

Ibrahim Beg Lokai (1889-1932)

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Some Unknown Facts of the History of the Basmachi Movement in Central Asia

Muhammad Ibrahim Beg was born in 1889 in village Koktash situated on the bank of the Kapan-Darya river, twelve km from Dushanbe. His father Chakabay was Aksaqal — head of Ihsan Khoja clan which inhabited Koktash. At the beginning of the 20th century there were eighty houses in this village. Chakabay was an employee of the local administration of Bukhara Emirate. His last rank given to him by the Emir was Tuqsaba (which corresponded to the rank of lieutenant-colonel in the Tzarist army). Chakabay had four wives, and six sons and six daughters by them. Ibrahim Beg was the youngest and the only one who remained alive, all his brothers and sisters died in their childhood. While his father lived Ibrahim Beg studied in a *maktab* (elementary school) where he learned to read texts in the Arabic script, but did not learn to write, he could only sign his name.

Chakabay owned some land and hired two or three farm hands, but he did not leave his son any legacy. As Ibrahim Beg said later, his only legacy was many debts, and after his father's death he had to hide from the creditors for almost ten years.

Ibrahim Beg had two wives at the time when his father was still alive, but he had no children. After the October Revolution, 1917, Ibrahim Beg took a third wife who was the daughter of Abu Qayum Parwanachi.

When the Civil War, began Ibrahim Beg, who by that time had his own small household, did not at first take part in the conflict. After the flight of Bukhara's Emir, Sayid Alim

Khan, to Afghanistan, at the beginning of March 1921, Ibrahim Beg left for Baljawan.

But soon after that the Lakai Uzbeke were brought letters from Ishan Sultan Khan, one of the Bukhara mir's courtiers. In these letters the Lakais were called upon to take part in the fight against the Emir's enemies, against the Russian soldiers and Jadids. The letters said that England, Afghanistan and other countries had declared war against Soviet Russia. Having received these letters, several Lakai Aksaqals organised Basmach detachments which were headed by Abu Qayum Parwanachi (Ibrahim Beg's father-in-law), Barat Beg and Tughay Beg. As for Ibrahim Beg he became Jigit, that is a rank and file fighter in the detachment of Abu Qayum Parwanachi. Some time later, in summer 1921, he was already his assistant. According to the order of Ishan Sultan Khan, Ibrahim Beg led the detachment into Hissar (previously the detachment fought in the regions of Aksu and Kungurt). The inhabitants of Hissar elected him their ruler (Beg).

The death of Enver Pasha in August 1922, did not mean the end of the Civil War in East Bukhara. The fight against the Soviets was continued by Ibrahim Beg and Fazail Maqsum. (The latter announced himself Emir of Darwaz and Karategyn). By spring 1923, in East Bukhara, besides small detachments, three pretty large Basmach groups were fighting. All in all they made up fifteen thousand men. At the head of these datchments were Ibrahim Beg, Fazail Maqsum and a former Turkish officer, Khoja Salim Beg (or Khoja Sami), one of Enver Pasha's men. This Khoja Salim Beg, having suffered several defeats at the hand of the Red Army detachments sent against him by A.I.Kork (1887-1937) the commander-in-chief of the Turkistan front, retreated to Afghanistan on June 15, 1923. Fazail Maqsum also retreated to Afghanistan. Ibrahim Beg too went to the left bank of the Panj River (that is to Afghanistan) but soon returned to Tajikistan.

Ibrahim Beg's attempts to get help from Afghanistan came to nothing. In spring 1923, he sent letters to Kabul to Amir Amanullah Khan and to Sayid Ali Khan. (The letters were taken to them by Abu Qayum Parwanachi). One letter was answered only by Emir of Bukhara who wrote, according to Amir Amanullah Khan, that "by the next spring (that is in 1924) he

would send Ibrahim Beg armed support". But there was no help sent from Afghanistan. In spring 1924, Ibrahim Beg sent another letter to Kabul which was taken there by Mulla Niyaz. It was he who informed Ibrahim Beg in his letter (he himself remained in Kabul) that "Amanullah Khan is having his own troubles: Mangals have begun military actions against him, therefore he can't do anything for us". (In spring 1924, in Khost, that is in the south-east of Afghanistan, Pashtun tribes rebelled against the government because they were displeased with the reforms of Amir Amanullah Khan. It was only in spring 1926, that a letter came from Sulaiman Khan, governor of Khanabad, offering people to be sent to him to get arms. Ibrahim Beg sent Ishan Isa Khan to Khanabad with fifty men. They brought one hundred Bardan rifles mostly old and five thousand cartridges.

In this situation Ibrahim Beg, whom Sayid Alim Khan had appointed his vicegerent in East Bukhara, changed his tactics. Instead of fighting with large detachments he began to make quick raids with small groups of Basmachis on populated areas, organising acts of sabotage and terrorism against vital points and against active supporters of Soviet power. Ibrahim Beg improved his intelligence service as well as the structure of his military groups. When he met with strong resistance (even from small detachments of the Red Army) Ibrahim Beg preferred to retreat instead of having extended battles entailing heavy losses.

The fighting of Ibrahim Beg against the Red Army detachments went on for four years (September 1922 — September 1926). The fighting took place on a vast territory in the south and south-west regions of contemporary Tajikistan and in the south-east regions of Uzbekistan. Despite all efforts, Ibrahim Beg and the Qurbashis under his command (Alla Nazar, Khalar Beg, Imam Bardy, Ismat, Khurram Beg, Turdy Bay, Mulla Turdy, Sayid Murad and others) could not consolidate their conquests of any region. Their bases of action became almost inaccessible thinly populated canyons and salt-marsh deserts.

In 1923-1924, the men under Ibrahim Beg made raids on settlements and important installation in the regions of Lakai, Baljawun, Yawan, Naryn, Baba-Saqal, Baba-Tagh and Aral-Tughay. In 1925 they made raids in the regions of Shirabad, Baysun, Shahrisabz, Kafirnigan. On April 18, 1925, martial law

was declared in Tajikistan. Action against Ibrahim Beg were led by 13 Corps under the command of I.F. Fedko (1897-1939). As a result of this action the number of Basmachis in Tajikistan was reduced to several hundred men. Most of them were dispersed or killed while some of them surrendered. A few of the groups that remained, gathered under the command of Ibrahim Beg on the left bank of Surkhan-Darya river.

Annihilation of the remained groups of Ibrahim Beg was completed in spring and the beginning of summer 1926 by the 7th Cavalry Brigade, the 8th Separate Turkistan Cavalry Brigade, and the 3rd Turkistan Infantry Division under the general command of S.M. Budenny (1883-1973) and the commander of the Turkistan Front K.A. Avkeentievsky (1890-1941).

By that time most of the Lakais were already in Afghanistan, together with their families and belongings. Their migration began in 1924 and was especially numerous in 1925. This caused diminishing of Ibrahim Beg's base as he himself said later. In order to avoid being taken prisoner, Ibrahim Beg left for Afghanistan on June 21, 1926 (the first day of Qurban-Bayram). He was accompanied by his nearest associates; there were fifty of them. To continue the struggle they had neither the means nor men nor arms and ammunition, he said.

In Afghanistan, Ibrahim Beg first made a stop in the settlement called Yangi Qala, but then went via Rustaq to Khanabad where he met the Governor, Sulaiman Khan. Ten days later the Governor informed Ibrahim Beg that he had received orders from Amir Amanullah Khan to send Ibrahim Beg and all his men to Kabul. In Kabul, Ibrahim Beg met the former Emir of Bukhara Sayid Alim Khan, who set him "a monthly subsidy of 1,500 Rupees Kabuli". Some time later Amanullah Khan ordered to pay him 500 Rupees more, which were given to him by Afghan officials. Ibrahim Beg settled in Qala-i-Fatu, a very small town eight km from Kabul. There Sayid Ali Khan also lived. Ibrahim Beg spent six months in this place, and during that period he never met any representative of the Afghan authorities. At that time his family joined him and he took it to Kabul where they all lived for almost two years until the outbreak of Bacha-i Saqao's rebellion. When the rebels' detachments occupied Kabul and Bacha-i-Saqao declared himself

Amir of Afghanistan (that is on January 19, 1929), Ibrahim Beg paid him a visit to greet him as the new Padishah.

When in April 1929, Ghulam Nabi Khan (former Afghan ambassador in Moscow and supporter of Amanullah Khan) appeared in Northern Afghanistan and captured Mazar-i-Sharif, Bacha-i-Saqao asked Sayid Alim Khan to send Ibrahim Beg there in order to organize detachments and help Sayid Husain (War Minister of Bacha-i-Saqao). Ibrahim Beg managed to assemble in a short time a detachment of one thousand men of Turkmen (as well as Uzbeks belonging to the clans of Kungrad, Durmen, Kazakh and Lakai) and made for the North where he fought against Hazaras — enemies of Bacha-i-Saqao. Ghulam Nabi Khan left the boundaries of Afghanistan at the beginning of June 1929. The family of Ibrahim Beg remained in Kabul.

In October 1929, Kabul was occupied by the detachments of Muhammad Nadir Khan. Bacha-i-Saqao tried to escape but was caught and executed (on November 2, 1929). Muhammad Nadir Khan became Padishah of Afghanistan.

The new Padishah appointed Sadar Khan governor of Khanabad. Ibrahim Beg was acquainted with Safar Khan because the latter had been representative of Amanullah Khan in Qala-i-Fatu where Sayid Alim Khan lived. So Ibrahim Beg sent Safar Khan his greeting with two messengers. At that time Ibrahim Beg lived in a settlement called Aliabad, populated by Lakai migrants from Central Asia. There were four thousand families of Lakais there.

A month later an order to turn over the weapons came to Aliabad from Safar Khan. Ibrahim Beg sent him 26 rifles. Soon another order came to give away the money also, but Ibrahim Beg refused to do that.

Some time later Ibrahim Beg received a firman (decree) of King Muhammad Nadir Shah about his appointment as assistant Wali (Ruler) of Mazar-i-Sharif, and in a few months, in the middle of 1930, he got letters, brought by Ishan Sudur, from Muhammad Nadir Shah and Sayid Alim Khan ordering him to come to Kabul.

Upon receiving these letters Ibrahim Beg decided to consult the Aksaqals from among the migrants. They were greatly displeased with this invitation and turned for advice to Ishan Khalifa who was holy teacher of all the migrants from

Central Asia. He lived in a town called Shibirgan. Ishan Khalifa also invited the Aksaqals for consultation and they decided that Ibrahim Beg should not go to Kabul.

Ibrahim Beg himself did not want to go to Kabul because he suspected that Muhammad Nadir Shah wanted to subject him to reprisal for the support he had rendered to bacha-i-Saqao. Later, in 1931, Ibrahim Beg said: "It was known that Nadir subjected the supporters of Kohistanis, that is supporters of Bacha-i-Saqao, to severe reprisals mainly because Nadir's power lacked strength and that only police and military measures kept him in power as the population of Kabul did not obey his orders and commands)". Attempts of Governor Safar Khan to catch Ibrahim Beg with the help of deception or force ended in clashes between Ibrahim Beg's supporters and Afghan soldiers. At that time (1930) War Minister Sardar Shah Mahmud Khan (brother of King Muhammad Nadir Shah) was already in Northern Afghanistan.

The Kabul government then sent against Ibrahim Beg detachments formed of Pashtuns, belonging to Mangal, Wazir and Jadran tribes.

These detachments were under the command of Afghan officers. According to Ibrahim Beg, the detachments were not provided with food and subsisted on robbery. They robbed mercilessly, took away everything and raped women. The Pashtuns were helped by the Hazaras. Since, not only Uzbeks and Turkmen — migrants but local population and Tajiks and Uzbeks too suffered from this robbery and violence, the native population of North Afghanistan treated Kabul government negatively and, as Ibrahim Beg said, "rendered him wide military support and gave food supplies". Local Uzbeks and Tajiks formed more than twenty groups numbering about 2,150 Uzbeks and 300 Tajiks to help Ibrahim Beg. These Jigits were paid 45 Rupees per month each by the population, according to Ibrahim Beg. Qataghan Uzbeks were most active fighters against the Afghans. Their hatred towards Afghan government was due to the fact that, about sixty years before, when they had been independent, they had been subjugated cruelly by Afghans.

Ibrahim Beg announced to the local Uzbek and Tajik population that the aim of his fight against the Kabul government was "to overthrow the Afghan regime and to create an

independent Uzbek and Tajik state in the territory of Qataghan and Badakhshan." At first Ibrahim Beg was successful in his fight; he inflicted defeat upon Afghan military forces near Khanabad (where the government lost 700 men killed) and near Aliabad (where 280 Afghans were killed). In the conquered regions Ibrahim Beg appointed his rulers (Begs); thus Rustak Qurban Shir Ali became Beg in Chayab, Ishan Isa Khan in Taluqan; and Ali Mardan Dadkhwa and Imam Sahi in Qur Artuq.

However by the end of 1930 and the beginning of 1931, Shah Mahmud Kan managed to mobilize all his forces and began to inflict defeats upon Ibrahim Beg's forces. At this very time Ibrahim Beg got a letter from Ishan Khalifa (delivered by his brother Alim Maqsum) in which he wrote: "it is impossible to remain in Afghanistan and it's necessary to go to Iran". But Ibrahim Beg decided to return to Central Asia.

Ibrahim Beg came to this decision because he got information about strained social and political situation in Central Asia due to the conduct of General Collectivisation. The organisation of cooperatives was being carried out without taking into account the real situation which existed there. The principle of voluntary participation was ignored. Instead of explaining the aim of collectivisation to the peasants they were forced to do what was demanded of them by the administration, which caused acute displeasure of the peasants, both the well-to-do and the poor ones.

Counting on the support of the population of Central Asia, Ibrahim Beg appealed (on April 8, 1931) "to all brothers-Tatars, Kazakhs, Armenians, Russians, Uzbeks, Tajiks and other peoples" to rebel against Soviet power. He also made it known to "brothers — Red Army men, workers, Muslims, Russians and people of other nationalities" that Afghanistan and England would help him. Later, he said that "neither Afghanistan nor England or any other state rendered him support" and that he had mentioned the fact only "to represent the Basmachi movement as a great affairs". His appeal was countersigned with his seal, which read: "Mullah Muhammad Ibrahim Beg, Biy, Diwan Begi, Tupchi Bashi, Lashkar Bashi, son of Chakabay Tuqsaba".

In a few days, by Ibrahim Beg's order, Soviet territory in Chubek region was crossed by about 9,000 Lakais belonging to the clans of Ihsan Khoja, Batrakly, Turtul and Bayram. Before that nine Russians, Osetins and Jews had gone to Soviet Central Asia together with the detachment of Qurbashi Mirza Nazar. Ibrahim Beg crossed the border at the head of 400 horsemen (only two hundred of whom were armed) two days later. When on Soviet territory (near Darwaza Bulaq) Ibrahim Beg ordered that each Qurbashi accompanying him had to go to the location of settlement of their tribesmen. Ibrahim Beg supposed that these detachments would become the main body around which local population would group to fight against the Soviet power. His calculations were in illusion.

After Ibrahim Beg arrived in Central Asia he gave himself out to be another man and called himself Wazir Beg. He concealed his own seal, and all letters were signed and sealed by Ishan Sudur. He said that he told his subordinates to consider him to be a small man and he even served them. He did that in order to make it difficult for the Russian to find him. Once when he was going by foot a horse kicked his right arm and broke it. "I became", he said, "only half a man because of that".

Having realised that his plans and calculations were a mistake, Ibrahim Beg decided to surrender to the Soviet authorities. He wrote letters to Abu Qayum Parwanachi and to some other Qurbashis about his decision and asked them to meet him. They came to Ibrahim Beg and saw him to the settlement called Haji Bul Bulaq situated on the bank of Kafirnigan on the way to Kulyab. Ibrahim Beg and his companion went by foot because they had lost their horses by that time. They crossed Kafirnigan with the help of local *dehqans* who gave them their goat skins. Ibrahim Beg sent a letter beforehand with one of the *dehqans* to a Red Army commander named Mukum. The letter said: "We have come, meet us, I intend to surrender". He was awaited by representatives of the Soviet government. They were: Commander Mukum and a local leader of the OGPU, Ibrahim Beg and his fifteen friends gave up their arms to Mukum. They were one Russian rifle, one English rifle, one Parabellum, one Browning and one Mauzer. After that they were arrested. This happened on June 23, 1931.

Together with Ibrahim Beg were also arrested:

- Abu Qayum Parwanchi, Lakai Uzbek, born in Qishlaq Dangara, 47 years old, illiterate.
- Salahuddin Sulaiman Ishan Sudur, Tajik, born in Old Bukhara, 54 years old;
- Ishan Iskhan Mansur Khan, Uzbek, born in Qishlaq Kayragach, 48 years old;
- Ali Mardan Muhammad Dadkhwa, Lakai Uzbek, born in Qishlaq Besh Bulaq, 44 years old, illiterate;
- Qur Artuq Ashur Dadkhwa, Lakai Uzbek, born in Qishlaq Sasyq Bulaq, 40 years old, illiterate;
- Qurban Kenji Tuqsaba, Lakai Uabek, born in Qishlaq Quzul Kiya, 28 years old, illiterate;
- Tashmat Khoja Berdy, Uzbek, born in Qishlaq Karamanqul, 47 years old, illiterate;
- Mulla Niyaz Hakim Parwanchi, Tajik, born in Bukhara, 53 years old;
- Qurban Beg Shir Ali, Lakai Uzbek, born in Qishlaq Shurchi, 34 years old, illiterate;
- Mulla Ahmad Biy Sayid, born in Qishlaq Munduk;
- Mirza Qayum Chary, Uzbek, born in Qishlaq Sary Ab, 34 years old, literate;
- Azim Marka Astanqul, Lakai Uzbek, born in Qishlaq Koktash, 51 years old, illiterate;
- Ishan Palwan Bahadurzada, Uzbek, born in Qabadian, 44 years old;
- Ali Palwan II, Mirza, Lakai Uzbek, born in Qishlaq Urulyq, 42 years old, illiterate;
- Shah Hasan Imanqul, Tajik, born in Qishlaq Taushar, 38 years old, illiterate.

Of the fifteen companion of Ibrahim Beg, seven were his tribesmen — Lakais; while four were ulama.

All of them were sentenced to death by the decision of OGPU Collage on April 13, 1932. Ibrahim Beg's companion were shot on August 10, 1932 and Ibrahim Beg himself was shot three weeks later, on August 31, 1932.

Vae victis! (Woe to the vanquished!)