



## **PARTICIPATION OF EASTERN COUNTRIES IN FAIR TRADE (1920s)**

Joraboev N. Yu.  
Associate Professor of TDTrU

### **ABSTRACT**

In this article, the participation of Eastern countries in Soviet trade fairs in the 20s of the last centuries, the activity of Central Asian economic agencies in this matter, i.e., the organization of an international trade fair in the region, and the position of central foreign trade organizations in relation to it are highlighted in the light of the historical materials of that time.

### **KEY WORDS**

Great Silk Road, Xi'an, trade, economy, fair, Nizhegorod Fair, Baku Fair, Tashkent, Russian Eastern Chamber of Commerce, Central Asian Chamber of Commerce, Central Asian Economic Council, trading companies.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Turkestan is geographically located on the important route of the Great Silk Road, and has played an important role in the East-West trade since ancient times. The caravans that started from the ancient city of Xian came to the cities of Kashgar and Urumchi in Eastern Turkestan through Western China, and from there they went to the North - Russia. At this point, the position of Turkestan as an intermediary in the trade and economic relations between Russia and the Eastern countries is remarkable. Active participation of Eastern countries in international fairs on the territory of Russia mainly dates back to the beginning of the 20s of the last century. In particular, the Nizhny Novgorod (Nizhny Novgorod) fair, which was reorganized in 1922, should be highlighted.

In the first year of this fair (1922), 29 foreign Eastern companies participated. These were mainly Iranian trading firms. In 1923, as a result of the introduction of a license-free procedure for trade with Afghanistan and Iran by the People's Commissariat of Foreign Trade of the RSFSR, the participation of eastern merchants in the fair became more active. In the same year, the number of participating Eastern firms reached 76, the following year (1924) - 237, 1925 - 259, and 1926 - 361 [1]. Or, in 1925, the total amount of trade of the fair was 150 million soums, so 13.2 million soums were contributed by the East - China, Turkey, Mongolia and Iraq [2].

At the same time, a number of events were carried out on the scale of Turkestan in order to more actively attract foreign Eastern countries to the Nizhegorod fair. Because Turkestan is geographically a neighbor of foreign countries of the East, and if we take into account the fact that they took their goods from here, the matter becomes self-evident.

Taking this into consideration, the Central Asian Representative Office of the USSR Labor and Defense Council (UpolSTO) established a fair assistance bureau under the Central Asian branch of the Russian Eastern Chamber of Commerce (RShSP) in order to ensure consistent participation of Eastern countries in the Nizhegorod Fair of 1925. The bureau included ambassadors of Iran and Afghanistan in Tashkent,

and information about the fair was delivered to them. In addition, the Central Asian branch of the USSR published a separate supplement to its special publication "Middle Eastern Trade" in three languages (Uzbek, Russian, Persian) entitled "Nizhegorod Fair in 1925" and distributed it to Eastern countries free of charge. Later, the Tashkent Commodity Exchange established a cooperation committee for the Nizhegorod Fair. According to the information provided by the "Central Asian trade bulletin", this committee was entrusted with the task of familiarizing the Central Asian trade organizations and eastern traders with the conditions of the fair, concessions, quantity of goods and other issues related to sales [3].

In conclusion, Russian trade and economic organizations managed to work diligently through Central Asian mediation and ensure the active participation of foreign Eastern firms in the Nizhegorod fair, which is geographically far away. The fact that 361 Eastern trade firms participated in the Nizhegorod fair held in 1926 can be a proof of this.

So, in the conditions of the New Economic Policy (YAIS-NEP), which gave a number of freedoms in terms of foreign economic relations, how did Central Asian economic authorities react to this issue? In general, what was the situation in the field of foreign trade at this time?

First of all, it should be noted with regret that the delimitation of the nation-state in the region (1924) was the beginning of the disintegration of the economic unity that had historically been formed in this region for centuries. But there was no hurry. In November 1926, an office completely subordinate to the center - the Central Asian Economic Council was established. However, it is known that this Council did not exist for a long time, it was abolished in 1934 at the initiative of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPSU(b). Moreover, this Council did not have independent rights in the field of foreign trade. Nevertheless, it is impossible not to emphasize that some of our economic agencies, regardless of the pressure of the center, had tendencies to seek freedom in foreign trade relations. After all, they understood that it would never be possible to enter the international market without it.

In particular, the fact that the Central Asian branch of the RShSP received the status of an independent Chamber was the first achievement in this regard. In the history of trade and economic relations of Central Asia with the neighboring countries of the East in the 20s, this Chamber has an extremely important place, which requires a separate topic. The issue of the fair, which we are writing about, is directly related to the initiative of this Chamber.

The active participation of Eastern trading firms in the international fairs of Nizhegorod and Baku showed that there was a great need for industrial goods in them, and if the fair was organized in a more convenient geographical location, it could undoubtedly succeed. In this sense, the organization of a trade fair of international importance in the territory of Central Asia was put on the agenda [4].

Holding such an economic event was also important because after the Nizhegorod fair - in the second half of the year, the level of trade with Iran, Afghanistan and Western China on the border of Central Asia would decrease to a certain extent. Because Eastern trade firms would buy a large amount of goods from the fair, and this situation would lead to a significant decrease in the need for Central Asian export goods in the coming months. In addition, it soon became clear that there were different views on this issue. The Central Asian branch of RShSP organized a special survey (questionnaire) in order to find out the opinion of existing trade organizations on this issue. It collected information from 31 trade and economic organizations operating in Central Asia. 26 of them turned out to be favorable, and the rest were negative. Nevertheless, the Central Asian branch of RShSP found it necessary to organize an international trade fair [5].

In an article entitled "Central Asian Fair" published in "Kyzil Uzbekistan" newspaper, the following comments were made about the necessary conditions for organizing a fair in the country: "In order to successfully launch the Central Asian Fair, it should be called before the Nizhegorod Fair. The following things guarantee its development and success: 1) our geographical situation; The goods of the countries neighboring to Central Asia, sent to the USSR and bought from it, pass through Central Asia; 2) The proximity of Central Asia to the Nizhny fair is very convenient for middle and small Eastern traders; 3) Trade customs in Central Asia are similar to trade customs in Eastern countries. Also, Tashkent connects Baku and other fairs in our Eastern trade" [6].

By the way, it should be mentioned that when a fair is organized, the question of where to call it is also the cause of sharp disputes. Considering Turkmenistan's border with Afghanistan and Iran, several organizations proposed to hold the fair in Marv or Chorjoi, others in Poltaratsky (Ashkhabad), and some recommended Bukhara to hold it here, taking into account the ancient fame of Bukhara in trade with the East [7]. However, based on the experience of the Nizhegorod and Baku fairs, the Central Asian department of the RShSP, noting that Eastern merchants buy industrial goods on a large scale, concluded that it is appropriate to hold the fair in Tashkent, one of the major industrial centers of Central Asia [8].

The task of decisively solving the issue of the fair was assigned to the Central Asian Trade Conference, which was to be held in Tashkent in May 1926, at the initiative of the Labor and Defense Council of the SSJI [9]. It was necessary to call this congress because there was no single organization in Central Asia that organized foreign and domestic trade at the same time. However, internal trade was under the control of the People's Commissariat of Internal Trade of the republic, and foreign trade was under the Central Asian representation of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Trade of the USSR. In other words, there was no independent foreign trade organization in Central Asia. On top of that, the session, which was expected to consider important issues, as well as the issue of the fair, was postponed twice under the pretext that the organizational aspects were not yet ready. During this time, there were changes in the internal and external trade, and the Central Asian Economic Council decided that it is no longer appropriate to call this session. The Economic Council of Uzbekistan, in its meeting held in November 1925, noted that the newly formed Central Asian republics are developing their own trade characteristics and emphasized that there is no need to convene such a meeting [10].

Thus, the session was not called. But the issue of organizing an international fair in Central Asia remained on the agenda. In fact, it is not difficult to understand that the central trade agencies, while not holding the congress, wanted to solve the issue of the fair for their own benefit. After all, the organizers of the Nijegord fair, as well as the officials of the RShSP, did not have peace of mind when the international fair was to be held in Central Asia, as they would lose customers from the East. But in the trade with the East, it was impossible not to count on the tendencies of the Central Asian republics to strive for freedom. In 1926, when the Central Asian branch of the RShSP received the status of an independent chamber, the Central Asian representation of the Labor and Defense Council of the SSJI and the State Planning Committees of the Central Asian republics raised the issue of convening an international trade fair in the region [11].

Unfortunately, in those years, neither the center nor some of our local trade organizations paid serious attention to putting this issue into practice. Thus, the Central Asian International Trade Fair, a wonderful event that should fill the pages of our economic history in the 20s, was not called. This good work, to put it bluntly, was a victim of the indifference of the central trade agencies to the foreign economic

interests of the remote national territories, and the intolerance of some of our local organizations in this regard.

Almost 100 years have passed since then. Now, Uzbekistan is independent and free. It has freed itself from the shackles of the totalitarian and highly centralized bureaucratic system of the former Union and operates freely in foreign and domestic trade relations. In a word, Uzbekistan has stepped on the path of development and progress. It has become an equal member of many prestigious international organizations in the field of economic cooperation. We now have the necessary regulatory documents related to foreign economic relations, our own ministry. The socio-political stability prevailing in the Republic guarantees that many countries of the world will boldly enter into economic relations with us. Nowadays, Uzbekistan is considering joining the International Trade Organization.

In conclusion, there are all grounds for solving the issues related to revitalization of any foreign economic relations. If the modern economists of our republic seriously consider the issue raised by their colleagues in the 20s of the last century - to organize a trade fair of international importance in Central Asia, it will not be without benefits, moreover, this event will bring together India, Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey, Indonesia, It would have further strengthened our growing economic ties with Malaysia and other Eastern countries. In this regard, the proposal of the President of our republic, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, in his speech at the SCO summit held in Samarkand on September 16, 2022, to hold a large SCO trade fair every year, and to create a single electronic platform based on it, was a practical step in this regard, no exaggeration [12].

## References:

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11. TsGA UzSSR. F.9, op.1, ed.xr. 2441, l.11.
12. See: the speech of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev at the meeting of the Council of Leaders of the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. - "People's Word", September 17, 2022.