

CENTRAL ASIA ON THE PAGES OF THE "TURKESTAN COLLECTION"

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***Abstract:** This article presents information about the competition between the Russian Empire and England for the conquest of Central Asia, the sending of various military expeditions to these regions, and the collection of valuable information about the country as a result of which the Russian Empire eventually conquered Central Asia and established its control over this region.*

***Keywords.** Turkestan collection, Central Asia, England, Pamir, India, Mongolia, Tashkent, Saint Petersburg.*

As we know, the European interest in studying and conquering Central Asia was strongly contested between England and Russia in the 17th century. In the 17th century, works by English traveling scientists on the study of the upper reaches of the Pamirs and the Amu Darya were published. During these periods, and later, at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries, Tsarist Russia was especially interested, and several expeditions were sent. As a result of these expeditions, the Russian Empire was able to colonize a large part of Central Asia. By 1867, with the capture of Tashkent by Russian troops, the Governor-General of Turkestan was established.

At the initiative of Count Konstantin Petrovich von Kaufmann, the commander of the Russian troops at that time and the governor-general of Turkestan, a bibliography of works published in Russian and foreign languages of that time was compiled in order to comprehensively study Central Asia. He entrusted such a huge task to the famous Russian bibliographer Vladimir

Izmailovich Mezhov, who agreed to this. However, he proposed to compile not a bibliographical index about Turkestan, but a collection of works about the region.

According to Vladimir Izmailovich Mezhov, “the reason for the comprehensive and in-depth study of Central Asia is purely commercial and scientific goals.” Of course, these ideas are true to a certain extent, but we will not be mistaken if we say that the country was studied in depth, not with a scientific goal, but with a purely military goal. In the study of the history of Central Asia, the famous Russian bibliographer of the 19th century V.I. Mezhov created an extremely valuable collection called “Turkestan Collection” (“Turkestan Collection”), which is currently stored in the rare books department of the National Library of Uzbekistan named after Alisher Navoi. It still retains its scientific and practical significance. This very large collection consists of 594 volumes. There are scientific critical articles by the following scholars on the creation and significance of such a unique collection.

However, in these articles, only those newspapers, magazines, and books published in Russian, Arabic, French, English, German, Italian, Spanish, and Latin languages in Russia and other countries in the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, written about Asia, mainly Turkestan, are collected here. In addition, another important aspect of the collection is that the "Collection" also contains sources on the history of India, Iran, Afghanistan, China, and Mongolia.

Information is provided about the history, economy, social situation, cultural and geographical structure of these states. Information is also provided about the attacks of the Russians on the Central Asian khanates. V.I. Mezhov's "Turkestan Collection" is a rare collection and is of great bibliographical importance. It has been widely commented on in specialized literature by Uzbek bibliographers. The "Turkestan Collection" was initiated by the order of the first governor-general, Count K.P. von Kaufman, who wanted to know all the information about the country. The main goal was to obtain information about the socio-economic, spiritual-cultural and religious life of the country through various

works written about the nature and natural resources of Central Asia. For this reason, attempts were made to subjugate this territory and keep it under control for as long as possible.

Vladimir Izmailovich Mezhov himself described the history of the “Turkestan Collection” in one of his letters as follows: “In 1867, Count K.P. von Kaufman, through I. S. Idarov, approached me with a proposal to compile a bibliographic index of books and articles related to Central Asia. In return, I offered him to compile the “Turkestan Collection”, which would include the largest number of books and articles. He agreed, and for the first time, as an experiment, I sent him the 10th volume of the “Turkestan Collection” to Tashkent. I received a reward of 1,000 rubles for this work.

Such unexpected funds gave me a great impetus to develop my work in the following years. In exchange for this money, I prepared from 20 to 30 new volumes of the “Turkestan Collection” and sent them to Tashkent. In the following years, I agreed to deliver from 40 to 50 volumes for the annual amount of 1,000 rubles that the Kaufman management would give me.

Vladimir Izmailovich Mezhov, who had the ability to keep track of books and periodicals in the libraries of St. Petersburg, used the funds allocated by the Governor-General of Turkestan to collect a large part of the information related to Central Asia and neighboring countries into a collection. He paid attention to any information.

In a letter to Konstantin Petrovich von Kaufman, Mezhov wrote about the importance of the "Turkestan Collection" compiled by him: "The task entrusted to me by your leadership can bring great benefit to the region. I hope that you will be very pleased with it. It includes not only articles from magazines and newspapers, but also separate works about Central Asia and the Turkestan region in general. I consider this work to be extremely necessary for a region as remote as Turkestan."

Konstantin Petrovich von Kaufman attached great importance to the "Turkestan Collection" and highly valued them. He emphasized the importance

of the collection for the development of "knowledge about the riches of Central Asia." Kaufman kept the first ten volumes of the collection in his personal library. But these ten volumes that were saved were transferred to the Turkestan Public Library in 1876.

A total of 250 volumes were published during the administration of Konstantin Petrovich von Kaufman. In 1882-1889, under the governors of Chernyaev and Rosenbach, another 166 volumes were published. Thus, the total number of volumes was 416, consisting of 4,713 titles in Russian, French, German, English, Italian, Spanish and Latin. It is also stated that the total cost of their preparation was 23,169 rubles. The compilation and publication of the "Turkestan Collection" continued regularly until 1887. An average of 20 volumes were published each year, which ultimately created an extremely valuable source. In 1884, the Governor-General of Turkestan, N. O. Rosenbach, doubting the completeness and significance of the composition compiled by Idarov and being primarily interested in the financial side of this work, ordered N. P. Ostroumov and N. V. Dmitrovsky to familiarize themselves with the collection.

In the "Note of a Member of the Commission for the Compilation of the Turkestan Collection", written together with Nikolai Vasilievich Dmitrovsky and Nikolai Petrovich Ostroumov, they attempted to analyze Mezhev's work in detail. Unfortunately, the text of this note has not been preserved, but a copy of it was found in Leningrad in 1924 by the famous local historian and bibliographer N. A. Burov. It contains an analysis of the collection, which consists of more than 300 volumes, and reveals its main shortcomings.

In conclusion, there were many attempts to conquer the Central Asian region by the Russian Empire and England, and ultimately the territory was occupied by Tsarist Russia.

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