

## The Impact Of The “Perestroika” Policy (1985–1991) On The Social Life Of The Uzbek SSR (A Case Study Of The Education System)

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### ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the historical and scientific impact of the "perestroika" policy implemented in the former USSR in 1985-1991 on the social life of the Uzbek SSR, in particular, on the education system. The causes and consequences of the deep socio-political and economic crisis that arose in Soviet society in the mid-1980s, the negative impact of the centralized management system and one-sided agrarian policy on the social spheres of the republic are revealed. Based on archival documents, statistical data and historical sources, the material and technical support of the education system, the involvement of students and teachers in forced labor, the decline in the quality of education and the deterioration of the socio-psychological environment are scientifically covered. The results show that the "perestroika" policy in the conditions of the Uzbek SSR was declarative in nature, failed to eliminate real socio-economic problems and further deepened the crises in the educational and social spheres. It is also argued that the social crisis that arose during this period was an important factor in the growth of national consciousness and the intensification of the processes of striving for independence. The conclusions of the study are of significant scientific importance for understanding the need to direct educational policy to human interests during the period of independence based on historical experience.

**Keywords:** - Perestroika policy, Uzbek SSR, social crisis, education system, centralized management, unilateral agrarian policy, cotton farming, forced labor, social sphere, youth problems, the eve of independence.

### INTRODUCTION

In the late 1950s, the USSR declared that “socialism had triumphed.” After that, cultural and educational events, mass and political work in society were directed at educating people in the communist spirit. During the years under study, the Soviet government conducted economic

activities within the framework of the all-Union economy in a way that ensured the priority of the interests of the center and disregarded the realities of local republics. This limited the ability of the national republics to make independent decisions. The budget norms set at the all-Union level were like an iron law, and it was impossible to even think

about departing from them. In such conditions, even when solving the most insignificant issue, one had to rely on the favor of the center. The issue of social security, which ruled in the USSR, was disconnected from real life. Similar situations became more acute in the mid-1980s, and the deep socio-political and economic crisis that developed in the former USSR covered all spheres of Soviet society, especially having a serious negative impact on the socio-economic development of the union republics. The long-term operation of the centrally planned economy, the administrative-command principles of management, the weakness of economic incentives, and the insufficient consideration of territorial interests created systemic imbalances in society. By the 1980s, these processes had turned into an open crisis, manifested in a decrease in production efficiency, a decline in the social sphere, and a sharp deterioration in the living standards of the population. "Over the past 10 years," noted the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan I. A. Karimov, "many programs adopted with the aim of falsely seizing power, ignoring existing opportunities in the social, food, agricultural, energy and environmental spheres, have led to a deepening of economic contradictions. As a result, a final recession occurred, which led to an acute shortage of material and financial resources" [1, p. 280].

The "perestroika" policy announced by the Soviet leadership in 1985 was interpreted as a large-scale reform aimed at overcoming this crisis situation, modernizing society, accelerating socio-economic development and improving the management system. However, this policy was not based on a deep scientific analysis and clear strategic goals, and most importantly, it attempted to implement economic and social reforms without a fundamental renewal of the political system, and therefore did not produce the expected results in many regions, including the Uzbek SSR. On the contrary, the existing problems deepened, and social tension increased. The new policy showed almost no signs of finding a solution to this situation, but rather aggravated the situation. The concept of perestroika was not based on a deep scientific analysis of the vital priorities and problems of the fraternal republics of the Union [2, p. 628]. Since Uzbekistan was formed during the Soviet period as a republic specializing primarily in raw material base, primarily cotton growing, the systemic imbalances in the process of

"perestroika" were even more pronounced in this region. As a result of a one-sided agrarian policy, the preference of production interests over the human factor, and insufficient attention to the social needs of the republic, the education system, healthcare, and social security sectors fell into a deep crisis. In particular, the subordination of the education system to production needs, the involvement of pupils and students in forced labor, and the weakness of the material and technical base seriously damaged the educational level and social development of the younger generation. In this regard, a scientific study of the impact of the "perestroika" policy on the social life of the Uzbek SSR in 1985-1991, in particular, on the education system, is of great historical and theoretical importance. This study serves to analyze social problems that arose in the last stage of the Soviet era, to reveal their causes and consequences, and to draw historical conclusions for the reforms carried out during the period of independence.

## METHODS

This study was carried out based on modern methodological approaches of history. In the course of the study, based on the principle of historicity, the socio-economic and socio-cultural processes that took place in the Uzbek SSR in the conditions of the "perestroika" policy in 1985-1991 were analyzed in their inextricable connection with the political, economic and ideological conditions of their time. Through the principle of systematic analysis, the interrelationship of economic, political and social processes in Soviet society and their impact on the education system were comprehensively studied. The source base of the study was formed by official documents stored in the central and republican archives, resolutions and orders of the Council of Ministers of the Uzbek SSR and other state bodies, statistical collections, as well as newspapers and magazines published during the Soviet period. Based on these sources, the dynamics of economic and social indicators, the material and technical support of the education system, the state of personnel provision, and changes in the standard of living of the population were analyzed.

The study also used the historical-comparative method, analyzing social processes in the Uzbek SSR in comparison with the situation in other union republics. This approach made it possible to identify the specific aspects of the "perestroika"

policy in the republican context and general trends at the all-Union scale. Based on the problematic approach, the crisis situations that arose in the education system, their causes and consequences, and the impact of these problems on social life were scientifically assessed.

In addition, through historical analysis, scientific research and conceptual views published during the period of independence were studied, and assessments of social policy during the Soviet era were summarized. Using the method of analyzing statistical data, changes in key indicators in the education, healthcare, and social spheres were identified, and scientific conclusions were drawn based on them. These methodological approaches served to ensure the scientific objectivity of the research and the reliability of its results.

## RESULTS

The results of the study showed that the "perestroika" announced by the new political leader in April 1985 gave some hope for overcoming the critical situation [3]. However, during the next 10 years of ongoing crisis, the neo-colonial policy did not yield positive results. The "perestroika" policy implemented in the Soviet Union in 1985–1991 failed to form effective mechanisms aimed at eliminating the systemic problems existing in the conditions of the Uzbek SSR. On the contrary, the preservation of the centralized management system and the subordination of the republic's interests to the priorities of the union further deepened the imbalances in the economic and social spheres. At that time, Uzbekistan was entering a new era of prohibitions [4], and it became clear that the negative consequences of "perestroika" were manifested in subsequent social relations, indicating the beginning of a fruitless political period. The lack of consistent implementation of economic reforms, the ineffectiveness of the planning and distribution system led to a decrease in production rates and a deterioration in the living standards of the population. In this regard, we recall Gorbachev's speech at the time when the idea of the policy of "perestroika" was formed: on April 23, 1985, at the Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU, many issues of socio-economic life were put forward in a new way, in which M. S. Gorbachev emphasized the following words: "... to accelerate the use of real opportunities for the country's economic

development, to reconsider the issues of management and planning, the structure and policy of investments, to strengthen discipline and cohesion in all areas, to radically improve the methods of action" [5], as if he had found a way out of the difficult situation of the country at that time. However, the promised plans and the actual reality did not coincide at all. This was confirmed even in the education system. Analysis of the education system shows that the lack of material and technical support was one of the most pressing problems of this period. Especially in rural areas, the organization of classes in two, and in some cases three, shifts due to the dilapidated educational buildings and the lack of classrooms led to a decrease in the quality of education. Due to malfunctions in heating systems and interruptions in the fuel supply, the reduction of the educational process in the winter season became a regular occurrence. These circumstances limited the ability of students to fully master knowledge and seriously undermined the continuity of the educational process. The social sphere was also in a deplorable state. The level of support in public education, health care, and preschool education did not exceed 40% [6, pp. 43–44]. In many rural schools, due to the use of firewood and coal for heating, the number of hours of study in two-shift classes was reduced. In rural areas, teachers and students spent a lot of time in the fields during the school year. Serious attention was also paid to the health of the population; in particular, chemicals were used to increase cotton yields, which led to a higher level of anemia and child mortality than in other republics. In addition, the most negative consequences of the events taking place in society were suicides among young people. In 1987, 223 people committed suicide or attempted suicide among minors [7]. Contrary to our nature, such incidents were recorded 74 times in Tashkent in 1987, 67 times in Karakalpakstan, and 37 times in Andijan and Namangan regions [8]. The results of the study confirm that the mass involvement of teachers and students in the cotton harvest exacerbated the problems in the education system. The subordination of educational institutions to production needs contradicts the basic principles of the pedagogical process and leads to the violation of curricula and programs. As a result, the knowledge level of the younger generation has decreased, and their social activity and professional prospects have been negatively affected. Analyses of the health care system also

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Analyses of the health care system also show a deepening of social tension. The underdevelopment of the network of medical institutions in rural areas, the lack of qualified personnel, and disruptions in the supply of medicines have had a direct negative impact on the health of the population. Statistical data, in particular, the increase in depression among young people and the increase in suicide rates, indicate an increase in the level of socio-psychological instability in society.

In general, the results of the study show that the practical results of the "perestroika" policy in the Uzbek SSR show a significant gap between declarative goals and the real socio-economic situation. The problems that accumulated in the education and healthcare systems during this period negatively affected the social stability of society and created the basis for a deep socio-economic crisis in the republic on the eve of independence.

## DISCUSSION

The specific features of this period, the consequences of the "perestroika" policy on the people of Uzbekistan, their way of life, and the social life of society, had a deeper impact mainly on the following issues:

### 1) The colonial nature of Soviet policy

- Uzbekistan was seen as a raw material base (cotton);
- The interests of the republic were ignored.

### 2) The disproportionate and superficial nature of "perestroika"

- Economic reform was carried out without updating the political system;
- The lack of a scientifically based concept.

### 3) Serious consequences in the social sphere

- Disruption of the education and health care

system;

- Forced involvement of students and teachers in cotton harvesting;

- Increased child mortality and diseases due to the use of chemicals.

### 4) Deterioration of the psychological and social state of the population

- A sharp increase in suicides among young people;
- An increase in the mood of social apathy and despair.

### 5) Irresponsibility of the central government and local leadership

- The inability of the leaders of the republic to protect the interests of the people;
- One-sided attention to the implementation of cotton plans.

### 6) Formation of national consciousness and independence movements

- The strengthening of national movements against the background of the socio-political crisis;
- The transformation of the desire for independence into a historical necessity.

For the above reasons, by the mid-1980s, the problems that arose in Soviet society, together with the policy of perestroika, led to the strengthening of national movements in the union republics. The results of the study show that the "perestroika" policy implemented in 1985-1991 in the conditions of the Uzbek SSR was not a set of deep reforms in content, but rather a historical process that revealed systemic problems and internal conflicts accumulated in Soviet society. Attempts to partially renew economic mechanisms in a situation where the political management system, property relations, and the division of powers between the center and the republics were not revised did not allow society to get out of the crisis. As a result, the "perestroika" reforms acquired a declarative character and did not lead to real socio-economic changes. The fact that the Uzbek SSR remained within the former USSR mainly as a raw material base, in particular, as a region specialized in cotton growing, seriously

hindered the comprehensive social development of the republic. Land resources for the population decreased. For example, in 1987, the average household land area per person living in the villages of the USSR was 0.21 hectares, while in Ukraine this figure was 0.27 hectares, in Belarus 0.31 hectares, in Latvia 0.34 hectares, and in Lithuania 0.41 hectares. In Uzbekistan, the average household land area at the disposal of the rural population was only 0.10 hectares, which was 2–3 times less than in other republics. This difference indicates that the interests of the republic were not sufficiently taken into account in the land policy pursued by the center[9]. The fact that many families did not have any land at all and the limited area allocated for housing construction led to an increase in population density in villages. As a result, it became common for two to three, and in some cases even more, families to live together in one yard in many villages[10]. As a result of the one-sided agrarian policy, a large part of economic resources was directed to the implementation of production plans, while the development of education, health care, and social infrastructure was considered a secondary task. This situation persisted even in the conditions of “perestroika”, leading to a deepening of inequalities in the social sphere. In particular, the subordination of the education system to the needs of production clearly demonstrated the utilitarian approach of Soviet policy to the human factor. The involvement of students in forced labor, including cotton harvesting, not only disrupted the continuity of the educational process, but also influenced the formation of negative attitudes towards labor, education, and state policy among the younger generation. This situation further revealed the contradiction between the principle of “the primacy of human interests” proclaimed in Soviet ideology and practical policy.

Also, during the “perestroika” period, the increase in social inequality, the aggravation of employment problems, and the limitation of social prospects for young people led to an increase in discontent in society. The results of the study show that it was precisely the problems in the educational and social spheres that were an important factor in the increase in the social activity and critical thinking of young people. This process created the basis for the growth of national consciousness in the Uzbek SSR, the widespread spread of ideas of historical justice and political independence.

Thus, the “perestroika” policy did not lead Soviet society to the path of sustainable development, as expected, but, on the contrary, revealed the ineffectiveness of the centralized management system and became one of the factors that accelerated its decay. In the case of the Uzbek SSR, this process was clearly manifested through the crisis in the educational and social spheres, which subsequently formed important historical lessons for the construction of an independent state.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the policy of “perestroika” implemented within the former USSR in 1985–1991, instead of eliminating existing systemic problems in the social life of the Uzbek SSR, especially in the case of the education system, only made them more pronounced. The preservation of a centralized management system, the subordination of the interests of the republic to the economic and political priorities of the union, and a one-sided agrarian policy limited the consistent development of education, healthcare, and social spheres. The results of the study show that the subordination of the education system to production needs, the involvement of students and teachers in forced labor, and the weakness of the material and technical base had a negative impact on the level of knowledge and social activity of the younger generation. This situation confirmed the relegation of the human factor to the second place in Soviet policy, revealing a deep contradiction between the declared ideas of social justice and equality and practical policy.

At the same time, the socio-economic crisis, the limitation of educational and employment opportunities during the “perestroika” period gave rise to a strengthening of critical thinking, national consciousness and political activism in society. It was these processes that later served as an important historical and social basis for Uzbekistan's striving for independence. Thus, this historical experience served as an important lesson for the reforms carried out during the period of independence. The need to direct the education system to human interests, to eliminate the practice of forced labor, and to form an education policy based on national needs and values was historically justified precisely on the basis of an analysis of the problems that arose during the “perestroika” period. In this sense, the results of this study are of great importance in

scientifically understanding and assessing the development strategy of the education system of Uzbekistan during the period of independence.

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