

CHAPTER 3

MUSLIMS IN THE SOVIET UNION

1. Introduction:

Islam in the Soviet Union had to endure one of the worst cases of persecution in history since the October revolution of 1917. The communist heirs of the Tsars, who came to power as a result of the revolution, saw Islam as not only incompatible with the ideas of militant atheism propagated by them, but also perceived in Islam a major threat to the very consolidation of their rule in the Muslim lands of the disintegrating Empire. As a result, the bolshevic leaders went back on their promises of self-determination for the Muslims of the Russian Empire given earlier when they were not in power and resorted to physical extermination of Muslim leaders. Consolidation of the Soviet rule in Muslim territories occupied during and after the Civil War was accompanied by terror against Muslims, the destruction or closure of mosques and the suppression of all Islamic activities by the regime.

This policy was reversed during the difficult years of World War II, when Stalin found it expedient to harness even the religious feelings of his subjects for the promulgation of victory over the foreign enemy. The regime renewed its onslaught on Islam after the war was over, albeit with less vigor and bloodshed. During the post-Stalin era, a new, more sophisticated approach towards Islam has been gradually developed by the Soviet leadership. The officially sanctioned administrative infrastructure of four muftiats on the territory of the USSR created during the war years was allowed to evolve into a so-called "official Islam" in the USSR, serving occasionally as a mouth-piece of the regime in its relations with Muslims abroad, and at

the same time, despite its submissiveness to the regime, providing institutional framework for Islamic activities on a limited scale at home.

In terms of territorial distribution, 47,330,000 Soviet Muslims inhabited in 1982 vast territorial expanses of Central Asia, Siberia and the Volga-Ural region, thus forming 17.8% of the total Soviet population. Nine-tenth of these are Sunni Muslims belonging to the Hanafi school, and speak a number of mutually intelligible Turkic dialects. The most prominent group among them prior to, and immediately after the October revolution, were the Volga Tatars. It was among them that an unprecedented Islamic renaissance took place at the turn of the century gaining momentum especially after the revolution of 1905. This Islamic renaissance was spear-headed by the jadidist (new method) movement aimed at the modernisation of the Muslim schools, and the adaptation of a dynamic, flexible approach to the changing economic and industrial environment of the time. The main proponents of this movement were the Tatar Muslim scholars such as Kursavi, Marjani, Kultasi, Gasparali and many others who understood the importance of taking up the challenge of the approaching industrial era and resorted to the inherent dynamism of Islam in order to adapt to new conditions. For instance, Marjani created an uproar among the conservative Ulema of the time when he, instead of joining in the denunciations of newly discovered photography as shaitan's (satan's) work, allowed himself to be photographed, and declared that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) banned the depiction of human images so as to keep his followers away from the folly of paganism. And as no such danger existed any more, photography was not forbidden.

Tatar leaders and intellectuals like Mirsaid Sultangali, Chelebi Cihan, Veli Ibrahim, Ismail Gabit and many others who played prominent roles in the revolutionary period before being killed by the Soviets, were the typical products of jadidism.

As the most determined and articulate group to voice opposition to the new-colonial policies of the Soviet regime, and to wage a determined struggle for national independence, the Volga Tatars had to suffer the heaviest blow of the Soviet terror machine. Not only their intelligentsia were to a great degree exterminated during the years of the Civil War and Stalin's purges, but also their future national development had been handicapped by relegating them to a second degree status of an "autonomous republic" within the Russian Federation in contrast to some of their far less numerous co-religionists in Central Asia, such as the Tajiks or the Turkmens who were granted the status of Union Republics. At present, Tatars endure far less degree of autonomy within the Soviet system in comparison to their Central Asian brethren despite the fact that numerically they are the third Muslim peoples of the USSR after the Uzbeks and the Kazakhs, and are known as the most advanced group socially and culturally.

Muslims suffered the worst form of persecution during the Stalinist era. Things reached such a point that their present situation in the Soviet Union, despite the extremely harsh attitude of the Government toward them appears to be an improvement. Muslim institutions have been eliminated progressively: of the 26,000 Mosques in 1917, all but 1000 had been done away with by 1978. Out of the hund-

reds of Muslim schools which functioned in 1917 only two were in existence in 1982. The Communist regime carries on a thorough campaign against Islamic culture and religion. It cut the Chagatai Turkic language, the lingua franca of the Muslim population, into pieces by converting every local dialect into a full-fledged language. It waged and still wages a ruthless war against the teaching of the Arabic language and the usage of the Arabic script by the Muslims.

The Muslim religious organization is kept under close surveillance. This organization is subdivided into 4 directorates: Russia, Caucasus, Transcaucasus, and Central Asia. The Muslim Ulama were, however, able to organize some international Islamic activities such as the commemoration of the 1200th anniversary of Imam Al-Bukhārī in 1974.

The Tsarist regime used to hold census which required the indication of the religious and ethnic affiliations of the citizens. Thus in 1897, there were 16 million Muslims in the Russian Empire. The Communist regime does not take into account the religion of the citizens for the census, pretending it to be irrelevant. The nationality of the citizens, however, is recorded. Thus, the number of Muslims could be deduced from the Muslim nationalities, and was estimated to be 35,943,000 in 1970 and about 44,600,000 Muslims (or about 17.0% of the population of the USSR) in 1979 (about 47,330,000 Muslims and 17.8% of the population in 1982).

2. Historical Background

Islam reached Central Asia and won a large number of converts in the very first century of Hijrah (7th century AD). Central Asia became an important centre of intellectual activity of the Muslim world in the 14th century.

The Muslim Ummah in these areas has been represented by the Turkic peoples the majority of whom gradually embraced Islam between the 1st and the 6th centuries of Hijrah. Among the earliest to become Muslims were the Bulgars of Idel (Volga), who formed in the middle ages a succession of most advanced Muslim states. The first of them was the Khanate of Bulgar. The capital city of this state, Bilar, impressed foreign visitors by the architectural sophistication of its main stone and brick buildings which were in sharp contrast to other wooden structures, and had underground central heating systems.

According to Ibn Rushd, mosques and schools existed in the cities and villages of the kingdom at the beginning of the 4th century Hijrah (10th CE). By then Arabic script was already displacing ancient runic scriptures of the Bulgars and other Turkic peoples.

Ahmed Ibn Fadlān, one of the envoys of the Abbasid Calif Ja'far Al-Muqtadir, visited the Bulgars in 922 CE, witnessing the embracing of Islam by their King Almush (Almas), who took the name of Ja'far after Khalif al-Muqtadir. This remarkable event occurred on the 16th of Muharram 310 Hijrah (Thursday, 15 May 922 CE), and must be viewed as the culmination of the gradual process of voluntary Islamization of the region.

In 986 CE, the Bulgars despatched Muslim scholars to Grand Prince Vladimir of Kievan Russia in an effort to persuade him to accept Islam rather than Orthodox Christianity.

In 1236 CE, Tatar armies of Batu Khan invaded the Kingdom of Bulgar and conquered it after a series of hard-fought battles. Subsequently, the seat of the new Empire of Golden Horde was established in Sarai. The superior Islamic civilization of the Bulgars, however, was to absorb the invading pagan Tatars in the following decades. Islam flourished again under the great-grandson of Batu, Uzbek, who was instrumental in convincing the pagan elements of his Kingdom to embrace Islam. By then the conquering Tatars were undergoing the process of cultural and linguistic assimilation by the Bulgars, although their name was being uniformly applied to the subjects of the Golden Horde.

When the Moroccan traveller Ibn Battūtah crossed the lands which form today the Soviet Union in the 14th century, he noted that the people lived in Muslim states, had Turkish as main language and belonged to the Hanafī school of law. The largest of these states was the State of Sultan Uzbek whose capital As-Sara (Sarai, now ruined) was on the River Idel (Volga). As for the Russians, they were weak and primitive tribes about whom Ibn Battūtah says: " they were Christians with blond hair, blue eyes, ugly faces, and great deceit".

During the reign of Toktamysh Khan at the end of the fourteenth century, the Golden Horde suffered a devastating blow from the armies of Timur the Lame. Its main cities, including the capital city, Sarai,

were destroyed and the population substantially reduced in numbers as a result of indiscriminate mass-slaughters by the victorious armies of Timur.

In the autumn of 1395 CE, Timur started his advance on Muscovy and actually devastated the region of Riazan, but decided not to proceed with the sacking of Muscovy, and returned to Central Asia.

The fact, that Timur the Lame turned his armies back after the destruction of the Golden Horde resulted in the emergence of Muscovy as the major military power in the region ripe for imperial expansion. The remnants of the Golden Horde gradually evolved into four khanates; those of Kazan, Astrakhan (Nogay), Siberia and the Crimea.

Under Ulu Muhammed Khan, the khanate of Kazan emerged as one of the most advanced Muslim states of the time. The artisans of Kazan were the first in Europe to produce cast iron, long before it was done in Britain. Their jewelry, leather goods and ceramics were famous far beyond the borders of the Kingdom. The architects of Kazan erected magnificent mosques and palaces. International trade fairs were held annually in Kazan, attracting thousands of merchants from Russia and distant lands of the orient.

The Russian conquest of Kazan in 1552 after a number of earlier successful attempts ended economic prosperity of the Khanate. Marauding armies of Ivan the Terrible massacred the survivors of the siege of Kazan and floated their bodies down the Volga River to frighten into submission the population of the Khanate of Al-Ḥāj Turkhān (Astrakhan).

Ivan the Terrible initiated forcible conversion of the Volga Muslims into christianity by methods similar to those employed by the Spanish Inquisition against the Muslims of Spain. After the fall of Kazan in 1552, the Khanate of Astrakhan suffered the same fate in 1556, followed by the conquest of the Khanate of Siberia in 1598, and the Khanate of the Crimea in 1783.

All these conquests were consolidated through the expulsion of surviving Muslims from their cities, confiscation of all their belongings and above all forced mass-scale conversion to christianity. But the Tatars resisted, and like their Morisco brethren in Spain were able to maintain their faith for generations in secrecy until they declared it openly in their great majority during the reign of Catherine the Second, when Muslims were persecuted less vigorously. By the end of the 19th century Muslims managed to restore and re-build their mosques and schools. For instance, in the region of Oufa alone there were 1555 mosques and 6220 Muslim schools by 1897.

After the Khanate of Kazan, the second major Muslim State to fall to Russian expansionism was the Giray Khanate of Crimea (Crimea Tatars). Its capital was Baghche Saray, and it enclosed much of the southern part of the Ukraine and the lower Don-Kuban region. It had borders with Russia, Poland and the Ottoman State. In its struggle against Russian encroachment, the Crimean State was supported by the Ottoman Empire. But when the Ottoman State itself weakened, the Crimean State could not resist alone. It was defeated by Russia and invaded in 1783. Then followed the fall to Russia of one Muslim State after another in quick succession in Central Asia and the Caucasus (see Figure

3.1). Kazakhstan and the Daghestan were conquered in the 18th century; the State of Bokhara in 1850; the State of Ferghana in 1873; the State of Khiva in 1876. Both Khiva and Bokhara remained a protectorate until 1920 when they were incorporated in the Soviet system. Other Muslim lands were taken away from Afghanistan, Persia, and Turkey around the turn of the century. The main centers of Islamic civilization for twelve centuries in Central Asia thus fell to Russian colonialism while other such centers fell to English, French, Italian, Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese colonialisms.

Just before the Communist Revolution, the mass of Muslims subjugated to the Russian Empire concentrated their efforts on Islamic education. Kazan itself was the seat of a university having 7000 students, a Muslim press which printed 2.5 million copies of 250 different books in 1902 alone, and a Muslim library visited yearly by more than 20,000 readers. Mosques and schools were built on such a scale that the ratio was one Mosque for each 150 Muslims. All this happened in spite of Russian discrimination and persecution. As the Russian State weakened, Muslims started to think about gaining their freedom.

The October 1917 Revolution brought in its wake a new situation. Muslims rose in rebellion, asking for independence in many areas. These popular movements of liberation took place in Bashkiria, in Khiva (1918-1920) and Ferghana (1918-1926) under the leadership of Mohammed Amin Beg; in Bokhara under the leadership of Akram Khan, and in Crimea

under the leadership of Tchalabi. Sayyid Sultan Ali-Oglu who put forth the idea of a bi-national Muslim-Russian Federation under the communist system, was imprisoned and then executed in 1937.

The Communist Government followed a policy of dividing the Muslim Community into linguistic groups which totalled about 42 entities, many of them sharing no more than dialects of the same language. They put an end to the teaching of the Arabic language, to the usage of the Arabic script, and followed up this by a continuous propaganda war against Islam, its beliefs, culture and civilization.

3- Numerical Strength and National Distribution

Demographically speaking, the Muslims passed through very severe conditions between 1897 and 1939 which had a highly negative effect on their numbers. Russians killed hundreds of thousands of Muslims when they rebelled in Bashkiria and Kirghizia in 1917. At least one million Kazakh and Kirghiz Muslims died in artificial famines in 1921. Another million Kazakh Muslims died of hunger in 1929 (25% of the remaining Kazakhs of the time) as a result of communist confiscation of their herds. Then the Russians brought in Russian colonizers to take the lands of the dead nomads.

In the census of 1897, a total of 16 million Muslims were reported in the Russian Empire, or about 12.6% of the total population. The census taken by Tsarist Russia requested the religious affiliation, and we thus knew the number of Muslims. But in the censuses of the Soviet State, this question was never asked. Given the intense official propaganda against religion in general, and Islam in particular, it is not easy to know who is Muslim in the Soviet Union. But the Soviet census gives information about the "nationality" of the person, and since the Muslim "nationalities" are well known, it is possible to deduce the number of Muslims from the official Soviet censuses, just by adding the numbers of the Muslim nationalities. Past experience has shown that the generations of Muslims subjected to persecution always see their beliefs strengthened, and thus it is assumed that those belonging to a Muslim nationality still consider themselves (even secretly sometimes) to be "Muslims".

The Muslim populations of the Soviet Union can be divided into two categories: 1) the Turkish-speaking Muslims, who are the most numerous; and 2) the rest. Most of these Muslims belong to the Hanafī school, and some, especially in the South East Caucasus are of the Imāmī school. The nationalities which are members of the Turkic group are in the descending order of their numerical strength: the Uzbek; the Tatars; the Kazakhs; the Azeris; the Kirghiz; the Turcoman; the Bashkir; the Kara Calpak; the Balkar; the Karatchay; the Kara Nogai; and other groups of smaller numbers. As for those who speak other languages than Turkish they are: the Tajik; the Tchechen; the Ingush; the Kabards; the Ajars; the Abkhaz; the Adighians; the Circassians; the Daghestanis; the Udmurts; the Mary; the Ossets; the Tchuvash; and others of fewer numbers. In all, there are 42 Muslim "nationalities" with "nationality" as defined by the Soviet State. Some Muslim nationalities are not listed as such in the Soviet census. The most important are the Adjar of Georgia who are Georgian Muslims. Their number has been estimated as 80% of the population of the Adjar ASSR. We also estimated that 80% of Kurds only are Muslims, so are 50% of the Abkhaz, 30% of the Ossets and 20% of the Chuvash, Mary, Mordvins and Udmurts. The Meskhetians, Talysh, Karapapakh, Ingiloy (Georgia Shias) and Hemshins (Armenian Muslims) have not been counted, since they most probably are counted with other Muslim nationalities. Table 3.1 represents the number of Muslims belonging to the most important nationalities in 1959, 1970, and 1979 censuses.

From Table 3.1, it becomes clear that the demographic situation of the Muslim community improved greatly since 1959. This statement is

Table 3.1 - Muslims in the Soviet Union by Nationality

People	1959		1970		1979		% Increase 1959-79
	Population	%	Population	%	Population	%	
Uzbek	6,015,000	23.7	9,195,000	25.6	12,456,000	27.9	107.1
Kazakhs	3,622,000	14.3	5,299,000	14.8	6,556,000	14.7	81.0
Tatars	4,968,000	19.6	5,931,000	16.5	6,317,000	14.2	27.2
Azeris	2,940,000	11.6	4,380,000	12.2	5,477,000	12.3	86.3
Tajiks	1,397,000	5.5	2,136,000	6.0	2,898,000	6.5	107.4
Turkmen	1,002,000	4.0	1,525,000	4.2	2,028,000	4.5	102.4
Kirghiz	969,000	3.8	1,452,000	4.0	1,906,000	4.3	96.7
Bashkirs	989,000	3.9	1,240,000	3.4	1,371,000	3.1	38.6
Others	3,456,000	13.6	4,785,000	13.3	5,591,000	12.5	61.8
Total	25,358,000	100.0	35,943,000	100.0	44,600,000	100.0	75.9
Turkic	21,398,000	84.4	30,263,000	84.2	37,553,000	84.2	75.5
Non Turkic	3,960,000	15.6	5,680,000	15.8	7,047,000	15.8	78.0

true for all Muslim nationalities, with the relative exception of the Tatars and the Bashkirs. The highest rate of increase in the period 1959-1979 was among the Tajiks (107.4%) followed closely by the most numerous single Muslim nationality, the Uzbek (107.1%). The smallest rate of growth was among the Tatars (27.2%) and the Bashkirs (38.6%) who came much earlier than the others under the Russian occupation. However, the rate of increase of these two nationalities was still higher than that of non-Muslim nationalities of the Soviet Union during the same period (18.6%). The overall growth of the Muslim population was more than four times this rate (75.9%).

This demographic fact created a new situation for the Muslims of the Soviet Union. Indeed, their percentage in the total population of the Soviet Union increased from 11.3% in 1939 to 17.0% in 1979 and an estimated 17.8% in 1982. In other words, their percentage exceeded largely that of 1897 in spite of the incorporation of many new non-Muslim areas in the Soviet Union after World War II.

4 - Geographical Distribution and Political Organization

The Soviet establishment divided the Muslim community into a multitude of nationalities. To the most important of these nationalities a Federal Soviet Republic was established. There are 15 such republics in the Soviet Union, six of which belong to Muslim nationalities. To fourteen of the remaining nationalities twelve autonomous republics were constituted: ten are in the Russian Soviet Republic (Bashkiria, Tataria, Daghestan, Udmurtia, Tchuvachia, Mordvia, Tchechen-Ingush, Mary, Kabard-Balkar and Northern Ossets) and two are in the Georgian Soviet Republic (Abkhazia and Adjaria). Three autonomous regions were established for four more Muslim nationalities: two in Russia (Adighia, and Karachai - Tcherkess) and one in Georgia (Southern Ossets). Five of the Muslim Soviet Republics are in Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tadjikistan and Kirghizia) and one is in the Caucasus (Azerbaijan). The position of these territories is shown in Figures 3.2 and 3.3.

As for the Crimean Autonomous Republic it has been abolished as we shall see later. There are other Muslim regions whose Muslim communities have not been incorporated in any special entity the most important among these are the cities of Astrakhan (Al-Hāj Turkhān) and Kasimov (Qasimi). But large Muslim groups are found in these territories as well as in all other parts of the Soviet Union, most notably in Moscow and Leningrad, as well as in all the other large cities of the Soviet Union.

Table 3.2 - The Administrative units in the Soviet Union set for Muslim nationalities (FR: Federal Republic; AR: Autonomous Republic; AO: Autonomous Region).

Administrative Unit	Type	Capital	Area (Km ²)	Population in 1979	Year of conquest	Year of establishment
Uzbekistan	FR	Tashkent	450,000	15,380,000	1873	1924
Kazakhstan	FR	Alma-Ata	2,750,000	14,684,000	1866	1936
Tadjikistan	FR	Dushanbe	143,000	3,806,000	1873	1929
Kirghizia	FR	Frunze	198,000	3,529,000	1886	1936
Turkmenistan	FR	Ashkhabad	487,790	2,765,000	1873	1925
Total Central Asia	-	-	4,028,790	40,164,000	-	-
Azerbaijan	FR	Bakou	87,000	6,027,000	1920	1936
Daghestan	AR	Machačkala	50,300	1,627,000	1723	1921
Tchechen-Ingush	AR	Groznyj	19,300	1,155,000	1850	1957
Kabard-Balkar	AR	Nalčik	12,500	675,000	1557	1936
Northern Ossets	AR	Ordžonikidze	8,000	597,000	1784	1936
Abkhazia	AR	Sukhumi	8,600	505,000	1810	1930
Adyghya	AO	Majkop	7,600	404,000	1878	1922
Karachai-Tcherkess	AO	Čerkessk	14,100	369,000	1878	1957
Adjaria	AR	Batumi	3,000	354,000	1878	1921
Southern Ossets	AO	Chinvali	3,900	98,000	1878	1922
Total Ca casus	-	-	214,300	11,811,000	-	-
Bashkiria	AR	Oufa	143,000	3,849,000	1557	1919
Tataria	AR	Kazan	68,000	3,806,000	1552	1920
Udmurtia	AR	Izevsk	42,100	1,490,000	1560	1934
Tchuvachia	AR	Čeboksary	18,300	1,293,000	1552	1925
Mordvia	AR	Saransk	26,200	990,000	1552	1936
Mary	AR	Joskar-Ola	23,800	703,000	1552	1936
Total Volga	-	-	322,000	12,131,000	-	-
Grand Total	-	-	4,562,100	63,736,000	-	-

All the above political divisions are, however, of only a superficial nature and are no more than administrative divisions. Russian is actually the official language in all the republics and national languages have always a secondary value, often of only a folkloric nature. As for the Federal republics, Russian ministers are put in key ministries in all of them. Table 3.2 indicates the different Muslim administrative units and some of their characteristics.

It can be deduced from Table 3.2 that, if we take into account Muslim lands incorporated into non-Muslim nationality territories, the lands taken by the Soviet Union (Russian Empire) from the Muslim World amount to about one third of the total territory of the Soviet Union. The territories left to Muslim "nationalities" constitute about 20% of the area of the Soviet Union and are among the richest and more valuable lands in the Union.

It can also be noticed that the total population in these territories was 63.732 million in 1979 whereas the entire Muslim population of the Soviet Union amounted to 44.6 million only. If we estimate the number of Muslims outside these territories at about 3 millions, there would be a Muslim percentage of only 65% in their own lands. This low percentage is a result of a long period of colonization of Muslim lands by Slavic

immigrants throughout the 19th century and half of this century. This trend is being reversed after 1959 as will be seen in the following section.

5 - Colonization of Muslim Areas

Before making any deductions on the scale of Russian colonization of Muslim lands, consider first Table 3.3 which provides comparative figures for the percentage of Muslims in the different Soviet Republics between the three censuses of 1959, 1970 and 1979.

Table 3.3 shows that the percentage of Muslims increased steadily and steeply in all the six Muslim Republics between 1959 and 1979, thus reversing a dangerous trend in the period between the beginning of colonization and 1959. The percentage of Muslims in Russia and Georgia increased as well, but decreased in the other Republics which are devoid of any Muslim Autonomous Republic or Autonomous Region.

In 1959, the total number of Muslims in the six Muslim Republics was 16,470,000 or 64.9% of the total Muslim population in the Soviet Union and 61.7% of the total population of these republics. This population amounted to 26,676,000 of whom a total of 10,206,000 persons were non-Muslims.

In 1979, the total number of Muslims in the six Muslim republics was 32,226,000 or 72.3% of the total Muslim population of the Soviet Union. This shows that there was, during the

Table 3.3 - Population increases in the Soviet Republics between 1959 and 1979

Republic	1959			1970			1979		
	Total Pop	Muslim Pop	%	Total Pop	Muslim Pop	%	Total Pop	Muslim Pop	%
Uzbekistan	8,119,000	6,535,000	80.5	11,799,000	9,787,000	82.9	15,380,000	13,099,000	85.2
Kazakhstan	9,295,000	3,278,000	35.3	13,009,000	5,018,000	38.6	14,684,000	6,241,000	42.5
Azerbaijan	3,698,000	2,685,000	72.6	5,117,000	4,016,000	78.5	6,027,000	5,013,000	83.2
Tadjikistan	1,982,000	1,624,000	81.9	2,900,000	2,468,000	85.1	3,806,000	3,285,000	86.3
Kirghizia	2,066,000	1,179,000	57.1	2,933,000	1,781,000	60.7	3,529,000	2,305,000	65.3
Turkmenistan	1,516,000	1,169,000	77.1	2,159,000	1,728,000	80.0	2,765,000	2,283,000	82.6
Sub-total	26,676,000	16,470,000	61.7	37,917,000	24,798,000	65.4	46,191,000	32,226,000	69.8
Russia	(12.8%) 117,534,000	(64.9%) 8,092,000	6.9	(15.7%) 130,079,000	(69.0%) 10,133,000	7.8	(17.6%) 137,552,000	(72.3%) 11,137,000	8.1
Georgia	4,044,000	549,000	13.6	4,686,000	680,000	14.5	5,015,000	843,000	16.8
Armenia	1,763,000	135,000	7.7	2,492,000	186,000	7.5	3,031,000	214,000	7.1
Ukrainia	41,869,000	89,000	0.2	47,127,000	117,000	0.2	49,609,000	150,000	0.3
Other	16,941,000	23,000	0.1	19,419,000	29,000	0.1	20,868,000	30,000	0.1
Sub-total	182,151,000	8,888,000	4.9	203,803,000	11,145,000	5.5	216,075,000	12,374,000	5.7
Total	(87.2%) 208,827,000 (100.0%)	(35.1%) 25,358,000 (100.0%)	12.1	(84.3%) 241,720,000 (100.0%)	(31.0%) 35,943,000 (100.0%)	14.9	(82.4%) 262,266,000 (100.0%)	(27.7%) 44,600,000 (100.0%)	17.0

period 1959-1979, an increase in Muslim concentration, rather than a dispersion. This is due mostly to a higher natural growth rate of Muslims in these republics compared to Muslims in other republics. In 1979, the total population of the six republics amounted to 46,191,000 persons of whom 13,965,000 persons were non-Muslims. The Muslim percentage in these republics also increased to 69.8% in 1979.

The percentage increase of the non-Muslim population in the six Muslim republics amounted to 36.8% in the 20 years period under consideration. This figure is to be compared to a percentage increase of 95.7% for the Muslim population of the six Muslim republics.

Table 3.4 shows the national origin of the non-Muslim population of the six Muslim republics. Assuming a natural increase of the Russian and Ukrainian growth rate outside the Muslim area, one can estimate readily the rate of immigration. Thus, the net increase in the non-Muslim population of the six Muslim republics amounts to 3,759,000 persons in the period 1959-1979. Of these 2,244,000 persons are due to natural growth and 1,515,000 persons to net immigration (1,370,000 Russians and 145,000 Ukrainians)

Thus , in the six Muslim republics, in spite of continuing non-Muslim immigration, the percentage of Muslims with respect to non-Muslims increased dramatically, due to a much higher

natural growth in the Muslim population compared to others. Furthermore, it is obvious from the above figures that Muslims refuse to leave Muslim areas, as the percentage of Muslims in the six Muslim republics with respect to the total Muslim population of the Soviet Union increased dramatically during the same period (1959-1979).

Table 3.4 - National origin of the non-Muslim population of the six Muslim republics

Nationality	1959		1979		Increase %
	Population	%	Population	%	
Russians	6,714,000	65.8	9,788,000	70.1	45.8
Ukrainians	1,060,000	10.4	1,221,000	8.7	15.2
Others	2,432,000	23.8	2,956,000	21.2	21.5
Total	10,206,000	100.0	13,965,000	100.0	36.8

Because of higher natural growth rates among Muslims compared to others, Muslim percentages increased also in the two republics where Muslims exist in substantial numbers: Russia (from 6.9% to 8.1%) and Georgia (13.6% to 16.8%). Muslim percen-

tages decreased in the same period in Armenia from 7.7% to 7.1%. In Armenia, Muslim percentages dropped slightly in the same period due mainly to immigration of Armenians estimated to amount to about 413,000 persons, and emigration of Muslim Azeris out of Armenia, estimated to be about 40,000 persons during the same period.

From the above, it appears clearly that there is a tendency of Muslims to emigrate back to their areas of concentration, thus enabling them to protect themselves better from the dangers of cultural assimilation. Furthermore, the higher natural growth rate of Muslims is bound to give their republics more weight in the future, as their percentages in these republics increases continuously, giving these republics a stronger Islamic identity.

(Handwritten note in a circle: No space to be left)

6 - Official Assault on Muslim Identity

The religious organization of the Muslim community is divided into four directorates: 1) European Russia and Siberia (seat Oufa in Bashkiria); 2) Northern Caucasus and Daghestan (seat Bujnaksh in Daghestan); 3) Transcaucasia (seat Bakou in Azerbaijan); and 4) Central Asia and Kazakhstan (seat Tashkent in Uzbekistan). The latter is headed by Imam Babakhanov. It became the most active since it was founded in 1946.

The apparent policy of the Soviet authorities with this organization of the Community is tolerance and control. In fact, however, the policy of the Soviet Government seems to be to try all possible means to frustrate the efforts of the Muslims to live as an organized community. Article 124 of the 1936 Soviet Constitution stipulates "the freedom of religious practices and anti-religious activities as well". What this has meant in practice is that the State has waged a continuous war against religion in general, and Islam in particular, and denied the people the means by which they could preserve their religious identity and defend it against the State-sponsored onslaughts.

The article of M.S.I. Umahanov, the First Secretary of the Communist Party in the Daghestan Autonomous Region which appeared in the official Communist Party journal "Party Life" in September 1975, shed some light on the efforts of the Communists to undermine Islam. Umahanov states that work against religion has been stepped up considerably: that 54 theoretical

seminars had been held for more than 2000 "educators" specialized in anti-Islamic activity. He also mentioned that 980 older students in high schools have joined atheistic clubs to propagate anti-religious ideas among fellow students. Special adult education classes for women had also been introduced in order to fight effectively against religion. The "educated" class, according to Umahanov, had been mobilized to "enlighten" the population regarding the need to reject religious practices such as almsgiving during funerals, circumcision, sacrifice of sheep in Eid-ul-Adhā and religious weddings. Just as during the Spanish Inquisition, once a group of people has been won over for atheism they are immediately called upon to convey the benefits of their "conversion" to those who are still religious. Umahanov also points out that much of the cultural and artistic life of the Republic was also geared to anti-Islamic propaganda. Festivals of anti-religious films were held every year. In the Daghestan Autonomous Republic alone, according to Umahanov, there were 200 centers for anti-Islamic lectures accompanied with films and slides. Radio and TV were also used for this purpose and anti-Islamic broadcasts were made in the seven main languages of the Autonomous Republic.

In his article, Umahanov also appeals for mixed marriages between people of different nationalities (so they can all be Russianized) and urges people to become more "internationally" minded (i.e. forget about their own nationality). He

also mentions that religious festivals have been replaced by State-invented ones. Umahanov, naturally, is not only highly pleased with all this, but also feels strongly that these efforts needed to be strengthened.

The above is illustrative of the Soviet State policy toward Islam. The methods used by the Soviet Government and the Communist Party constitute an educational/motivational approach that is not much different from that of the former Russian Greek-Orthodox Church against Islam during the Tsarist era. The effort is carried out with an intense zeal inherited directly from the Tsarist times. At the same time the Soviet information media points a rosy picture of Islam in the Soviet Union so as to deceive the outside world, especially the Muslims, as regards the real situation of the Muslims.

In its war against Islam, the Soviet propaganda resorts to sheer lies, fabrications, distortions, and concealment of facts. The media ascribe the survival of many social evils and inequities to Islam, which is reminiscent of the propaganda of the European colonial powers in Africa and Asia. Islam is decried as harmful for industrial discipline, and as an enemy of growth and progress as such. It is seen as a major obstacle in the efforts to make the USSR the exclusive center of devotion and loyalty. Above all, Islam is considered a stumbling block which prevents the assimilation of all races within the Russian system.

The result of this continuous war has been catastrophic to Islamic institutions. There were 26,000 mosques in the Russian Empire at the time of the October 1917 Revolution. Just before the Revolution the number of religious functionaries amounted to 45,000. There were thousands of Islamic schools and enough awqaf to run the Islamic institutions. Today (1982) none at the awqaf (religious endowments) are run by Muslims, for they were confiscated by the Government long ago. The number of mosques is estimated now to be somewhere around 450 in the whole of the Soviet Union. Even a historical Muslim metropolis like Tashkent which today has a total population of 2 million (of whom 1.4 million are Muslims), has no more than 12 mosques (and 6 churches and 2 synagogues). Construction of new mosques or rehabilitation of old ones are rarely permitted. The number of religious functionaries dropped to 8,000 in 1955 and stood at a much lower figure in 1982. Only two madrasahs (religious seminaries) survived today in the Soviet Union; the one in Bokhara, Mir-Arab School, is the largest. It is forced to accept every year 25 candidates and reject more than 400 applicants. The last two madrasahs of Samarkand were closed down as far back as in the year 1921. Religious education in public is banned. Muslim youth are openly persecuted and rejected from the Komsomol movement. Only thirty Muslims are allowed to perform the Hajj to Mecca every year. Religious literature is practically non-existent. The Holy Qur'an has been printed six times since 1956, but no interpretation of its meaning in any Muslim language has been permitted ever since the October 1917 Revolution.

7 - Inner Resistance of the Muslim Community

What is, then, the reaction of the Muslims to this onslaught on their religion? In their struggle for survival, Muslims have the choice between: 1) cleverly contrived and discreet effort designed to ensure the continued survival of Islam; and 2) open conflict and resistance in order to secure freedom to live according to the teachings of Islam. They tried the second method up to World War II. It brought few results and did considerable damage to the community. The discouraging results seem to have induced the Muslims to resort to the first method. This is done by following up efforts in three directions: 1) asserting the Islamic identity, strengthening the cohesion of the Muslim community, and increasing its contacts with the Muslim world; 2) trying to avoid provoking the Soviet regime by pointing out its positive achievements, and stressing the common ground there is between the regime and Islam; and 3) abandoning customs and practices which were not an inalienable part of Islam in the first place, and stressing that the Muslims ought to stay within the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

Illustrative of this attitude is the article written by the late Mufti Dhiauddin Babakhanov in the January 1975 issue of the Tashkent Magazine entitled "Muslims of the Soviet East" that there was "full freedom of religion" in the Soviet Union. His

statement about religious freedom makes sense only if we take it in a relative sense and consider it to mean religious freedom as compared to what it was in the Stalinist era, or in comparison to such countries as Communist Albania and Maoist China. Muslims also often thank the Soviet regime for delivering them from the "persecutions of the Tsarist era and of the Greek Orthodox establishment", which is technically true. The fact that they became victims of another type of persecution is certainly understood by the mass of Muslims. Mufti Babakhanov again declared to Alain Woodrow (Le Monde, Sept. 8, 1978) that "believers accomplish freely and without persecution their religious obligations. To believe or not to believe is a personal matter of each citizen". Imam Yusufkhan Shakir, the assistant to Mufti Babakhanov declared to the same correspondent: "The Muslims of the Soviet Union can participate in the building of the new society. Their faith in God Almighty does not prevent them nor does it forbid them from being the carriers of the Socialist Culture". In a book published in Moscow recently on "Muslims in the Soviet Union" Abdul-Wahhab, a Soviet Muslim, writes: "The participation in the building of the new society does not prevent the faithful from following the right path shown by the Qur'an and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.). Indeed the teachings of Islam as expressed by the Qadis stress that: love of one's homeland is an integral part of faith in God".

In another way of appeasing the Soviet regime, Imam

Shakir told t h e correspondent of Le Monde that "we have relations with all the countries of the Muslim world, even with Saudi Arabia, whose capitalist regime does not entertain any relations with the Government of the Soviet Union. As for us, our organism does not get involved in politics" .He was, in a way, right.

This policy of avoiding conflict with the Soviet Government, coupled with other factors, brought some advantages to the Muslim community. In October 1970, the Muslim 'Ulamā' of the Soviet Union sponsored a conference in Tashkent "For Unity and Solidarity of Muslims in the Struggle against Imperialist Aggression". This was followed a year later by a conference in the same city which was devoted to the "Struggle against Zionist Intrigues". Another conference, held in August 1974 in Samarkand, was of greatest importance in view of the importance of the personality in whose honor it was held. The conference was termed "Scientific Conference of the USSR Muslims" and marked the 1200th anniversary of Imam Bukhārī, the most important compiler of ḥadīth and a native of the region. The meeting of more than one hundred imams from the Soviet Union and hundreds of distinguished Muslim guests from 27 countries around the world was a kind of reunion and get-together of the Muslims of the Soviet Union with their brothers from the rest of the world. The meeting had certainly lasting effects on both and was charged with an air of brotherly emotion. The then pro-rector and present rector of

Al-Azhar University (Cairo), Sheikh Muḥammad Bīṣār was not only talking to his Muslim audience when he said in the meeting: "Imām Bukhārī may have lived 12 centuries ago, but he was well ahead of his time, and his work for the advancement of science and technology provided excellent evidence to show that Islam has been suited to all times and all historical stages". In October 1976, another conference was convened in Tashkent by the Muslim Religious Body to which delegations from all the Muslim world were invited. The occasion was the thirtieth anniversary of the "Establishment of the Islamic Religious Body in the Soviet Union". Seeing the sorry state of the mosques in the Capital of Islam in the Soviet Union and comparing it with all the stadiums, operas and play-houses in the construction of which the regime had spent lavishly the late Sheikh Abdul-Rahman Kettani, the Assistant-Chairman of the Board of Moroccan 'Ulama' declared to the Soviet Press: "I wish you could put the same effort in letting the Muslims establish their mosques as you are putting in taking care of their need for sport and culture".

These meetings, notwithstanding the propaganda purposes underlying them and despite the limitations on individual freedom in the Soviet Union, have played some part in opening the way for communication with the entire Muslim Ummah. This communication has also been possible by the fact that some Muslim students were allowed by the Soviet Government to go to Egypt and Morocco for higher studies. There are also some signs of a

relaxing attitude toward the Muslims. During the last few years it has been noticed that some new mosques were built in USSR with official approval. Such "liberties" would have been impossible just a decade ago.

The mass of Muslims in the USSR is presently witnessing an Islamic revival. It seems far too strong to be crushed by force. Even the large mosques of Moscow and Leningrad are overflowing with the faithful on Friday. Official propaganda is often ignored by Muslims as boring and ridiculous. Muslims of the Soviet Union are gaining in self-respect and self-confidence, making the job of their atheistic prosylitizers increasingly difficult. For instance, Mr. Gapurov, the Communist leader of Turkmenistan wrote in the issue of April 1973 in the journal "Turkmenskaya Iskra": "The number of people observing religious rites is not decreasing in our Republic. An insistent and stubborn struggle is needed against the carriers of religious infection which stems from the past. Muslim religion causes particular concern in that it frequently acts as a depository of reactionary national customs and traditions and encourages national exclusiveness". The resistance against atheism is evident from the behaviour of young people, boys and girls, which are often inclined to make a point of saying that they were fasting during Ramadān. They do so in spite of the risks to which such a statement exposes them. It is also evident from the visits, in great numbers, to the tombs of famous religious leaders and national Muslim heroes

whose memory they wish to honor. It is also evident from the network of Muslim Imams which is parallel to the official one. Private study groups which hold prayers and classes in homes, in spite of the risks of heavy penalties, are also indicative of the same trend. Finally, it seems to be gleaming through the eyes of the Muslims of the Soviet Union whenever and wherever they happen to meet Muslim brothers from abroad.

8 - The Case of the Crimea Tatars

The Crimea Tatars have been among the bigger losers of Russian colonization. Their case is treated here with some detail since it is an extreme case which still awaits a just solution. It is, however, not a unique case, for several other Muslim nationalities in the Soviet Union have fared as badly.

The Crimean Muslim state was established in the fifteenth century under the Girey dynasty. It expanded in the following centuries to cover much of what is now Ukrainia. In 1571, they besieged Moscow and burned it to the ground. The Crimean State had borders with the Ottoman Empire, the Russian Empire and the Polish Empire. It was the natural ally of the Ottoman Empire against Russian expansionism. In its apogee the Crimean State had a Muslim population of about seven million. From the second half of the 17th century, Russia began to gain the upper hand over Crimea. Although Crimean Tatars defeated Peter the Great in

1711, Russians invaded and ravaged Crimea during the Russo-Turkish wars of 1735-39 and 1768-74. In the middle of the eighteenth century, the population of Crimean State was about 1,000,000 persons, 80% of whom were Crimean Tatar Muslims. The remaining were mostly Greeks. There were no Russians among them. By then the Crimean State was reduced to the Crimean Peninsula (see Figure 3.4) having an area of about 27,000 km². The capital was Baghche Saray..

After the Russian conquest of Crimea in 1783, a large number of Muslims fleeing Russian onslaught emigrated to Turkey, bringing the number of Crimean Tatars in their land to about 500,000. Many of these died of poverty and disease, the remainder became greatly impoverished. They however still constituted about 75% of the total population. Indeed, the Russian conquest was followed by intense persecution of the Muslims and their forced conversions to Christianity. Their conquest of Crimea was followed by a continuous trickle of emigration of Crimean Tatars to the lands that were still within the Ottoman Empire. On the other hand, from 1784, the Russians sponsored a policy of territorial colonization of Muslim lands.

The recognition of the Ottoman Empire of the Russian annexation of Crimea in 1792, deprived the Crimean Muslims of their last hope to ever free themselves from Russian domination. This led to the second major Tatar emigration, reducing the

population of Crimea to about 610,000 people in 1851. The Crimean War (1854-1856) was fought between Russia on the one hand, and by the Ottoman Empire, Britain and France on the other, on the Crimean territory. It was extremely costly for all its participants in terms of human life. But for the Crimean Tatars, the war was not only a loss but a catastrophe. Most of the Crimean Tatar population was forcibly expelled out of their homeland to other parts of Russia and about 200,000 of them were expelled to the Ottoman Empire, of whom 100,000 were settled by the Ottoman authorities in Bulgaria (Rumelia).

More waves of Muslim emigration, with the encouragement of the Russian State, occurred in the 1860's and 1870's. By 1897, there were left only 188,000 Tatars in Crimea, constituting about 35% of a total population of 540,000 people. The number of Russians and Ukrainians increased meanwhile to 240,000 people (or 45% of the total population). A new wave of emigration occurred in the period 1891-1902. By the October 1917 Revolution, the Crimean Tatar population of the Crimean Peninsula was further reduced, bringing their percentage down to 102,000 people or 25% of a total population of 410,000 persons.

The Bolshevic authorities decided to establish an Autonomous Republic in the Crimean Peninsula in 1921. They recognized the Crimean Tatar nationality, and at last the Crimean Tatars felt that their miseries were coming to an end. However, they

still formed a minority in their own state. In the census of 1926, there was 624,000 people living in the Crimean Autonomous Republic of whom 162,000 were Crimean Tatars (26%); 318,000 Russians (51%); 50,000 Germans (8%) and 94,000 (15%) of other nationalities. In that year, there was a total of 300,000 Crimean Tatars in the Soviet Union; i.e., about 138,000 Crimean Tatars still lived outside their Republic. By 1939, the Crimean Tatar population of the Crimean Autonomous Republic increased to 200,000 or 28% of the total population, in spite of the deportation of 30,000 to 40,000 Crimean Tatars in the late 1920's and early 1930's to the Urals and Siberia, during the Soviet collectivization drive. During this same period a violent anti-religious drive led to the assassination or the deportated of most Tatar Muslim Ulemas. The state terror then turned to the Muslim masses in the 1936-1938 period.

World War II brought once more on the Crimean Tatars a catastrophe similar to that of the Crimean War. During the war, Germany invaded the Crimean Republic. When the Soviet Union reconquered the lost territories, it falsely accused the Muslim population of collaboration with the Germans. Stalin decided to punish the entire Crimean Tatar population in a manner reminiscent of the most barbaric periods of the Middle ages. On May 18, 1944 the entire Crimean Tatar population was exiled to Central Asia (mainly Uzbekistan) and Siberia. Two years later, on June 25, 1946 the Crimean Autonomous Republic was abolished. The Crimean Tatars

were also deprived of their civil rights, including the right to foster their language and culture. The Crimean Peninsula was then made a Region of the Russian Federal Republic. It was transferred in 1954 to the Ukrainian Federal Republic.

A total of 238,000 Muslims were thus deported in the most horrible circumstances, leading to the death through starvation, hunger, cold, illness and sorrow of 110,000 mostly women and children (or 46% of the total). After, their departure, Soviet authorities bulldozed their mosques, their madrasahs, their cemeteries. They burned their books and they destroyed their museums, removing any memory of their existence in Crimea. The Crimean Tatar language was abolished, and the Crimean Tatar nationality was declared inexistent.

During his de-Stalinization program, Premier Nikita Khrushchev of the Soviet Union absolved the Crimean Tatar Community of the accusations made against them. The exiled Crimean Tatars regained their civil rights in Uzbekistan in 1956. They were, however, not only denied any compensation for the harm that they had unjustly suffered, they were not even permitted to return to their homeland. The Crimean Tatars have been agitating for return to their country ever since. Protest demonstrations in 1960's and 1970's in Uzbekistan were suppressed and the leaders of the community were tried as dissidents. But the Crimean Tatars have shown extraordinary persistence. On August 22, 1978 five thousand members of the community sent a petition to

the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party requesting the authorization to leave Uzbekistan and settle in Crimea. They demand the re-establishment of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the right to return to their homeland.

In 1970, the population of the Crimean Peninsula was 1,623,000 persons of whom 1,136,000 were Russians (70%); 406,000 Ukrainians (25%); and 81,000 were members of other nationalities (5%). As for the Crimean Tatars, only 1,600 families were permitted to return to their homes between the years 1967 and 1978. Thus, in 1982 there were only about 10,000 Crimean Tatars in Crimea, which constitutes less than 1% of the total population, while many thousands were evicted by force whenever they dared come back to Crimea.

In 1982, one can estimate the total number of Crimean Tatars in the Soviet Union at about 400,000 persons, of whom at least 250,000 lived in Uzbekistan and the rest were scattered across the Soviet Union. However, these figures are only estimates, since the Soviet census does not count any more Crimean Tatars separately, but count them with the Kazan Tatars.

9 - Endangered Nationalities

The other Muslim national group that suffered most from Russian annihilation tactics are the Cherkess. They are to be found today in great numbers in Turkey, Syria, Lebanon,

Jordan, Palestine and Egypt. By the time of the establishment of the Soviet State in 1917 only a tiny fraction of them remained in their homeland. They were 30,000 in the Soviet Union in 1959 and they became 46,000 in 1979.

Under the Soviet Regime, the other Muslim national groups which were deported en masse to Siberia, and whose republics were abolished after World War II are the Chechens and the Ingushs (about 500,000 persons in all) and the Karatchay and the Balkars (about 120,000 persons). Thus, after World War II, two Muslim Autonomous Republics (Crimea and Chenchon-Ingush) as well as an Autonomous Region (Karatchay) were abolished. Moreover, Muslims in other districts have been removed from their homes and dispersed across the Soviet Union. Among these are the Nogay people of the Kizliar district in Eastern Caucasus; the Tatars and the Cherkesses of the Taman Peninsula, and the Cherkesses of the Adigh Autonomous Region and the Meskhetians of Georgia. Thus, a total of more than two million Muslims have been condemned to cultural death by the Soviet authorities after World War II.

It was during Premier Khrushchev's tenure that the Chechen-Ingush territory was re-established first as an Autonomous Region in 1957, and then as an Autonomous Republic. Under the same decree, the Kabard Autonomous Republic became the Kabard-Balkar Autonomous Republic; and the Cherkess Autonomous Region became the Karachai-Cherkess Autonomous Region, all within the Federal Republic of Russia. A.F. Gorkine, the Secretary of the Presidium of the

Supreme Soviet characterized the deportation of these populations as "a gross violation of the Leninist policy toward nationalities" in declaring the re-establishment of the above mentioned territories. Yet, he did not say a word about the Crimean Tatars.

The operation of repatriation of the exiled Muslims lasted until 1960. For instance, in 1970, of a total of 1,084,000 people in the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic, 635,000 people were Chechen-Ingush, or 58.5% of the population. The number of Chechens in the Soviet Union rose from 419,000 in 1959 to 756,000 in 1979; that of the Ingush, from 106,000 to 186,000; that of the Karachai, from 81,000 to 131,000; and that of the Balkar, from 42,000 to 66,000. Thus, these nationalities have regained their territories and their demographic vitality.

But those who suffered most from the Russian campaign of physical and cultural elimination as well as dispersion are the Tatars in general, of whom the Crimean Tatars are one important section. In numbers, Tatars were second among the Muslim nationalities only to the Uzbeks. They became third in 1979 census after the Uzbeks and the Kazakhs. But while the Uzbeks and the Kazakhs are well concentrated in their republics, the Tatars found themselves dispersed in a diaspora that encompasses most of the Soviet Union owing to the five centuries of Russian persecution and deportations. The Tatar communities are found outside the Soviet Union as well: in Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria,

Turkey, Saudi Arabia, China, Japan, Australia, and the US (especially California and New York).

Forced Christianization was imposed on the Volga Tatars at least four times without much success. First, in the 16th century under Ivan IV. Then, in 1740, when a decree from the Tzar imposed taxes and military service on the Kazan Tatars who refused to be baptized. Then, in 1742, when the Russian Senate decided to destroy all mosques, except those of villages and towns where there are no Christians. Thus, 418 mosques out of a total of 536 have been razed to the ground. Finally, in 1864, when Ilminsky baptized by force about 160,000 Muslim Tatars. Most of their descendants returned to Islam in 1905 when a new Constitution allowed them to do so. Tatars were continuously transferred from one region to another under a variety of pretexts.

Today, the Tatar communities are found in most large cities of European Soviet Union, specifically in Kasimov, Vilnius, Astrakhan, Leningrad and Moscow, as well as in Siberia and Uzbekistan. The low rate of growth of the Tatars with respect to other nationalities is a result of low birth rates and continuous assimilation due to this dispersion. In 1920, a Tatar Autonomous Republic was established with Kazan as capital. But the population of this Republic was made up mostly by Russian settlers. However, since World War II the percentage of

the Tatar population in the Tatar Republic tended to increase. For instance, in 1959, there were 1,345,000 Tatars in their Republic out of a total population of 2,850,000 and a total Tatar population of 4,968,000 in the Soviet Union. Thus their percentage in the Republic was 47.2% and the percentage of those Tatars who live in their own Republic with respect to the total Tatar population of the Soviet Union was 27.1%. In 1970, there were 1,536,000 Tatars in their Republic out of a total population of 3,131,000 and a total Tatar population of 5,930,000 in the Soviet Union. Thus, the percentages became respectively 49.1% and 25.9%. The 1979 census shows a trend of stabilization in both the dispersion of the Tatar population and in their dilution in their own Republic. Indeed, there were 1,642,000 Tatars in their republic compared to 6,556,000 Tatars in the Soviet Union. Thus, the above percentages became respectively 47.6% and 26.0%.

It was on 15 November 1944 that all Meskhetians were deported from Georgia along with other Muslims near the Turkish border. They were about 200,000 Muslims, thus punished for the simple reason that they were Muslims. They were transported to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan under the most terrible circumstances, leading to the death of 25% of them. On April 28, 1956, they were freed from the "special settler" regime. Since then, they agitated unsuccessfully for the right to return to their homes in Georgia or to emigrate to Turkey. To this day, their efforts brought no results.

10 - Conclusions

After this overview of the situation of Muslims in the Soviet Union, the questions to be posed are, what are their chances of surviving and thriving as Muslims? What are the future trends in general in the Soviet Union?.

To answer these questions a comparison between the situation before and after World War II is necessary. Between the censuses of 1926 and 1939, the Russian population of the Soviet Union increased by 27%, whereas that of the total population of the Union (including the Muslims) increased by only 16%. Demographically, the period was a catastrophe for the Muslim population: the Muslim nationality which suffered most were the Kazakhs and the effect of the catastrophe is felt to this day. From 1939 to 1970, the situation reversed itself, and the trend is becoming more pronounced after 1970. The Muslim populations increased at a faster rate than the other populations. This in effect halted the efforts of Russification, even in Kazakhstan, where Muslims became a minority. While some regions, such as Crimea were purged entirely of their Muslim populations, one can nevertheless say that demographically the situation improved greatly for the Muslims.

In terms of their distribution, the Muslims occupy a compact area making up about 20% of the area of the Soviet Union. While the Muslim republics and autonomous regions seem to be

split into three main areas: the Caucasus, the Volga and Central Asia, the territories lying between these areas are also regions of Muslim concentration, although excluded from the Muslim nationality regions. Since 1939 there was no further dispersion of the Muslim population. Today about 93% of Soviet Muslims live in areas where they form the majority or near majority of the population.

Religiously, there is official segregation against those who practice Islam openly. However, public prayers are not forbidden, Islamic festivals are celebrated and the Muslim religious organization is in existence and functioning. Even smaller groups of Muslims such as those of Leningrad and Moscow get together to pray. Thus, even in this respect, the situation is improving. The Muslim religious leadership has lately showed great wisdom and tact to induce improvement without antagonizing the Soviet authorities. For acting wisely they deserve the respect of the Muslims both inside and outside the Soviet Union. The religious organization is paid by the Soviet State in exchange for the confiscated waqf. It is also recognized by the Soviet authorities as a civil entity.

The number of existing Muslim institutions decreased greatly. But the existing ones are fully used to the point that the construction of new mosques has been tolerated here and there. Thus, the lowest point in the downward trend in this

respect seems to be already over and slow improvement is expected.

Modern communications media, the freeing of the colonies elsewhere in the world, the spread of Islam in the American continent, the revolutionary movements of suppressed Muslim populations in Africa and Asia inspired by Islam, the heroic struggle of the Afghan people against Soviet imperialism, all these had the most impressive effects on Islam in the Soviet Union. Muslim youth are getting greater awareness of their Islamic heritage, and are less inclined to hide positive feelings towards Islam. Their adherence to Islam is a kind of super-national feeling that binds together all Muslims of the Soviet Union. When in 1978, the Muslim American heavy-weight champion, Muhammad Ali, visited the USSR and met the highest authorities, he made a point to visit Tashkent (in fact the Muslim capital of the Soviet Union) and pray in its Mosque. This act was received by wild excitement, and the champion was received more like a Muslim champion than just a heavy-weight champion.

Economically, the Muslim areas have the greatest impact on Soviet economy: most of the Soviet cotton is produced in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan. Muslim areas produce 75% of electric energy, over 50% of oil, 75% of lead, 50% of zinc, etc. The importance of these regions is expected to increase rather than decrease.

Thus, in spite of all the miseries of the past, Islam in the Soviet Union has retained a good deal that is necessary for its survival. It has been pushed outside the political, economical and social life of the country, but could not be obliterated from the hearts of its followers. As the atrocities of the Tsars, Lenin and Stalin become more and more impossible to repeat, Islam is bound to come back to the surface again.

Once Muslims are given back their religious freedom of expression and their political rights as Muslims, they will certainly respond by collaborating in building up the Soviet Society as a multicultural society where Islam will have the important and increasing role it deserves. Materialism alone as developed by the Communist theories brought only human and spiritual misery. Many see that this spiritual void can only be filled by Islam. In this lies the challenge presented to the Muslims of the Soviet Union. Among a people who were able to survive centuries of atrocious persecution and colonization a growing confidence is noticeable: that the Islam which they had tried to retain is not only the remedy for their own ailments but also for the ailments of the country in which they live, and the people with whom their destiny seems inextricably linked and to whom they can still bring salvation through Islam.

References

1. F. de Romainville "Islam en Union Sovietique" Hermes-France Press (Paris, France), 1947, in French.
2. R. Pipes "The Formation of the Soviet Union" Harvard University Press (Mass, USA), 1954, in English.
3. V. Monteil "The Soviet Muslims" Editions du Seuil (Paris France), 1957, in French.
4. J.P. Roux "Islam in Asia" Payot Press (Paris, France), 1958, in French.
5. A. Hetmatek "Islam under the Soviets" Ph.D. thesis, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C, 1965, in English.
6. A. Benningson & C. Lemerrier Quelquejay "Islam in the Soviet Union", Pall Mall Press (London, England), 1967, in English.
7. M.A. Kettani "Muslims in Communist States" Published by Muslim World League (Mecca, Saudi Arabia), 1974, in Arabic.
8. K. Lavencic "Muslims in USSR" Impact International (London, England) April 9-22, 1976, in English.
9. M. Abdul-Wahhab "Muslims in the Soviet Union" Moscow (Soviet Union) 1977, in Russian.

10. S. Maslough "Muslims in the Soviet Union" paper presented at the International Seminar on Muslim Communities in non-Muslim State, July 1978 (London, England), in English.
11. A Woodrow "La Vie Religieuse en USSR" Le Monde (Paris, France) September 7 and 8, 1978, in French.
12. H. Carrere d'Encausse "L'Empire Eclaté" Flammarion Press (Paris, France) 1978, in French.
13. Radio Liberty "The All-Union Census of 1979 in the USSR" Research Bulletin, Munich (Germany) Sept 1980.
14. A. Sheehy and B. Nahaylo "The Crimean Tatars, Volga Germans and Meskhetians" Minority Rights Group 1981.
15. A. Seytmuratova "The Plight of the Crimean Tatars". International Conference of the 15th Century Hijra, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Nov. 24 - Dec.4, 1981.
16. S. Akiner "Islamic People of the Soviet Union" Routledge and Kegan Paul PLC, (England), 1983