# 3

# NATIONALIZING THE REVOLUTION

Events in Turkestan had taken their own course since March 1917, when the Tashkent soviet arrested the governor general A. N. Kuropatkin and deported him back to Russia. That soviet's seizure of power in November was driven by local considerations, and although it sent a delegate to Petrograd to announce the ascent of Soviet power in Turkestan,[1] it continued to act entirely independently of the center. This independence was facilitated by the collapse of transport networks and an incipient civil war that cut Turkestan off from inner Russia. The main challenge for the Bolshevik leadership was to reestablish central control over Turkestan and to bring proper Soviet order to it. What that order was to be in a colonial situation was an open question, however, and one that was settled mostly by trial and error over the next two years. This uncertainty was compounded by the center's tenuous control over Turkestan, for its authority had to be projected through trusted emissaries armed only with mandates and powers of exhortation. This unsettled situation created an opportunity for the Jadids to join the new organs of power and to attempt to put them to their own use. The imperatives of the center thus inaugurated a new arena of politics that existed against the backdrop of the ethnic and social conflict described in the previous chapter.

How was a revolution imagined as class conflict to work out in a colonial region where national and racial distinctions were fundamental? The Bolsheviks

1. RGASPI, f. 5, op. 1, d. 2920, ll. 1–2ob.

had adopted a stridently anticolonial rhetoric from the beginning, but they had no clear idea of how the categories of nation and class intersected. The Bolsheviks were to come up with a ramified nationalities policy, but that did not exist in 1917. Bolshevik actions in the period until 1920 were often reactive to the challenges of various national movements, while their thinking tended to be quite flexible in its conflation of the categories of class, nation, and confession. On 20 November 1917, the new Soviet government had issued a proclamation "To All Toiling Muslims of Russia and the East" that exhorted Muslims to support the new government: "All you, whose mosques and shrines have been destroyed, whose faith and customs have been violated by the Tsars and oppressors of Russia! Henceforward your beliefs and customs, your national and cultural institutions, are declared free and inviolable! Build your national life freely and without hindrance."[2] Not only did Lenin entangle the national question within Russia with the colonial question abroad, he also equated colonialism with class oppression. Nationality seemed to be synonymous with class in colonial situations. The practical implication of this line of thought in Turkestan was to overturn the policies of the Tashkent soviet that had used the language of class to deny the colonial population all access to power. Moscow thus forced the entry of Muslims into the new organs of power at the expense of the settlers.

Such a policy was very promising to the Jadids, to whom the revolution made sense only as an anticolonial and a national phenomenon. They had also come to acquire a sincere enthusiasm for revolution as a modality of change, an enthusiasm redoubled by the opposition they had faced from their own society in 1917. The Jadids' fascination with revolution was also shaped by the new geopolitical conjuncture produced by the end of the war that created both desperation and hope. The final collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the last sovereign Muslim state in the world, seemed to indicate an existential crisis for Islam and the Muslim world. It radicalized the Jadids' reform agenda and gave it a new urgency. The Muslim world could only be saved through progress, which was possible only through revolutionary change. The Soviet regime appeared as harbingers of a new anticolonial world order that would allow the rejuvenation of Central Asia and the Muslim world at large and make it possible for it to fight back against the "imperialists" that had triumphed in the war. The geopolitics of the time allowed the Jadids to conflate Islam, nation, and revolution into a vision of anticolonial struggle with Britain as the main enemy and the Soviet state as an ally.

This anticolonial reading effectively nationalized the revolution for those Muslims who joined the new regime once doors to it were opened under pressure

2. *Dekrety sovetskoi vlasti*, vol. 1 (Moscow, 1957), 113–115.

from Moscow. Between spring 1918 and summer 1920, they articulated a vision of Turkestan's future that would be Muslim, national, and revolutionary at the same time. Such a Turkestan would be free of the depredations of the settlers domestically and a conduit of revolution to the Muslim world internationally. Armed with nation and revolution, Muslims would revolutionize the colonial world and bring liberation to "the East." Ultimately, however, that vision was squashed by the Bolsheviks. They were willing to push back at the power of Turkestan's settler Communists, but they had no intention of putting in their place a different group with wide autonomy and a substantially different understanding of revolution. As the center regained political control of Turkestan, it also asserted control over the meaning of revolution in the region.

## The Bolsheviks and Turkestan

Turkestan was an unlikely place to experience a proletarian revolution, and the Bolsheviks' desire to control it requires at least some explanation. The most fundamental motivation for the Bolsheviks was a desire to extend Soviet rule over all of the former Russian Empire. There were two other reasons for the center's interest in Turkestan. One was the region's strategic position for revolutionizing "the East." "Eastern policy" loomed large over all discussions of Turkestan from 1918 to 1921. "It is no exaggeration to say," Lenin wrote in an open letter to "the Communists of Turkestan" in November 1919, "that the establishment of proper relations with the peoples of Turkestan is now of immense, world-historic importance for the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic. For the whole of Asia and for all the colonies of the world, for thousands and millions of people, the attitude of the Soviet worker-peasant republic to the weak and hitherto oppressed peoples is of very practical significance."[3] Lenin was to persist in this opinion to the end of his active life, although many of his comrades were much more skeptical.

The second reason for Moscow's interest in Turkestan was a more straightforward one and one that placed the Soviet regime in direct continuity with the Tsarist Empire. This was the need for the economic resources of the region, especially cotton. In the most immediate short term, central authorities wanted access to Turkestan's cotton without which Russia's textile industry could not function.

3. V.I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 5th ed., vol. 39 (Moscow, 1963), 304.

The Tashkent soviet had "nationalized" all cotton in Turkestan, but the same collapse of transport and legal order that had ushered in the famine also meant that this cotton continued to lie in factories and warehouses. Moscow began sending buying missions to the region even when it was cut off from the center by the civil war. In the longer term, Turkestan's resources were to play an important part in the Soviet state's economic calculations. Economic goals were a clear part of the mandate of the Turkestan Commission (Turkkomissiia) when it arrived to knit Turkestan into the Soviet state. Even before the commission arrived in Turkestan, L. B. Krasin, the commissar for trade and industry, was pointing out that "the recent reunion of Turkestan presents the opportunity . . . for making broad use of this region as well as of countries neighboring it . . . for the export of cotton, rice, dry fruits, and other goods necessary not only for the internal market of Russia, but also for its external trade."[4]

However, Turkestan had to be knit back into the Russian state on new terms. If Soviet rule in Turkestan were to be an example to the colonial world, and indeed if Soviet rule were to be secure in Turkestan, then it needed to be distanced from its Tsarist antecedents and based on the local population. The center's primary goal in 1918 and 1919, therefore, was to force the Tashkent soviet to abandon its policy of excluding Muslims from power. In February 1918, it appointed Petr Kobozev its "plenipotentiary commissar" for Turkestan with the task of establishing oversight over local Soviet power. He arrived in Tashkent in April with two Tatar officials from Narkomnats in tow. He was preceded by a telegram from I. V. Stalin, then commissar for nationalities affairs, which announced the kinds of compromises the center was willing to make:

> We are sending to you in Turkestan two comrades, members of the Tatar-Bashkir Committee at the People's Commissariat for Nationalities Affairs, Ibrahimov and Klebleyev. The latter is maybe already known to you as a former supporter of the autonomous group. His appointment to this new post might startle you; I ask you nevertheless to let him work, forgiving his old sins. All of us here think that now, when Soviet power is getting stronger everywhere in Russia, we shouldn't fear the shadows of the past of people who only yesterday were getting mixed up with our enemies: if these people are ready to recognize their mistakes, we should not push them away. Furthermore, we advise you to attract to [political] work [even] adherents of Kerensky from the natives if they

4. Krasin to Eliava, 03.11.1919, in *Ekonomicheskie otnosheniia sovetskoi Rossii s budushchimi soiuznymi respublikami, 1917–1922* (Moscow, 1996), 89.

> are ready to serve Soviet power—the latter only gains from it, and there is nothing to be afraid of in the shadows of the past.[5]

Arif Klebleyev, in fact, had chaired the Military Council (Harbiy Shuro, the organization of Muslim—mostly Tatar—soldiers stationed in Turkestan) in Kokand, which had under his signature sent a telegram to the new Soviet government in Petrograd, asking it to command the Tashkent soviet to recognize the autonomous government at Kokand as the legal authority in Turkestan.[6] Now, three months later, he was doing the work of the central government in Turkestan.

Kobozev and his companions set about breaking the hold of the settlers on power. They mobilized the Muslim population and inducted it in the new institutions of power. A "soviet of Muslim and peasant [*dehqon*] deputies" began functioning in the old city of Tashkent in April, and its members participated in the Fifth Congress of Soviets that convened in Tashkent on 21 April. Kobozev also proclaimed a general amnesty for those who had been involved with the autonomous government in Kokand,[7] and he forced a reelection to the Tashkent soviet before the Fifth Congress of Turkestan's soviets. "A brilliant victory of ours in the elections to Tashkent's proletarian parliament has decisively crushed the hydra of reaction," he telegraphed Moscow. "White Muslim turbans have grown noticeably in the ranks of the Tashkent parliament, attaining a third of all seats."[8] At the congress, he had himself elected chair of the presidium and forced the inclusion of several Muslims in it. The congress created the Central Executive Committee of Turkestan (TurTsIK) as the supreme organ of power in the region. Kobozev ensured that nine of its thirty-six members were Muslims and that the new sovnarkom contained four Muslims out of sixteen.[9] Kobozev also spearheaded the establishment of the Communist Party in Turkestan (KPT) for the first time. The Bolsheviks in Russia itself had finally broken from the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party only in 1917, but no such change had taken place in Turkestan. Kobozev convened a conference of all Bolshevik organizations in Turkestan in June 1918 and oversaw the formation of the KPT as a branch of the Russian Communist Party. In Turkestan, it

5. The Tashkent soviet did not care to make this telegram public; it was published in Russian only in September, and then in an off-the-cuff manner in connection with the obituary for Klebleyev, who died of typhus in Khujand (*Nasha gazeta*, 25.09.1918). Klebleyev and Ibrahimov, however, had ensured its publication in Uzbek right away in April: *Ulug' Turkiston*, 18.04.1918.

6. "Petrog'irodga yiborilgan teleg'irom," *Ishchilar dunyosi*, no. 2 (17.01.1918 [o.s.]), 22–23.

7. GARF, f. 1235, op. 93, d. 583a, l. 69.

8. TsGARUz, f. 25, op. 1, d. 78, ll. 5–6 (16.4.1918).

9. *Nasha gazeta*, 12.05.1918.

was the revolution that created the Communist Party and not the other way round.[10]

## Muslims in the Soviet Order

The first responses of the Jadids to the Bolshevik takeover had been entirely negative. "Russia has seen disaster upon disaster since the [February] transformation," Fitrat had written in November 1917. "And now a new calamity has raised its head, that of the Bolsheviks!"[11] Few Muslim figures in Central Asia disagreed. For Hoji Muin, the Bolsheviks' demands were "unnatural" and all their promises remained on paper, which was why "no nation believed them," and they were already at war with Ukraine by the new year.[12] The conquest of power by Tashkent's settler Communists drew even harsher criticisms. "Muslims . . . have not seen a kopeck's worth of good from the Freedom [i.e., the revolution]," G′ozi Yunus noted at about the same time. "On the contrary, we are experiencing times worse than those of Nicholas," for "our *tovarishes*" had subverted the freedoms proclaimed by the revolution and brought back censorship and banned organizations. The greatest danger for G′ozi Yunus lay in the plan for the socialization of land, "which does not accord with our shariat," and which would result in the alienation of all land to European settlers.[13] The bloodbath at Kokand only confirmed these doubts.

Central intervention against the settler Communists, however, offered entirely new possibilities. For many Jadids, the new organs of power became a site for the continuation of the mobilization of 1917, both against European settlers and against "reaction" in their own society. Abdulla Avloniy, the poet and pedagogue, appeared in the Tashkent soviet as a Bolshevik while the poet Tavallo took his seat as a Left Social Revolutionary, in which party he had the company of Said Karim Said Azimboyev, scion of one of the most established families of Tsarist-era Tashkent.[14] In Samarqand, Behbudiy was a member of the

10. The insight that the revolution created the party in Turkestan belongs to Georgii Safarov, *Kolonial'naia revoliutsiia: opyt Turkestana* (Moscow, 1922), but it bears repeating. The first congress was shambolic, and the party did not become a functioning organization until the end of 1918; see I. Sol′ts, "K istorii KPT," in *Tri goda sovetskoi vlasti: sbornik k tretei godovshchine Oktiabr'skoi revoliutsii v Turkestane* (Tashkent, 1920), 45–53.

11. Fitrat, "Siyosiy hollar," *Hurriyat*, 07.11.1917.

12. Hoji Muin, "Bolshaviqlar va biz," *Hurriyat*, 09.01.1918 (o.s.).

13. Mullo G′ozi, "Hurriyatmi? Yoki istibdod?" *Ishchilar dunyosi*, no. 3 (01.02.1918 [o.s.]), 36–39. Later in the year, G′ozi Yunus was to travel to Istanbul and seek Ottoman intervention.

14. GAgT, f. 12, d. 6, l. 96.

old-city soviet and chaired it as well.[15] Many of the younger Jadids, those who had entered public life in 1917, were particularly prominent. Laziz Azizzoda had begun teaching only in 1916 and in 1917 had been active in the Shuroi Islomiya. He joined the Bolsheviks in 1918 and by the following year had become the head of the old-city organization of the KPT in Tashkent.[16] Sobirjon Yusupov, who had been prominent in the Shuroi Islomiya throughout 1917 and was a member of the Kokand government, and Nizomiddin Xo′jayev, also a prominent activist throughout 1917, reappeared in Tashkent, where both joined the nascent KPT. By late summer, Yusupov was TurTsIK's representative in Moscow and Xo′jayev was to become chair of the Tashkent old-city ispolkom.

This was the same time, we might recall, that other activists were traveling to the Ottoman Empire in search for support. In 1918, Soviet organs represented one more option for continuing the work of 1917. The Jadids used their access to the new institutions to continue their struggle with the ulama. One of the first acts of the newly formed old-city soviet in Tashkent was to ask the city police to arrest the "counterrevolutionary" ulama of the Ulamo Jamiyati and to requisition its property. The request was duly carried out on 21 May 1918, when the commissar of the old city of Tashkent shut down the Ulamo Jamiyati and its journal *al-Izoh*, and confiscated its property.[17] The old-city soviet also took an aggressive line against the educational establishments where the ulama were based and began questioning them on their views on social justice and economic equality.[18] Over the next two years, the soviet also requisitioned property on behalf of new-method schools and theatrical groups, thus providing the main institutional support for the flagship cultural institutions of the intelligentsia.[19]

The theater that prospered in 1919 and 1920 was squarely located in concerns of the nation. A sampling of the theatrical repertoire captures the mood of that period. It included prerevolutionary Jadid plays such as *Zaharli hayot* (A Poisoned Life) by Hamza Hakimzoda Niyoziy and *Baxtsiz kiyov* (The Unfortunate Son-in-Law) by Abdulla Qodiriy that recounted the harmful consequences for individuals and society of lack of education; new plays in exactly the same mode, such as *Baxtsiz shogird* (The Unfortunate Pupil) by G′ulom Zafariy,[20] or

15. GASO, f. 89, d. 1, ll. 87, 95, 96.

16. *Ishtirokiyun*, 01.12.1918, 08.02.1919, 04.12.1919.

17. *Pobeda Oktiabr'skoi revoliutsii v Uzbekistane: sbornik dokumetov*, 2 vols. (Tashkent, 1963–72), 2:203–204, 265; TsGARUz, f. 36, op. 1, d. 12, ll. 38–40.

18. TsGARUz, f. 36, op. 1, d. 12, l. 182–182ob; GAgT, f. 12, d. 12, ll. 14, 21–25.

19. Traces of these requisitions are to be found in GAgT, f. 12, d. 4, ll. 107, 113ob, 141; d. 24, l. 268.

20. Mirmullo Sher-Muhammad, "Tiyotir va muziqo," *Ishtirokiyun*, 06.03.1920.

*Javonbozlik qurboni* (Pederasty's Victim) by Xurshid.[21] Nor were all problems the product of colonialism. In perhaps the first historical play in Uzbek, called *Turkiston xonlig'i, yoxud muhabbat natijasi* (The Khanate of Turkestan, Or, the Fruits of Love), a certain A. Romiz cast an unflattering look at Turkestan's past. A boy falls in love with the daughter of the *to'qsabo*, who does not approve of the match, and instead gives his daughter to the khan as a present. When she refuses, the girl is thrown into prison, where the jailer attempts to rape her. The play ends in tragedy, when both lovers are killed during an attempt by the boy to rescue his beloved from jail. In his review, Mirmullo Shermuhammad found much to criticize about the feebleness of the plot, but welcomed the attempt to acquaint the public with the "injustices and un-Islamic [*g'ayri mashru'*] acts . . . of our despotic khans and their . . . ignorant warlords [*johil qo'rboshilar*]."[22] The revolution was the opportunity to rectify these shortcomings.

However, the new order broadened access to public life, and the Jadids were joined by a different kind of activist—men who entered public life not through involvement in cultural reform but through politics more directly. Their intellectual trajectories differed from those of the Jadids in important ways. Some arrived at participation through the radicalization of the Muslim urban population as a result of the famine and the new political situation. Others came through the ranks via political struggles over questions of food supply and the violence against Muslim peasants and nomads, and mobilized around "concern for the poor swelling up with hunger."[23] Many of these freshly minted Communists were educated in the so-called Russo-native schools (which had, ironically enough, been established with the aim of creating a group in the indigenous population fluent in Russian and therefore capable of acting as a pillar of support for Russian rule in Turkestan). They were thus fluent in Russian, which had become indispensable for participation in the new politics inaugurated by the February revolution. Few of them had been seriously involved in the project of Islamic reform that had defined Jadidism until the revolution.

It was one of these men, Tŭrar Rïsqŭlov (1894–1938), who was to be the most significant actor in Muslim politics in Turkestan over the next several years. Born in Semirech′e to a Kazakh family of modest means but high status, Rïsqŭlov attended a Russo-native school, where he acquired good enough Russian to work for a Russian lawyer and then to attend the agriculture school in Pishpek. In October 1916, he matriculated at the Tashkent normal school, and it was here that

21. *Ishtirokiyun*, 27.03.1920.

22. *Ishtirokiyun*, 17.03.1919.

23. *Trudy 3-go s"ezda Kommunisticheskoi partii Turkestanskoi respubliki Rossiiskoi Sovetskoi Federatsii, 1–15 iiunia 1919 goda* (Tashkent, 1919), 109 (Rïsqŭlov's speech).

the February revolution found him. He had no previous record of public life, no contacts with the Kazakh intelligentsia in Semirech′e, and he seems to have taken no part in public life in Tashkent. His was not a Jadid trajectory. In March 1917, he returned to his home town of Merke, where he supposedly founded a Union of Revolutionary Kazakh Youth. Although no documentary record has ever emerged of the existence of this organization, we know that by the winter of 1917–18, he was active in the Avliyo Ota ispolkom. He rose rapidly in soviet institutions and returned to Tashkent in mid-1918. By that autumn, he was Turkestan's commissar for health[24] and was to rise to greater heights in 1919.

Old-city soviets could articulate and defend the interests of the population of the old cities against the settlers, but they also represented a shifting a political power within the old cities. Over the summer of 1918, the old-city soviets in Tashkent, Samarqand, and Margelan granted numerous licenses to Muslim Communists to carry guns to "protect themselves from counterrevolutionaries."[25] The power of the old elites of the ulama and the *ellikboshi* (headmen elected by property holders) was being usurped by a cohort of (generally very young) men ensconced in Soviet institutions. The transition was deeply contested and resented. On 19 January 1919, when Karl Osipov, the Turkestani commissar for war, staged an unsuccessful putsch (in which he shot fourteen of his fellow commissars dead), the old city was under the control of the insurgents for most of the day, during which time the ulama reemerged as a political force. As the old order was restored for a few hours, the ulama and their fellow conservatives pursued Jadids and Communists alike.[26]

## New Languages of Politics

What did Bolshevism mean to the Jadids and the freshly minted Muslim Communists of Turkestan? Their very appearance is surprising and worthy of an explanation, for until 1917 not only was there not a native Muslim working

24. Xavier Hallez, "Communisme national et mouvement révolutionnaire en Orient: parcours croisés de trois leaders soviétiques orientaux (Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev, Turar Ryskulov et Elbekdorž Rinčino) dans la construction d'un nouvel espace géopolitique" (thèse de doctorat, EHESS, 2012), 64–76, 253–264. The two published biographies of Rïsqŭlov treat his early life only superficially. The better work is Ordalï Qongïratbayev, *Türar Rïsqŭlov: qoghamdïq-sayasi jäne memlekettïk qïzmetï* (Almaty, 1994); V. M. Ustinov, *Turar Ryskulov: ocherki politicheskoi biografii* (Almaty, 1996), writes entirely within Soviet parameters and is thus incapable of bringing out the ironies of Rïsqŭlov's remarkable career.

25. GAgT, f. 12, d. 6, ll. 122, 146, 177, 216, 217; d. 17, l. 17; GASO, f. 89, d. 1, l. 141; GAFO, f. 121, op. 1, d. 33, l. 23.

26. *Ishtirokiyun*, 19.02.1919; Iu. Ibragimov, "Ianvarskie sobytiia v Tashkente," *Zhizn' natsional'nostei*, 30.03.1919.

class in Central Asia, there was also no language to articulate politics as class conflict. While a few intellectuals with Russian educations had contacts with socialist parties, there was little comprehension, let alone sympathy, for socialism among Muslims at large. After the seizure of power by the Tashkent soviet, various Muslim figures tried to use the language of class, but only to domesticate it. The autonomous government at Kokand felt compelled to garner "proletarian" legitimacy for itself and organized a conference of Muslim workers in Kokand in January 1918. At the same time, activists established a Muslim workers' soviet in Tashkent, although the only sign of its existence was its press organ, the "national, political, economic, historical, scientific, and social journal" called *Ishchilar dunyosi* (Workers' World). Despite its name, the journal aimed "to improve the material and spiritual existence of the poor who live off their labor while holding tight to the proud shariat of our Prophet," to help workers organize, and "to put in place a Turkic-Islamic policy [*Turk-Islom siyosati*]."[27] It featured harsh critiques of Bolshevik actions *and* policies and sought to educate Muslim workers on the dangers of Bolshevism. Two months later, after the destruction of the Kokand government, a "Muslim Workers' Party" appeared in Tashkent. Its founding statute declared that "because our shariat is against capitalism and speculation . . . there is no capitalism and bourgeois-ness [*burzhuylik*] in our Turkestan, and the party stands against its spread to Turkestan."[28] The platform then went on demand extensive national and linguistic rights for Turkestan's indigenous population and connected revolution directly to national liberation. Seralï Lapin, for his part, returned from the debacle at Kokand and penned a fascinating letter to the Tashkent soviet in the name of the Ulamo Jamiyati, in which he claimed that the roots of socialism lay in Islam, whose teachings about social justice foreshadowed the Marxist critique of capitalism, and thus the ulama, as the carriers of Islam, were the real force of revolution in Muslim society and the natural partners of Soviet power (unlike the "so-called progressists" who only wanted to Europeanize Muslim society and thus to pave the way for capitalism).[29]

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27. "Maslak va maqsad," *Ishchilar dunyosi*, no. 1 (4.1.1918 [o.s.]).

28. *Xodimi islom firqasining maromnomasi / Programma musul'manskoi trudovoi partii* (Tashkent, 1918), 1 (Uzbek pagination). The Russian and Turkic texts are quite different and use very different political vocabularies.

29. Ser Ali Lapin, "Ot Tashkentskoi organizatsii 'Ulema' Russkim Sotsialistam" (17.01.1918), TsGARUz, f. 39, op. 1, d. 11, ll. 3–10; this document has now been published by M.M. Khaidarov, "'Evropeiskii sotsializm imeet svoim pervoistochnikom tot zhe samyi Islam . . .': Pis'mo russkim sotsialistam ot tashkentskoi organizatsii 'Shuro-i-Ulema.' 1918 g.," *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, 2004, no. 2: 172–182; a shortened version of Ulamo Jamiyati's proposals appeared in "Ulamo Jamiyatining taklifi," *Ishchilar dunyosi*, no. 3 (01.02.1918 [o.s.]), 42–43.

Still, socialism remained a mystery for most Muslims, and its nature and provenance continued to be discussed in the vernacular Soviet press once it emerged in June 1918. While some authors provided a basic introduction to the concepts,[30] others sought to find some sanction or precedent in the history of Islam. They found it in the teachings of Sheikh Bedreddin Simavî (1358–1416), the Bektashi Sufi figure from the Balkans who had led a revolt against Ottoman power and advocated the redistribution of land among the peasants.[31] Bedreddin was a heretical figure, of course, who was executed for his pains. Evoking him did not constitute an attempt at the formulation of a theory of "Islamic socialism," a doctrine that might explain socialism in Islamic terms as was attempted later in the twentieth century by many in other parts of the Muslim world. Rather, it was a search for intelligibility for a concept radically new to local political discourse.

In general, the new language of politics remained poorly understood. Muslims in the party, especially those who worked in Russian, quickly learned to populate their memos with seven-headed hydras of the bourgeoisie, counterrevolutions, and toiling masses (although the meanings they attached to the new vocabulary had a disconcerting tendency to be at odds with what party authorities might have in mind). For those working in vernacular languages, the challenge was much greater. The language of class-based politics had been entirely absent from local debates until 1917, and the vocabulary needed for it simply did not exist. If *exploitation* and *oppression* were to be used, they seemed a lot more applicable to imperialism, which is why an anticolonial reading of the revolution was so attractive to Muslim actors in Central Asia. Bolshevism was connected to revolution, but not class. Here is a poem titled "Bolshevism" from the official organ of the Communist Party of Turkestan as late as 1921:

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|---|---|
| Bildim bu na maslakdir? | Now I know what this principle is! |
| Insonlarni birlatdi . . . | It has united all humanity . . . |
| Bayroqlarni parlatdi! . . . | It has made banners shine . . . |
| Zolimlarni titratdi! . . . | It has made tyrants tremble! . . . |

30. "Sosiyolizm ne narsa?" *Ishtirokiyun*, 07.11.1918.

31. Abu Turg′ud (pseud.), "Islom dunyosinda so′siyolizm fikri," *Ishtirokiyun*, 12.02.1919; S.M. [Sadriddin Aynī], "Islām va qāmmūnizm (Shaykh Badruddīn Simāvī)," *Shu'la-yi inqilāb*, 10.03.1921, 2–4; M., "Mundam beshyuz yil burun o′tgan musulmon kommunist (Shayx Badriddin Simoviy)," *Mehnatkashlar tovushi*, 10.05.1921, 17.05.1921. The source for all these articles was a single piece published several years previously in the Tatar journal *Shura*. Later in the twentieth century, Sheikh Bedreddin was similarly evoked by many leftists in Turkey as an indigenous predecessor, with the great poet Nazım Hikmet making him the subject of a renowned poem ("Simavne Kadısı Oğlu Şeyh Bedreddin Destanı," 1936).

| | |
|---|---|
| Mazlumlari uyg′otdi!? | It has awakened the oppressed! |
| Qardoshlig′a yo′l ochdi! | It has opened the path to brotherhood! |
| Har yerga ziyo sochdi.[32] | It has spread light in all directions! |

Unity and struggle against oppression—this was how Bolshevism made sense to Central Asians. Exploitation, class conflict, and the dialectic were still hard to find in local rhetoric.

## Liberating the East

It was perhaps the mission of liberating "the East" that provided the greatest amount of common ground between the Bolsheviks and the Muslim intelligentsia of Central Asia. "The East," and the colonial world in general, were, from the first, an object of Bolshevik interest. Lenin had argued during the war that imperialism was the highest form of capitalism in which the bourgeoisie can buy off the proletariat by exporting exploitation to the colonies.[33] Depriving the European powers of their colonies was necessary for social revolution to succeed in the metropole. The Bolsheviks had dabbled with "the East" from the moment they took power (one of their earliest decrees was addressed "To the Toiling Muslims of Russia and the East") and the revolutionary potential of "the East" had already aroused the enthusiasm of activists within and without the party,[34] but it was the failure of the proletariat in Europe itself to rise to revolution (and the defeat of revolution in Germany and Hungary in 1918) that pushed colonial revolution to the forefront of Bolshevik thinking. Unexpected events, such as the emergence of Amanullah Khan in Afghanistan, who wrested his country's independence from Britain and established relations with the Soviet state, helped this geopolitical vision. By the middle of 1919, Trotsky saw "the international situation . . . shaping up in such a way that the road to Paris and London lies through the towns of Afghanistan, Punjab, and Bengal,"[35] and "Eastern policy" (*Vostochnaia*

32. Yangi Ishchi (pseud.), "Bolshovizim," *Qizil bayroq*, 18.01.1921.

33. V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Form of Capitalism* (1916).

34. K. Troianovskii, *Vostok i revoliutsiia: Popytka postroeniia novoi politicheskoi programmy dlia tuzemnykh stran Vostoka—Indii, Persii, Kitaia* (Petrograd, 1918). Troianovskii was the moving force behind the establishment of the Union for the Liberation of the East (Soiuz Osvobozhdeniia Vostoka) in October 1918: B. Gurko-Kriazhin, "10 let vostokovednoi mysli," *Novyi Vostok*, no. 19 (1927), xli.

35. Leon Trotsky, *The Trotsky Papers, 1917–1922*, vol. 1 (The Hague, 1964), 624.

*politika*) became all the rage in Moscow. The "national and colonial question" was a major issue at the Second Congress of the Comintern in July 1920, which convened the First Congress of the Peoples of the East in Baku in September. In all of this, Turkestan occupied a central place as "the front door to the East," the vanguard of the revolution in India and "the Muslim East." Lenin and Trotsky both contemplated setting up a military base in Turkestan even before it was meaningfully reintegrated into Soviet rule, and in 1920 the Comintern established its own Turkestan Bureau, complete with a military school, in Tashkent.[36]

Central Asian intellectuals had their own path to the idea of anticolonial revolution. As the war effort melted away in 1917, old Russia's enemies began to appear as friends, while the Bolsheviks' anticapitalist rhetoric aimed at Russia's erstwhile allies found resonance, for slightly different reasons, with the Jadids. By autumn 1917, it was permissible to openly sympathize with the Ottomans. If capitalism, so to speak, was the highest form of imperialism, then Britain and France were the champions of imperialism; alongside the world's proletariat and the entire colonial world, the Ottoman Empire (and hence the entire Muslim world) was among the victims of imperialism. The publication by the Bolsheviks of the secret treaties signed by imperial Russia with Britain and France during the war, most of them at the expense of the Ottoman Empire, touched a raw nerve among the Jadids. Even as he bemoaned the Bolshevik seizure of power in Petrograd, Fitrat wrote that "it had now become clear who the real enemies of the Muslim, and especially the Turkic, world are."[37] The Ottoman defeat, which opened the way to unprecedented British paramountcy in the Middle East, was a turning point of sorts for the Jadids, who lost a great deal of their earlier fascination with the liberal civilization of Europe and turned to a radical anticolonial critique of the bourgeois order. The situation also led the Jadids to a reevaluation of the Bolsheviks, who now appeared as agents of a new world order, an order that contained in it the possibility of national liberation and progress, as well as a struggle against reaction. The experiences of 1917 and 1918 had radicalized both the cultural and the political horizons of the Jadids and given them a fascination with the idea of revolution as a modality for change.

Anticolonial struggle, the defense of Islam, and national revolution shared the same iconoclastic mood as the Bolsheviks, and the conflation of all these

36. Trotsky to CC, 20.09.1919, in *The Trotsky Papers*, 1:672; Lenin to Eliava, 16.10.1919, in Richard Pipes, ed., *The Unknown Lenin: From the Secret Archive* (New Haven, 1996), 74. On the Turkestan Bureau of the Comintern, see V.M. Gilensen, "Turkestanskoe biuro Kominterna (osen′ 1920–osen′ 1921)," *Vostok,* 1999, no. 1: 59–77, and M.N. Roy, *The Memoirs of M.N. Roy* (Bombay, 1964), 429–438.

37. Fitrat, "Yoshurun muohidalari," *Hurriyat*, 28.11.1917.

phenomena proved remarkably easy in the fluid ideological atmosphere of the time. Fitrat, who before the war had used an Englishman as his mouthpiece in his exhortations to reform, turned to an increasingly critical view of the British. His writings from 1919 and 1920 are intensely anticolonial and specifically anti-British. From being exemplars of progress, the British had become unmitigated villains. Imperialism, exploitation, and oppression had now become the hallmarks of Europe (and Britain in particular). In numerous works, Fitrat focused on the oppression of British rule in India and celebrated those who struggled against it. For Fitrat, driving the English out of India was "as great [a duty] as saving the pages of the Qur'an from being trampled by an animal . . . a worry as great as that of driving a pig out of a mosque."[38]

Fitrat discussed the rapidly evolving geopolitics in a series of columns in *Hurriyat* and *Ishtirokiyun*, many of which he collected in a brochure called *Sharq siyosati* (Eastern Policy), published in 1919. The following year, he wrote two plays on Indian themes that are eloquent evocations of anticolonial patriotism. In *Chin sevish* (True Love), he portrayed the love of Zulaikha for Nuruddin, a patriotic, revolutionary poet, which is foiled by Rahmatullah, an Anglophile who desires Zulaikha as he has desired many young maidens before. In the tradition of Jadid theater established before the revolution, the play ends in a bloodbath, as a secret meeting of an Indian revolutionary committee, involving both Zulaikha and Nuruddin is ambushed by the police (who are led it to it by Rahmatullah). But the linkage between love, patriotism, and revolution is firmly established. True love is inextricable from patriotism, while the failure to support patriotic revolution is synonymous with treason. In *Hind ixtilolchilari* (Indian Revolutionaries), which also portrayed the struggle of Indian patriots for independence, Fitrat repeated these themes, but in a more overtly political manner. Rahim Bakhsh is an educated young man in love with Dilnavaz, both of them afire with patriotic love. After the police arrest Dilnavaz, Rahim Bakhsh has to overcome his earlier ambivalence, and he joins a clandestine group of "revolutionaries" in a mountainous redoubt on the Afghan frontier. The plot is similar in its tragic ending, but love for the country is again equated with love for a woman and the protection of her honor. Anti-imperialism, patriotism, and revolutionary action are inextricably intertwined.

In both plays, Fitrat focuses on the oppression of colonial rule. He had come a long way from his fascination with Europe and its civilization in *A Debate*

38. Fitrat, *Hind ixtilolchilari* (1920), in *Tanlangan asarlar*, 5 vols. to date (Tashkent, 2000–), 3:46. For a more extended analysis of the Indian theme in Fitrat's work of the period, see Adeeb Khalid, "Visions of India in Central Asian Modernism: The Work of Abdurauf Fitrat," in *Looking at the Coloniser*, ed. Hans Herder and Beate Eschment (Würzburg, 2004), 253–274.

*between a Bukharan Professor and a European on the Subject of New Schools* (1913). What had changed? Fitrat himself provides the answer in a passage in *True Love*, which undoubtedly is autobiographical at some level but is here put in the mouth of Karim Bakhsh in *True Love*: "It is of course necessary to learn European things. Studying in Europe is necessary not so that we praise the Europeans for being just, but to save ourselves from them, to become toothed-and-clawed [for the struggle]. . . . The sciences we learnt in Europe are easy to use in the way of improving the world and peace."[39] The basic premise about the absolute necessity of self-strengthening, and the desirability and inevitability of progress remained unchanged from *The Debate* to *Eastern Policy*. The dramatic shifts in the world order and a new sense of desperation had transformed the diagnosis. Fitrat now proposed a strategic alliance between the Muslim world and Soviet Russia. "The government of Soviet Russia has struggled with European imperialists. Its motto is 'Victory or Death.' This is exactly the kind of effort, and exactly this kind of nobility required to unite the East."[40] Fitrat noted that "Comrade Lenin, the leader of Soviet Russia, is a great man, who has already begun the attempt at awakening and uniting the East."[41] He also noted that given that the European and American proletariat had failed to rise to the Soviets' support, the Soviets had no choice but to form an alliance with the East.[42] Fitrat had been less than enthusiastic about the Bolsheviks in October 1917, but things had clearly changed by 1919.

Dreams of a colonial revolution were helped along by real events. Amanullah Khan's repudiation of British overlordship was seen by many as an anticolonial gesture. Amanullah looked to the Soviets for support and sent a mission to Moscow that passed through Tashkent in May 1919, where it established a consulate. The Soviets took on the task of establishing a modern army in Afghanistan, with the hope of destabilizing British rule in India. For this, they found the cooperation of Cemal Pasha, the exiled Unionist leader, whom they deemed to "enjoy influence" among "Muslim tribes that constitute the majority of the population in the Indus valley and the province of Punjab."[43] At the same time, many Indian

39. Fitrat, *Chin sevish* (1920), in *Tanlangan asarlar*, 3:10.
40. Fitrat, *Sharq siyosati* (n.p. n.d. [Tashkent, 1919]), 40.
41. Ibid., 40–41.
42. Ibid., 43.
43. So Stalin to Trotsky, 02.11.1921, RGASPI, f. 558, op. 2, d. 21, l. 168. The dalliance of the Bolsheviks with the Ottoman triumvirs remains to be fully explored, but see Kamoludin Abdullaev, *Ot Sin'tsziania do Khorasana: Iz istorii sredneaziatskoi emigratsii XX veka* (Dushanbe, 2009), 198–232; V.M. Gilensen, "Sotrudnichestvo krasnoi Moskvy s Enver-Pashoi i Dzhemal'-Pashoi," *Vostok*, 1996, no. 3: 45–63, is oblivious to Turkish sources but presents good archival evidence from Moscow.

activists began to show up in Turkestan via Afghanistan, with the hope of fighting British rule in India with the help of the regime that represented revolution. The Indian revolutionaries of whom Fitrat wrote existed in real life.[44] Tashkent, in fact, was the crossroads of world revolution in 1919 and 1920, with Ottoman subjects of various stripes (exiled Unionists, representatives of the nascent nationalist resistance in Anatolia, Communists such as Mustafa Suphi, as well as ordinary POWs), Iranian exiles, and Afghan diplomats all rubbing shoulders with Indian revolutionaries. Communism was rendered synonymous with anticolonial national revolt. In 1919, Kazım Bey, an Ottoman officer sent to Afghanistan during the war as part of a German-Ottoman mission to lure that country into war against the British, showed up in Turkestan, exhorting the locals to unite with the Soviet government to fight the British, "the enemies of the freedom and independence of all humanity and the constant enemy of Muslims."[45] In January 1920, he was joined at a meeting, hosted by the Tashkent old-city ispolkom, by Hüseyin Hilmi Bey, a representative of the Anatolian national movement, in making the same plea.[46] Not surprisingly, then, the task of liberating the East and the Muslim world from imperialism took on Turkist features. Şakirbeyzade Rahim, another Anatolian representative, asserted, "Turkestan is the path to the liberation of the East, [and] the Red Soviets are the way to our natural and human rights. From now on, Turkestan and Turan will live only under the Red Soviet banner."[47]

The Bolsheviks' Eastern policy tried to ride this sentiment, but with little success. It never amounted to a coherent set of initiatives, nor could they retain control of it. A number of organizations existed at different levels of the party-state and often found themselves in competition with each other. They were often established with open-ended goals ("preparing the toilers of the East for revolution") that were often experimental. The "Eastern" activists attracted to these organizations had their own understandings of revolution and the goals of these institutions. As we shall see in the rest of this book, this problem applied to all Soviet and party institutions in Central Asia, but it stood out in particularly

44. No existing work does justice to this fascinating episode; see, however, G. L. Dmitriev, *Indian Revolutionaries in Central Asia* (Gurgoan, 2002); M. A. Persits, *Revoliutsionery Indii v strane Sovetov: u istokov indiiskogo kommunisticheskogo dvizheniia, 1918–1921* (Moscow, 1973). Maia Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia: How the Ghadar Movement Charted Global Radicalism and Attempted to Overthrow the British Empire* (Berkeley, 2011), chap. 5, places the revolutionaries in the broader context of anticolonial activism in India.

45. *Ishtirokiyun*, 22.03.1919.

46. Mirmullo Shermuhammadov, "Eski shahar 'Ijroiya qo'mita'sida sharafli bir majlis," *Ishtirokiyun*, 13.01.1920. At the same meeting, Kazım Bey echoed the sentiment: "My only hope and my only motto is: 'To destroy the despotic English government in union with the Soviet government.'" *Ishtirokiyun*, 13.01.1920.

47. "Turkiston aholisina," *Ishtirokiyun*, 01.01.1920.

sharp form with the nominally independent institutions formed to serve Eastern policy. The Tashkent branch of the Union for the Liberation of the East attracted many Muslims who had been active in 1917 but marginalized after the Soviet takeover. At the Baku Congress of the Peoples of the East, Enver Pasha showed up as a revolutionary and the congress in general became a forum for the criticism of the Bolshevik record in the Muslim borderlands of the former Russian Empire. Even as the Soviets welcomed a newly assertive Afghanistan as an anticolonial ally (the Afghan mission was reciprocated by a Soviet mission to Kabul headed by Iakov Surits in September 1919), they found that the Afghan government had ambitious plans of its own to extend its influence in Central Asia.[48] The Afghan consulate became the center of Muslim public life in Tashkent, where visitors of all stripes could discuss "eastern policy" according to their own lights.[49]

Nevertheless, the sense of a global struggle against British imperialism dominated the rhetoric of Muslim Communists in Turkestan and provided them with a mission of world-historical proportions. A resolution passed by the first Turkestan Congress of Muslim Communists in May 1919 conveys a sense of this combination of self-justification and self-importance:

> To the revolutionary proletariat of the East, of Turkey, India, Persia, Afghanistan, Khiva, Bukhara, China, to all, to all, to all!
>
> We the Muslim Communists of Turkestan, gathered together at our first regional conference in Tashkent, send you our fraternal greeting, we who are free to you who are oppressed. We wait impatiently for the time when you will follow our example and take control in your own hands, in the hands of local soviets of workers' and peasants' deputies. We hope soon to come shoulder to shoulder with you in your struggle with the yoke of world capitalism, manifested in the East in the form of the English suffocation of native peoples.[50]

Nor was this enthusiasm purely altruistic. If Turkestan was to be the model of a successful anticolonial socialist revolution, then the policies pursued there were of great import. Turkestan's Muslim Communists hoped that the imperatives of "revolutionizing the East" would shape Soviet policies in Turkestan. An anticolonial reading of the revolution was absolutely central to the worldview of the first

48. For an account of Soviet-Afghan relations in this period that emphasizes their dissonance, see S. B. Panin, *Sovetskaia Rossiia i Afganistan: 1919–1929* (Irkutsk, 1998).

49. Joseph Castagné, "Notes sur la politique extérieur de l'Afghanistan depuis 1919," *Revue du monde musulman* 48 (1921): 6–7.

50. GARF, f. 1318, op. 1, d. 441, l. 29. British intelligence picked this resolution up; a partial English translation is to be found in TNA, FO 608/209, f. 7 (29.05.1919).

Muslim Communists in Turkestan, and nowhere is it better reflected than in the political trajectory of Tŭrar Rïsqŭlov.

## The Musburo and the Imagining of a Revolutionary Turkestan

The forced entry of Muslims into the organs of revolutionary power encountered the implacable opposition of the European Communists of Turkestan. Therefore Kobozev pushed for the formation of a Central Bureau of Muslim Communist organizations of Turkestan (Musburo) in March 1919, with the task of propagating the ideas of Soviet power among the indigenous population and of establishing party organizations among it. The Musburo created a network of organizations across Turkestan, recruited among the Muslim populations, and held three conferences between May 1919 and January 1920. The Musburo was granted the right to communicate directly with Moscow and the newspaper *Ishtirokiyun* was placed at its disposal.[51] It became Kobozev's main base of support in his struggles with local Russian leaders and—even more important for our purposes—an institutional framework for the assertion of Muslim power within the new institutions.

The Musburo's cause was helped by a bombshell dropped by the Central Committee on the political situation in Tashkent in July 1919. Via radiogram, it instructed local organs of power that "in the interests of the policies of worker-peasant power in the East, the broad inclusion, proportional to the population, of the native Turkestani population in State activity is necessary, without the requirement of belonging to the party, as long their candidatures are put forward by Muslim worker organizations."[52] If carried out, this directive would have utterly transformed the political situation in Turkestan. Dismayed, TurTsIK sought to conceal the news from the population. Proportional representation, it argued, would lead to a return of the nonclass principles of representative politics embodied by the Constituent Assembly in 1917, and the undoing of the "revolution" in Turkestan. The Musburo, however, swung into action. It organized a public meeting in the old city of Tashkent to publicize the contents of the radiogram, and published the text in *Ishtirokiyun*.[53] By September, with Kobozev's backing, Muslim Communists had acquired a majority in TurTsIK.

51. AAP RUz, f. 60, op. 1, d. 65, l. 20 (Kraikom KPT minutes, 18.04.1919).
52. RGASPI, f. 122,op. 1, d. 47, l. 7.
53. *Ishtirokiyun*, 10.08.1919.

The defense of the indigenous population against the depredations of European settlers, the struggle for food and against the self-proclaimed monopoly declared by the Europeans over the revolution all provided Muslim Communists the cause around which to mobilize. Thus we find Tŭrar Rïsqŭlov in November 1918 reporting to the Turkestan sovnarkom on the situation in Avilyo Ota uezd, where half the Kazakh population of 300,000 had perished from the famine but the settler-dominated uezd soviet had nevertheless levied an additional tax of 5 million rubles on the survivors.[54] For Rïsqŭlov, this was a straightforward form of colonial exploitation or, in the terminology of the day, *kolonizatorstvo*, which rapidly became the key concept for Turkestan's Communists. A term of recent vintage, it was derived from *kolonizator*, which until the revolution had the neutral meaning of "colonist" or "settler," but which had now acquired the connotation of colonial exploitation.[55] It referred to the actions of colonists, not to the system of colonialism as a whole, and as such, kolonizatorstvo was not synonymous with colonialism, nor was a critique of it necessarily a critique of all Russians or of the Russian state. Nevertheless, it was foremost a kind of inequity and exploitation that the revolution was supposed to undo. For Rïsqŭlov, this was the central issue in the revolution, and he went on to derive a theory of anticolonial revolution from this basic fact.

The fundamental fact of life in the colonial world was the opposition of colonists and the colonized and that the fact of ethnic difference between them overshadowed all else. "In Turkestan," he was to write to Lenin in May 1920, "as in the entire colonial East, two dominant groups have existed and [continue to] exist in the social struggle: the oppressed, exploited colonial natives, and European capital."[56] Colonial difference overrode class, for even workers were party to colonial exploitation. Imperial powers sent "their best exploiters and functionaries" to the colonies, people who liked to think that "even a worker is a representative of a higher culture than the natives, a so-called Kulturträger."[57] The situation had not changed after 1917. "In Turkestan," he stated at a gathering of Communists from various Muslim parts of the former Russian Empire in June 1920, "there was no October revolution. The Russians took power and that was the end of it; in the place of some governor

54. TsGARUz, f. 25, op. 1, d. 31, ll. 100–101.

55. The terms *kolonizator* and *kolonizatorstvo* do not appear in prerevolutionary dictionaries, although the former did appear in print. In any case, the usual term used for Russians who settled in non-Russian parts of the Russian Empire was *pereselentsy*, "re-settlers," and not *kolonizatory*. The use of the term *kolonizator* for Russian settlers in Turkestan, and its use to connote exploitation, was a double move of the revolutionary era. The use of the term thus explicitly foregrounded the colonial nature of Turkestan's relationship to Russia.

56. T.R. Ryskulov, "Doklad polnomochnoi delegatsii Turkestanskoi respubliki V.I. Leninu," *Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh* (Almaty, 1997), 3:175.

57. GARF, f. 1318, op. 1, d. 441, l. 79 (speech at the 4th congress of KPT, Sept. 1919).

sits a worker, and that's all."[58] Undoing this ought to have been the goal of the revolution in the colonial peripheries of the empire; again, as he wrote to Lenin, "the October revolution in Turkestan should have been accomplished not only under the slogans of the overthrow of the existing bourgeois power, *but also of the final destruction of all traces of the legacy of all possible colonialist efforts on the part of Tsarist officialdom and kulaks*."[59] The new Soviet state should be based on "the broad, active participation in state activity" of the native population led by indigenous Communists, who should enjoy complete trust and be allowed to set policy—in short, they should be able to define what the revolution was.

The relationship between the Musburo and the many national organizations operating in the old city remains difficult to trace. In December 1917, when the Kokand government organized a demonstration in its favor in Tashkent, the new-city soviet granted permission as long as demonstrators did not enter the new city. It was an open admission that Soviet power was confined to European spaces and exercised elsewhere only through the barrel of Red Guard guns. After Kobozev's intervention, the old cities continued to function in parallel with European spaces, with their soviets enjoying a great degree of de facto independence. Moreover, Muslim cells in the KPT seem to have their own rules of recruitment. G′ozi Yunus, for instance, traveled to Istanbul in August 1918 to petition the Ottoman Ministry of War for help in seeking Turkestan's independence. By October, he was back in Tashkent as a Bolshevik activist.[60] He was to be a prominent figure in the KPT during this period. Memoirs of Ottoman POWs present a picture of the old city functioning on its own, with new arrivals being offered jobs in schools that were run by other Ottoman officers, who also presided over a number of youth groups.[61] The key figure in this regard was Munavvar qori, who worked in the waqf department of Turkompros, but whose real activity seems to have been behind the scenes. He seems to have coordinated the activity of the Ottoman POWs and was so well known among them that when Cemal Pasha passed through Tashkent in August 1920, he could mention Munavvar qori by name in a letter to his fellow exiled triumvir Talât Pasha.[62] It was a sign of how things stood that Cemal also received

58. Dina Amanzholova, ed., *Rossiia i Tsentral'naia Aziia, 1905–1925 gg.: sbornik dokumentov* (Karaganda, 2005), 281.

59. Ryskulov, "Doklad polnomochnoi delegatsii," 175–176 (emphasis in the original).

60. On 8 October 1918 he received a mandate from the "Party of Muslim Bolsheviks" (*Musulmon bolsheviklar firqasi*) to establish a Bolshevik committee in Fo′lod volost in Tashkent uezd; GAgT, f. 12, d. 26, l. 14.

61. Râci Çakıröz, "Türkistan'da Türk Subayları," *Türk Dünyası Tarih Dergisi* (April 1987), 42–43; Ziya Yergök, *Sarıkamış'tan Esarete* (*1915–1920*), ed. Sami Önal (Istanbul, 2005), 230–240.

62. Cemal Pasha to Talât Pasha (01.08.1920), in Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, *İttihatçı Liderlerin Gizli Mektupları* (Istanbul, 2002), 252. See also the remarkable photographs of Munavvar qori with groups of Ottoman officers in A. Ahad Andican, *Cedidizm'den Bağımsızlığa Hariçte Türkistan Mücadelesi* (Istanbul, 2003), 106, 108.

a guard of honor from the marching bands of all the new-method schools of the city.[63] Clearly, the Soviet order in the old cities of Turkestan had own meaning.

Rïsqŭlov was an outsider to this scene, so he must have forged alliances with local actors. One of the few extant publications of the Musburo, other than the newspaper *Ishtirokiyun*, was a pamphlet titled *Navoiy's Thoughts about Humanity*, which drew a sharp contrast between ulama who sold Islam to power (and authorized rulers' views of themselves as the shadow of God on earth) and great thinkers such as Ibn ʿArabi, Jami, Bedil, Rumi, and Navoiy, who held on to truth and rightness (*haq va haqiqat*) and promised a struggle against corrupt power.[64] The pamphlet was published without a byline, but there is good reason to believe that the author was Fitrat.[65] Clearly, there was cooperation between the Jadids and Muslim Communists such as Rïsqŭlov. In general, however, while Rïsqŭlov and his followers used the nation as a fundamental category, they did not use the language of Turkism and did not invoke Temur. And yet, at their moment of triumph, short lived though it proved to be, they pushed through a number of remarkable resolutions in a Turkist vein. In January 1920, the Fifth Congress of the KPT met with a Muslim majority and renamed Turkestan the Turkic Soviet Republic and KPT the Turkic Communist Party, and claimed that "the Turkic Soviet Republic should fully answer to the customary, historical, and economic needs of the core population [of the region]."[66] This remarkable document repays closer examination.

Rïsqŭlov arrived at the idea of a national anticolonial revolution using contemporary Bolshevik political language. "One of the most important conditions for the achievement of the goal [of Communism] advanced by the Communist Party is the self-determination of oppressed . . . peoples," for it "unmask[s] the falsity of the policies of capitalist powers [in this regard]." The liberation of "the oppressed East, . . . the vanguard of world revolution," was another important side of the class struggle that was fundamental to revolution. With the approaching collapse of capitalism, the East was to be an indispensable ally of the Western proletariat. Turkestan, being an integral part of the East and a place where all sorts of lessons could be learned for political work in the rest of the East, was of crucial importance. "If Soviet Russia needs to show the working class of Western capitalist countries the correctness of its system, then it needs

63. Râci Çakıröz, "Türkistan'da Türk Subayları," *Türk Dünyası Tarih Dergisi* (July 1987), 44.

64. *Insoniyat haqinda Navoiyning fikri* (Tashkent, 1919), 2.

65. On Fitrat's authorship, see Hamidulla Boltaboyev, "Professor A. Fitratning nazariy qo'llanmasi," preface to Fitrat, *Adabiyot qoidalari*, ed. H. Boltaboyev (Tashkent, 1995), 6.

66. RGASPI, f. 5, op. 1, d. 2920, ll. 61ob-63; the document has now been published by Amanzholova, ed., *Rossiia i Tsentral'naia Aziia*, 223–229.

even more to show the oppressed East the proper restructuring of the social life of Muslim society in Turkestan and elsewhere." Soviet policy in Turkestan therefore had a global significance. "The crude colonialism of Tsarism produced hate and distrust toward the ruling nation. If the proletariat of the ruling nation now scorns the proletariat of the oppressed nations, it will only produce more distrust." Yet this was what had been happening since 1917. The solution, therefore, was to establish Soviet power in Turkestan in a way that would recognize both its importance to world revolution and the specificity of its colonial situation. The Musburo resolution declared, "Turkestan is the land of Turkic nationalities [*narodnosti*] . . . while the remaining population of Russians, Jews, Armenians, and others represent a newly arrived [*prishlyi*] element." Turkestan should be reestablished (in conformity with the constitution of the RSFSR) as the Turkic Soviet Republic, a national republic for its indigenous nationalities. The territorial basis of Turkestan should be replaced by the national one. This "Turkic Soviet Republic should fully answer to the customary, historical, and economic demands of the life of the [region's] core population." Finally, "in the interests of the international unification of toiling and oppressed peoples," the conference called on other Turkic republics already existing in Soviet Russia to unite with this Turkic republic, and it held out the hope that future republics in neighboring lands (Bukhara, Khiva, Afghanistan, Iran) would also join. For all these reasons, the resolution called for wide ranging autonomy for Turkestan.

Rïsqŭlov had thus connected colonial oppression to class struggle and rendered national self-determination an integral part of it. More than that, he had put Turkestan at the very center of the geopolitical aims of the Soviet regime and its Eastern policy, the interests of which required giving Turkestan wide autonomy. This anticolonial rhetorical move was coupled with a sweeping national one, which turned Turkestan into the national republic of Turkic peoples, whose unity was seen as a crucial aspect of internationalism, just as it turned Russian settlers into immigrants (*prishlye*). Colonial oppression had a class dimension to it, to be sure, but nation here trumped class. The whole "East" was oppressed and functioned as the "vanguard of world revolution." In the colonial periphery of the Russian Empire, revolution made sense only as a national enterprise.

What Rïsqŭlov and the Musburo argued here was argued by many other Muslim Communists during the Russian revolution: that in the non-Russian colonial peripheries of the empire, revolution made sense only as a national anticolonial struggle; that the colonial world was oppressed as a whole; that the duty of the Russian revolution was to undo colonial oppression at home and to liberate the colonial world abroad; and that Muslim Communists from the Soviet state had a special place in this enterprise. Revolution was a means of national liberation and modernization. This was, in Alexandre Bennigsen's apt phrase, "Muslim

National Communism,"[67] and best known to us through the figure of Mirsayät Soltangaliyev (Sultan-Galiev), the Tatar Communist who rose to be a member of the collegium of Narkomnats and who was accused in 1923 of masterminding a nationalist "antiparty" faction. Yet Muslim national Communism was neither a unified theory (or "deviation"), nor was it embodied by a single organization headed by Soltangaliyev. Rather, different activists arrived at Muslim national Communism independently. In Azerbaijan, Nəriman Nərimanov articulated remarkably similar views on nation, Islam, and revolution as did Rïsqŭlov in Turekstan.[68] Nor was the Musburo part of a wider network of organizations, but specific to Turkestan. Organizations of Muslim Communists had existed in European Russia since the first months of the revolution. An All-Russian Congress of Muslim Communists convened in Moscow in November 1918 and elected a Central Bureau of Muslim Communist Organizations of the Russian Communist Party, but its name was misleading, for it was largely a Tatar affair. Turkestan was cut off and much too far away, its problems too different from those of the Volga-Urals region, for there to be any common cause.[69] A second congress, now called the Congress of Muslim Communist Organizations of the Peoples of the East, met in November 1919, but again without any significant Turkestani participation.[70] Although the Musburo conducted some correspondence with the Central Bureau of Muslim Communist Organizations, it was not a major axis of its organizational or political activity.[71] Rïsqŭlov had little direct contact with Muslim Communists from outside Turkestan during 1919. It was only in May 1920, when he traveled to Moscow (see below) that he met his counterparts from other regions of the Soviet state. His national communism was an independent invention. The Russian revolution was a postcolonial moment and national liberation and anticolonialism inhered in the revolution itself.

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67. Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslim National Communism in the Soviet Union: A Revolutionary Strategy for the Colonial World* (Chicago, 1979).

68. See Jörg Baberowski, *Der Feind ist überall: Stalinismus im Kaukasus* (Munich, 2003), 225–313. Unlike both Rïsqŭlov and Soltangaliyev, Nêrimanov (1870–1925) had been an established cultural and political figure in Transcaucasia before 1917, with numerous plays to his credit. For a literary biography, see Teymur Əhmədov, *Nəriman Nərimanov: Yaradacılıq yolu* (Baku, 2005).

69. RGASPI, f. 583, d. 1.

70. RGASPI, f. 583, d. 4. The best account of these conferences is to be found in A.I. Ishanov, *Rol' Kompartii i Sovetskogo pravitel'stva v sozdanii natsional'noi gosudarstvennosti uzbekskogo naroda* (Tashkent, 1978), chap. 1.

71. The Central Bureau could be used as yet another channel of communication to the center, as when Rïsqŭlov asked it in September 1919 to inform Stalin of the "abnormal situation" prevailing in Turkestan and to ask central organs of the government and the party not to take any decisions on the basis of "one-sided reports and statements" that Tashkent's "old Bolsheviks" might send in. RGASPI, f. 122, op. 1, d. 30, ll. 33–33ob. However, surviving records show no evidence of systematic interaction between Musburo and the Central Bureau.

## The Turkkomissiia and the Assertion of Central Control

The Musburo's moment of triumph also proved to be its undoing. In October 1919, the Red Army was able to break the Orenburg blockade and restore a direct rail link between Moscow and Turkestan. Central authorities were finally able to assert direct control on Turkestan. Units of the Red Army arrived in significant numbers just as the Central Committee appointed a Turkestan Commission (Turkkomissiia) as its plenipotentiary organ to govern the region. Headed by Shalva Eliava, the commission included Gleb Bokii, Mikhail Frunze, Filipp Goloshchekin, Valerian Kuibyshev, and Jānis Rudzutaks. Its arrival altered the political landscape in Turkestan quite drastically and put an end to the period of quasi-independence from the center that the region had enjoyed since March 1917.[72]

The Musburo hoped that the commission would support it against the settlers. Rïsqŭlov led a crowd of five hundred Muslims in welcoming the first members of the commission when they arrived in Tashkent on 4 November.[73] The first speeches of members of the commission indeed struck the right tone. Eliava was reported to have said that Soviet Russia did not demand a social revolution from the East, and that it was sufficient to bring about national independence.[74] In December, visiting Russian enclaves in Bukhara, he told a gathering of Russians that as a result of the "incorrect policies of 1918 . . . the Soviet government came to be seen as worse than the former Nicholas government by the Muslim masses."[75] Indeed, kolonizatorstvo became the political sin of the moment, and the Turkkomissiia supported the ouster of many Russian figures. The Musburo rode this wave and even resolved to raise a 200,000-strong Muslim Red Army. TurTsIK approved the resolution and sent it, along with a request for money and command staff, to the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and to Lenin personally.[76] Members of the Turkkomissiia had no objection to this request, nor did they have a definite opinion on the January resolutions that renamed Turkestan and the KPT.[77]

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72. On the Turkkomissiia, see A. Khalid, "Turkestan v 1917–1922 godakh: bor′ba za vlast′ na okraine Rossii," in *Tragediia velikoi derzhavy: natsional'nyi vopros i raspad Sovetskogo Soiuza* (Moscow, 2005), 214–222; V.L. Genis, "*S Bukharoi nado konchat'. . .": k istorii butaforskikh revoliutsii* (Moscow, 2001); B.A. Koshchanov, *Pravo na vtorzhenie* (Nukus, 1993); for a late Soviet account, see A. Akramov and K. Avliiakulov, *V.I. Lenin, Turkkomissiia i ukreplenie sovetskoi vlasti v Srednei Azii* (Tashkent, 1991).

73. *Ishtirokiyun*, 12.11.1919.

74. *Ishtirokiyun*, 24.12.1919.

75. "Turkiston komisiyasi Yongo Buxoroda," *Ishtirokiyun*, 04.01.1920.

76. GARF, f. 1235, op. 93, d. 582, l. 152.

77. As Eliava reported to Moscow on 23 January, he and Kuibyshev were inclined to approve the resolutions, while Rudzutaks was opposed and Goloshchekin uncommitted. Frunze had still not arrived in Tashkent. GARF, f. 130, op. 4, d. 786, l. 4.

Yet there were problems from the outset. The Turkkomissiia had come to establish central control over Turkestan, not to empower the Musburo, and even its actions against Turkestan's settler Communists were strategic rather than punitive. The Musburo was therefore unable to establish the same cordial relations with the Turkkomissiia that it had with Kobozev. Things came to a head with the belated arrival in February 1920 of Mikhail Frunze, the commander of the Turkestan Front of the Red Army and a member of the Turkkomissiia. Having been born in Pishpek (now Bishkek, the city bore his name for much of the Soviet period), he considered himself a "Turkestani," even though for local Communists, this only meant that he was one of the settlers. Frunze took on Rïsqŭlov and the Musburo most aggressively, harshly criticizing their stance as "narrow petty bourgeois nationalism," and forcing the Turkkomissiia to annul the resolutions of the Musburo on renaming Turkestan and the KPT. Consequently an intense struggle between Turkkomissiia and Turkestan's Muslim Communists, who now controlled both the KPT Central Committee and TurTsIK, erupted in spring 1920. Muslim Communists went on the offensive. They dragged their feet in implementing decisions of the Turkkomissiia and incessantly complained to the center about its conduct. At stake were issues both of tactics and of principle. Muslim Communists made the struggle against kolonizatorstvo the central pillar of their program. They tied the actions of European settlers in an indictment of all policies pursued until then by the Tashkent government. G′ozi Yunus toured Shïmkent uezd in Syr Darya oblast and reported that all the trees in orchards and farmland belonging to Muslims had been cut down, but the settler village of Kazanskii had a completely different look. "This is inhabited by Turkestan's fake masters, the Russian Ukes [*Rus xoxo'llari*]. . . . A group of narrow nationalists, having washed their hands with the blood of the people, put on the mask of Bolsheviks or Left SRs, and cleansed the uezd of its Muslims." Having usurped the land of Kazakh and Kyrgyz nomads in 1916, they established "the dictatorship of landlords and kulaks in the Russian settlements." The party and state institutions contained "many thieves under the mask of Bolsheviks," but "naturally, given that the Soviet government established in 1918 was headed by narrow nationalist comrades, complaints about such behavior were ineffective."[78] In expressing the hope that the Turkkomissiia would set things right, G′ozi Yunus positioned Muslim Communists as the logical bearers of Soviet rule in Turkestan.

Frunze, however, stood firm and led the Turkkomissiia to take a hard line against national Communism. In April, he even suggested abolishing the KPT

78. G′ozi Yunus, "Chimkand va Sayrom ahvoli," *Ishtirokiyun*, 02.03.1920. For other accounts of kolonizatorstvo, see *Ishtirokiyun*, 17.02.1920, 27.02.1920, 03.03.1920.

and beginning anew.[79] Eventually, in May, Muslim Communists circumvented the Turkkomissiia entirely and decided to put their case directly before Lenin and the Central Committee through an "extraordinary delegation" headed by Rïsqŭlov. Members of the Turkkomissiia also headed to Moscow to fight out the case. Lenin was personally involved in the deliberations, which took place just as the party was preparing to host the Second Congress of the Comintern, where the national and colonial questions were high on the agenda. Rïsqŭlov again argued on the basis of the significance of Turkestan to Soviet Eastern policy and of the colonial nature of national relations existing there to claim that Turkestan should be a national republic enjoying wide ranging autonomy, including the right to conduct its own foreign policy and to print its own money (both of which had in fact been the practice in the period since 1917).[80]

The gambit did not succeed and the delegation was overruled. Lenin was serious about Turkestan being treated gently, but there were limits to what he deemed permissible, and the Muslim Communists' demands had clearly crossed those limits. On 22 June, the Politburo passed a resolution that defined Turkestan's position in the Soviet state. External relations, external trade, and military affairs were to be the exclusive domain of the center and Turkestan's economic and food-supply policies were to operate within the framework of plans established by the government of the RSFSR. "Recognizing the Kazakhs, Uzbeks, and Turkmens as the indigenous peoples of Turkestan," the decree proclaimed "the Turkestan Soviet Socialist Republic . . . as an autonomous part of the RSFSR."[81] The Politburo granted that Turkestan had an indigenous population, but it refused to accord it the kind of autonomy that various actors, whether in the autonomous government in Kokand or in the Musburo, had demanded. At the same time, the Politburo transformed the Turkkomissiia into the Turkestan Bureau (Turkburo) as the standing plenipotentiary agent of central power. The Turkburo, which became the Central Asia Bureau, or Sredazburo, in 1922 when its jurisdiction was extended to Bukhara and Khiva as well, was expected to be the political mechanism for the assertion of central power. The Politburo also ordered the reelection of all party and soviet committees in Turkestan, in which Rïsqŭlov and his followers were ousted from office. This process was accompanied by a wave of arrests of "nationalists" as well as the deportations of many Europeans for kolonizatorstvo. Nearly two thousand European functionaries were deported

79. Turkkomissiia, *protokol* no. 24 (30.04.1920), RGASPI, f. 5, op. 1, d. 2920, ll. 64–64ob.

80. "Proekt Polozheniia Turkestanskoi avtonomnoi sovetskoi respubliki Ross. Sots. Federatsii" (May 1920), RGASPI, f. 5, op. 1, d. 2920, ll. 53–56. The debates of 1920 are described in detail in Hallez, "Communisme national," 380–436.

81. GARF, f. 1235, op. 93, d. 582, ll. 173–173ob; *Izvestiia* (Moscow), 27.08.1920.

from Turkestan in the autumn and winter of 1920–21, although the number of those arrested for "nationalism" remains unknown.[82] Rïsqŭlov himself was sent off to a desk job in Narkomnats, first in Moscow and then in Baku.[83]

The summer of 1920 thus marked a turning point in the establishment of Soviet rule in Turkestan. The previous two years had been a period of flux, both because of the absence of central control and of uncertainty over the limits of the permissible in terms of autonomy. This uncertainty had allowed Rïsqŭlov to theorize about anticolonial revolution rooted in the nation. That period was now over. By imposing a certain degree of control over its institutions in Turkestan, the center had curtailed the horizons of the national Communists' ambitions. From now on, national Communists were to work under closer scrutiny of the center and within more circumscribed ideological bounds. It was also a turning point in the fortunes of national organizations outside the Soviet framework. Most of the youth groups were either abolished or brought under Soviet control and the Ottoman POWs began to depart the scene. The national movement was now pushed underground. However, at the same moment as Turkestan was being domesticated, the Bolshevik conquest of Bukhara opened up entirely new avenues of hope for the national movement. Faced with the necessity of installing a government composed of Bukharans, the Soviets had little choice but to turn to Bukharan Jadids who had been radicalized by their persecution by the emir. Bukhara became a national project of a different sort.

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82. R. Aripov and N. Mil′shtein, *Iz istorii organov gosbezopasnosti Uzbekistana* (Tashkent, 1967), 101.

83. The suggestion to remove Rïsqŭlov from the scene had come from the Turkkomissiia. "Given his present state of mind," wrote V. V. Kuibyshev, "Rïsqŭlov is somewhat dangerous for our line in the East. We therefore suggest his transfer to Moscow under the direction of the Central Committee." Kuibyshev to CC, 09.08.1920, in Amanzholova, ed., *Rossiia i Tsentral'naia Aziia*, 286–287.