, the history of one’s own country or people studied in the Oriental studies course, as well as the “Tatar invasion” and, in general, “everything that relates to and explains everyday life.” With a workload of up to 36–40 hours per week, attendance was high, but due to a shortage of literature, the students studied together, which eliminated rote learning²⁷. Russian history was of particular interest; the students even gathered for classes on holidays.

In the 1921–1922 academic year, a total of 82 people graduated, including 24 Tatars, 1 Chuvash, 8 Armenians, 3 Votyaks, 2 Uzbeks, 1 Permiak, 2 Georgians, 1 Azerbaijani, 1 Abkhazian, 1 Frenchman, 1 Lezgin, 1 Buryat; 4 Bashkirs, 2 Koreans, 3 Ossetians, 3 Turks, 3 Mari, 2 Kirgiz, 2 Karelians, 5 Jews, 3 Russians, 3 Zyrians, and 2 Persians. The lecturers’ group of the basic course was created on August 22, 1922, and included 60 people, of which by the end of the studies there remained 44; half of them were peasants, 13.7% were workers. 4.5% had incomplete higher education, 38.7% had secondary education, 22.7% had incomplete secondary education, 29.6% had primary education, and 4.5% had home education. Among the students were 8 Tatars, 3 Ossetians, 3 Koreans, 8 Armenians, 6 Russians, and 6 Jews; 1 Turk, 1 Georgian, 1 Chechen, 1 Mordvin, 1 Chuvash, 1 Karelian, 1 Buryat, and 1 Persian²⁸.

In 1921, in the history section there were studied Russian history, Western history, the history of human society, and the history of materialism, with “elements of Oriental material.” In Russian history, the students studied the most important events that had occurred before the 19th century. The general course in Russian history offered “an opportunity for the students to understand the process of enslavement of their nationality by the developing course of Russian capitalism,” but the organizers encountered the students’ complete inattention and lack of understanding “due to the boring presentation” of the material, while a lack of knowledge of Oriental languages hampered the assessment of the quality of teaching. The natural science course was attended by 30 KUTV students, 23 seconded people, and 6 auditing students, including 21 Tatars, Bashkirs, Lezgins, and Uzbeks (3 people each), Kirgiz, Karachays, Chechen-Ingush, Azerbaijanis, Mari and Chuvash (2 people each), Ossetians and Armenians (5 people each), and 4 Mordvins. The most advanced students were also studying at the state university²⁹, and the Lazarev Institute of Oriental Languages. In general, the reports noted the students’ low interest in social and economic subjects and various types of excursions; in this regard, it was proposed to

²⁵ G.I. Safarov (1891–1942) was a party member from 1908, worked in Turkestan in 1919–1921. He was J.V. Stalin’s co-rapporteur at the 10th Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) on the national question (1921). In 1922–1924 he was head of the Eastern Department and secretary of the Executive Committee of the Comintern.

²⁶ M.P. Pavlovich (M.L. Veltman, 1871–1927) was a party member from 1898, organizer of the 1st Congress of the Peoples of the East (1920), head of the All-Russian Scientific Organization of Orientalists (from 1921); in 1921–1923 he was a member of the board of the People’s Commissariat of Nationalities, one of the founders and rector of the Moscow Institute of Oriental Studies.

²⁷ RGASPI, f. 532, op. 8, d. 2, l. 27, 29.

²⁸ Ibid., l. 35–37.

²⁹ There is no name.

increase the course duration by 3 months, and attention was drawn to the shortage of textbooks, instruments, microscopes, and other equipment³⁰.

The report of the university's educational and auxiliary department, which was to "develop the KUTV students' Marxist worldview" noted as follows:

an ideology expressed in bright colors and artistic images is more attractive and has a stronger effect than one which is perceived by listeners in the form of strictly regulated educational classes <...> there should not be a single aspect of political and educational work which is not imbued with the Marxist worldview³¹.

However, engaging a great number of students of many nationalities with different languages, traditions, and economic norms in such work was extremely difficult, and the department set a "very interesting, but also very difficult" task of "finding a synthesis between 'we want to embrace European culture' and the recurring demands 'not to carry out Russification'." In total, 8,624 students attended excursions, and the clubs hosted joint games, performances, parties, and discussions. These proved extremely important, as at times there was observed "a rather pronounced manifestation of national sentiments." To eliminate these sentiments, there were used revolutionary songs and skits about the struggle for social justice performed in national languages. They were "exceptional in their colorfulness and original interpretation of political events against the backdrop of everyday life." However, evening club activities were not frequent, as much of the students' time was consumed by party and Komsomol cell meetings. At the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviet party schools in 1923, it was acknowledged that the majority of students (former workers and peasants) were accustomed to thinking in images, lacked a firmly established worldview, and had "almost no general knowledge or skills, but they were revolutionary-minded, with great energy and a desire to study."³²

The degree of mastering of the curriculum also varied across groups and sectors: the Turkic and Azerbaijani groups, Tatars and Baku workers managed to master it to some extent, while the Uzbeks and Azerbaijani peasants could not do it. Among the most backward were the Mountain-Dagestani sector, the Ossetian group, the Ingush and Chechens, the Karachay-Dagestani, the Balkars, the Kirgiz, the Uzbeks, the Turkmen, and the Farsi. The leadership considered it necessary to give the study of the Russian language a "political coloring," to abandon teachers "who were here today and gone tomorrow" and to hold separate meetings and club activities for those who did not know Russian³³.

Problems of students' leisure, health improvement and everyday life

The KUTV had clubs in mathematics, physics, chemistry, chess, drama, dance, public speaking, newspapers, piano, and languages. Books aroused great interest: the reading room of the library was open 14 hours a day. There were organized 14 student-run corridor libraries in the dormitory, one for each year of studies. Each of them contained 100-150 books, mostly educational literature. On the occasions of political holidays and congresses there were held book exhibitions. The drama club, without any "theoretical work," quickly staged the play "The Trial of a Mountain Woman" and held a so-called Komsomol Easter party, which included a choral revolutionary repertoire and the play "God the Father, God the Son, and Company." There were also staged a series of plays in

³⁰ RGASPI, f. 532, op. 8, d. 2, l. 48, 50.

³¹ *Ibid.*, l. 64–67, 95.

³² A. Ryndich, "Chetyre goda raboty sovpартshkol," 6.

³³ RGASPI, f. 532, op. 8, d. 11, l. 65–67, 70, 72, 28–29.

national languages, involving over 200 students. They included the Mongolian play “The Power of the Shamans,” Chinese and Uzbek anti-religious plays, Turkish collective recitation, national choirs and ditties.

The KUTV organized movie shows with the participation of lecturers, and on the day of the Paris Commune (March 18), the play “For the Commune” was staged for the university students at the V. Meyerhold Theater. In Studio 1 of the Art Theater, all students saw the show “The Death of Hope” based on the play by Dutch writer H. Heijermans; they also visited the Bolshoi Theater. The students presented performances for workers, including young ones³⁴. In their party-educational work, the party cell waged a “struggle against nationalism, individualism, and sometimes even anti-Semitism, etc.” The institution of party organizers was introduced. There were ten-day periods of “organized struggle against nationalism, unfriendly attitude toward female students, etc.” The number of wall newspapers increased, and the commune organization “destroyed the students’ individualistic habits” and disciplined them. There was a council for physical and health education, a cultural and theatrical council, and a mutual aid fund³⁵.

The health of applicants proved to be a serious problem. A special medical commission determined the health status of applicants, and not all those sent for studying were deemed fit. Monthly medical examinations became an important part of monitoring students’ physical fitness throughout their studies at the KUTV³⁶ and other universities. In 1920, at the Sverdlov Communist University there were identified “malicious neurasthenics” and those suffering from scurvy. At the KUTV, the first semester of the 1921–1922 academic year was not completed, as based on the results of an outpatient examination, 44% of the students required an immediate break and a vacation, while the rest showed signs of exhaustion and fatigue. The classes resumed only on February 3, but in March, the incidence of illness increased again³⁷. Almost half of the students initially lived in a cold, cramped isolation ward with poor lighting, which caused repeated complaints³⁸. In 1922, the KUTV medical commission sent 200 people “for various diseases – venereal diseases, tuberculosis, etc.” Some went to hospitals. The treatment gradually yielded results, and doctors recorded: “Now everyone is recovering, they are gaining weight.”³⁹ However, in the mid-1920s, it was acknowledged that

despite the improvement in the health of the students, a fairly high nervous system disorders percentage of them in almost all communist universities suffer from nervous system disorders. Nervous system disorders are prevalent in all communist universities; in some, the rate of nervous system disorders reaches 60% or more; among the students living in dormitories the rate was higher⁴⁰.

In 1925, at a meeting of doctors of the communist universities, it was noted that the incidence of nervous disorders among the students living in dormitories was significantly higher than among those living in private apartments. Among the reasons cited were a careless attitude toward their own time and work, and a lack of regular rest. It was

³⁴ RGASPI, f. 532, op. 8, d. 11, 44–49.

³⁵ Ibid., d. 12, l. 43–44, 48.

³⁶ Ibid., op. 11, d. 2, l. 94; d. 842, l. 1–4.

³⁷ Ibid., l. 84, 94.

³⁸ Ibid., op. 8, d. 2, l. 53.

³⁹ Ibid., op. 11, d. 13, l. 32–33.

⁴⁰ A.R., “K voprosu o ratsionalizatsii ucheby i byta sovpartshkol [On the issue of rationalization of education and everyday life in Soviet Party schools],” in *Sovpartshkoly i komvuzy* (Moscow–Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo Publ., 1926), 207, 209.

proposed to normalize workload and daily routines, to introduce hygiene courses, to conduct work on health education in clubs, including through theatrical performances, to introduce mandatory physical education classes, to normalize nutrition, and ensure that each student receives at least one-month vacation⁴¹.

Monitoring the situation at the KUTV, Dr. A. Mayants noted that it was necessary to create a medical and sanitary organization at the KUTV for representatives of 73 nationalities, many of whom “do not speak Russian and require special living conditions due to the fact that they are not accustomed to the Moscow climate.” The most common illnesses identified were lung diseases and malaria, due to which

these students live in sunny, dry rooms; they are provided with intensified nutrition; they are given warmer clothes in winter, and are all sent to the KUTV recreation center throughout the year; they are not overloaded with excessive work⁴².

It should be noted that, thanks to the efforts undertaken, these types of illnesses were successfully addressed, and as a result, the admissions process became more thorough. Thus, out of 515 students, 62 were deemed unfit for admission, some of the sick students were sent back; there were conducted systematic medical examinations, physical education classes, and dietary and intensified nutritional programs. Over the course of the year, in the recreation center there were 409 people. However, at the same time the number of nervous disorders increased. The doctor attributed this increase to excessive academic and social workload, poorly organized living conditions, and “incessant practical work.” In the summer of 1924 he wrote as follows:

The number of students in spacious rooms is big (often 10-12 people), where smoking is common. The dormitories are noisy. There’s a lack of self-discipline: classmates often disregard each other’s desires to study or relax⁴³.

Only 20% of the students attended outdoor physical education classes. Wet rubdowns in the morning aroused no enthusiasm among young people who had arrived from the remote areas and had difficulty adapting to previously unseen sanitary and hygiene requirements. In their final year of study in the 1924–1925 academic year only 12% of the students were perfectly healthy. At the same time, compared to the previous year, at the KUTV certain work was carried out. During the course of study, medical examinations for pulmonary and malaria patients were conducted, which reduced the incidence of malaria by a factor of 4-5. Physical education classes, a special dietary canteen, intensified nutrition, and the recreation center, which served 409 people during the year, all played a role⁴⁴.

The KUTV thoroughly addressed the organization of supplies and services for the students and faculty, taking into account the challenges of providing for the populations of ethnic regions. Thus, in the Darginsky District of Dagestan in 1927, 45% of women, 48% of children, and about one-third of men had no underwear at all; 17% of children, 20% of women, and 39% of men had more than one change of underwear, but no more than 2–3.

⁴¹ A.R., “K voprosu o ratsionalizatsii ucheby i byta sovpartshkol [On the issue of rationalization of education and everyday life in Soviet Party schools],” in *Sovpartshkoly i komvuzy* (Moscow–Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo Publ., 1926), 209–210.

⁴² A. Mayants, “Eshche o zdorov’e komvuzovskogo studenchestva [More on the health of Komso-mol students],” in *Sovpartshkoly i komvuzy* (Moscow–Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo Publ., 1926), 222–224.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

20% of men had no light outerwear (beshmet, shirt) and wore a fur coat directly over their underwear. Half of all children, 35% of women, and 9% of men had no winter outerwear at all, and very few had shoes⁴⁵.

In 1921, the standards and procedures for providing students and employees of the Communist University of Workers of the East were equal to those of the students and employees of the Sverdlov Communist University⁴⁶. Information from the institution's reports for 1920–1923 provides an idea of the problems which the KUTV staff faced in its initial period of operation. In 1921, instead of 800 there were admitted over 1,000 students, and there was lack of classrooms and living space. The buildings assigned to dormitories were “in a catastrophic state.” The administrative and maintenance department managed to provide plumbing and heating; 50 poods of clothes could be laundered per month. Outpatient clinics and a dental office were opened at the university, monthly medical examinations were conducted, and the dormitories were disinfected weekly. Of the 3,412,549,718 rubles allocated to the KUTV, 2,349,965,619 rubles had been spent by December 1. These funds were used, among other things, to purchase clothing for 800 students (stockings, women's and men's boots, socks, padded jackets, warm long underwear, fur hats, jackets, aprons, gloves, women's blouses, skirts, sandals, shirts, bast shoes, men's long underwear, medical gowns, foot wraps, greatcoats, summer trousers, winter helmets, office supplies, tools, equipment, furniture, and dishes). There also operated a shoemaker's and a tailor's workshops, and firewood was collected for heating the premises. Under an agreement with the Central baths of Moscow, the students visited them once a week and hairdressers were also available⁴⁷.

The KUTV had a canteen for 700 people, and the standard ration for students and lecturers included, in pounds (1 pound = 453.5 grams): bread – 90, herring – 11.5, sugar – 2, fat – 2.5, salt – 3, coffee – 0.25, vegetables – 30. Standards were not set for matches, tobacco, soap, cereals, and flour. Students received bread, sugar, matches, tobacco, and soap, the rest was in common use – in zolotniks per person (1 zolotnik = 4.266 grams). A 1921–1922 report noted the lack of discipline of students “from the backward outskirts, who had never lived in a city,” stating that in the first days in the canteen they “wolfed down food, now they have a sense of collectivism.” There was an overspending on bread and tobacco, while vegetables and cereals remained in stock. Rations were received by 33% of the families of students and employees. On November 7, 1921, the day of the October Revolution, the administration purchased “luxury products – 40 buckets of wine, nuts, rice, and canned goods.” Along with the unused food, they were consumed at the joint celebration. In the summer of 1922, the students were sent to Malakhovka in the Moscow region, where a commune was formed that played an important role in the students' adaptation and education. As the administration believed, created to organize everyday life and joint education,

it frees one from the negative external influence, but gives the opportunity to develop this self-activity in a certain way in terms of better organization of one's life, better use of one's capabilities, and spending of one's resources⁴⁸.

⁴⁵ M. Ya. Mirzabekov, *Modernizatsionnye protsessy v kul'ture narodov Dagestana (90-e gody XIX v. – 30-e gody XX v.)* [Modernization processes in the culture of the peoples of Dagestan (1890s–1830s)] (Makhachkala: [N.s.], 2010), 210.

⁴⁶ *Dekrety Sovetskoi vlasti* [Decrees of the Soviet government] (Moscow: Gospolitizdat Publ., 2009), 302.

⁴⁷ RGASPI, f. 532, op. 11, d. 2, l. 76–78.

⁴⁸ RGASPI, f. 532, op. 11, d. 2, l. 76–78, 82; d. 13, l. 40–42, 47.

A 1924 report noted that the commune disciplined and “eliminated the students’ individualistic habits.” There operated a crèche for 30 people, and books in various languages were purchased at a discount⁴⁹.

The commune board dealt specifically with the problems of supplying students. In 1922, for example, following a request by student Irishev to have his overcoat altered into trousers and a jacket and to return his overcoat to him from the university storeroom, it was decided to give him an overcoat, but not his jacket and trousers, and to leave his overcoat in the storeroom. Two students’ request to share rooms with their wives was met, while another student was denied permission to live in a private apartment. Students living in private apartments received a state scholarship, but they were not provided with firewood; they received no assistance from the KUTV commune unless they were its members. Three students who reported the theft of their overcoats were given new ones, but their cost was deducted from their scholarships. The commune refused to give new trousers to student Shamilov, offering to “repair the old ones.” Meanwhile, Sultangazina’s stolen overcoat was written off without deduction from her scholarship and she was given old felt boots⁵⁰. The comrades’ court, the commune board, and the party commission investigated the incidents and students’ offenses. In particular, on September 11, 1922, Khamidulla Saifulin was accused of selling an overcoat to buy another, cheaper one. Since this was his first offense and he made a sincere confession, he was publicly reprimanded. On February 18, 1923, seven third-year students failed to complete their labor duty and were reprimanded; three of them were acquitted⁵¹. Socialization was an integral part of the KUTV work.

G. Gasilov, the head of the Council for National Minorities of the RSFSR, while noting the enthusiasm of national cadres, their activity and loyalty to the Soviet government, nevertheless called graduates of communist universities “half-done teachers-Komsomol members.”⁵² According to the All-Union party census of 1927, in the republics and territories of the RSFSR, among communist employees (heads of institutions, their deputies and assistants) the level of education on a 5-point scale (5 – higher education, 3 – secondary education, 1 – elementary and home education) was estimated at an average of 1.76 points; heads of departments of institutions, their deputies and assistants – 1.83 points; in subdepartments and other departments of institutions – 1.53 points; instructors and inspectors – 1.71 points⁵³.

On the resolution of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) on May 11, 1930, the system of communist higher education institutions was given more hierarchy and organization: special departments were to train party and Soviet workers (up to the village council level), propagandists, teachers of secondary Soviet-party schools, and organizers of public education. Correspondence and evening education were widely introduced. In December 1930, the Organizational Bureau of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) decided to establish two-year central courses at the Communist University of Workers of the East for the retraining of “national workers for leadership party work in national regions.” Local party organizations sent students to the courses. Upon completion of their studies, graduates

⁴⁹ RGASPI, f. 532, op. 11, d. 12, l. 48, 50.

⁵⁰ Ibid., op. 8, d. 13, l. 13, 16–17, 20.

⁵¹ Ibid., d. 39, l. 10.

⁵² *Prosveshchenie natsional'nostei. 1926–1933 gg.* [Education of Nationalities. 1926–1933] (Moscow: Rabotnik prosveshcheniia Publ., 1934), 25–26.

⁵³ *Kommunisty v sostave apparata gosuchrezhdenii i obshchestvennykh organizatsii. Itogi Vsesoiuznoi partiinoi perepisi 1927 goda* [Communists in the apparatus of state institutions and public organizations. Results of the All-Union Party Census of 1927] (Moscow: Государственное издательство Publ., 1929), 12.

were to return to their previous positions. Kazakhstan was to send 20 people, Kirgizstan and Bashkiria 15 each, and the remaining autonomous regions with Turkic populations sent from 3 to 10 people. In total, in 1924–1930, the KUTV trained 549 Soviet workers, representing 54 nationalities. By 1930, at 12 departments of the university (including the Department of Economics of the Soviet East and the Department of History and Party Building in the Soviet East), there worked 14 professors, 32 research fellows and associate professors, and 10 assistants. There were 99 graduate students, representing 80 nationalities⁵⁴.

Conclusion

Indigenization became a serious challenge to the implementation of the Soviet project, as it required significant material and technical, organizational, financial, and cultural investments to create a new mass stratum of managers from among people from traditional societies that represented the interests of the working population. In this process, the educational-ideological and political development of national cadres, as well as the socio-cultural adaptation of those from the country's most remote regions acquired a meaningful and progressive character both at the local level and at central educational institutions, thanks to the state's consolidating role and a special approach to organizing the training of party cadres. The KUTV not only served as an institution promoting the ideas of world revolution in the East, but also made an important contribution to providing personnel for the autonomous regions of the RSFSR and other national republics. Information on the specifics of the educational process, as well as the daily life and leisure activities of students at the KUTV, provides a better understanding of the socio-cultural aspects of the large-scale transformations carried out during Soviet nation-building.

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⁵⁴ *TSK RKP(b)-VKP(b) i natsional'nyi vopros* [The Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) – All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) and the national question] (Moscow: РОССПЭН Publ., 2005), 652–653.

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