

THE HISTORY OF LOCAL SOVIETS IN TURKESTAN (November 1917 – April 1918)

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Abstract: The article examines the changes introduced into the system of local government bodies in Turkestan after the establishment of Soviet rule, the normative legal documents of the administrative system, and the history of the formation of the local Soviets of workers, peasants, soldiers and Muslims.

Keywords: Turkestan, Soviet, syezd, Council of People's Commissars of Turkestan, bolshevik, left socialist revolutionary, worker, soldier, peasant, deputy, election, Provisional Government, statute, uyezd, volost.

At the Third All-Turkestan Congress of Soviets (15–22 November 1917), the Turkestan Council of People's Commissars, headed by Fyodor Kolesov, was formed [1. 66–76]. This governing body administered Soviet power in Turkestan. The Bolsheviks and left-wing Social Revolutionaries, having seized power, reorganised the state administration system in Turkestan on the basis of communist ideology. The Third Congress of the Turkestan Provincial Soviets adopted on 22 November 1917 the resolution ‘On the Establishment of Local Power’ [2. 69]. This resolution stipulated that local power should be in the hands of the workers', soldiers' and peasants' Soviets, that these Soviets and the Muslim workers' deputies should immediately convene provincial Soviet congresses and hold elections to the provincial Soviets at them, where Muslim deputies' councils have not been formed, to entrust the local workers', soldiers' and peasants' councils with the task of organising them [3].

On the basis of this decision, on 28 November of that year in Samarkand[4], and on 30 November in Jizzakh, all power passed into the hands of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies[5]. Within the Jizzakh Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, led by Commissar Levin, military, civil, and food sections were established.

On 10 December 1917, on the basis of the above decision, the Council of People's Commissars of Turkestan developed the “Regulations on the Organisation of Local Soviets”[2. 69]. It was on the basis of this very Regulation that the initial structure of the local Soviets was created. However, the full organisational structures of the local Soviets had not yet been established, and the higher Soviet bodies had not yet fully implemented guidance and instructional work within them. Therefore, in the early days of Soviet rule in Turkestan, as local administrative bodies were being formed, it was the Soviets themselves who determined their structure and organisation.

At the same time, the old administrative systems—the city and volost administrations and the district commissioners—had not yet been fully abolished. For example, although the city dumas of Tashkent[6] on 4 December 1917 and Namangan on 3 January 1918 were dissolved for their connections with anti-Soviet forces[7], their administrations remained in place until the Soviets were established.

By early 1918, Soviets, including Muslim Soviets, began to be actively established in the towns and villages of Turkestan in place of the dissolved Provisional Government institutions. During this period, 100 Soviets were operating in Turkestan, of which 11 were Soviets of workers', soldiers' and peasants' deputies, 74 were Soviets of workers' and soldiers' deputies, 5 were Soviets of soldiers' deputies, and 10 were Soviets of peasants' deputies[8]. Table 1.

Type of Soviets	Number
Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', and Peasants' Deputies	11
Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies	74
Soviets of Soldiers' Deputies	5
Soviets of Peasant Deputies	10
Total	100

Table 1. Local soviets established in Turkestan in 1918.

During this period there were 24 Soviets in Syrdarya Oblast, 17 in Caspiysk Oblast, 13 in Fergana Oblast, 5 in Samarkand Oblast, 4 in Yettysu Oblast and 2 in the Russian settlements of Bukhara [9. 50]. Figure 1.

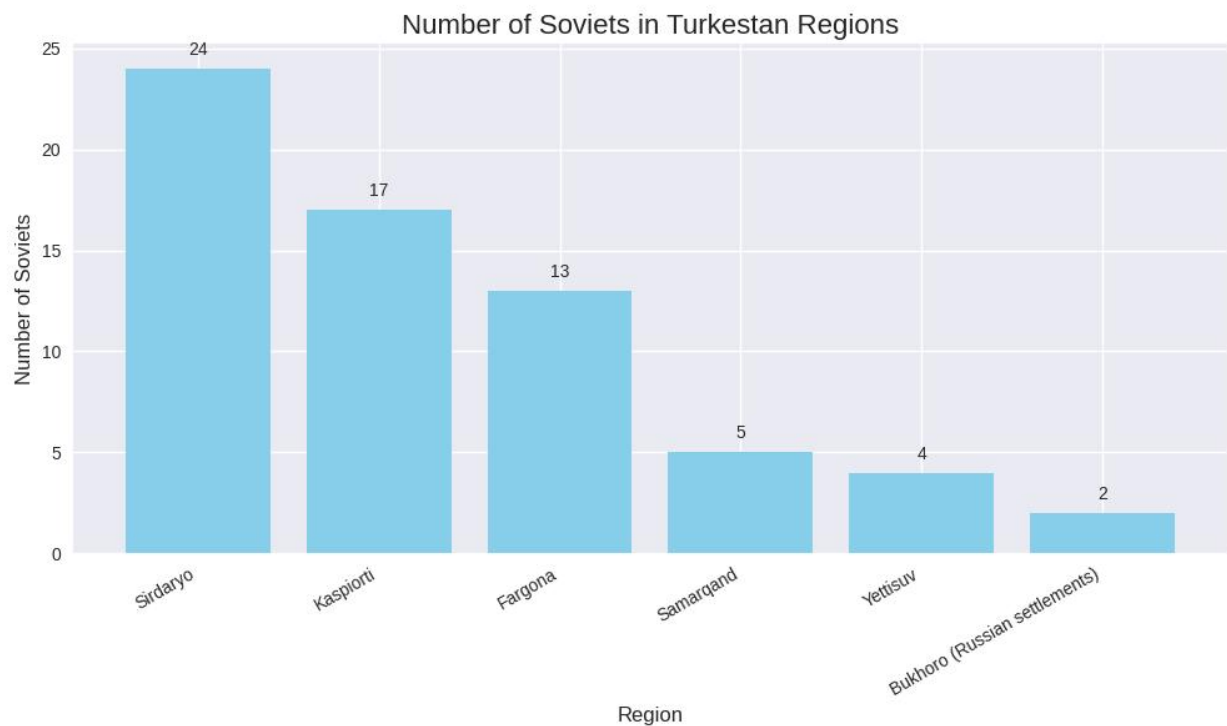


Figure 1. Local soviets in Turkestan at the beginning of 1918, by province.

While these soviets initially fought to seize power, they later became the bodies responsible for local administration.

The existence of such a variety of Soviets gave rise to certain problems in the administration of the regions. Consequently, there was a need to merge them into a single Soviet. On 30 March 1918, the peasant, Muslim, worker and soldier Soviets in the Tashkent district were merged to form the single Tashkent District Soviet of People's Deputies. Seats for the district soviet were distributed as follows: 1. Two from each volost with a Muslim population, a total of 54. 2. 33 for the Russian settlements. 3. 10 for the workers' and soldiers' Soviets, a total of 97[10].

In April 1918, re-elections were held for the Tashkent City Soviet. The inhabitants of Tashkent's Old City took an active part. Of the 300 deputies elected to the Soviet, more than 100 were representatives of the local nationalities. In the re-election of the Tashkent City Soviet, the communist Uzbeks S. Qosimkhojaev and A. Bobojanov took an active part [9. 49].

Following the elections in Tashkent, re-elections for the Soviets were held in almost all the cities of Turkestan. The significant results of this political process include the purging of the Soviets of the Menshevik-Social Revolutionaries and a considerable increase in the number of Bolsheviks within them. For example, in the election to the Andijan Soviet, 80 per cent of the deputies were members of the Bolshevik Party. A similar result was achieved in New Bukhara (Kogon), ...in the Soviets of workers', soldiers' and peasants' deputies of Skobelev (Fergana), Old Margilan, Namangan, Shahrihon, Kuva, Piskent, Mirzachul and other towns, where the left-wing Social Revolutionaries were also defeated[11. 20].

The struggle for power between the Bolsheviks and the Left-Social Revolutionaries, and the existence of numerous other administrative bodies, gave rise to various disagreements between them. For example, in May 1918, the land and water committee staff, who had visited the Chernyaev district of the Syr Darya province, sought to reorganise the volost soviets and elect volost commissioners. The district commissioner sent a report on this to the Syr Darya provincial commissioner. The Syrdarya Provincial Soviet examines this matter and the staff of the Land and Water Committee decide that the volost' Soviets have no authority to reorganise and, in particular, to re-elect the volost' commissar elected by the people.

In short, from the establishment of Soviet power until the formation of the Turkestan ASSR, worker, soldier, peasant and Muslim local soviets were formed in Turkestan. They operated in place of the former local administrative bodies and exercised governance. At the same time, as a result of the political struggle among the Soviet factions, the Bolsheviks seized full power.

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