Cultivating the Periphery: Bolshevik Civilising Missions and 'Colonialism' in Soviet Central Asia*

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RESÜMEE

Exzeptionalismus und die proklamierte historische Sonderrolle waren die ideologischen Fundamente, auf denen die Bolschewiki nach 1917 ihre zivilisatorische Mission in den Randzonen des sowjetischen Herrschaftsbereichs aufbauten. ‚Westliche' koloniale Herrschaftsmodelle bildeten die Negativfolie für ihre revolutionären Neuansätze. Trotzdem kann die Frage nicht eindeutig beantwortet werden, ob es sich bei der Sowjetunion um einen Kolonialstaat gehandelt habe. Vielmehr gilt es, die innere Dynamik der Herrschaftsinstitutionen und ihrer Akteure genauer zu untersuchen, um Schlussfolgerungen über die Vergleichbarkeit des sowjetischen Sonderwegs zu ziehen und den ‚Kolonialismus' in diesem Prozess genauer zu verorten. Dazu werden nach einer Schilderung der aktuellen Forschungsdiskussion die Biographien dreier führender Bolschewiki untersucht, die die Geschicke des sowjetischen Zentralasien zwischen 1924 und 1941 prägten.

Exceptionalism was not an empty phrase but the founding principle of the Soviet Union. The Bolsheviks were not only fighting the basic mechanisms of the capitalist world economy but were trying to fundamentally reverse the 'West-European' political standards of their time:

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> *The Soviet Union gave to the world new models to solve the problems of the nation-state. Everything in this area known from Western-European practice – and, on the whole, the experience of the bourgeois democratic countries – can in no way be compared to the foundational principles which the USSR, and the policies of the leading Communist Party, applied and are applying to solve one of the most difficult social questions – the question of peaceful coexistence of different nationalities on the basis of true equality.*[1]

The pursuit of national 'equality' through the political instruments of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' served as the foundation of Bolshevik rule in Soviet Central Asia.[2] In marked difference from Western countries, as well as from their Tsarist predecessors, the Bolsheviks proclaimed an anti-colonial agenda of national 'liberation'. With this agenda, their policies caused much debate in the Western capitals.[3] Additionally, as before 1917 – when Tsarist rule in Turkestan had served as a model for German colonial planners and was closely watched by British observers in nearby India[4] – Soviet rule in Central Asia informed Western judgments of the Bolshevik's political and economic performance. Certainly, analysts in the Western world (and Soviet ideologues alike) understood the politics of Soviet 'socialist development' in Central Asia as global colonial politics.[5]

The question this article tries to approach is in which ways the techniques of a 'civilising mission' became intertwined with genuine attempts by the Soviet leadership to forge cultural, social and economic change in an age of modernising dictatorships and world-wide ideological competition. It argues that the rubrication of the Soviet Union as a 'colonial' enterprise could in fact be a hindrance to understanding precisely how the renewal of the Russian empire was achieved by the Bolsheviks after 1917.[6] To prove this, the article takes as a point of departure a short review of recent historiographical and political debates on Russian and Soviet 'colonialism'. It then moves on to describe the legacy that the Bolsheviks were rejecting: Tsarist 'colonial' rule in the Turkestan between 1865 and 1917. Focusing on the question of Russian racism, the third part of the article then traces the struggle to overcome the Tsarist 'colonial' legacy with a programme to promote 'equality' and 'national self-determination'. The last sections examine two key

1 M. Burov, Ekonomicheskaia storona problemy natsional'nogo razmezhevaniia Srednei Azii [The economic aspect of national delimitation in Central Asia], in: Narodnoe khoziaistvo Srednei Azii [The Economy of Central Asia], (1925) 2-3, pp. 14-25, here p. 14.

2 V. I. Lenin, Pol'noe sobranie sochenenii [Complete collected works], v. 43, Moscow 1963, pp. 241-247. For an opposing view of a disappointed former Bolshevik sympathiser, see: M. Chokai-ogly, Turkestan pod vlast'iu Sovetov. K kharakteristike diktatury proletariata [Turkestan under Soviet power. On the character of the proletarian dictatorship], Paris 1935.

3 M. Thomas, Albert Sarraut, French Colonial Development, and the Communist Threat, 1919–1930, in: Journal of Modern History, 77 (2005) 4, pp. 917-955.

4 W. Busse, Bewässerungswirtschaft in Turan und ihre Anwendung in der Landeskultur, Jena 1915, esp. pp. iii-v; A. Morrison, Russian Rule in Samarkand, 1869–1910. A Comparison with British India, Oxford 2008, pp. 5-8.

5 R. Asmis, Als Wirtschaftspionier in Russisch-Asien. Tagebuchblätter, Berlin 1926 [1924]; O. Caroe, Soviet Empire: The Turks of Central Asia and Stalinism, London 1967 [1954]; A. G. Park, Bolshevism in Turkestan, 1917–1927, New York 1957. For more references, see below, footnotes 15-18.

6 On a thorough discussion of this issue, see: A. Khalid, Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization: Early Soviet Central Asia in Comparative Perspective, in: Slavic Review, 65 (2006) 2, pp. 231-251.

features of alleged Soviet 'colonial' rule in Uzbekistan – the economically most viable of the newly formed national republics of Tsarist Turkestan – namely, cotton production and mass mobilisation for large-scale irrigation construction. It will be argued that the Bolsheviks understood their forceful and disruptive 'modernisation' of cotton cultivation as their main instrument to inflict 'progress' as well as a new 'national' culture upon the heterogeneous populations of Uzbekistan.

The violent 'modernisation' of society and economy was at the core of Bolshevik 'civilising mission' in Central Asia. But the Bolshevik agenda for change was broad and therefore also quite vague. Contrary to the assertion that the 'general party line' trumpeted the ideas and actions of individual party members, policies in Central Asia were shaped to a large extent by the personal opinions and biographical experiences of top level Bolsheviks. The geographical distance, a poor communications infrastructure, and the Bolshevik system of government that relied on personal networks and patronage, all suggest a biographical approach.[7] Rather than focusing on individual Soviet campaigns – such as the unveiling of women or the struggle against pre-arranged marriages and bride price[8] – the biographical approach allows us to take a closer look at the changes that Soviet 'civilising missions' underwent in the period between 1924 and 1941.

To that end, three biographies of high-level Bolshevik representatives will be examined more closely and will be paralleled with the different ways in which the Soviet 'civilising mission' was practically implemented. These biographies are indicative of how and at what price the Russian empire could be renewed after the watershed of 1917, but they also demonstrate how Soviet 'civilising missions' shaped the personal and political experience of key members of the Soviet elite – whether they were emissaries from Moscow to implement central policies (Isaak Zelenskii), Bolsheviks stemming from the former native 'colonial' elite (Faizulla Khojaev), or Uzbek party careerists who were able to fundamentally reshape centre-periphery relations in the context of the Stalinist system after 1937 (Usman Iusupov). Their biographies demonstrate, firstly, how Soviet 'nationalism' replaced the 'colonial' inequality and racism of the revolutionary period as a dominating political factor and, secondly, how the Uzbek native Bolshevik leadership was instrumental in implementing the Soviet 'civilising mission'.

1. Soviet 'Colonialism'?

Applying the concept 'colonialism' to the history of the Russian empire and its heir after 1917, the Soviet Union, has been and remains a bone of contention: Historians continue to struggle with the "confused nature of Russian colonialism", as one recently characterised Russian rule in Central Asia between the first conquest in 1865 and the Bolsheviks'

7 G. M. Easter, Reconstructing the State: Personal Networks and Elite Identity in Soviet Russia, Cambridge (Mass.) 2000; T. H. Rigby, Early Provincial Cliques and the Rise of Stalin, in: id., Political Elites in the USSR: Central Leaders and Local Cadres from Lenin to Gorbachev, Aldershot 1990, pp. 43-72.

8 See e.g.: D. Northrop, Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia, Ithaca / London 2004.

renewed conquest of the territories between 1919 and 1923.[9] Likewise, the events and developments of the early period of the Bolshevik regime in Central Asia between 1924 and 1941 seem to be beset with contradictions and conflicts. On the one hand, the creation of new Soviet national republics and the promotion of indigenous leadership would hardly fit into the framework of European colonial rule; on the other hand, the overextension of cotton cultivation in Central Asia and the over-centralisation of the planned economy led historians to muse about 'Soviet colonialism', concluding that the Soviet Union was distinctive in its "state-sponsored effort to turn so-called backward peoples into nations […] within the context of a unified state with a colonial-type economy and administrative structure".[10]

These difficulties of categorisation could be discarded without ceremony as intellectual gymnastics if they did not touch upon certain sensitive issues concerning recent reinterpretations of the post-Cold War political order. Today, alleged 'Russian colonialism' serves as a cornerstone of ongoing debates about history and national identity in the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union. Take the example of Georgia: In his 1991 memoirs *The Future Belongs to Freedom*, Eduard Shevardnadze presented the view that his country of birth had been a Russian colony since 1801, when in a process of annexation and invasion, Georgia was piece by piece swallowed up by Tsarist Russia. Shevardnadze – serving as the Georgian First Secretary during the Brezhnev period, and thereafter as Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR under Gorbachev – maintained in his version of the imperial history that Russia had brought Georgia under the "imperial yoke" and had exercised "typical colonial politics".[11] On the other hand, centre-periphery relations during the Soviet period were, in his view, characterised by over-centralisation of planning and decision making, a mechanism of rule that in the long run proved as destructive for Georgia as the Tsarist 'colonial politics' had been prior to 1917.[12] Unsurprisingly, as a former member of the Soviet elite, Shevardnadze had few things to say about 'Soviet colonialism'. But notably, his version of the role of 'colonialism' in Russian history has become the most prominent understanding of the past in Georgia, as well as in other post-Soviet states (the authoritarian rulers of these states having endorsed it, and their historians having followed suit).[13]

9 J. Sahadeo, Russian Colonial Society in Tashkent, 1865–1923, Bloomington (In.) 2007, p. 233.

10 F. Hirsch, Toward an Empire of Nation: Border-Making and the Formation of Soviet National Identities, in: Russian Review, 59 (2000) 2, pp. 201-226, here p. 204.

11 E. Shevardnadze, The Future Belongs to Freedom, London 1991, p. 5.

12 Ibid., pp. 23-26, 30-33.

13 See e.g.: Turkestan v nachale xx veka. K istorii istokov natsional'noi nezavisimosti [Turkestan at the beginning of the twentieth century. On the history of the sources of national independence], Tashkent 2000; N. Abdurakhimova, The Colonial System of Power in Turkestan, in: International Journal of Middle East Studies, 34 (2002) 2, pp. 239-262. On the political framework, see: M. Laruelle, Wiedergeburt per Dekret. Nationsbildung in Zentralasien, in: Osteuropa, 57 (2007) 8-9, pp. 139-154.

In Western academic discussion, Russia and the Soviet Union is largely absent from debates about colonialism.[14] There seem to be few doubts that this absence is an outcome of Cold War science (where, under the heading 'colonialism', power relations between the First and the Third Worlds, Europe, Asia and Africa, were in the centre of interest). While during the 1950s the Soviet enemy behind the Iron Curtain figured decidedly as a 'colonial empire' which deliberately oppressed its subject nations,[15] with the decolonisation crisis of the 1960s, more nuanced approaches were developed as sociological methods entered historical analysis. Subsequently, the conceptual framework of the 'colonialism' argument was shifted away from the issue of 'national oppression' towards the study of 'economic development' and 'modernisation'.[16] The research was set apart from inquiries into colonialism and decolonisation, and the rise of Soviet Studies as a separate academic discipline largely prevented comparative studies of the Second and the Third Worlds, the focus of research instead resting upon arguments over the internal workings of totalitarian dictatorships.[17]

After 1991, when the growing influence of post-colonial theory seemed to pave new ground for portraying Soviet rule in Central Asia as 'colonialism',[18] the break-up of the Soviet Union instead gave rise to a fast growing literature on Soviet nationality policies and nationality relations, a framing of the question apparently more suited to addressing the historical background of the sudden and unexpected disintegration of Europe's 'last empire'.[19] Thus, the dispute over the role of 'colonialism' in Soviet history has had and continues to have firm institutional and ideological restrictions with which historians have to deal. Nonetheless, in the wake of the 'cultural turn' and inspired by the inquiries into post-colonialism, historians of Central Asia unearthed the decisive role of custom and religious practices, lifestyle and differing views of reality that played a role in the encounter between Russians and the native populations of Central Asia. One key element of this encounter was the desire of government officials to impose the norms and standards of European 'civilisation' on Central Asian societies. Russian and Soviet 'civilising missions' relied on the assumption that a perceived religious and ethnic difference of cultural forms and economic behaviour could be overcome by defining 'European'

14 J. Osterhammel, Russland und der Vergleich zwischen Imperien. Einige Anknüpfungspunkte, in: Comparativ, 18 (2008) 2, pp. 11-26.

15 A representative work is: W. Baczkowski, Russian Colonialism: The Tsarist and Soviet Empires, in: R. Strausz-Hupé/H. W. Hazard (eds.), The Idea of Colonialism, New York 1958, pp. 70-113. For a political application, see: R. F. Kennedy, The Soviet Brand of Colonialism, in: New York Times Magazine, 8 April 1956, p. SM15.

16 A. Nove/J. A. Newth, The Soviet Middle East: A Model of Development? London 1967; S. P. Dunn/E. Dunn, Soviet Regime and Native Culture in Central Asia and Kazakhstan: The Major Peoples, in: Current Anthropology, 8 (1967) 3, pp. 147-208; A. Bennigsen, Colonization and Decolonization in the Soviet Union, in: Journal of Contemporary History, 4 (1969) 1, pp. 141-151; W. K. Medliny/W. R. Cave/F. Carpenter, Education and Development in Central Asia: A Case Study on Social Change in Uzbekistan, Leiden 1971.

17 W. Myer, Islam and Colonialism: Western Perspectives on Soviet Asia, London 2002. For a rare exception, see: A. W. Gouldner, Stalinism: A Study of Internal Colonialism, in: Telos, 34 (1977/1978), pp. 5-48.

18 D. Kandiyoti, Post-Colonialism Compared: Potentials and Limitations in the Middle East and Central Asia, in: International Journal of Middle East Studies, 34 (2002) 2, pp. 279-297.

19 J. L. H. Keep, Last of the Empires: A History of the Soviet Union, 1945–1991, Oxford 1995; R. G. Suny, The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union, Stanford 1995.

norms of conduct that, if widely accepted by the population, would create 'progress' and 'modernity' in regions geographically distant from the Russian European heartland.[20] The distinctive feature of the Russian imperial and Soviet 'civilising missions' – setting them apart from the Western colonial states – seems to be the observation that they were always applied to the 'colonial' periphery *and* to the Russian heartland alike with equal force.[21] From the state elite's point of view, the Turkmen tribes of the Karakum desert and the Russian peasants of the Tambov region alike defied the standards of Western civilisation that Russia had to achieve. Intellectual and political debates about '*kulturnost*' ('culturedness') were both indicator and shorthand for the disconnect between the elite's idea of how the population should live and the population's continual shortfall of these expectations.[22] Moreover, the ideology of European socialism was a vehicle for the Bolsheviks to demand 'progress' and 'modernisation' from the populations of the Soviet Union (especially the peasantry) which to them seemed 'dark' and 'backward'.[23] The enormous gulf between the ruling elites of Russia and the Soviet Union (and their representations of state, culture, and future), on the one hand, and the everyday life experience of ordinary people, on the other hand, was a continuous source and motive for attempts to promote 'civilisation'.

2. 'Russian' Central Asia before and after 1917

Tsarist officials in Central Asia before 1917 presented themselves as carriers of 'European civilisation'. Nonetheless, they by and large refrained from active campaigns to change customs and traditions of the native populations of Turkestan, because the stability of their fragile regime was their main objective.[24] Subsequently, if one stresses fragility, under-government and indirect rule as defining features of 'colonialism', Russian Turkestan was indeed a 'colony'. The region had come under Russian control in the course

20 J. Baberowski, Auf der Suche nach Eindeutigkeit. Kolonialismus und zivilisatorische Mission im Zarenreich und in der Sowjetunion, in: Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas, 47 (1999) 4, pp. 482-503.

21 D. Geyer, Der russische Imperialismus. Studien über den Zusammenhang von innerer und auswärtiger Politik, Göttingen 1977, p. 239; V. Kaganskii, Kul'turnyi landshaft i sovetskoe obitaemoe prostranstvo [Cultural landscape and Soviet inhabited space], Moscow 2001, pp. 143-144.

22 S. P. Frank, Confronting the Domestic Other: Rural Popular Culture and Its Enemies in Fin-de-Siècle Russia, in: S. P. Frank / M. D. Steinberg (eds.), Cultures in Flux: Lower-Class Values, Practices, and Resistance in Late Imperial Russia, Princeton 1994, pp. 74-107; W. Sunderland, The 'Colonial Question': Visions of Colonization in Late Imperial Russia, in: Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas, 48 (2000) 2, pp. 210-232; V. Volkov, The Concept of kul'turnost': Notes on the Stalinist Civilizing Process, in: S. Fitzpatrick (ed.), Stalinism: New Directions, London/New York 2000, pp. 210-230; A. Edgar, Bolshevism, Patriarchy, and the Nation: The Soviet 'Emancipation' of Muslim Women in Pan-Islamic Perspective, in: Slavic Review, 65 (2006) 2, pp. 252-272.

23 L. Viola, Peasant Rebels under Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance, New York / Oxford 1999, pp. 13-44; Y. Slezkine, From Savages to Citizens: The Cultural Revolution in the Soviet Far North, 1928–1938, in: Slavic Review, 51 (1992) 1, pp. 52-72.

24 A. Morrison, Russian Rule (footnote 4), pp. 30-36. See also: S. N. Abashin / D. I. Arapov / N. E. Bekmakhanova (eds.), Tsentral'naia Aziia v sostave Rossiiskoi imperii [Central Asia as a component of the Russian empire], Moscow 2008.

of the 'Great Game' – an attempt to delimit spheres of interest between the British and Russian empires in Central Asia during the 1860s and 1870s. Military interests, foremost, dictated the Russian administration's actions in Turkestan. Therefore it took the government more than twenty years after the conquest before officials actively began to pursue the region's economic development, especially in the area of cotton cultivation.[25] In the capital St. Petersburg, the southward extension of the borders in Central Asia was discussed with much controversy, and it was only a very small group within the military elite that consequently pushed forward an agenda to transform the Russian empire into a 'colonial state'.[26]

At the time of the conquest of Central Asia, a system of administration of non-Russian and non-Orthodox populations within the empire was firmly in place, although the territories of the heterogeneous state were governed in various and widely differing ways.[27] An overarching strategy of the bureaucrats in St. Petersburg was to include new populations by guaranteeing religious toleration under the auspices of the rule of the Tsar. This strategy was likewise applied to Turkestan and its Muslim population: Orthodox proselytising was not permitted in the newly gained territories, Shari'a courts continued to function, and religious authorities retained their positions.[28] Although Muslim judges and imams played an instrumental role in strengthening Russian administration, the governors of Turkestan proclaimed a policy of so-called '*ignorirovanie*' of Islam. They hoped that the Muslim population would recognise their 'backwardness', 'stubbornness' and 'prejudice', and eventually convert to Christianity.[29] Thus, if one determines cultural and economic penetration of a territory by a strong 'colonial state' to be colonialism's main characteristic, Tsarist Russia did not qualify as a 'colonial' empire. Russian rule affected the broad population of Central Asia and its way of life only marginally.

This system of 'weak' imperial inclusion became porous as Russia entered the revolutionary period. When social unrest spread throughout the vast country in 1905, the Russian elite began to alter its minority policies in fundamental ways. Russian nationalism, Islamophobia and anti-nomad policies (aiming at their sedentarisation) came to dominate government policy and rapidly reshaped the situation in the Central Asian territories: In the towns, Russian workers (especially on the strategically important railroads) were systematically provided with better conditions and given higher wages than their Central Asian counterparts. By granting privileges, the local government in Turkestan aimed at guaranteeing their loyalty to and support of the Tsarist regime. Workers responded

25 D. Mackenzie, Turkestan's Significance to Russia (1850–1917), in: Russian Review, 33 (1974) 2, pp. 167-188.

26 A. Marshall, The Russian General Staff and Asia, 1800–1917, London 2006, pp. 34-45. See also: J. Sahadeo, Russian Colonial Society (footnote 9), pp. 152-153.

27 A. Kappeler, Rußland als Vielvölkerreich. Entstehung, Geschichte, Zerfall, München 2001 [1992], pp. 134-138 passim; A. J. Rieber, Sedimentary Society, in: E. W. Clowes / S. D. Kassow / J. L. West (eds.), Between Tsar and People: Educated Society and the Quest for Public Identity in Late Imperial Russia, Princeton 1991, pp. 343-366, esp. pp. 348-350. See also: J. Baberowski / D. Feest / C. Gumb (eds.), Imperiale Herrschaft in der Provinz. Repräsentationen politischer Macht im späten Zarenreich, Frankfurt am Main 2008.

28 R. Crews, For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia, Cambridge (Mass.) 2006, pp. 241-292.

29 A. Morrison, Russian Rule (footnote 4), pp. 55-58, 152-156.

favourably to this change of circumstances and adopted strategies of exclusion and segregation toward Muslim town dwellers.[30] In the countryside, a massive programme of the St. Petersburg government was started to resettle peasants from the Russian heartland in the Semireche province of Turkestan in order to ease social tensions and 'overpopulation' in the Russian villages. Much to the dismay of local Tsarist administrators in Turkestan, Russian peasants settled in great numbers on nomad pastures. The settlement campaign organised by the central government after 1905 led to a dramatic increase of conflicts between nomads and settlers, and tensions erupted violently in a large-scale uprising of Kazakh nomads in 1916.[31]

During the Civil War from 1918 to 1923 – when devastating famine struck the region and tens of thousands of Central Asians died of starvation – the Russian-dominated revolutionary workers' councils (*sovety*) distributed the available food deliveries exclusively to Russians. The ethnically divided economy spurred armed clashes, pogroms and settler-nomad conflicts that led to general breakdown. Central Asians were systematically excluded from participation in the government.[32] Ethnic tension on the ground was therefore not, as the Bolsheviks tried to convince themselves and others, the result of 'century-long Tsarist oppression' but rather a short-term outcome of the revolutionary unrest since 1905. Thus, the 'colonialism' that the Bolsheviks were fighting was not so much a consequence of the Tsarist elites' self-fashioning as representatives of a 'European colonial power', but rather the result of a severe economic crisis that triggered racist worker politics in the Soviet revolutionary councils and violent ethnic competition for survival.[33]

To the Bolsheviks, overcoming the 'colonial relicts of the Tsarist regime' in Central Asia meant the destruction of the old traditional society and the building of a new and 'modern' Soviet civilisation in its place.[34] The revolutions and the Civil War brought significant changes to the way in which Central Asia was governed. However, the elites' insistence on 'civilising missions' signifies a continuity arching over the divide of 1917 which

30 J. Sahadeo, Russian Colonial Society (footnote 9), pp. 188-190.

31 D. Brower, Turkestan and the Fate of the Russian Empire, London/New York 2003; Die Kolonisation Sibiriens. Eine Denkschrift von P. A. Stolypin und A. W. Kriwoscheïn, Berlin 1912, pp. 108-115; C. Steinwedel, Resettling People, Unsettling the Empire: Migration and the Challenge of Governance, 1861–1917, in: N. B. Breyfogle/A. Schrader/W. Sunderland (eds.), Peopling the Russian Periphery: Borderland Colonization in Eurasian History, London/New York 2007, pp. 128-147; J. Sahadeo, Russian Colonial Society (footnote 9), pp. 146-151. A recent article states that at least 3,828 Russians died during the fighting in 1916-17: A. V. Ganin, Poslednaia poludennaia ekspeditsiia imperatorskoi Rossii. Russkaia armiia na podavlenii Turkestanskogo miatezha 1916–1917 [The last southern expedition of imperial Russia. The Russian army and the elimination of the Turkestan uprising 1916–1917], in: Russkii sbornik [Russian Anthology], 5 (2008), pp. 152-214, here p. 188.

32 R. Vaidyanath, The Formation of the Soviet Central Asian Republics: A Study in Soviet Nationalities Policy, New Delhi 1967, pp. 76-77; P. Bergne, The Kokand Autonomy, 1917-18: Political Background, Aims and Reasons for Failure, in: T. Everett-Heath (ed.), Central Asia: Aspects of Transition, London/New York 2003, pp. 30-44.

33 M. Buttino, La rivoluzione capovolta. L'Asia centrale tra il crollo dell'impero zarista e la formazione dell'URSS, Naples 2003 [Russian edition: Revoliutsiia naoborot. Sredniaia Aziia mezhdu padeniem Tsarskoi imperii i obrazovaniem SSSR, Moscow 2007]; J. Sahadeo, Russian Colonial Society (footnote 9), pp. 193-207.

34 G. Safarov, Kolonial'naia revoliutsiia. Opyt Turkestana [Colonial revolution. The experience of Turkestan], Moscow 1921, esp. pp. 8-9.

in light of the recent ethnic conflict became even more radicalised. Moreover, in stark contrast to the Tsarist administrators, the Bolsheviks stuck to their word: they generated unprecedented activity and a flurry of campaigns to achieve their aim to thoroughly transform the Russian settler community as well as the native Central Asian peasant and nomad societies. Drawing new internal state borders, pushing for higher cotton outputs and campaigning for mass mobilisation of the population were three areas where the new Soviet 'civilisation' was to be put into practice after 1924.

3. Civilising the 'Colonial Self'

The Central Asian Bureau of the Central Committee of the All-Russian Communist Party (*Sredneaziatskoe Biuro Tsentralnogo Komiteta RKP(b)*, or in short *Sredazbiuro*) was one of several subsections of the Bolshevik Party's central apparatus which dealt with the regions far away from Moscow, where (in some cases) ethnic Russians made up only a minority of the population. While the Central Committee's regional bureaus in the Caucasus, the Urals, Siberia, the Far East and the North West were dissolved between 1922 and 1927, Sredazbiuro remained in place and functioned until the end of 1934 when it was finally closed. After its establishment in 1922, the Bureau oversaw all party activity and economic life in Central Asia. It gained its institutional shape in 1924 when the borders of the former Tsarist 'colony' of Turkestan were redrawn and new territories emerged on the map in Central Asia.[35]

The newly founded Soviet republics of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan as well as the Autonomous Regions of the Tajik, the Kyrgyz and the Karakalpak fell under the jurisdiction of the Central Asian Bureau under the leadership of its First Secretary, Isaak Zelenskii. It was only in 1930, when the number of its formal members had risen to thirtyfive, that the Bureau gained an organisational strength that allowed a more systematic monitoring of the region, including extensive travelling of inspectors.[36] Before 1930, members of the Bureau were spending most of their time in their Tashkent offices and only occasionally travelled to major party meetings and conferences in the regions. The main source of power of the Central Asian Bureau did not derive from its competence in understanding local affairs or its organisational efficiency, but in its institutional control over communications with Moscow.[37]

35 On the early years of Sredazbiuro, see: S. Keller, The Central Asian Bureau, an Essential Tool in Governing Soviet Turkestan, in: Central Asian Survey, 22 (2003) 2-3, pp. 281-297. Its dissolution in 1934 is documented in: R. W. Davies et al. (eds.), The Stalin-Kaganovich Correspondence, 1931–36, New Haven / London 2003, pp. 266-267.

36 M. F. Anderson, Iz istorii partiinogo stroitel'stva v Srednei Azii [From the history of party construction in Central Asia], Dushanbe 1966, pp. 20-21, 32.

37 Iusup Abdrakhmanov, Chairman of Kyrgyzstan's Council of People's Commissars, complained in a 1929 letter to Stalin about the "threefold 'subservience' [troinoe 'poddanstvo']" of this autonomous territory within the Soviet administrative structure – firstly to the Russian Federative Republic, secondly to the Sredazbiuro, and thirdly to the all-Union bureaucracy, see: Iu. Abdrakhmanov, Izbrannye trudy [Selected works], Bishkek 2001, p. 183. On

Isaak Abramovich Zelenskii (1890–1938) was an individual capable of dealing with the powerful position he gained as the First Secretary of the Sredazbiuro. The son of a former soldier-turned-tailor and born in Saratov, he learned the hatter's trade and became involved in the revolutionary movement at the early age of sixteen. Because of his political activities he was exiled twice, to Narym in 1912 and to Irkutsk in 1915. After escaping from Irkutsk, he found himself in Moscow in January 1917 where he was one of the leading figures of the revolution and became chairman of Moscow's Basmannyi district Soviet committee. During the Civil War, Zelenskii was involved in one of the most violent and deeply anti-peasant Bolshevik revolutionary organisations, the People's Commissariat of Food Supplies (*Narkomprod*) where he worked between 1918 and 1920. After a brief dispatch to Siberia in late 1920, he returned to the capital in March 1921 to become one of the Moscow Party secretaries. In 1922, he was elected member of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party and in this position was transferred to Bukhara in 1923.[38]

The political dilemma that Isaak Zelenskii encountered during his time of service as the Chairman of the Central Asian Bureau in Tashkent from November 1924 until February 1931 subsequently became his personal dilemma: When the Soviet Union was founded in 1922, one of the top priorities of the Bolshevik leadership was to 'solve the nationality question' in the empire's peripheries. The Soviet state's goal was twofold and contradictory – to become a political federation of national republics or territories on the one hand, and to form a union-wide integrated and supra-national economy on the other hand.[39] The Bolsheviks found a purely ideological solution to the dilemma of nationality policies versus economic integration when they decided to fight in two directions at the same time – against Russian 'great power chauvinism' and against 'nationalism at the local level'.[40] To forge commitment and broaden the social foundation of their regime, the Bolsheviks further introduced a policy that promoted the culture and language of local nationalities as well as native cadres in order to 'root in' Soviet power in minority regions and the periphery (in Russian termed '*korenizatsiia*').[41]

In Central Asia, Zelenskii first became involved in nationality problems when he participated in the redrawing of the borders in 1924–1925. While the general decision to

Abdrakhmanov's activities in Kyrgyzstan, see: B. H. Loring, Building Socialism in Kyrgyzstan: Nation-Making, Rural Development, and Social Change, 1921–1932, Ph.D. dissertation, Brandeis University 2008.

38 Zelenskii's autobiography can be found in Deiiateli Soiuza Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik i Oktiabr'skoi Revoliutsii [Activists of the USSR and the October Revolution], v. 1, Moscow 1929, cols. 141-143. On Zelenskii's revolutionary activities in 1917, see: Slovo starykh Bol'shevikov (iz revoliutsionnogo proshlogo) [The word of the old Bolsheviks (from the revolutionary past)], Moscow 1965, pp. 240-244.

39 F. Hirsch, Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union, Ithaca 2005, pp. 62-98.

40 G. Simon, Nationalismus und Nationalitätenpolitik in der Sowjetunion. Von der totalitären Diktatur zur nachstalinschen Gesellschaft, Baden-Baden 1986 [English edition: Nationalism and Policy toward the Nationalities in the Soviet Union: From Totalitarian Dictatorship to post-Stalinist Society, Boulder 1993], pp. 83-106; Y. Slezkine, The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism, in: Slavic Review, 53 (1994) 2, pp. 414-452.

41 T. Martin, The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939, Ithaca / London 2001, pp. 1-27.

dissolve the 'colonial' borders between Turkestan and the former Russian protectorates Bukhara and Khiva was made by the party leadership in Moscow, the actual redrawing of the borders was accomplished in Tashkent. Here, emissaries from Moscow presided over border commissions where Central Asian Bolsheviks agreed amongst themselves how the borders between Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan should be delimited.[42] Ethnic principles overrode other determinants (namely the economic) more often than not, because the process of border drawing and the division of territory "had transformed everyone into nationalists", as one of the Central Asian Bolsheviks observed.[43] During this process, native Bolsheviks from Turkestan, Bukhara and Khiva changed and redefined at a breathtaking pace their personal national belonging along the lines of loyalties, career choice, and opportunity.[44]

Moscow's intention in redrawing the state borders in Central Asia was both 'overcoming colonialism' and demonstrating the sincerity of '*korenizatsiia*' policy. More generally, it aimed at political 'modernisation' according to European standards, where in the wake of World War I large political units had been dissolved and redefined along ethnic lines. In Central Asia, however, the new borders not only produced new conflicts during the actual process of border drawing, but they had a deep and lasting effect: constant clashes among the leaderships of the Central Asian republics over the distribution of economic resources (especially water allocations and central financial subsidies) became a structural constraint to decision making.[45] This experience made Zelenskii aware of the difficulties that arose from reconciling national antagonisms within Central Asia with the demands of the all-Union economy, but he also experienced these complications as a part of his day-to-day work with Bolsheviks who came from Central Asia.[46]

In his position as the head of the Central Asian Bureau, Isaak Zelenskii actively pursued an agenda that was labelled '*dekolonizatsiia*' during the early 1920s.[47] He supported the 1921–22 deportation from Central Asia of thousands of Russian peasants who had set-

42 A. Haugen, The Establishment of National Republics in Soviet Central Asia, Houndmills/Basingstoke 2003, pp. 180-210; A. Sengupta, The Formation of the Uzbek Nation-State: A Study in Transition, Lanham 2003, pp. 81-131; A. Farrant, Mission Impossible: The Politico-geographical Engineering of Soviet Central Asia's Republican Boundaries, in: Central Asian Survey, 25 (2006) 1-2, pp. 61-74.

43 A. Dzhumashev, Allaiar Dosnazarov i politika natsional'no-territorial'nogo razmezhevaniia Srednei Azii [Allaiar Dosnazarov and the politics of national delimitation], in: Vestnik Karakalpakskogo Otdeleniia Akademii Nauk Respubliki Uzbekistan [Proceedings of the Karakalpak branch of the Academy of Science of the Republic of Uzbekistan], (2007) 2, pp. 57-61, here p. 59.

44 One of the most prominent examples for this process was Faizulla Khojaev, see footnotes 56-57.

45 For an elaboration of this argument, see: C. Teichmann, Canals, Cotton, and the Limits of De-colonization in Soviet Uzbekistan, 1924–1941, in: Central Asian Survey, 26 (2007) 4, pp. 499-519, esp. pp. 503-506.

46 I. Vareikis/I. Zelenskii, Natsional'no-territorial'noe razmezhevanie Srednei Azii [The national delimitation of Central Asia], Tashkent 1924; A. Haugen, The Establishment (footnote 42), p. 80.

47 For the contemporary use of the term 'dekolonizatsiia', see: Tainy natsional'noi politiki TsK RKP. Chetvertoe soveshchanie TsK RKP s otvetstvennymi rabotnikami natsional'nykh respublik i oblastei v g. Moskve 9-12 iiunia 1923 g. [Secrets of the nationality policies of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party. The fourth meeting of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party with leading party workers of the national republics and regions, Moscow June 9-12, 1923], Moscow 1992, p. 44. On the ambivalence of Soviet 'decolonisation', see: G. Simon, Nationalismus und Nationalitätenpolitik (footnote 40), pp. 17-18; A. Sengupta, The Formation (footnote 42), pp. 83-85.

tled on nomad pastures before 1917.[48] Zelenskii also actively battled negative attitudes of Russians toward natives. In 1925, he told a meeting of Russian workers in the cotton sector that maltreatment and abuse of Uzbek peasants, embezzlement and racism would not be tolerated at the cotton collection points:

> *Crudeness – this is the debasement of the native population as if they were representatives of a lower race. Shamefully, this is the conduct of many of our workers, who think of themselves as enlightened and progressive-minded people; there is an insufficient awareness that the work of peasants has the same value as any other kind [of work]. […] If we can apply the death penalty to some county chairman, then, if we see a person who sits at a cotton collection point and weighs the delivered cotton to his own [financial] advantage, who steals, who teases the native peasantry – [what] in your opinion [should we do], should we fondle his head? No, for somebody like this there is nothing else but the death penalty.*[49]

The 'decolonisation' dilemma that Zelenskii faced was common to many of the formerly 'colonised' regions: workers, specialists and experts who managed all of the economically important ventures openly exhibited racist attitudes, whereas the native peasantry remained aloof to Bolshevik rule and rejected attempts to reform their way of life, to redistribute land, to unveil, or to overcome 'religious prejudice'. Still, Soviet 'civilising mission' aimed at both at the same time, the fight against local traditions of the 'backward' populations in Uzbekistan as well as the 'colonial' attitudes exhibited by Russian workers. Within this dual agenda, Zelenskii's use of the term 'race' can therefore also be read as pure political rhetoric that targeted local power structures within the Russian settler community.

In the same vein, despite the indigenisation agenda that Moscow promoted, '*korenizatsiia*' was stunningly unsuccessful in Central Asia as compared to the Caucasus, Tatarstan, Bashkiria or Ukraine.[50] This was due to Zelenskii's efforts to centralise political and economic power in the Sredazbiuro and his continued policy to assign important positions to so-called 'European party workers' (i.e. Russians, Tatars and Jews, Armenians and Azeris). Zelenskii was habitually distrustful of Central Asian native Bolsheviks. His general perception of them was guided by an obsessive attention to their feuds and disagreements.[51] Even 'Europeans', he feared, could become caught up in these power strug-

48 On this complex, see: RGASPI f. 62, op. 2, d. 86, ll. 5-6; V. Genis, Deportacija russkich iz Turkestana ("Delo Safarova") [The deportation of Russians from Turkestan (The "Safarov Case")], in: Voprosy istorii [Questions of History], (1998) 1, pp. 44-55; RGASPI f. 62, op. 2, d. 9, ll. 5-7; R. Vaidyanath, The Formation (footnote 32), pp. 112-113.

49 GARF f. 374, op. 27, d. 612, ll. 64, 67. For more examples of racist attitudes of Russians in Central Asia during the 1920s, see: C. Cavanaugh, Acclimatization, the Shifting Science of Settlement, in: N. Breyfogle/A. Schrader/W. Sunderland (eds.), Peopling the Russian Periphery (footnote 31), pp. 169-188.

50 A. Edgar, Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan, Princeton 2004, pp. 70-128; T. Martin, The Affirmative Action Empire (footnote 41), pp. 125-181.

51 See e.g.: Zelenskii's letter to Stalin from 29 April 1928, RGASPI f. 558, op. 11, d. 735, ll. 32-34.

gles which sabotaged the party's political goals.[52] Hardly hiding his distrust, Zelenskii's position was characterised by differences of opinion on this question, even with other 'European' comrades in Tashkent who were better able to relate to the native Bolsheviks. One of Zelenskii's Russian colleagues in Uzbekistan, Vladimir Ivanov, quipped at him during a 1926 party meeting because in the former's view group feuds and disagreements "took on a real form – but we disagree on this issue."[53] Thus, Zelenskii was personally unable to overcome his distrustful attitude towards native Central Asian Bolsheviks, and it was this distrust that prevented any solution to the dilemmas of decolonisation during the 1920s.

4. Cotton and the Ambiguities of 'Liberation'

The Bolsheviks assessed the success of their nationality policy by its ability to ease ethnic conflicts on the ground. Judging by their own standards and expectations, their endeavours had resulted in complete failure in Uzbekistan by 1929. Ethnic tensions were prominent in all aspects of everyday life. Visitors from Moscow expressed surprise at the "very strange classification of the population into 'Europeans' and Uzbeks. This classification was a leitmotif in all conversations I had with workers and peasants." 'European' Soviet workers in Bukhara complained that for them, being "cultured and civilised people, it is very hard to work with the uncultured Uzbeks, and that the mission [*zadachi*] of the Europeans is great, overwhelming". Disturbed by the ruthless treatment that Uzbeks received from street car drivers and railway personnel, the observer from Moscow compared the everyday situations he witnessed in Uzbek towns to the then contemporary racial segregation in the United States and scenes from colonial India.[54]

Uzbek nationalist intellectuals, on the other hand, were expressing their discontent with Bolshevik rule in a similar language, remarking the 'colonial' character of economic and cadre decisions: "All Russians and foreigners are strangers to us. One should not give them their head; one should expel [*vyzhit*] them from Turkestan. The damn Europeans attained culture and now they even oppress China." The main problem was the continuing in-migration of poor Russians to Uzbekistan: "The revolution did not give us anything; everything is the same as it used to be in Tsarist times, and only the flag has changed. Under the flag of joblessness the [Russian] settlement of our region continues." Even the Uzbek First Party Secretary, Akmal Ikramov, recognised in 1929 that "they

52 RGASPI f. 62, op. 2, d. 86, l. 18; GARF f. 5446, op. 71, d. 74, ll. 5, 8; A. Edgar, Tribal Nation (footnote 50), p. 112; A. Haugen, The Establishment (footnote 42), pp. 102-105.

53 RGASPI f. 17, op. 69, d. 58, l. 20. From 1925 to 1927, Vladimir Ivanovich Ivanov (1893–1938) served as a Secretary of the Uzbek Communist Party organisation.

54 GARF f. 374, op. 27, d. 1708, ll. 206-207. For more negative reports: "Sovershenno sekretno". Lubianka – Stalinu o polozhenii v strane ["Top secret". Lubianka to Stalin on the state of the nation], v. 6: 1928, Moscow 2002, pp. 453-454 passim.

come to our region [*k nam*] from other parts of the Union as to a warm country, but from our side we have to cope with our shortage of land and overpopulation".[55]

Faizulla Khojaev (1896–1938) was an important figure at the centre of these political and social tensions. He was in a powerful position after a brilliant career, but he was also vulnerable because of his personal past: Khojaev was born into the family of a rich merchant from Bukhara. Accordingly, he received a good education, studied in Moscow between 1907 and 1912, and subsequently became involved in the Muslim reform movement (Jadidism) after his return to Central Asia. The Young Bukharan movement – which was partly financed through the fortune that Khojaev inherited after the death of his father – aimed at the indigenous self-reform of society, education and economy following the path of European modernisation. Subsequently, Khojaev's position in the Emirate of Bukhara was jeopardised when he was persecuted because of his 'revolutionary' activities after 1917.[56] But eventually, in September 1920 (shortly after the Red Army invaded Bukhara and overthrew the Emir's government) Khojaev became one of the leaders of the Bukharan People's Soviet Republic at the age of twenty four. When the borders in Turkestan were redrawn in 1924 and Uzbekistan emerged as a new state on the map, Khojaev moved on to become head of the Uzbek Council of Ministers, a position he retained until his arrest during the Great Purges in 1937.[57]

Precisely because of this ambiguous image, it was he – being the head of the Uzbek state – who was chosen by the leadership in Moscow to put the Soviet program of 'cotton independence' into effect.[58] 'Cotton independence' meant that production in Uzbekistan had to rise exponentially in the short span of the Five Year Plan. According to the upgraded version of the Plan in the summer of 1929, the Soviet republics of Central Asia and Kazakhstan were given the assignment to produce 44.5 million poods of raw cotton by 1932 (instead of 18 million poods harvested in 1929). This increase in production was to guarantee Soviet independence from cotton imports coming from the U.S. and Egypt. 'Cotton independence' had a cultural dimension as well. It functioned as a version of 'civilising mission' since its thrust was to enforce state control, to forge collectivisation, and to spread industrialised methods and 'socialist working habits' (such as working in brigades) in the agricultural sector.[59]

55 TsK RKP (b)-VKP (b) i natsional'nyi vopros [The Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party and the nationality question], v. 1: 1918–1933 gg., Moscow 2005, pp. 574-575; RGASPI f. 17, op. 113, d. 725, l. 13.

56 A. Khalid, Society and Politics in Bukhara, 1868–1920, in: Central Asian Survey, 19 (2000), pp. 367-396; R. Kangas, Faizulla Khodzhaev: National Communism in Bukhara and Soviet Uzbekistan, 1896–1938, Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University 1992, pp. 180-240.

57 On the early career, see also: C. Obiya, When Faizulla Khojaev Decided to Be an Uzbek, in: S. Dudoignon/H. Komatsu (eds.), Islam in Politics in Russia and Central Asia, London 2001, pp. 99-118; G. Fedtke, Wie aus Bucharern Usbeken und Tadschiken wurden. Sowjetische Nationalitätenpolitik im Lichte einer persönlichen Rivalität, in: Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft, 54 (2006) 3, pp. 214-231.

58 A. G. Abdunabiev, Iz istorii razvitiia irrigatsii v Sovetskom Uzbekistane [From the history of irrigation development in Soviet Uzbekistan], Tashkent 1971, pp. 92-97.

59 F. Khojaev, Khlopok [Cotton], in: Revoliutsiia i natsional'nosti [Revolution and the nationalities], (1930) 6, pp. 27-32, esp. p. 28.

The cotton campaign, combined with collectivisation of agriculture and state terror against the peasantry, which included the deportation of thousands of 'rich peasants' (named '*kulaki*' or '*bai*') from the countryside, had a devastating impact on the agriculture of Uzbekistan. Social disruption, out-migration and mass starvation accompanied the extension of cotton production during the years between 1929 and 1934.[60] But although the situation remained precarious, peasants in Uzbekistan developed coping strategies after overcoming the initial onslaught of the state. Government reports emphasise the peasants' passivity and rejection of a system of agricultural labour that fully exposed them to the will of state agencies as well as the dependence on government loans and centralised food supplies: "In many of the kolkhozes of the [Uzbek] republic working discipline is very low, absenteeism is high, and the non-fulfilment of the working norm has taken on a mass character."[61]

The impact of this 'civilising mission' under the veil of Soviet 'modernisation' was socially and economically destructive in its outcome, but Uzbek Bolsheviks such as Khojaev understood 'cotton independence' as a way to aggressively achieve 'progress' and to find a new foundation for 'modernity'. Khojaev noted in an article published in 1930:

> *All this helps to fully unfold the realisation of cultural revolution in Uzbekistan. The material and cultural inequality that stems from the historical conditions here – being the result of the Tsar's and the capitalists' oppression – should be finally liquidated in the shortest period of time. Cotton – the cultivation of which happened through inhuman exploitation of the broad masses of the poor and middle peasantry under the Tsar and the capitalists – under Soviet power, thanks to the correct policy of our party, turned into a lever of the upmost strength in the fight for the liquidation of all and every relict of the former order, of inequality and national oppression.*[62]

In compliance with and submission to Stalinist economic policy, Khojaev unfailingly defended the rapid expansion of cotton acreage. In public and in closed party sessions he advocated violent methods to be used to push peasants towards higher cotton output.[63] It was his tirelessly voiced opinion that the increase of cotton acreage would prove fruitful to economic development and the extension of infrastructure to rural areas. Even in internal correspondence he did not criticise, as other government members did, the damaging consequences of 'cotton independence' for agriculture in Uzbekistan.[64]

60 M. Thurman, The 'Command-Administrative System' in Cotton Farming in Uzbekistan, 1920s to Present, Bloomington (In.) 1999, esp. pp. 14-22, 30-34.

61 RGANI f. 6, op. 6, d. 666, l. 22.

62 F. Khojaev, Khlopok (footnote 59), p. 29.

63 State Archive of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Tashkent, f. 837, op. 26, d. 289, ll. 25-27ob. and 249-260. For a similar argument concerning the land reforms of the 1920s, see: J. Critchlow, Did Faizulla Khojaev Really Oppose Uzbekistan's Land Reform? in: Central Asian Survey, 9 (1990) 3, pp. 29-41.

64 For a critique of cotton expansion and the negative consequences of irrigation, see: Abdullah Rakhimbaev's 1933 report at the Russian State Archive of Economic History, Moscow, f. 8378, op. 1, d. 99, ll. 330-336.

Faizulla Khojaev typically exhibited the political and personal tensions that evolved within the Uzbek elite during the 1930s. He was susceptible because of his Bukharan 'nationalist' past, but also instrumental to introducing the cotton 'civilising mission'. His biography nevertheless provided a more ambiguous account of Russia's 'colonial' past because he embodied the 'nationalist' version of history that had understood Soviet 'progress' as a path to evolutionary, not revolutionary, 'modernisation'. Khojaev based this assessment of 'colonial' history on the idea of the Jadid reformers that successful social change in Central Asia had to be initiated by the Muslim community itself.[65] It was precisely this idea that rallied sharp criticism against him.[66] In contradiction to his criticism of Tsarist attempts before 1917 to forge "'cultural mission' of the Russian bourgeoisie in Turkestan",[67] he helped to enforce a new form of Soviet 'civilising mission' specifically because of his 'nationalist' convictions on how to successfully achieve Muslim 'modernity'. However, this could not save him from being purged from his prominent post in the summer of 1937. As one of the defendants of the Third Moscow show trial (the 'Bukharin trial') he was sued and shot in early 1938.

5. Permanent Mass Mobilisation

Unlike Faizulla Khojaev and other early Bolshevik leaders originating from Central Asia, Usman Iusupov (1900–1966) descended from a peasant family and was not a highly educated man. Quite in contrast, he was rude, bold, bull-necked, and inarticulate.[68] It is not hard to imagine that the circle around Stalin – whose speeches and comments at party meetings were a mix of meaningless ideological debris, strong words and the call of radical measures – favoured persons like Iusupov who copied Stalin-style behaviour in his political habitus. Additionally, Iusupov unconditionally supported the central government's agenda to further extend cotton agriculture. Iusupov made Soviet 'civilising mission' the overarching project of his political as well as his personal life. His choice to marry the daughter of a Tashkent railroad worker of Ukrainian origin underlines how much self-cultivation according to Soviet standards and the Stalinist transformation of Uzbekistan went hand in hand. His marriage to Iulia Logvinovna Stepanenko in 1929 provided Iusupov with the necessary cultural knowledge and prestige to rise higher in the party organisation, and as a result, in the cultural hierarchy of the Soviet Union.[69] After working in the Sredazbiuro from 1931 until late 1934, Iusupov and his wife Iulia moved to Moscow where he took up studies in the Central Committee's Marxism courses. He

65 F. Khojaev, Dzhadidy [The Jadids], in: Ocherki revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia v Srednei Azii [Scetches from the revolutionary movement in Central Asia] , Moscow 1926, pp. 7-12.

66 F. Khojaev, Izbrannye trudy [Collected works], v. 1, Taschkent 1970, pp. 450-451,

67 F. Khojaev, Izbrannye trudy [Collected works], v. 2, Taschkent 1972, p. 120.

68 For an example see a 1931 speech of Iusupov, cited in: B. Reskov / G. Sedov, Usman Iusupov, Moscow 1976, p. 84.

69 Ibid., pp. 68-77. On the importance of intermarriage within the Central Asian Bolshevik elites, see: A. Edgar, Marriage, Modernity, and the 'Friendship of Nations': Interethnic Intimacy in Post-War Central Asia in Comparative Perspective, in: Central Asian Survey, 26 (2007) 4, pp. 581-599, esp. pp. 584-585, 593.

stayed there until early 1937 and – unlike Faizulla Khojaev – made some powerful and influential friends in this key institution of the Bolshevik party.[70] From 1937 to 1950 he chaired the Uzbek Party Organisation. In 1950, he became the first Uzbek ever to serve as a Minister of Cotton Production in the Moscow Council of Ministers.

Working in local trade union organisations in the Ferghana valley during the 1920s, he was a grass-roots '*praktik*' in 'building socialism'. In 1929, only three years after Iusupov's entry into the party, his person was already discussed. In an atmosphere of distrust between Moscow and the Uzbek party leadership on the eve of the cotton campaign and collectivisation that severely shook the Uzbek party leadership, First Secretary Akmal Ikramov attacked young social climbers within the Uzbek party like Iusupov, doing nothing to hide his distrust towards them. In a May 1929 Moscow Orgburo session Ikramov told the audience that

> *there is a number of comrades-climbers, and under their auspices, act right-leaning elements [i.e. 'nationalists' in the Bolshevik parlance]. In Samarkand, for instance, there were not only rightists, but also a pan-Turkish element […]. What kinds of people were promoted by us? Iusupov, Altabaev and others.*

The Moscow leadership had a very different assessment of this group, and Lazar Kaganovich, in response and opposition to Ikramov, noted: "A cadre of Uzbek [party] workers has matured. I should say straightforwardly that this is the best we have there. This cadre grew up fighting nationalism and chauvinism." When Iusupov came to Moscow for the first time in July 1930 as member of a Sredazbiuro delegation (headed by Isaak Zelenskii), he quickly recognised where his allegiance should lie and began denouncing Ikramov and his old-school 'nationalist' friends.[71]

As soon as Usman Iusupov ascended to the highest party post in September 1937, mass mobilisation to build irrigation canals became the main theme of Soviet 'civilising mission' in Uzbekistan. Backed by his powerful protectors in Moscow, Iusupov was able to launch construction projects in Uzbekistan of hitherto unimaginable dimensions. Unlike the post-collectivisation period under Khojaev's leadership between 1932 and 1937 – during which such large-scale infrastructure construction was not undertaken – beginning in 1938 new construction sites were opened throughout Uzbekistan. In 1939, fifty two irrigation canals and dams were built with an overall length of 1.332 kilometres.[72] The biggest and most publicised irrigation construction was the building of the Great Ferghana Canal during the winter months of 1939–40. The canal with a length of 250

70 These were Anastas Mikoian [see: B. Reskov / G. Sedov, Usman Iusupov (footnote 68), pp. 92-94] and, more importantly, Andrei Andreev [RGASPI f. 558, op. 11, d. 57, ll. 94-95; RGANI f. 6, op. 6, d. 665, ll. 46-50].

71 RGASPI f. 17, op. 113, d. 725, ll. 33, 60. A 1931 denunciation letter of Iusupov (who had just been fired by Ikramov from his post of Party secretary in Tashkent) is preserved at RGASPI f. 82, op. 2, d. 154, ll. 79-92.

72 RGANI f. 6, op. 6, d. 662, l. 254. For a more detailed account of irrigation construction during the late 1930s, see: C. Teichmann, Canals, Cotton, and the Limits (footnote 45), pp. 509-513.

kilometres was built in only a few weeks by up to 160 thousand people from all over Uzbekistan.[73]

These building projects ('*narodnye stroiki*') relied on the constant mobilisation of the population. Thousands of peasants, urban youths and prisoners worked to construct canals that changed the hydrological setup of whole agricultural regions. Moreover, as part of the continuous revolutionary progress towards 'communism', the construction of the new canals was advertised with a strong nationalist message, as an 'Uzbek' way to boost the 'Uzbek' economy. Iusupov told a conference audience in 1939:

> *I do not know if you could find any person that would say the Uzbek people are a backward and poor people. The Uzbek people have a right to reveal to the whole world that they are […] a revolutionary and powerful people. On the basis of the upsurge of industry, agriculture, and culture, we have ended the first phase of building communism and have founded a socialist society.*[74]

By 1939, mass mobilisation for canal construction had become the main activity of the Uzbek party leadership, the government and the population under its auspices. Regardless of this, the mobilised people lived in such deprived material conditions that escapes back home and 'desertions' were common occurrences.[75] More and more it emerged that the canals were Iusupov's 'personal ideology' and part of his desire to 'lift the people up [*podnjat' narod*]' as he understood it.[76] Seen from this perspective, the 'colonial period' had become a distant past. Bolshevik empire building had proven to be a valid project as it was enacted by strong and violent native leaders who were able to capture the imagination of the Soviet leadership, and especially Stalin, in order to mobilise resources for canal construction and permanent mass mobilisation. Forging 'modernisation' and Soviet 'civilisation' in Uzbekistan had ultimately ended in the steady forced recruitment of the population to dig canals using only spades, if they were lucky, or with their bare hands, if they were not.

6. Conclusion

For the Tsarist elites and the Bolsheviks alike, the territories and societies to be cultivated, gardened, and civilised began right outside the front doors of their homes and offices, regardless of whether they lived in St. Petersburg or Tashkent. The common denominator of their 'civilising missions' was the declared intention to forge popular acceptance

73 L. U. Iusupov, Sotsializm i tvorcheskaia initiativa mass. Narodnoe stroitel'stvo v respublik Srednei Azii v 1938–1950 [Socialism and the creative initiative of the masses. People's construction projects in the republics of Central Asia], Tashkent 1977, pp. 19-20.

74 U. Iusuopv, Izbrannye trudy [Selected works], v. 1, Tashkent 1982, p. 163.

75 RGANI f. 6, op. 6, d. 668, ll. 148-156 and d. 663, ll. 4-5, 12.

76 RGANI f. 6, op. 6, d. 662, ll. 197-199; RGANI f. 6, op. 6, d. 667, l. 42-43. See also: P. Stronski, Fonder une cité soviétique en Asie centrale: Le plan pour la culture à Tachkent 1937–1941, in: Communisme, 70/71 (2002), pp. 109-129, esp. pp. 122-123.

of 'European' standards in everyday life and public behaviour. Especially since 1929, mobilisation was coupled with state violence against 'backward' populations and 'traditional' working habits to achieve this aim. Between 1924 and 1941, this process was constitutive of the biographies and careers of Central Asian Bolsheviks: Isaak Zelenskii tried to monopolise power in the Sredazbiuro with its majority of 'European' party workers; Faizulla Khojaev had to come to terms with a Bolshevik version of Central Asian 'colonial' history that repressed autochthonous features of the Muslim reform movement (Jadidism); and Usman Iusupov was intimately drawn into the realm of Russian-Soviet culture through marriage and political habitus. Nevertheless, the subjugation of the population to modernising 'civilising missions' was a common feature of the Stalinist Soviet Union and by no means particular to historical developments in Central Asia.

The global discussion on 'colonialism' played a part in this development. Although 'civilising missions' were applied to all parts of the population regardless of whether their place of living was close to the centre or on the edges of the periphery, the existence of a (revolutionary, short-lived and popular) Russian 'colonial state' in Central Asia can help to understand the rise and endurance of racial hierarchies among the empire's populations. Even if there were emissaries from the centre who forged 'equality' in the periphery and native 'nationalists' who were willing to violently transform their country according to the wishes of the centre, the tensions of the 'civilising mission' persisted, as the goal of 'liberation' was not achievable. The Soviet case is remarkable in that it unhinged the connection between 'civilising mission' and the 'colonial state' and structurally replaced 'colonialism' with 'nationalism' and totalitarian state-driven 'modernisation'.

Thus, the ambiguity of promise and fulfilment came full circle only in the world of Soviet propaganda: The main characteristic of the Bolshevik state and its ideology rested upon the juxtaposition of 'true' socialism and 'untrue' capitalism, righteous inside and unjust outside, clean self and unclean other. When 'equality of all Soviet nations' was officially proclaimed and propagandised, peasants suffered the terrors of collectivisation and the famine of 'cotton independence'. When 'communism' was proclaimed, mobilised native masses in Uzbekistan dug canals into deserts, dirt and swamps. This condition was before everyone's eyes. Still, a global frame of reference pointed to what made Soviet policies unique and mendacious, as one anonymous letter writer noted when he told the government in 1932: "Generally, dear comrades, don't write about India, just take a closer look at yourselves".[77]

77 Tragediia sovetskoi derevni. Kollektivizatsiia i razkulachivanie [The tragedy of the Soviet countryside. Collectivisation and dekulakisation], v. 3: Late 1930–1933, Moscow 2001, p. 313.