


The Role of The Soviet Congresses in The Introduction of The Eight-Hour Workday in The Turkestan ASSR

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Abstract

In the article, the author scientifically analyzes the historical and evolutionary process of the issue of introducing an eight-hour working day in the Soviet era. During the research, it was scientifically proven that this issue was relevant in labor relations of that time and was discussed at Soviet congresses with the aim of its legal regulation. The author also reveals the socio-economic significance of this issue and presents the results of the analysis based on scientific methods and methodology.

Keywords: Labor law, labor relations, "the Eight-Hour Working Day", soviet congresses, RSFSR, CPC, CEC, Turkestan ASSR, People's Commissariat of Labor, "Code of Labor Laws", declaration, nationalization, labor control, unemployment, labor exchanges, child labor.

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1. Introduction

In any state, the resolution of labor law and the systematic regulation of labor relations are an urgent issue in solving social problems, which plays an important role in establishing social partnership, preventing social conflicts, ensuring decent working conditions and economic stability. In this regard, the study of how these processes took place in the history of the Turkestan ASSR and the activities of the congresses of soviets and government bodies in this direction is of scientific and practical importance today. As is known, in late 1917 and early 1918, the Soviet government, as one of the main ways to preserve state power, the Bolsheviks, began to rebuild the country's economic foundations. These measures were not just reforms, but a political path

aimed at radically changing the existing socio-economic system at that time. Initially, one of the most problematic issues facing the Soviet government was the regulation and provision of labor rights for workers, who constitute the backbone of the country's population. In particular, "How many hours should a worker work per day?" As a legal answer to this important question, on October 29, 1917, the Council of People's Commissars (CPC) of the RSFSR adopted the Decree "On the Eight-Hour Working Day" in Petrograd. This document served as the first normative legal document regulating labor relations by the state. This document consisted of 26 articles, and according to Article 2 of it, it was determined that "working hours determined by the internal regulations of enterprises should not exceed eight working hours per day and 48 hours per week; this time also includes the

time spent on cleaning machines and putting the workplace in order" [1. P. 10-13]. Thus, at that time, a six day work week was in effect, with Sunday as a day off. At the same time, according to the new order, preparation and cleaning work were also recognized as part of the main work. According to this decree, the time from 9 pm to 5 am is considered night time (Article 5). The use of labor by women and men under the age of 16 at night is prohibited (Article 6). The following rules were established for the employment of minors (under 18 years of age): a) Minors under 14 years of age are not allowed to work, b) Working hours for those under 18 years of age should not exceed 6 hours per day (Article 9). The procedures set forth in this document were very strong legal protections aimed at protecting the personal time of workers and employees [2]. Within the framework of labor relations, the Soviet state considered it the most important task to abolish the capitalist relations established during the former Russian Empire, that is, to establish "workers' control" over production and distribution by transferring the country's economy, which was based on private property, a free market, trade, production, and entrepreneurship, to state management. To this end, on November 14, 1917, the Central Executive Committee (CEC) of the All-Russian soviets of workers', peasants' and soldiers' deputies approved the draft Law "On Workers' Control" [3. P. 78-82]. According to paragraph 1 of the Regulation adopted on the basis of this document, in the interests of planned regulation of the national economy, it was noted that in all industrial, trade, banking, agricultural, transport, cooperative, manufacturing companies and other enterprises that employ hired workers or employ domestic workers, workers' control over the production, purchase and sale of products and raw materials, their storage, as well as the financial side of the enterprise will be introduced [4. P. 35]. This "control" was the initial stage of the process of seizing privately owned land, factories, factories, commercial enterprises and banks, converting them into state property as public property and subsequently nationalizing them (taking them over to the state).

2. Results

The above-mentioned decrees also began to be implemented in Turkestan. It should be noted that previously the working day in the country lasted 10-12, and even 12-18 hours, and wages were very low. The average annual wage of a worker was 180 rubles (120-130 rubles in cotton factories). In Central Russia, this

figure was 280 rubles. Women and adolescents were paid less for equal work than men, and workers of local nationality received 1.5-2 times less than their Russian colleagues [5. P. 50-54]. At this point, it should be noted that the main workforce of the country's industrial sector was represented by representatives of the Russian-speaking nation, and the local population mainly worked as ordinary workers in agriculture and partly in the industrial sector.

The issue of the eight-hour working day in Turkestan was raised much earlier, that is, before the October coup. In particular, from the first days of March 1917, soviets of workers' and soldiers' deputies (mostly from Russians) were formed in Turkistan. They demanded a reduction in the working day to the eight-hour at all large enterprises of the country and declared strikes. Under the influence of these soviets, labor issues were also discussed at the congresses of soviets. For example, at the final (April 15) session of the first congress of the Turkestan region soviets of workers' and soldiers' deputies, held in Tashkent from April 7 to 15, 1917, the report of the working section was discussed, and a resolution "On the introduction of an eight-hour working day" was adopted. According to the resolution, the congress considered it important to legally introduce an eight-hour working day (or seven hours on Sundays) in all areas of labor, to ensure one day of rest per week, and to prohibit overtime work. In this regard, a proposal was submitted to the Provisional Government to adopt a decree "On the introduction of an eight-hour working day". At the same time, the congress adopted resolutions on workers' issues such as wages, the establishment of conciliation chambers, strikes, factory inspection, child and women's labor, hospital funds and workers' insurance, labor exchanges, and trade unions, and it was necessary to achieve equal rights for men and women [6. P. 363-365]. However, the majority of the congress delegates, consisting of Socialist Revolutionary Mensheviks, spoke out against the immediate introduction of an eight-hour workday and the establishment of labor control in enterprises [7. P. 13].

On November 15, 1917, the III Regional Congress of soviets of Turkestan began its work in Tashkent. On November 19, the congress adopted a declaration "On the organization of power". According to this document, the Regional Soviet of workers', soldiers' and peasants' deputies was considered the highest authority of the region and was renamed the Council of People's Commissars (CPC) of Turkestan. F.I. Kolesov

(Bolshevik) was elected chairman of the CPC of Turkestan, and the government was determined to consist of 15 commissariats [8. P. 178-179]. Although this government did not include representatives of the local population, within the framework of the newly formed system, the People's Commissariat of Labor took a number of measures to regulate labor relations in the country and formulate legislation. In particular, on December 27, 1917, this commissariat developed the "Regulation on the Compulsory Organization of Labor Exchanges in the Turkestan Region" in order to solve the problem of unemployment and regulate the supply and demand for labor. On this basis, the Turkestan Regional Labor Exchange was actually opened in Tashkent in January 1918. Its first chairman was V.D. Votintsev [9. P. 13]. By May of that year, local labor exchanges also began operating. With the establishment of labor exchanges, all private intermediary agencies and employment bureaus were abolished. These exchanges also served as labor distribution bodies.

On January 19, 1918, the IV (Extraordinary) Regional Congress of soviets of workers' and soldiers' deputies opened in Tashkent. Although the agenda mainly included political issues, the issue of unemployment was also discussed [10]. In particular, at the meeting of January 24, 1918, the delegates considered the issue of unemployment and the fight against it, which was associated with the demobilization of the army. The congress considered the following measures to be important in the issue of unemployment: the immediate introduction of workers' control over production in the country, the creation of trade union networks, their unification with the central trade union bureau, the complete prohibition of overtime work and the use of child labor, the unconditional introduction of an 8-hour working day, preparatory measures for the repatriation of prisoners of war, the rapid organization of free canteens, dormitories and medical care [11. P. 13]. On this basis, the IV Congress adopted its resolution "On Measures to Combat Unemployment". This document stipulated the implementation of the following measures: 1) the immediate establishment of workers' control over production in the Turkestan region, the creation of a network of trade unions among workers and their unification under the leadership of the Central Bureau of Trade Unions; 2) the creation of labor bureaus in all places and the establishment of large-scale public works; 3) the mandatory establishment of a maximum eight-hour working day, an absolute ban on overtime and part-time work, and the use of child labor [12].

Based on the above instructions, all enterprises and farms in Turkestan were repeatedly required to strictly observe the eight-hour working day. However, in practice, these measures were not fully implemented. An example of this is the order of the People's Commissariat of Labor dated May 9, 1918. This order stated: "Among some professions in Turkestan, the eight-hour working day is being exceeded. Taking into account the unemployment in the country, I order all labor commissars: 1) Take measures to introduce (conduct) a maximum eight-hour working day; 2) In the event of unemployment, labor commissars must strictly monitor work performed outside working hours..." [13].

It is worth emphasizing that the labor legislation of the Turkestan ASSR did not have an independent "Labor Code". That is, it was formed on the basis of the "Code of Labor Laws" of the RSFSR, adopted on December 10, 1918 [14. P. 905]. This legal document was approved by the Central Executive Committee of Turkestan only by the middle of 1919; therefore this code was applied in Turkestan somewhat later.

On April 20, 1918, the V Congress of soviets of the Turkestan Region opened in Tashkent [16. P. 1]. Along with political and economic issues, the agenda also included social problems of that time – hunger and unemployment. The congress reviewed in detail the activities of the People's Commissariat of Labor. The head of this commissariat, P.G. Poltoratsky, noted in his report: "At present, there are two most urgent problems among the workers - nationalization and unemployment, and all the other problems awaiting a solution are in the second place" [17]. These problems noted by Poltoratsky were closely related to each other at that time. Since the nationalization of enterprises was accompanied by a shortage of raw materials and financial resources, production rates decreased and mass unemployment arose. Poltoratsky proposed a number of important measures to organize the fight against unemployment, in particular: reducing working days, deductions from wages, state insurance, payment of wages in products, expanding production from public works, and assistance in the organization of national handicraft workshops through the allocation of subsidies by the republic [18. P. 35]. However, the congress limited itself to considering only P.G. Poltoratsky's proposals, and as a result, no practical decisions were made to resolve the problem of unemployment.

From October 5 to 15, 1918, the Extraordinary VI Congress of Soviets of the Turkestan Republic was held

in Tashkent. The "current situation" on labor relations in the social sphere and reports on the activities of the republic's highest authorities were discussed. At the second session of the congress, held on October 6, 1918, a resolution on the current situation, prepared by the communist faction, was adopted. This document analyzed the complex political situation at that time and decided to organize "committees of the poor" in all places where Soviets existed and to soon introduce "general labor obligation" [19].

3. Discussion

During the discussion of the reports of the Central Committee and the Council of People's Commissars (CPC) included in the agenda of the congress, heated debates broke out. The congress listened to the report of the CPC of Turkestan, summed up the work done, and at the end of the meeting, a resolution of the communist faction was adopted. The resolution noted the formation of a new composition of the CPC and assigned the necessary tasks to the 11 reorganized (including Labor and Social Security) people's commissariats. In this regard, the Commissariat for Labor and Social Security was tasked with the task of fully registering all unemployed persons through existing labor exchanges in order to identify "non-working elements" and separate them from society, and in addition, to develop and implement a republic-wide regulation on social security for persons who have lost their ability to work and their family members, as well as for military personnel who died or became disabled in the cause of the "revolution" and their families [20]. On October 15, 1918, at the final, sixth session of the congress, the first Constitution of the Turkestan Republic (the text was prepared in Uzbek and Russian) was adopted [21. P. 22-29]. However, this Basic Law did not include a separate paragraph (article) expressing the equal rights of women and men, that is, their equality in state and public administration and other spheres, in particular, in labor relations.

On March 7, 1919, the Extraordinary VII Congress of soviets of the Turkestan Republic began its work in Tashkent. The agenda included issues related to the economic, military and financial spheres. In particular, issues such as the organization of the poor and land and water committees, providing farmers with seeds and food, and organizing the labor of workers and employees were considered. The congress conducted its work divided into sections. In particular, at the meeting of the Labor and Social Security Section on March 15, 1919, the report of the Commissar of Labor and Social Security

on labor protection and the introduction of an eight-hour working day for representatives of intellectual labor was heard. The section on labor protection adopted the following resolution: "Since the Commissariat of Labor has not introduced new regulations in this area since its establishment, the Commissariat has acted on labor protection issues solely based on the instructions developed by the First Constituent Congress of Trade Unions held in Tashkent on June 22, 1918. Therefore, the Section on Labor and Social Security considers it necessary to propose to the Commissariat of Labor to develop a normative regulation on labor protection in the shortest possible time " [22. P. 6]. This resolution also indicated the need to establish a commission that would determine the norms of working hours for professions, taking into account age, gender, health status and specific working conditions. As for the length of the working day, the section resolution noted that the working day for hired labor should not exceed eight hour and that the measure of limiting daytime working hours also applies to hired peasant workers in agriculture. The resolution also set out instructions on social security, the organization of workers' communes and artels, and the payment of wages. It approved the "Regulations on Workers' Communes" previously adopted by the Commissariat of Labor and obliged each district trade union to organize a model commune based on it. As for wages, the section considered it necessary to establish equal rates for all regions, cities, volosts and villages of Turkestan [23. P. 21-22].

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, during the Soviet period, social and legal issues related to labor in the Turkestan ASSR were extremely complex and contradictory, due to the conflict of local socio-economic conditions. During this period, there was an imbalance in the division of labor in labor relations in the country. At the same time, the local population worked mainly in agriculture and partly in industry, mainly as ordinary workers. Representatives of the local ethnic group were partially involved in leadership positions. Representatives of the Russian-speaking ethnic group occupied leadership, that is, management and control, and technical positions.

At the same time, the Russian-speaking population held a dominant position within the labour hierarchy. Their concentration in leadership, supervisory, and specialized roles gave them considerable influence over the management of economic processes and the implementation of labour legislation. This unequal

distribution of labour roles reflected broader characteristics of Soviet nationalities policy and contributed to persistent structural imbalances within the republic. Overall, the introduction of the eight-hour workday into labor relations in the Turkestan ASSR, while a progressive step, faced serious obstacles in practice: a deep economic crisis, famine, the consequences of the Civil War, and an acute shortage of skilled personnel.

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