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**Kh. K. Karimov, 'A Short Report on the Work of the
"People's education in Soviet Tajikistan (Kabul,
November 20 - December 2 1965)" Exhibition'**

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Summary:

Account of a recent exhibition in Kabul, including a Tajik publication in Arabic script and a conversation with a refugee from Samarkand.

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Russian

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Translation - English

To the first secretary of the CC CP Tajikistan comrade Rasulov D. R.
To the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Tajik SSR comrade A. K. Kakharov

A Short Report on the Work of the "People's education in Soviet Tajikistan (Kabul, November 20 - December 2 1965)" Exhibition.

[Prepared by Kh. K. Karimov, Head of the Persian Language Department at the State University of Tajikistan, Dushanbe].

The official opening of the exhibition "People's education in Soviet Tajikistan" took place on November 20, 1965 in the exhibition hall of the Ministry of Press and Information of Afghanistan in the city of Kabul.

All of the items were presented in a thematic way with accompanying notes written in Tajik using Arabic script.

At the opening ceremony senior officials from the field education and culture, representatives of Afghanistan's press corps, as well as from the diplomatic corps accredited in the city of Kabul took part - more than 150 people in all. Mohammed Khaled Rushan, the Minister of Print and Information, and comrade Konstantin Ivanovich Aleksandrov, the Soviet ambassador to Afghanistan, made official statements at this ceremony. In their speeches they underlined the importance of economic and cultural cooperation between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union. They noted the particular importance of our exhibition.

[...]

From November 21 to December 2 the exhibition was open to the public. The exhibition had between 10 to 150 visitors per day, with an average of 111 people per day.

Among the visitors were workers from the field of education, teachers, students, workers, government officials, traders, etc.

[...]

Many Afghans asked me for works by [Abdulqasim] Lahuti, [Sadridin] Ayni, and in general works by Tajik writers that were available in the Arabic script.

One could feel lively interest in the classics of Russian and Soviet literature published in the Tajik language.

We provided visitors and various offices with a specially published brochure in Tajik (in the Arabic script) called the "People's Education in the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic" prepared in 1200 copies, as well as 50 copies of curriculum plans from different types of schools.

[...]

It is interesting to note that the brochure we passed out we saw that evening in the window of a book kiosk, where it was being offered for sale for 8 Afgani.

The next day 3 copies of this brochure had been sold. It turned out that visitors, apparently after reading the brochure, would give it to the kiosk (in Afghanistan the

buying and selling of books is highly developed.)

When the exhibition was closing we gave various books, 1500 copies in total, among them school textbooks and publications for children, to visitors as well as to libraries of the city of Kabul. These were received with great interests even though these books had been published in our modern alphabet.

[...]

Very often the space of our exhibition became a sight of lively discussions and arguments among the visitors. Once an Afghan said that in Soviet Tajikistan reading texts in the Arabic script is considered "qufr", which means heresy or crime, and others, on the contrary, said that there is full religious freedom...who wants to pray can do so. They turned to me. I explained our reason for switching to the new alphabet and, pointing to the primer for Afghan schools, said that in your schools children study only the alphabet in their first years, while in our schools they cover five books in the first year and showed them all the textbooks for the first year - five different titles. I also showed them the textbook for Persian language for 5-6 grades that our students use to study the Arabic script and added that in the humanities faculties of our universities the study of Arabic script is mandatory. And so in our republic there are hundreds of times more people who know the Arabic script now than there were in the pre-revolutionary period and many more than there are now in Afghanistan.

Once I heard the following conversation in the exhibition hall.

One Afghan was excitedly talking about his neighbor, a refugee from Samarkand (in Afghanistan there are many refugees from Central Asian republics). He complained that in the Soviet Union private property is taken away. When asked what the Soviets had taken he said that he had three residences: one for himself and two that he rented out to workers and clerks. When he (the Afghan) found out that two of these houses had been confiscated for the workers and clerks, he said that that was the right thing to do and those who were listening to him declared that the Soviets had acted correctly. Those standing nearby listened approvingly.

[...]

I paid an official visit to Doctor Akram-Khan, Afghanistan's Deputy Minister of Education. A minister had not yet been appointed.

He was interested in how education was organized in the Tajik SSR, and at his request I delivered a report on the topic the following day to workers at the Ministry. I was given an hour but the meeting went on for over two hours. Those present were interested in questions of how education was organized in our republic, the shift from Arabic script to the new alphabet, the educational plans of our schools, and the planning of the educational process.

I should report that recently, especially among students, there is increasing agitation and dissatisfaction with the current order of things in the country. After the bloody demonstration in October, where some 40 people were killed, there were also student protests during my time here, and two of the largest faculties of Kabul University, those of the exact sciences and medicine, went on strike. These events made it impossible for me to speak at Kabul university, although I had been invited there.

I must also report that, as it seemed to me, representatives of the ruling circles of Afghanistan are not eager to engage in ideological contact between our countries. This tendency is evident at each meeting, though in a veiled form.

[...]

After the closing of the exhibition I reported in person and in written form to the Soviet ambassador in Kabul, comrade K.I. Aleksandrov. He spoke positively about the exhibition and asked me to thank the leadership of the republic, to pass his heartfelt greetings and his invitation to visit the city of Kabul.

He also reported that the Prime Minister of Afghanistan will visit Moscow at the invitation of the government of the Soviet Union and is planning to travel through the Central Asian republics on his way there.

[...]