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RECONSTRUCTION OF "CARAVAN ROUTES":

Orenburg-Tashkent Railway

and its influence on the development of the Orenburg region

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The purpose of this article is to analyze the impact of the Orenburg-Tashkent Railway on the Orenburg province development. The study is based on the archival documents from the archive of the Samara-Zlatoust Railway Office (1883-1917, F. 156 of the Samara region State Archives) and the archive of the Tashkent Railway Office (1901-1917, F.142 of the Orenburg region State

Archives), as well as from the archives of the Orenburg provincial administration, also obtained from the State Archives of the Orenburg region.

The building of the Tashkent main line in 1901 – 1905 was determined by the need of the Russian Empire in direct railway communication with Central Asia. The first projects of the railway to Central Asia came into being in 1870`s due to the successful military expeditions and expansion of the Russian spheres of influence. In 1874 - 1877's the line Batraki - Samara - Orenburg (512 versts in length) was built by the private joint stock company of the Orenburg railway and the first bridge across the Volga was constructed. The construction of the railway was extremely beneficial because the government took a significant portion of risks to itself and acted as a guarantor of private joint stock companies` financial obligations. Later the Orenburg line of the road was purchased and in 1893 was given to the Office of the Samara-Zlatoust Railway by the State. So the section Batraki - Samara (together with a unique bridge across the Volga River) became the part of the Great Siberian Railway, and the line from Samara (Kinel) to Orenburg was brought to Tashkent (over 1740 versts) in 1901 – 1905 and was named the Tashkent Railway. Thus, the Orenburg-Tashkent Railway (1740 versts) was built in a short period (1901-1905) and was joined to the section Kinel-Orenburg (350 versts). On January 1, 1906 the Tashkent Railway (2090 versts in length) serving the territory over 820 thousand sq. versts was formed.

If to characterize that railway road quantitatively, then it should be noted that the rolling stock of the Tashkent Railway consisted of 533 steam locomotives, 444 passenger and 7167 freight cars (on January 1, 1911). The passenger car park consisted of 725 units. The freight car park numbered 7973 units. If in 1905 467 thousand passengers were carried, then in 1907 - more than 1 million people, and in 1913 - more than 2.6 million ones. The transportation of military goods by rail in 1915 - 1916's seriously affected the reduction of the speed of commercial goods and passengers delivery. Every year 3.5 million of military servants and 25-30 million poods of military cargoes, that were given a significant amount of rolling stock, storage area, fuel, etc. to be transported, were carried by rail without any queues.

The government chose the Orenburg direction (1740 versts) from the four possible ones (to Omsk - 1900 versts, to Petropavlovsk - 1958 versts, to Chelyabinsk - 1790 versts) not only to save time and resources in the process of construction work. The prospects for economic development of the territories included into the sphere of main line influence (soil quality, the supply of fresh water, fuel, population density, availability of trade routes) were also taken into consideration. The railroad was to strengthen inter-regional economic relations and to help intensify trade operations, a special place in which an exchange of grain for cotton took. The served territories were provided with water, fuel, and

were located near the old caravan route that had been used for the export of Asian cotton to Russia.

The Tashkent main line linked the Russian and Central Asian railway network together. Until the opening of the Turkestan - Siberian Railway in 1931, the Tashkent railway was the only way from Russia to Central Asia. The continuous connection of the central Russian provinces and Central Asia contributed to the realization of the economic potential held back by insufficient carrying capacity of the Central Asian Railway and the Caspian Sea ports. The Tashkent line made it possible to carry out large-scale trading operations of national importance, among which there were domestic exports of grain and imports of cotton. The construction of the railway to Central Asia helped the city of Orenburg regain its significance as an important trading place. Its status of the "gate to Central Asia," lost after the construction of the Transcaspian Military Railway, was restored.

The main freight traffic (65-70%) was on the main line's direction from north to south. Flour and grain, wood, stone, iron, textiles and sugar were exported to Central Asia. They imported mainly cotton, leather, wool, fish, vegetables and fruit. The amount of goods that was transported in the First World War exceeded 150 million poods.

Favorable economic conditions as well as effective management practices provided an annual profit of 9-10 million rubles and it was no less than that of the Samara-Zlatoust main line. Despite the fact that the

Tashkent railroad lacked the rolling stock, passenger transportation growth was higher than the same growth the Samara-Zlatoust and Central Asian railways had. It was possible because the line influenced the formation of new traffic and there was rapid growth of underdeveloped areas. Due to its length, the sphere of influence, the scale of ongoing transportations and the presence of lateral branches the Tashkent railway became a main line.

The road facilitated the inflow of new labor and capital, which made it possible not only to continue the development of new virgin lands, but also to open a stock exchange, as well as bank branches in Orenburg. The stock exchange helped to make trade of grain more organized as the regulatory requirements for quality of grain and flour grades were being worked out there, prices were being determined. Its turnover was the reason of the fact that it was among the five leading Russian stock exchanges. In 1910, there were 134 members and 21 institutions in its committee. The turnover of the exchange was millions of rubles.

If the construction of the Orenburg private railway in the 1870s predetermined the way for the export of grain, the construction of the Tashkent line helped to increase the supply of grain to the central provinces of the country and Europe and to send flour to Turkestan in exchange for cotton. So, before the construction of the railway in Tashkent in 1888 320 thousand poods of grain and 80 thousand poods of flour were transported from

the Orenburg station, and after the construction of the railway main line in 1909 - more than 7 million poods of grain and 3.5 million poods of flour. Before the First World War the province exported 11-13 million poods of grain and 9-10 million poods of flour and it was more than 50% of the total harvest. The grain was delivered to Samara, the Baltic ports and to Europe, and loads of flour were mainly directed to Turkestan in exchange for cotton. The surplus of agricultural raw material, accumulated and flocking to railway stations, contributed to the foundation of light industry enterprises. The Orenburg province, thanks to the development of the railway transport, became the part of the trading grain farming in Russia.

Grain specialization of the Orenburg region demanded the construction of mills and grain elevators near the railway station. Milling industry produced 75% of total production in the province and was focused on exports by rail. In the sphere of influence of the Tashkent Railway there were meat and dairy companies, wood processing factories, industries of mining and fishing.

At the Southern part of the road, in its turn, cotton processing plants began to develop. At that time the government pursued a policy of increasing the cultivation of cotton in Central Asia for the needs of the textile industry. After establishing the Turkestan general-governorship (1867), one of the most pressing issues was the organization of steady communication with the central provinces of Russia. Cotton production had existed for more than one hundred years, but it started to be realized on the commercial scale

only with the arrival of Russians and the construction of railways. Prior to joining Central Asia to Russia cotton crops occupied small areas. The spurt of cotton crop growth occurred in 1890-1900s. The cotton crops achieved their maximum in 1916 (700 thousand hectares). On the contrary, the areas for grain crops decreased. Thus, cotton became a major export article in Turkestan. Shipments of cotton in the period from 1909 until 1916 increased from 7 to 15 million poods.

However, there were difficulties associated exactly with the economic growth and infrastructure of the railway as its limitation. That was especially vivid in the years of wars and social unrest. Thus, in 1905 there were serious problems with shipments of grain to the central cities of the Empire. The shipment of grain from the Orenburg station was constrained by the strikes of railway employees and the need for rolling stock to transport military supplies and soldiers returning from the Russo-Japanese War. In October 1905 loading turns of grain reached 43 days.

In the report to the Minister of Railway Transport Mayor Kuzmin stated: "Orenburg produces 27 cars a day, but no more than 10-15 cars are provided, sometimes even none. Soon the loading turn will be up to 90 days. Millers can close their mills, and two thousand people will lose their income. And in Samara with the productivity of 100 cars a day the loading turn was only 15 days. In Nizhny Novgorod there are no turns at all because it is close to domestic markets, which it flooded with its flour". Those reasons led to

the fact that the Orenburg bread became cheaper. In addition, the Orenburg merchants complained: “Our buyers don't use our product and say that Saratov, Syzran, Balashov and Uralsk load with no more than one month queue”.

The railway administration sought to solve the emerging issues connected with increasing the capacity of the line by means of organizational measures and modernization of rolling stock.

Firstly, financial incentive of employees who made train schedule was introduced. Since 1911 the premium for the scheduling of trains was given to employees. Having the material interest, they sought to offer more efficient and thus more fuel-saving schedules. As a result, the average distance of freight route without reformation (uncoupling - attaching cars) increased from 140 versts to 759 versts, i.e. 5 times, providing substantial saving. The costs of marshalling, shunting work of locomotives and delivery time were reduced.

Secondly, the schedules of idle time were introduced for each car (an idle day of one empty car cost 1.25 ruble). The implementation of that rule made it possible to reduce idle time for 10% on the average, and only in 1913 it resulted in saving of about 327 thousand rubles.

Thirdly, the load of the trains increased. That effect was achieved by increasing the length of the train and using the cars of higher capacity. The increased length of train sets of cars required the roads on the stations to be longer, and that was not always possible due to dense development of the

station buildings. The cars with the carrying capacity of 750 and 900 poods were replaced by new ones with the capacity of 1000 poods. Also a careful supervision over the full loading of cars was introduced. As a result the quantity of sent train sets reduced, and the amount of transported cargo increased. While in 1911 70 thousand freight trains transported about 107 million poods of cargo, in 1913 52 thousand freight trains transported goods with a total mass of about 144 million poods. But that entailed a different problem - an extensive wear of railway lines and rolling stock.

Fourthly, the annual inspections on the knowledge of staff instructions were carried out. The training of railway employees, most of whom did not have special education, was put into practice. Only 25 of five thousand people employed in the service had higher education in 1913. The majority (3.5 thousand people) had primary education. There were 1.5 thousand literate people without education, and there were 66 illiterate persons. 13 primary railway colleges for cadres were opened in 1909: 5 two-year and 8 one-year colleges. 1863 people studied there in 1909, and in 1913 they already numbered 2450 people. On the line of the railroad there were nine departments of libraries, it was mandatory to build Orthodox churches at large stations.

So, with the help of the Orenburg-Tashkent railway construction Orenburg regained its significance as an important trading center on the road to

Turkestan, having been lost because of the Central Asian Railway construction. In the 1880-1890s the caravan trade in the direction Orenburg - Tashkent declined. Asian goods were shipped by rail from east to west, to the ports of the Caspian Sea, and then were transported along the Volga and distributed between the stations of the Russian railways. The construction of the Tashkent Railway restored the old "caravan route", led to the increase in turnover, and reduced the transportation and economic costs. In addition, the road changed the "face" of the Orenburg region significantly, made it more proletarian and educated.