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Military Intervention in Tuva (1918–1919)

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Abstract: The establishment of a protectorate over Tuva by Russia in 1914 was followed by attempts to introduce Russian administrative and judicial system, which did not always take due account of characteristic features of a well-established internal self-governance of Tuvans. The 1917 revolutions in Russia and the civil war that immediately ensued also had an influence on Tuva, exacerbating the already complicated political situation. The Urga and Peking governments contributed to this by taking concerted action to capture the territory of Tuva. The groundwork for military action was laid closer to the border line, and in 1919 Tuva was invaded by armed units of the Chinese and Mongolians, who used foodstuffs and carts requisitioned from local people to replenish supplies and recruited the local population to reinforce their troops. The Omsk Government was unable to provide any substantial help. This article, based on archival studies and a contributions series of Russian and international scholars, attempts to offer a number of insights about the reasons, course, and outcome of this armed conflict.

Keywords: history of Tuva; Uriankhai krai; Mongols; Sodnom-Balcer; revolution of 1917; civil war

1 Introduction

In October 1917 there was a coup in Russia, which also had serious consequences for Tuva, characterized by military foreign intervention. Two periods can be distinguished in the historiography of this topic. Researchers developed the problem of Tuva in the context of relations with Russia, Mongolia, and China. In 1956, a collection of memoirs of participants of the revolutionary events – I. G. Safyanov, A. D. Kravchenko, P. E. Shchetinkin, and S. K. Kochetov – was published and prepared by H.M. Seifulin (1956). For the first time, an attempt at a serious scientific comprehension was made in the works of V. Ch. Ochur, who, using a vast database of archival

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sources, studied the main stages of the invasion of Tuva by Chinese and Mongolian detachments, the Kolchak and Red armies (Ochur 1967). In subsequent years, the problem in question was addressed in his works by Yu. L. Aranchyn and N. A. Serdobov (Aranchyn 1982; Serdobov 1985). In the post-Soviet period, Zasayan scientists, E. A. Belov, and G. V. Datsyshen (Belov 1999; Lamin 2007, 87–95), who revealed the complex and contradictory picture within related topics, also contributed to the development of the topic. Thus, much work has been done to comprehend and systematize the factual material.

Nevertheless, there remain a number of unresolved issues. In this article, based on archival documents and a number of works by Russian and foreign researchers, an attempt is made to clarify the causes, course, and outcome of the armed conflict of 1918–1919.

2 Administrative and Judicial Restructuring of Tuva After the Establishment of the Russian Protectorate

The establishment of the Russian protectorate over Tuva in 1914 was made possible thanks to the efforts of A. P. Tsererin, the head of border affairs of the Usinsk district. At that time, individual Tuvan khoshuns and sumons were part of two aimags of neighboring Mongolia or were shabinars of Jalkhanza-hutugta; administratively, Tuva was fragmented, and “the highest person in the hierarchy of officials, Ambyn-nyon Kombu-Dorzhu, did not have enough authority to unite all Tuva under his authority” (Mollerov 2014, 17). To minimize Mongol influence, A. P. Tsererin “removed ... all Mongol officials without hindrance” (Collection of archival documents about the protectorate of Russia over the Uryanghai Region (Tuva) (to the 100th anniversary of the historical event) 2014, 156). The ruler of Beezi khoshun, a subject of the former Sayn-Noyan aimag of Mongolia, was elected a Tuvan, Kuular Chymba, who was given a ball of the first degree. The ruler of Maada and Chodu sumons was assigned to a man in the position of terguun-zaisan (chief zaisan). Already in August 1914, A. P. Tsererin reported to the Irkutsk Governor-General that he had carried out, in several stages, the procedure of announcing to the Tuvan noyons the establishment of the Russian protectorate.

In November 1914, V. Y. Grigoriev was appointed commissioner for the Uryankhai region and immediately began actively reorganizing Tuva. He wrote: “The end of Uriankhai and Uriankhas (Tuvinians. – A. S.)! In 2–3 years there will be two or three Russian volosts here, as many foreign (Soyot), and the Uryankhai region itself will be called part of Minusinsk district of Yenisei province!” (Safyanov 2012, 102).

In the spring of 1915, V. Y. Grigoriev fraudulently took the seal from the governor of Tuva, Kombu-Dorzhu, and then dismissed him altogether, appointing his own man. But Agvan-Demchi, a protégé of V. Yu. Grigoriev, was soon killed by unknown people on the Kaldak-Khamar pass. Also, the Russian commissar with a detachment of Cossacks tried to arrest the ruler of the Tojinsky khoshun, Togmid, but he managed to escape at the last moment, and “Grigoriev got only Togmid’s hat with a red ball.” (Safyanov 2012, 103).

The introduction of the Russian judicial system in Tuva never took root. The Tuvinians did not trust or feared turning to the Russian court because “the natives were most afraid of the Minusinsk prison, where they died quickly and in large relative numbers” (Lamin 2007, 38). In three years, about 30 Tuvinians died in Minusinsk prison. Then, in 1915, the “Temporary Provision on a mixed court between Russians and Uriankhayans” was developed. It was based on the provisions of the volost court of the peasant self-government of the Russian Empire. The Provision provided for collegial decision-making, appeals, elective judges (four judges on a parity basis from Russians and Tuvinians and a chairman appointed by the commissioner), and publicity of court proceedings. Judges were also elected for one year. Candidates “under 30 years of age, deprived of their rights, those who had served a prison sentence under a court verdict, [and] those who were under trial and investigation” were not eligible (Collection of archival documents about the protectorate of Russia over the Uryanghai Region (Tuva) (to the 100th anniversary of the historical event) 2014, 198).

Thus, the Russian authorities in Tuva actively took measures to change the administrative structure and judicial system, aiming to unify the Russian imperial system of governance, which did not always consider the peculiarities of the established internal self-government of the Tuvinians (Samdan 2014).

3 Sino-Mongolian Meeting

After two revolutions in Russia in 1917, the abdication of Nicholas II and the coup, the majority of Tuvan noyons declared the termination of the Russian protectorate in Tuva. Once again, there was uncertainty, and some Tuvan noyons even expressed a desire to join Mongolia.

According to Article 11 of the Kyahta Triple Treaty of 1915, the territory of Outer Mongolia was defined as “the areas under the jurisdiction of the Chinese amban in Urga, the Jiangjun in Ulyasutai and the Chinese amban in Kobdo,” and thus Tuva remained outside the boundaries of Mongolia. The delimitation between China and Outer Mongolia had to be made within two years from the date of the signing of this treaty.

On April 16, 1916 the Mongolian side handed a note to the Russian consul A.Y. Miller, stating that after the proclamation of Mongolian independence in 1911, Tuva came under the jurisdiction of the Urga Bogdo Khan and on this basis demanded its return. Before delimiting the borders of Mongolia according to Article 11 of the 1915 Treaty of Kyakhta, the Mongolian government sent an authorized dignitary to Tanna-Uryankhai for border pacification accompanied by a military convoy (Belov 1999, 155).

In August 1916, a Chinese-Mongolian meeting was held in Urga, where the participants, using a loose interpretation of Article 11 of the Kyahta Treaty of 1915, considered the Uryankhai region to be “an undivided part of the Autonomous Outer Mongolia.” (NA RT, f. 112, inventory list 1, case record 115, list 8). As a result, it was decided to send participants to Tuva, each accompanied by a military convoy of 50 men, according to Article seven of the above treaty. The Chinese resident in Urga Chen Lu and the Mongolian government “undertook to pursue a coordinated policy in Uryankhai” (Belov 1999, 156). The consul in Urga, A.A. Orlov, expressed dissatisfaction to the Mongolian Foreign Minister Tserendorji about discussing the Uryankhai issue without Russian participation.

In Tuva, the Chinese sent their representative Yang Shichao, a graduate of the law faculty of St. Petersburg University and head of the office of the Chinese resident in Urga. He arrived in Ulyasutai in September 1918 accompanied by an armed convoy of 11 people.

In October 1918, Yang Shichao arrived in Ulangom and, having learned about the Russian military force in Uriankhai, reported it to Urga and was forced to stay here for the winter, waiting for a response. In early December, five echelons of Chinese troops of 30 men each (three echelons were formed in Urga and one each in Kobdo and Ulyasutai) with four mountain guns and seven machine guns arrived to help Yang Shichao. “Each echelon was accompanied by military cargo and provisions.” (NA RT, f. 112, inventory list 1, case record 115, list 16).

In March 1918, the Mongolian government appointed the Sinophile Itgemjit Beise Tsogt-Ochir as its representative in Tuva. While being the representative of the Urga government in Kyakhta, he had shown himself to be “an irreconcilable opponent of the development of the Russian cause in Mongolia and a supporter of the Chinese.” (NA RT, f. 112, inventory list 1, case record 115, list 5). Tsogt-Ochir was accompanied by the religious figure Chin-Suzhigt Nomun-khan Tsedenbalzhir and a military aide, Gn Dashravdan. As we can see, to influence the local population, the Mongols decided to use religion and, if necessary, were ready to use military force.

In early autumn of 1918, a Mongol detachment halted near the monastery of Soyan sumon in southern Tuva, where it spent several months. The Mongols expedited Tsogt-Ochir's departure with 20 soldiers to Ulangom to meet with a Chinese representative there. Upon his arrival in November, Tsogt-Ochir announced the

mobilization of men, horses, and provisions from nearby Mongol aimags and districts. However, according to an eyewitness, the Mongolian detachment “not only was not trained in the art of war and shooting, but they did not even know how to handle firearms” (NA RT, f. 112, inventory list 1, case record 115, list 24).

After negotiations with the Chinese, one officer and 13 soldiers were sent to them, while the main part of the Mongolian detachment camped in Duzriin-Bulan. Nomun-khan, accompanied by 20 men, settled in a small monastery of Gandan Duregch-van khoshun of Dzasktu-khan aimag (The Dilova Khutukhta of Mongolia. Political Memoirs and Autobiography of the Reincarnation of a Buddhist Lama 2018, 70).

The Chinese did not waste time. In January 1919, bypassing Russian posts, a Chinese detachment of 25 men under the command of Huang appeared in Samagaltai. Here he held a meeting with the participation of Tuvan officials, as a result of which Sodnam-Balchir was elected “ruler over the Zakhrebt Uryankhas” (NA RT, f. 112, inventory list 1, case record 115, list 215). As reported by the Kobda consul A. P. Hionin: “Huang personally arranged on Samagaltai the ceremony of accepting the Uryankhs – the composition of the Oinar khoshun – into the subjection of the Republic of China and handed the seal of the amban to the son of Gombodorzhi” (NA RT, f. 112, inventory list 1, case record 115, list 13). It was also ordered to organize mobilization of the population just “accepted as subjects” for military service, numbering more than 100 people. Huang returned to Ulangom together with Sodnam-Balchir, where he was presented to Yang Shichao.

According to A.I. Maltsev, in 1920, Mongush Nimazhap and Kamba lama Daganai traveled to Ulangom to meet with Yang Shichao, where they discussed the issue of taking the Hemchik khoshun under Chinese rule.

The Chinese representative, while in Ulangom, sent letters to the Russian authorities of Tuva, claiming to be traveling “with a small convoy to patronize the trade of our traders in Uryankhai.” (NA RT, f. 112, inventory list 1, case record 271, list 5). Under the guise of “protecting the interests of his traders,” he tried to conduct “peace negotiations” in Tuva. Meanwhile, in Ulangom, the Chinese continued preparing for an armed intervention, ordering from the local population the mobilization of 180 horses for soldiers and 100 camels for transporting provisions and military cargo.

4 Military Aid from Omsk

The Russian authorities of Uriankhai, fearing a sudden invasion of the Chinese-Mongolian detachment, reported the threatening danger to Omsk and Irkutsk, and requested additional military assistance. The Omsk government sent the sixth centurion of the 3rd Siberian Cossack regiment, fully equipped and armed, under the

command of Hesaul K. Raspopin. He and all other Russians were ordered to avoid armed clashes with the Chinese and Mongols, and “should not have official relations with them” (NA RT, f. 112, inventory list 1, case record 271, list 6). As A. A. Turchaninov anticipated, the Chinese would try to provoke an armed clash “so that it could be fanned and troops could be brought into Mongolia. Uriankhai is a pretext, the prize is Mongolia.” (Ibid).

Meanwhile, A. P. Hionin informed A. A. Turchaninov, commissioner for the Uryankhai region, about the movement of Chinese and Mongolian troops. “The Chinese and Mongols,” telegraphed the consul, “have begun to advance gradually toward the Uryankhai frontier with the purpose of penetrating into Uryankhai. The former are advancing to the passes Khandagaitu and Torgalyg (Chyzhyrgana), and the latter to Samagaltai and Amban-kura” (NA RT, f. 112, inventory list 1, case record 90, list 93). Having received this message, A. A. Turchaninov took measures to prevent the Chinese and Mongols from entering Tuva and organized Russian Cossack posts along the border with Mongolia. For this purpose, he sent a Cossack centurion (six officers and 129 Cossacks) from Minusinsk to the western regions of Tuva. In addition, the Russian commissar “sent 80 Cossacks with machine guns to Khemchik from Belotsarsk and organized military detachments” (Belov 1999, 163). This action somewhat calmed the ardor of the Chinese.

A. A. Turchaninov, having received another telegram from A. P. Khionin about the movement of the Chinese towards Tuva, began to panic and asked for help from the nearby towns of Minusinsk and Usinsk “with a sufficient supply of ammunition and, if possible, machine guns.” (NA RT, f. 112, inventory list 1, case record 90, list 35). However, he never received it.

A. A. Turchaninov forcibly mobilized men aged 18 to 40 years of age from the residents of Tuva and Usinsk district, without counting and without paying attention to “any certificates and testimonies and inability to work and carry weapons” (RA TIHASER, m/c, case record 388, list 21). “In the Russian settlements of the region,” wrote H.M. Seifulin (1956), “peasants were forcibly recruited into the druzhiny ostensibly for the purpose of organizing self-defense” (37).

Then detachments of vigilantes from settlers were created to guard the main strategic roads to Belotsarsk. People were sent to Tuva districts to organize druzhiny and reconnaissance. The druzhiny were commanded by officers and retired military men who arrived from the first Minusinsk company and were in the service of the Resettlement Department.

The commissioner warned the Russian population of Tuva about an armed invasion from Mongolia with the proviso “to keep secret, especially from the Soyot (Tuvan) population,” (NA RT, f. 112, inventory list 1, case record 90, list 95), apparently fearing unrest.

5 Armed Clashes

In late February 1919, a Chinese armed detachment of 118 soldiers invaded the southwestern part of Tuva through the post of Chyzhyrgan, as the Kobda consul had informed. The Russian post was taken without difficulty after a brief firefight. The Chinese were followed by a detachment under the command of Khorunzhiy Delibalt, who discovered the detachment already near the Verkhne-Chadan khuree.

Here, on March 1, an armed clash took place, lasting almost 12 hours with breaks for negotiations. As Delibalt reported: “The poorly trained and untrained vigilantes had to be driven into the line of fire with only a revolver and the blunt end of a checker” (NA RT, f. 112, inventory list 1, case record 90, list 96). As a result, the Chinese detachment was forced to retreat, losing seven men killed and having six wounded. The retreating Chinese-Mongolian detachment returned to Ulangom.

The Russians got one Maxim system machine gun, about 30,000 rounds of ammunition and 50 rifles. “In connection with the defeat of the Mongolian-Chinese-Uryanghai detachment near Chadan khuree in March 1919, the head of the Mongolian government’s foreign policy department Tserendorzhi sent a note to A. A. Orlov, who represented the interests of the Omsk government in Mongolia, demanding that the Russians who had killed and captured Chinese and Mongolian soldiers be punished” (Lamin 2007, 92).

Meanwhile, the Mongols from Ulangom moved to “Gandan-khuree on the Tes River, and then, leaving their military reserves there, moved northwest and settled in the khoshun of the Bait Bandi Beile near the mouth of the Tes River at its confluence with Lake Ubsa-nur on the eastern side.” (NA RT, f. 112, inventory list 1, case record 115, list 24). Tsogt-Ochir secretly met Sodnam-Balchir near the border with Tuva and informed him that “according to the agreement of the highest governments of Russia and Mongolia, the Uryankhis should be transferred to Mongolia” (NA RT, f. 112, inventory list 1, case record 269, list 115).

Seeing the concentration of military Russians in Tuva, Tsogt-Ochir never decided to enter the territory of Tuva and asked for his resignation, arguing that he was “not familiar with the organization of military affairs” (NA RT, f. 112, inventory list 1, case record 269, list 115).

On July 6, 1919 the battle took place again. This time the Chinese-Mongolian detachment was reinforced by 200 Tuvinians. The Cossack hundred and Russian volunteer squads were defeated. Khorunzhiy Delibalt was killed. On July 10, 1919 Tserendorzh, in a note addressed to A.A. Orlov, insisted on the eviction of Russian military from Tuva, claiming they had no right to enter the territory of Tuva without the permission of the Mongols.

By July 1919, all Russian posts in western Tuva – the Hemchik, Shagonar, and Chaa-Kholsky – and in southeastern Tuva, the Podhrebtinsky post, were unable to withstand the onslaught of Mongol and Chinese units. Other Russian posts were also ineffective. A. Turchaninov reported to Omsk on April 22, 1919: “The post on Chyrgak scattered during the attack of a small gang ... Druzhinniki, as a military force, are useless, run away at the first shot, throwing weapons. Demoralization is complete” (Seifulin 1956, 44, 45).

The easy “success” encouraged further disturbances by the Chinese and Tuvians. On the Khemchik, 45 farmsteads were looted, and 31 Russians and 11 Tuvians were killed.

The Chinese detachment split into two groups. One stayed in the area of the Verkhne-Chadan khuree, the other in Dag-Uzhu close to Shagan-Aryg (Seifulin 1956, 40).

6 Religious Factor in Conflict

On February 25, 1919, Nomun-khan Tsedenbalzhir convened a meeting in Samagaltai, attended by almost all officials of Oyunnar khoshun. Seeing their fragmentation, when each ruler of the sumon self-determined at will, Nomun-khan forced everyone to unite under the rule of Sodnam-Balchir. The Mongols gained his support, as he promised to lead the detachment “through passes and trails to Khemchik, bypassing Russian posts” (Belov 1999, 164). However, they lacked horses and weapons, so Orombo-gegen was sent to Kenderge-huree.

There, under the guise of holding a worship service, he gathered representatives of the Tuvan ruling elite and lamas and held a meeting. It was decided to collect 200 horses for the Chinese and Mongolian detachments (Belov 1999). Having learned about this, A. A. Turchaninov urgently ordered Staff Captain G. I. Bochkarev, serving in the Podrebtinskaya district, to offer Orombo-gegen to leave Tuva, which was done.

Seeing the huge gathering of Tuvians around Mongolian religious figures, A. A. Turchaninov returned to the question of establishing the institution of Pandito hambo-lama in Tuva, modeled after the head of the Buddhists of Eastern Siberia and Transbaikalia. On June 3, 1919 a meeting was held in Belotsarsk to discuss this issue. The only candidate for the position was Ondar Lopsan-Chamzy, a staunch supporter of the Russians. He was educated in the famous Urga monastery of Gandan. Lopsan-Chamzy was among those who signed a petition for the patronage of Tsarist Russia, where in a “separate annex he made a list of his spiritual moral teachings and urgent requests” of 17 points (Mollerov and Samdan 2022, 124). In 1907, he was appointed abbot of the Verkhne-Chadan monastery.

“Educated, energetic,” wrote A. A. Turchaninov in the introduction, “with a clear view of things, enjoying well-deserved respect both among the clergy and the population of the country Chjamtso khambo-lama will be better able than anyone else at this difficult moment for Russia to unite the Uryankhai clergy and through its intermediary to influence the native population of all khoshuns in favor of Russia with his authority.” (NA RT, f. 112, inventory list 1, case record 29, list 6).

The complicated internal political situation in Tuva due to the invasion of foreign invaders, prompted the Russian authorities to send Lopsan-Chamza to Omsk. He was able to return to Tuva only after two years and only for a short period of time.

7 Khatan-Bator Magsarjav

After Tsogt-Ochir’s resignation, Khatan-Bator Magsarjav was appointed in his place in March 1919. In mid-May, at the Mongolian military headquarters, he assumed overall command and also performed a ritual of worship to Bogdo-gegen, thus expressing his loyalty to him. After a month’s military training, Magsarjav camped at Shuurmak.

The Mongols, realizing the complexity of the situation in the border areas of Mongolia and Tuva itself, as well as the importance of the “Uryankhai issue,” sent instead the Buddhist reborn Dilova Khutukhta.

On the way, Dilova Khutukhta fell ill and in mid-July encamped in the small monastery of Gandan Duregch chin-wang khoshun of Dzasaktu-khan aimag (RA TIHASER, m/c, case record 693). “Between them they established a line of communication from four urtons” (*The Dilova Khutukhta of Mongolia. Political Memoirs and Autobiography of the Reincarnation of a Buddhist Lama* 2018, 71).

Magsarzhav mobilized men quickly near the border, and in the spring of 1919 a Mongol detachment of 300 men was stationed in the southern regions of Tuva. “The appearance in Tuva of a large and sufficiently combat-ready detachment headed by a prominent military leader was in line with the policy of Chinese expansion into the former outskirts of the Qing Empire” (Lamin 2007, 93). The maintenance and supply of the Mongol detachment fell on the shoulders of ordinary Tuvan arats. Thus, from the Khemchik khoshun, 47 cattle, 232 mRS, 360 lan, and 28 guards were allocated.

The inhabitants of nearby Russian settlements, in order to avoid looting and casualties, sent four negotiators, but they were shot by a Mongolian detachment. A second delegation still managed to meet with Magsarzhav and “beg for mercy from the Russian population” (RA TIHASER, m/c, case record 388, list 23). Magsarzhav reported that he had originally offered to “settle things peacefully,” but A. A. Turchaninov had arrested the Mongol envoy. As a result of negotiations, Magsarzhav announced he would accept Russians in this area under his protection “from any

violence and robbery” (RA TIHASER, m/c, case record 388, list 24), but with the condition to arrest “the officials of the Siberian government who have in the Podhrebtinsky district” (RA TIHASER, m/c, case record 388, list 22). At the same time, Magsarzhav allowed the Russian vigilantes to keep their weapons for self-protection purposes.

On July 3, 1919, Magsarzhav easily took the Kaldak-Khamar Pass, the only road to Belotsarsk, which was guarded by Russian vigilantes. About 20 Russians were killed in the battle, and the Mongols took their equipment and horses. Here Magsarzhav left 30 soldiers with weapons for protection (Myagmarsambu 2011, 70–71). As I. Shagdyrzhap recalled, before advancing to Belotsarsk, at the pass Magsarzhav conducted a ritual of lighting the battle flag with the blood of a decapitated Russian Cossack (RA TIHASER, m/c, case record 274, list 43–44). He had performed the same ritual before the siege of the Kobdo fortress in 1912.

Before Belotsarskoye, he stopped for a short rest in the area of Lake Chagytai. Here he wanted to gain support from the local population, and as a result of some efforts, the Tuvinian sumons of Irgit, Chodu, Oyunnar, and Shalyk announced that they had accepted Bogdo-gegen as their ruler.

Khatan-Bator Magsarzhav, in order to strengthen his detachment and provide provisions, continued to insist on mobilizing the local population to join the Mongol detachment. He warned that if they assisted the Russians, the Tuvinians would be severely punished. In his letter of November 1918, addressed to Beise Azhykai, Dalama Baldar, and officials of Salchak and Oyunnar khoshun and Maady sumon, Magsarzhav ordered that the flour stored in Khem-Belchir be taken from the Russians and urgently delivered to the Mongol military headquarters.

In July 1919, in order to consider at the joint commission the cases of killing of Tuvans and robbery of their property, the Mongols sent letters to the Tuvinian side to make a list of those who suffered from the actions of Russians within a month. This issue was discussed in detail in the Russian-Mongolian negotiations with the participation of Ruter and Mongolian representative Zhamsran in the village of Verkhne-Usinskoye on April 20, 1920.

After the arrival of the Siberian partisan army under the command of P. E. Shchetinkin and A. D. Kravchenko in Belotsarsk on July 18, 1919, the Russian population of the Podhrebtinsky district turned to it for protection. Having learned that this army in Tuva would be temporary, and fearing military actions or expulsion from Tuva, they began to work out the option of resettlement deeper into Mongolia. In such a development, the Russians wished to “give privilege to the Russians for 50 years without paying (taxing) taxes” (RA TIHASER, m/c, case record 338, list 25).

A delegation was established from the population of the Podhrebtinsky district to introduce peace negotiations, which succeeded in convincing the Mongols that the Russians had the right to reside on the territory of Tuva.

Arriving in the capital, Magsarzhav stopped 5 km from the city. On August 19, 1919, he met with the commanders of the partisan detachment P. E. Shchetinkin and A. D. Kravchenko. The latter planned to stockpile weapons from the Mongols or to follow through Mongolia to Turkestan. In return, Magsarzhav demanded that the Russian population be withdrawn from the territory of Tuva within four days.

The next day, a congress was held in Belotsarsk with the participation of representatives of the Siberian partisan army, local Russians, Tuvinians and Mongols, where Magsarzhav demanded that the Russian population leave Tuva within 30 days. The Russians only succeeded in obtaining an additional 15 days. Considering the positive experience of the Podhrebti negotiations, the participants of the congress decided to follow them. As a result of difficult negotiations, Sait-noyon, as the Russians called the Mongolian representative, after accepting conditions humiliating for them, “accepted the Russian population in Uryankhai under his patronage” (RA TIHASER, m/c, case record 388, list 27).

Russians had to submit their family lists, a certificate from the Siberian partisan army about no obstacle against the Russians’ passing under the patronage of Mongolia and a written request to Bogdo Khan to take “measures to protect Russians from all kinds of violence” (RA TIHASER, m/c, case record 388, list 27). In addition, a “Commission on the Affairs of Russians with Mongolia” was created, which included two people from each district. The main immediate tasks of this body were: 1) to collect data on the losses caused to the Russian population by the Tuvinians; 2) to petition to stay in the same place; and 3) to appeal to the Siberian army to issue them weapons for self-protection.

In August, Magsarzhav and Dilova Khutukhta demanded that the Tuvan ruling circles surrender to them all seals and awards issued by the Russians.

In the second half of August a White Guard detachment of Hesaul Bologov entered Belotsarsk. On August 29 the Belotsarsk battle took place. There were heavy losses on both sides, while the Mongols did not intervene and remained outside observers.

After the partisan army left, despite the “patronage” of the Mongols, Belotsarsk was looted and houses burned. “As soon as the army of the Reds passed back into the Minusinsk region,” wrote I. G. Safyanov, “the Mongol headquarters abruptly changed its attitude toward the workers of the Russian colony. It demanded that the Russian colonies should clear the settlements they occupied within 1.5 months and leave with all their property to the Usinsky district” (Safyanov 2012, 143).

Many Russians were forced to flee and 6,000 people crowded into the village of Verkhne-Usinskoye. In October 1919, the residents of Verkhne and Nizhne-Usinskoye, in order to prevent a repetition of the events in Belotsarsk, authorized four people to negotiate with the Commission on the Affairs of Russians with Mongolia.

By the end of October, the Mongols' position had changed dramatically. They warned the Tuvan side about the undesirability of further harassment of Russians, arguing that the "expulsion" of Russians did not correspond to the concluded treaty. Instead, a tax in the form of five poods of flour from each Russian household living in Tuva was to be established, which would go to the maintenance of the detachment. The poor and indigent were exempted from this tax. For this purpose it was necessary to make a list of Russian households.

In Tuva, Magsarzhav encountered a number of difficulties. They concerned not only the local mountainous and forested terrain and lack of communication routes but also, as he admitted in a report to the Urga government, the language barrier and the different mentality of the Tuvans, which largely hindered his far-reaching plans.

In the fall of 1919, Magsarzhav's chronic illness worsened and he informed his government. But the request was left without satisfaction. Then he summoned Chin Zutgelt-baise Zhamsran from Kobdo to him and handed over his powers to him, and returned to Mongolia himself (Myagmarsambu 2011, 73).

Thus, having united, the Mongols and Chinese completely seized power in Tuva. They forbade Russians to trade and the circulation of Soviet and tsarist money on the territory of Tuva. In addition, they established a tax in the form of five poods of flour for the needs of the detachment.

8 The Mongol and Chinese Offensive in the Village of Verkhne-Usinskoye

Beise Zhamsran, just like the previous Mongolian representative, continued to gather manpower and food. Seeing the increase of the Russian military contingent from five to 100 people in Saryg-Sepe alone, including at the expense of militia, he ordered the mobilization of 30 people each from Salchak and Ary-Oyunar sumons, and 20 people each from Baikar, Maada, and Chodu. All the recruits were to arrive with necessary provisions, things, and horses in early December at the Mongolian military headquarters, which was located behind the Kaldak-Khamar ridge near Samara. In addition, in order to provide the Mongolian detachment, he announced the collection of a three-month norm of food for 10 days from the Tuvan population, distributed as follows: 100 bulls, 50 cows, 200 rams.

The Mongolian headquarters, despite requests to remove the tax from the Russian population for 1919 due to the difficult political situation, issued an order in which they categorically stated that in the case of non-compliance, the Russians would be expelled from Tuva. Even the regional congress, held on December 15, 1919, did not resolve this issue because the Mongols "behaved so boldly at the congress that

if the congress did not agree with their opinion, they threatened to close the congress and all affairs . . . , that is, it turned out to take up arms and expel the entire Russian population from Uryankhai” (RA TIHASER, m/c, case record 388, list 30).

Part of the Mongolian detachment, pursuing the Russians, stopped on the way in Turan and collecting provisions from the local population, then made a sortie to the village of Verkhne-Usinskoye. Having received a stiff repulse, it retreated temporarily and stopped 10 km from the village. During the firefight four Mongolian soldiers were killed. To prevent further attacks, P. S. Medvedev and M. G. Sukhanov were sent to negotiate. But before starting negotiations, Zhamsran demanded the bodies of the killed Mongols, which had been thrown into the Us River.

Only through negotiations was it possible to stop further attacks. But the Mongols did not just leave; they just traveled “to the villages of Usinsk, committed various violence, [and] robbed property” (RA TIHASER, m/c, case record 388, list 33). A report about all these facts was drawn up and sent to the Mongolian headquarters. In January 1920, a reply was received from the Mongolian site stating that it was informed “about all illegal actions of Mongolian officials and soldiers over Russians” (RA TIHASER, m/c, case record 388, list 95) and declared that all disturbances and oppressions against Russians should stop.

In June, Zhamsran demanded the eviction of the Russian population of three settlements along the Elegest River – Atamanovka, Elegest, and Berezovka – without a valid reason. The Russian side asked to postpone this issue because the powers of the commissioner for the Usinsk border district, A.I. Kashnikov, had expired and another representative had not yet been appointed. Only after part of Soviet regular troops entered Tuva did the Mongols’ ardor cool down.

But soon a Chinese detachment under the command of captain Sosti Lyadoshun appeared in the village of Verkhne-Usinskoye. All the agreements reached with the Mongols came to naught. The Chinese promised to expel the Mongols from the territory of Tuva, to stop theft and violence, and to hold trials for each case. The Chinese ordered not to pay the tax imposed by the Mongols in the form of flour, but to pay allegiance to them instead. Some Russian settlements filed “public verdicts” to come under the protection of the Chinese. Also the Chinese canceled the Commission on affairs of Russians with Mongolia; affairs were now to be conducted through senior elected Russian settlements. In fact, the Chinese continued to plunder the civilian population.

9 Joint Meetings

At the meeting with the participation of plenipotentiary representatives of Mongolia and the RSFSR in Bayankol settlement, on May 11, 1920, it was possible to protocolize

the admission of agents of Soviet Russia within Tuva for the purpose of trade, the acceptance of Soviet credit signs “on a par with gold and silver coin.” In this case, the ruble was equated to five cents of silver. In addition, the administration of the Russian population was transferred into the hands of the Soviet government.

On May 16–18, 1920, a regular meeting was held, where, in addition to the above-mentioned representatives, Commissioner Yang Shichao took part. An agreement was reached on the return of Russian prisoners to the village of Verkhne-Usinskoye. The number of prisoners exceeded 65 people. They were kept “according to all the rules of Chinese severity: they were chained ... undressed, beaten on the cheeks.” (RA TIHASER, m/c, case record 388, list 39).

It was decided to establish a special commission consisting of two representatives from the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, one each from the Republic of China and Mongolia, and one from each Tuvan khoshun to determine the damages caused by the parties. The Russian population residing in Tuva prior to this meeting was allowed to remain in place, but new settlement was to cease until the question of Tuva’s status was finally resolved. Despite the objections of the Chinese representative, who “made a proposal to judge the population according to its law and protect it himself, until the Russian consul is sent” (RA TIHASER, m/c, case record 388, list 39), the arguments of A.I. Kashnikov were more convincing, and as a result it was decided that the Russians were subject to their own laws.

They also discussed questions about gold mines and the telegraph line. Russians were allowed to fish and hunt, but with the condition to pay taxes.

In his speech, Yang Shichao drew attention to the fact that he had with him only a military convoy, but the Chinese troops in Mongolia numbered 10,000 people and therefore he urged refraining from the introduction of Russian regular troops.

The Russians, in order to preserve political balance, sought to make Tuva a buffer zone. As A. I. Kashnikov wrote, for this it was necessary that Russian villages should have troops subordinate to the commissar of the Uryankhai border district, and Mongolian troops to be present in Tuvan villages. The number of troops would be determined independently by each commissar. In his opinion, Tuva should be under the joint influence of Mongolia and the RSFSR.

Thus, during the joint meetings, agreements were reached on important issues: 1) permission for Russians to conduct trade throughout the territory of Tuva. Already on June 12, A.I. Kashnikov reported to the Mongolian site about a trading expedition under the chairmanship of Babushkin heading for Mongolia; 2) the circulation of Soviet money was officially recognized; and 3) refugees could return to their former places of residence, except for Khemchik, Shagan-Aryg and Chaa-Khol, since these areas were occupied by the Chinese and there was no permission from Buyan-Badyrga. Apparently, his permission was supposed to be obtained during the meeting, but he refused to come.

10 Conclusions

After the establishment of the Russian protectorate over Tuva in 1914, radical changes took place in the political sphere. Measures were taken to change the traditional institutions of power, the judicial system, and the religious organization of Tuvinians, aimed at unification with the Russian system of governance.

Taking advantage of the difficult situation in Russia, the Chinese and Mongols attempted to bring Tuva back under their influence. They sent their representatives to Tuva accompanied by a military convoy. Their actions led to further fragmentation of Tuvan ruling circles. At one time, a united Chinese-Mongolian group was able to establish its authority in Tuva. The Mongols and the Chinese jointly took measures to expel the Russians from Tuva.

The Omsk government was unable to provide military aid in adequate quantities. A.A. Turchaninov had to resort to forced mobilization of men from Russian settlements, who had little knowledge of military affairs. Although the *druzhinas* were commanded by officers, all Russian posts in Tuva were taken by a Chinese-Mongolian detachment.

For the entire period of the “Uryankhai issue,” it was the first time that the parties tried to solve it by military force. Mongolian troops penetrated from the southern part of Tuva, the Chinese from the western part, and the Whites and Reds from the north. Each side acted in its own interests, but the local population suffered as a result. The latter was forced to supply the foreign invaders not only with food but also to take part in mobilizing people and means of transportation.

The Mongolian representative Magsarzhav carried out work among individual Tuvan *sums* and Russian settlements, as a result of which their inhabitants were forced to recognize Mongolian subjection. Accordingly, the Mongols imposed a tax of five poods of flour from each household for the maintenance of their detachment.

Looting and theft began in many settlements. Many Russians were forced to flee. The hope of the local Russians for protection by a partisan detachment was not justified. The only way to save themselves was to negotiate with representatives of Mongolia and China, in which decisions were reached on important issues, including the stabilization of the situation in Tuva.

Research ethics: This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards established in the Russian Federation. All procedures comply with the principles of research ethics and respect the rights of the participants.

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