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During the early decades of the 20th century the Sinkiang province of North West China enjoyed a privileged isolation from the civil wars of mainland China. The peace was, however, broken in 1931 when a first wave of Tungan rebels swept in from Kansu to join indigenous insurgents. A Soviet intervention followed two years later bringing a tight control over the affairs of Sinkiang.

The purpose of this paper is to make a preliminary inquiry into how Turkish influence, in competition with other foreign powers, was pursued in the short-lived Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkestan 1933-34 and to what effect.

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Governor Chin Shu-jen of the Sinkiang province had taken power in 1928, when his predecessor Yang Tseng-hsin had been assassinated. There has as yet been no favourable judgement passed upon Chin by historians like Owen Lattimore, Allen S. Whiting or O. Edmund Clubb, whose works are the standard ones on the history of modern Sinkiang.¹⁾ Compared with the legendary Yang, Governor Chin was weak and irresolute, but it must be noted that the administration of Chin Shu-jen was only a continuation of a tradition of oppression, nepotism and economic rapacity, that had become the trademark of Chinese rule in Inner Asia. The philosophy behind the harsh system of Governor Yang had been "après moi le déluge" and indeed it swept over Sinkiang during the unhappy reign of Chin, whose domestic policy went from blunder to blunder.

The scope of foreign influence in Sinkiang was limited by geographic obstacles. With the Government of India behind the Pamir bound by its "masterly inactivity" and a far away Japan, the two

main contestants in Sinkiang were the U.S.S.R. and the Republic of China. The Turk-Sib railway, combined with the relatively easy access to Sinkiang from the west, gave a comfortable advantage to the Soviets; the Gobi desert and the mosaic of independent war lords to the east proved too much for the Chinese to overcome.

It is within this mainly bi-polar context that the short spell of Turkish influence on the Moslem movement for independence in Kashgaria (which is the common name on Sinkiang south of the T'ien Shan mountain range) must be seen. The Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkestan tried to break off the Sino-Soviet dominance through connections principally with the Republic of Turkey, but the historical research has up till now been focused on allegedly British or Japanese connections neglecting the unifying bonds of Pan-Turanian nature between the Turcic peoples.

This supplementary picture of Turkish influence can be derived from British, German and Swedish sources, which have been used for this paper. In my future research into the history of the Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkestan, I will include Turkish sources and, in addition, make use of the interview method among the refugees from Sinkiang now living in the Republic of Turkey.

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On the 29th of December, 1932, a rising flared up in the small town of Kara Kash near Khotan. With the soil already prepared, it did not last long before the Chinese authorities capitulated both at Kara Kash and Khotan.²⁾

The local authorities at Kashgar dispatched in vain a detachment of Chinese regulars to quell the rebellion in Khotan. When the inadequately trained and equipped Chinese soldiers, for the most part consisting of Moslems, confronted their co-religionists on the battle field, they often preferred to change sides. Very soon even

the town of Yarkand changed hands.³⁾

From the nearby mountains, Moslem Kirghiz nomads descended to take part in the general killing and looting, gradually developing a despotism of their own. In Kashgar, Tungans and Chinese united under the Taoyin Ma Shao-wu against this Turki-Kirghiz coalition.⁴⁾

Division between the Turki leaders impeded for a long time the creation of an independent republic in Southern Kashgaria, but in November 1933 an official communiqué proclaimed the establishment of the ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF EASTERN TURKESTAN, with Khoja Niaz as President. A Prime Minister directed a complete cabinet according to the written constitution, in which the Islamic character of the republic was the overshadowing element. The presidential office held by Khoja Niaz for life was combined with that of Commander-in-Chief, which gave him both the power and the title of Padishah, or King.⁵⁾

The general foreign policy of the young republic went along anti-Soviet, pro-British lines. Another fundamental feature was the strong anti-Chinese current in the Turki population after years of power abuse. Out of necessity, the domestic policy centred around the weak economy and the disrupted trade. Law and order, according to the shariat, was enforced, but the younger generation also harboured plans of starting modern schools and a newspaper. They founded a hospital at Kashgar.⁶⁾

To the Soviet Union, the Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkestan was an Anglo-Japanese creation, exploiting spontaneous discontent among the indigenous population.⁷⁾ Quite naturally, British and other Western observers appreciated the establishment of a Moslem buffer state promising stiff resistance to further Soviet advance. However, the Westerners harboured serious misgivings concerning

the economic shortcomings of the republic, drawing parallels with the reign of Yakub Beg in the 1870s. At the beginning, the amount of taxes remained conspicuously low, but soon the Moslem government had to increase the burden of taxation to meet the military and administrative expenditure, surpassing even their Chinese predecessors in rapacious behaviour.⁸⁾ The Moslem government had a hard choice to make between popular enthusiasm or necessary taxation, because no foreign subsidies were forthcoming to the war-ravaged country.

The main reason for the cold attitude from most foreign powers lay in the fact that a diplomatic recognition of the Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkestan would mean an immediate break of diplomatic relations with China. In addition, the Soviet Union discouraged foreign powers like Turkey and Afghanistan from taking interest on an active basis.⁹⁾

In rapid succession during the Spring of 1934, General Ma Chung-ying and his Tungan élite troops after their defeat by Soviet regulars in Dzungaria were able to gain control over the cities along the southern rim of the Taklamakan desert. Khotan fell as the last stronghold in June after furious fighting. The so-called Tunganistan was created from the very core of the short-lived Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkestan, when Urumchi troops arrived to Kashgar in July 1934.¹⁰⁾

The Tungan invasion of Kashgaria delivered the death-blow to the Islamic Republic. But diplomatic isolation, economic chaos, internal strife and Soviet machinations slowly ground down the republic.

However, the NFA had * admit Turkish "feelings for a people. The National Flag, which was decided upon (white star and crescent on a blue ground), served as an external sign of the

close affinity between the Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkestan and the Republic of Turkey. When an official New Year telegram was sent to Ankara, the Islamic Republic "au drapeau bleu" saluted the beloved (sic.) Turkey "au drapeau rouge".¹¹⁾

The design of a national flag, plans for modernization of schools and the military, etc. were not brought about by pure chance. In November, 1933, a certain Dr. Mustapha Ali Bey of Izmir and a Turkish military officer named Mahmut Nedim Bey (in all probability identical with the late ex-officer Nedim Kaytmaz of İstanbul) entered the Kashgarian arena as advisers to Khoja Niaz administration. The two Turks exerted a dominating influence on political and military affairs of the Islamic Republic, which even sent Dr. Ali on a mission for munitions and contributions from fellow Moslems in India. At Khotan, Nedim Bey trained the army and bought weapons allegedly from Japan.¹²⁾

Soviet pressure in Ankara seems to have limited the role of the Turkish ambassador in Kabul to that of an observer only. His German colleague, however, remarked that "... die türkische Regierung mit der ostturkischen Bewegung zum mindesten sympathisiert und unter der Hand manches geschehen lässt, was der Sowjet-Russische Regierung nicht genehm ist."¹³⁾

The reaction of the Turkish press on the creation of the Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkestan was exuberant. The rebels fought as "true Turks" for freedom and the foundation "of a modern State which will advance along the road to perfection."¹⁴⁾ The press reports caused the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tefvik Rüştü Bey, to deny all collaboration with the Islamic Republic. However, the MFA had to admit Turkish "feelings for a people which speaks her language" and set out the right for every nation to follow the Turkish example of self-emancipation. The

good neighbourship existing between the Soviet Union and Turkey was also a valid argument against interference in Sinkiang.¹⁵⁾

A sudden change in Turkish opinion took place after the New Year 1933/34, when the official Anatolian Agency distributed Soviet material on Turkish reactionaries, German business methods, British military imperialism and the partition of China. The report wanted to show how misplaced, if not ill-advised, Turkish sympathy for the new Moslem régime in Sinkiang was.¹⁶⁾ It is interesting to see that the "Izmir Postası" clears Dr. Mustapha Ali of any alleged plot at Izmir, adding a remark on his "republican convictions". However, according to the paper, the Islamic Republic had been created through British and German intrigues as an anti-Japanese state with Communist views.¹⁷⁾

After an initial outburst of sympathy for the Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkestan in 1933, the New Year's resolution seems to be a whitewashing of Turkish connections with Central Eurasia. Soviet diplomatic pressure in Ankara carried greater weight than feelings of kinship, because the improvement in Turco-Russian relations since 1929 must not be jeopardized. In spite of the worldwide Depression the Soviet Union could still offer favourable commercial agreements involving loans, experts and methods necessary for the development of Turkey's economy.¹⁸⁾

In conclusion then, the * attempt by certain pro-Turkish circles

Later developments during the 1930s show, however, that Turkish interest for Sinkiang was not entirely extinguished by the negative Soviet reaction to the early outbursts of sympathy for the Turki or Uighur movement of independence.

In 1937 the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Aras, commented that if the Japanese should approach Sinkiang, "then Turkey would have a certain racial interest in subsequent develop-

ments." A year later, Dr. Aras repeated his earlier statement in stronger words, when he demonstrated to the British Ambassador the "strong moral interest" Turkey harboured on the behalf of the Uighur population in Sinkiang. An independent buffer state, with a guarantee from the Indian Empire and support from Afghanistan, should prevent Japan from absorbing Sinkiang's "white" population with "the yellow races". But Soviet resistance in Sinkiang to any Japanese advance on a basis of Communism was equally disastrous. Then the Turkish population of Sinkiang would be lost to "Turkdom" anyway. The Republic of Turkey could only regret such a proceeding, because there existed no means to prevent it.¹⁹⁾

The continuing Turkish interest in Central Eurasian affairs belie the sincerity of the New Year's resolution of 1933/34, but it also exposes the political and geographic obstacles to any policy of intervention in Sinkiang.

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The Soviet Union virtually took over the province of Sinkiang after the deposition of Governor Chin Shu-jen in early 1933 and the extinction of the Tungan revolt in 1934. The Soviet domination lasted until 1943 as a countermove to a feasible Japanese Blitzkrieg. This was the price the Chinese Republic had to pay for the Soviet munitions help.

In conclusion then, the attempt by certain pro-Turkish circles within the newly founded Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkestan and Pan-Turanian elements from the Republic of Turkey to strengthen and establish the Moslem movement among the Uighurs on an international basis failed as a result of Soviet resistance. Any Moslem movement of independence in Sinkiang could easily reach also Russian Turkestan. All foreign interests - not merely Turkish - were highly undesirable in Sinkiang, which had definitely been converted into a Soviet sphere of influence in 1934.

NOTES:

- 1) Owen LATTIMORE, *Pivot of Asia*, Boston 1950.
 Allen S. WHITING, *Sinkiang: Pawn or Pivot?*, East Lansing 1958.
 O. Edmund CLUBB, *China & Russia. The "Great Game"*, New York 1971
- 2) G. ARELL et.al., *Din broders blod ropar. Bilder från inbördeskriget i Jarkend 1933-34*, Stockholm 1935, pp. 16-17, 30.
- 3) *ibid.*, pp. 31-35.
- 4) ANSGARIUS, *Svenska Missionsförbundets Årsskrift (Yearbook)*, 1933, (G.Palmaer), p. 103.
 ANSGARIUS, 1935, (J.Andersson), pp. 116-117.
 G. PALMAER (ed.), *En ny port öppnas*, Stockholm 1942, pp.228-229.
- 5) G.ARELL et.al., *op.cit.*, pp. 186-191.
 FO 371/17117 - F 7826/466/10: Cons.-Gen. to Government of India, Kashgar 2.11.33.
 B.HAYIT, *Turkestan zwischen Russland und China*, Amsterdam 1971, pp. 302, 305-307.
 Turkish translation: *TÜRKİSTAN Rusya ile Çin arasında*, İstanbul 1975, pp. 311, 313-316.
- E. ROSSI, *Le ultime vicende del Turkestan Orientale*. IN: *Oriente Moderno*, 19, 1939, pp. 248-252.
- N.B. According to the dates of several British diplomatic reports the ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF EASTERN TURKESTAN seems to have been founded at least a month earlier. See: FO 371/17117 - F 8031/466/10; which gives 22.10.33.
- 6) FO 371/18055 - F 130/14/10: Cons.-Gen. to GoI, Kashgar 23.11.33
 ANSGARIUS, 1933, (G.Palmaer), p. 104.
 INTERVIEWS with: Mr. İsa Alptekin, İstanbul 11.6.1974.
 Mr. Yunus Buğra, Ankara 14.6.1974.
 Mr. Ubeydulla Hatipoğlu, İstanbul 20.6.1974.
- 7) D.I. TIKHONOV, *Kharakter narodno-osvoboditel'nykh dvizhenii v Sin'ciane v XIX. v i pervoi tret'i XV. v.* (The character of the people's liberation movements in Sinkiang during the 19th and the first third part of the 20th centuries.) IN: *Sovetskoe Vostokovedenie* 6, 1949, pp. 346-347.
- 8) FO 371/17115 - F 5466/466/10: Cons.-Gen. to GoI, Kashgar 29.6.33.
 G. ARELL et.al., *op.cit.*, pp. 260-262.
- 9) FO 371/18055 - F 14/14/10: Officiat.Cons.-Gen. to GoI, Kashgar 19.10.33.
 M.E. BUĞRA, *Doğu Türkistan. Tarihi, Coğrafi ve Şimdiki durumu*, İstanbul 1952, pp. 37-39.
- 10) *ibid.*, pp. 44-47.
 G. PALMAER (ed), *op.cit.*, pp. 236-238.
 G. ARELL et.al., *op.cit.*, pp. 294-295, 298-299.
- 11) FO 371/18055 - F 48/14/10: Cons.-Gen. to GoI, Kashgar 16.11.33.
 F. TAILLARDAT, *Le Turkestan Chinois*. IN: *L'Asie Française*, 37, 1937, p. 16.

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- 12) AA IV Chi 218/ 2.2.34.: Kabul 10.1.1934.
FO 371/18055 - F 14/14/10: Off.Cons.-Gen. to GoI, Kashgar
9.11.33.
INTERVIEW with Mr. Namuk Eriş (nephew of Mr. N.Kaytmaz),
Istanbul 20.6.1974. - Since Mr. Nedim Kaytmaz'
unpublished memoirs are inaccessible for re-
search we have to accept the statement, that the
Turks went as volunteers without any official
mission or invitation to the Islamic Republic
of Eastern Turkestan.
- 13) AA IV Chi 644/ 4.4.34.: Deutsche Gesandtschaft, Kabul 6.3.34.
AA IV Chi 1167/ 4.6.34.: ibid., Kabul 9.5.34. (Quotation)
- 14) FO 371/18055 - F 23/14/10: Br. Embassy to FO, Ankara 23.12.33.
- 15) FO 371/18056 - F 744/14/10: Br. Emb. to FO, Ankara 3.2.34 (Quot.)
AA IV Chi 318/ 16.2.34.: Appendix; "TÜRKIYE", Istanbul 30.1.34.
- 16) FO 371/18056 - F 1025/14/10: Br. Emb. to FO, Ankara, 12.2.34
ANATOLIAN AGENCY 4.2.34. and printed in
"CUMHURIYET" and "TÜRKIYE" of Istanbul.
- 17) FO 371/18056 - F 1655/14/10: Br.Cons.-Gen., Izmir 5.3.34.
From "IZMIR POSTASI", 18.12.33. and 6.2.34 (Quot.)
- 18) B. LEWIS, The Emergence of Modern Turkey, OUP 1969, p. 285.
LEWIS clearly points out that the Kemalist etatism
was not due to any inclination for the Soviet Union or
Communism, " but to the sheer practical necessities of
the moment." The interests of Turkey itself - not
those of Central Eurasia - had to come first.
- 19) FO 371/21025 - F 10717/597/61: Br. Emb. to FO, Ankara 27.11.37.
FO 371/22118 - F 11923/139/10: Br. Emb. to FO, Ankara 28.10.38.

N.B. AA = Documents from Auswärtiges Amt, Bonn.
FO = Documents from Foreign Office now at Public Record
Office, London.

CONSULS-GENERAL, KASHGAR, 1918-1942

1918 Sir G. Macartney, K.C.I.E.

1919-24 Major (later Lt.-Col.) P.T. Etherton, I.A.

1925 Lt.-Col. R.A. Lyall, D.S.O. (Acting)

1926-27 Major G.V.B. Gillan, I.A.

1928-30 Frederick Williamson

1931 Capt. G. Sherriff (Acting)

1932-33 N. Fitzmaurice (Acting)

1934-36 Lt.-Col. J.W. Thomson-Glover, C.B.E.

1937-38 Capt. K.C. Packman

1939-40 Major H.H. Johnson, C.I.E.

1941-42 Eric Earle Shipton