

# Sultan Galiev - a forgotten precursor: Socialism and the National Question

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## About the author

**By Richard Price**

Maxime Rodinson, the author of the article that follows, died on May 23 this year at the age of 89.1 Born in Marseille in 1915, his parents were Russian-Polish-Jewish immigrants who later joined the Communist Party, and he left school at 13 to work as an errand boy. Despite having no formal qualifications, he managed to pass the entrance exam to university, and after graduation his academic career began to take off. He joined the Communist Party in 1937, and was fortunate enough to land a teaching post at the French Institute in Damascus in 1940, narrowly avoiding the fate of his parents, who died in Auschwitz.

He became an expert on the history and culture of the Muslim world, and held several senior academic positions. His widely read books included Islam and Capitalism, Israel and the Arabs and Mohammed. He left the Communist Party in 1958, complaining that it was too rigid and doctrinaire, but remained an independently-minded Marxist. This non-sectarian spirit was shown in his willingness to contribute an introduction to the first French edition of the Belgian Trotskyist Abram Leon's classic The Jewish Question. Although critical in some respects, Rodinson acknowledged the importance of Leon's work.

Increasingly critical of Zionism, especially after 1968, Rodinson campaigned for a Palestinian state, and in 1973 published Israel: A Colonial-Settler State? under the imprint of Monad, associated with the US Socialist Workers Party.

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When the Bolsheviks took power in 1917, they inherited the vast multi-national, multi-faith Tsarist empire. A classic example of uneven and combined development, it encompassed cities in European Russia with a large working class concentrated in huge enterprises, as well as vast areas almost devoid of an industrial working class inhabited by non-Russian nationalities, many of them predominantly Muslim. This was especially true of the lands on southern rim of Russia, much of which had been acquired by conquest in the nineteenth century, and in central Asia.

The overthrow of Tsarism was greeted with enthusiasm by many of the non-Russian minorities. By agitating in favour of self-determination for oppressed nations and land to the peasantry, the Bolsheviks won sufficient support to carry the revolution into the non-Russian lands.<sup>2</sup>

In the course of these struggles in the periphery, the Bolsheviks were obliged to strike some curious alliances. In August 1919, for example, General Deniken's White army was defeated by the combined

efforts of the Bolsheviks and a force of Chechens led by Uzun Haji, a Sufi Islamic cleric, who declared: 'I weave a rope to hang engineers, students and all those who write from left to right.' As the authors of a recent book on Chechnya note, 'He died in May 1920 before he had a chance to start fighting the Bolsheviks as well.'<sup>3</sup>

Support for the overthrow of Tsarism and for the defeat of the Whites in the Civil War did not necessarily translate into political support for, or even neutrality towards, the post-revolutionary regime. In the Ukraine and Georgia, the principle of self-determination was overridden by strategic military considerations.

The dilemma facing the Bolsheviks was considerable. There was no blueprint for striking a balance between the competing claims of centralising the forces of the revolution and making concessions to local cultural and political conditions, and the stick was frequently bent, first in one direction and then the other. Complete autonomy risked the predominance of reactionary pan-Islamic and other counter-revolutionary forces. Over centralisation risked driving the masses into the arms of the same forces down a different route.

The dangers of bureaucratic centralisation haunted Lenin towards the end of his life, and were at the core of his 'last struggle' that led to his breaking relations with Stalin before he became entirely incapacitated in 1923.<sup>4</sup>

On paper, the Communist programme supported the right of self-determination up to and including secession, even under a bourgeois leadership.<sup>5</sup> In practice, the willingness of counter-revolutionary and imperialist forces to utilise anti-Soviet movements, and the need to use whatever purchase the Bolsheviks had in the periphery of the former Tsarist empire to turn the oppressed masses of 'the East' against British imperialism meant that this right remained largely abstract.

How to relate to the Muslim oppressed posed particular difficulties, not least on the issues of religion and the liberation of women. E.H. Carr points out that:

'... the national question in the east ... at first ... presented itself to the Soviet leaders almost exclusively in its Muslim guise ... they were astonished to discover that, while the hold of Islam over the nomadic peoples and in parts of Central Asia was little more than nominal, it remained elsewhere a tenacious and vigorous institution which offered far fiercer resistance than the Orthodox Church to new beliefs and practices. In regions where it was strong - notably in the northern Caucasus - the Muslim religion was a social, legal and political as well as a religious institution regulating the daily way of life of its members in almost every particular. The imams and mullahs were judges, lawgivers, teachers and intellectuals, as well as political and sometimes military leaders.'<sup>6</sup>

Some delegates to the Congress of the Peoples of the East, held in Baku in September 1920, including John Reed, thought that Zinoviev had overstepped the mark when he called on several occasions for 'a real holy war' against British and French imperialism.<sup>7</sup> According to one account, Zinoviev even called for recreating 'the spirit of struggle which once animated the peoples of the East when they marched against Europe under the leadership of their great conquerors'.<sup>8</sup> Indian Communist M.N. Roy refused to attend Baku, calling the congress in advance 'Zinoviev's circus'.<sup>9</sup>

Sultan Galiev, the subject of this article - a review of Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Quelquejay's book *Mouvements Nationaux chez les Musulmans de Russie, 1: le 'Sultangalievisme' au Tatarstan* (National Movements Among the Muslims of Russia 1: 'Sultan Galievism' in Tatarstan) - is an almost forgotten figure of early Soviet history. His career from protégé of Stalin (when Stalin was Commissar of Nationalities) to victim of Stalin is a poignant commentary on the failure of the Russian revolution to live up to its early promise in the eyes of many that it professed to liberate. The legacy of Stalinist Great Russian chauvinism in the Muslim republics lives on in Putins' brutal denial of Chechen independence and the shocking retaliation at Beslan.

A useful further source on the life of Sultan Galiev is available at:

<http://harikumar.brinkster.net/MLRB/Sultan-Galiyev-FINAL.htm>

This avowedly 'Marxist-Leninist' website (founded by former members of the Albania-USA Friendship Society!) should be treated with considerable caution, and its account remains curiously agnostic about his fate. It nevertheless contains a number of useful references to the available literature.

## Notes

1. See Douglas Johnson, 'Maxime Rodinson, Marxist historian of Islam', Guardian, June 3, 2004.
2. See the useful account of the evolution of Bolshevik policy on self-determination under Lenin in E.H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1923*, Volume 1, Penguin, 1977, Chapters 11-14, pp.292-435.
3. Carlotta Gall and Thomas De Waal, *Chechnya*, Pan, 1997, p.21.
4. See M. Lewin, *Lenin's Last Struggle*, Pluto, 1975.
5. N. Bukharin and E. Preobrazhensky, *The ABC of Communism*, Penguin, 1970, p.248.
6. E.H. Carr, *op. cit.*, pp.323, 329-30.
7. Ed. B. Pearce, *Baku: Congress of the Peoples of the East*, New Park, 1977, pp.23-36.
8. R.A. Rosenstone, *Romantic Revolutionary*, Penguin, 1982, p.378.
9. Pearce, *op. cit.*, p.190n.

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## Sultan Galiev - a forgotten precursor. Socialism and the National Question

### Maxime Rodinson

The book on which these reflections are based has just been published under the auspices of the École Pratique des Hautes Études (6e section).<sup>1</sup> It is a conscientious and detailed study of a set of questions which have on the whole been given far more serious attention in the Anglo-Saxon countries than in France, where gratuitous political prophecy passes for scientific research all too often. A book like this is usually received with a priori suspicion in militant circles, and even elsewhere. My aim is to offer some counterweight to this traditional sectarianism.

Sultan Galiev is one of the men who played an important part in the early days of the Communist International and the Soviet Union. Most socialist militants are aware of him only through a passing reference made by Stalin,<sup>2</sup> rather an emotional reference, I used to think. Perhaps I was right. To have aroused some emotion in Stalin is already something in the way of an achievement.

Mir Sayit Sultan Galiev was born the son of a Tartar schoolteacher in about 1900. [This date is almost certainly wrong. Other sources have him born in a village in Bashkiria in 1880 - Ed.] The Tartars were a Muslim minority within the Tsarist Empire, with a character all of their own. There were about three and a half million of them scattered throughout the Empire, but they were concentrated to some extent in the 'Government' of Kazan, their political and cultural centre. They were mainly peasants, and the few Tartar industrial workers still kept close ties to rural life. But there was also a bourgeoisie: a few industrialists and many shopkeepers, from which a Muslim 'clergy' and an intelligentsia had emerged. This bourgeoisie and these intellectuals were active, dynamic and ambitious. Many had long been 'modernists' in their attitude towards Muslim dogma, and 'advanced' in their attitudes to the traditional Muslim way of life.

Their teaching activities often led them to penetrate and even establish themselves in areas inhabited by their less evolved co-religionists, such as Central Asia, Siberia and the Caucasus. In so doing, they introduced new ideas and modern ways, and generally stirred things up. They can be seen playing this role in the translations of Kazak and Tadjik novels published by Aragon, for instance.<sup>3</sup> All this was naturally viewed with great suspicion by the reactionary Khans.

Then came the October Revolution. An important part of the Tartar intelligentsia supported it, thinking that the socialism established by the new regime would realise and deepen the reformist movement's programme. Naturally enough they particularly appreciated Bolshevism's internationalist orientation. They hoped that this would lead to equality between ethnic groups and put an end to Great-Russian domination, a domination the 'Whites' would re-impose should they be victorious.

Sultan Galiev joined the Bolshevik Party in November 1917, and, thanks to his talents as an orator and organiser, soon became an important figure as the representative of this 'colonial' intelligentsia. He became a member and then president of the 'Central Muslim Commissariat', a new body affiliated to the Narkomnats (The People's Commissariat for Nationalities), a Commissariat presided over by a Bolshevik leader still relatively unknown at the time, Joseph Stalin. With the help of friends, Sultan Galiev created a Muslim Communist Party, and raised Tartar military units which played a key role in the struggle against Koltchak. Despite the opposition of the local Russian Soviets and communists, he extracted a promise from the Central Government to create a large predominantly Muslim state, the Tartaro-Bachkir Republic, which was to have five to six million inhabitants and to cover the vast areas of the Middle Volga and the Southern Urals.

It was during this period that he developed a series of ideas which he hoped to defend and to realise. He saw Muslim society, with the exception of a few big feudal landowners and bourgeois, as a unit which had been collectively oppressed by the Russians under Tsarism. There was thus no point in dividing it with artificially created differences and class struggles. Since for the time being the poorer Muslims were too impoverished and uncultured to provide cadres, one should not hesitate to make use of the available ones: the petty-bourgeois intellectuals and even the reformist clergy, who had given some proof of their faithfulness to the Revolution. In fact, the socialist revolution should adapt itself to fit a society so imbued with Muslim traditions. Sultan Galiev, an atheist himself, therefore recommended that Islam be handled gently, through a gradual 'de-fanaticisation' and secularisation. The Muslims of Russia, and especially the most enlightened amongst them, the Tartars, would then be capable of playing a tremendous historical role. For on the world scale the Revolution would have to be above all a liberation of the colonial peoples. It was therefore vital to counteract the Comintern tendency to concentrate mainly on the West. The socialist revolution would begin in the East. And who could bear the torch of both culture and socialism into Asia better than the Bolshevik Muslims of Russia?

To avoid confusion it should be stated right from the start that neither religious nor clerical demands were at issue. There were several ethnic groups in Russia whose religion was Islam, which had given them a common culture and tradition, and had similarly influenced many important aspects of their way of life. There was thus a certain incontestable cultural unity amongst these people which went beyond their ethnic particularities, especially as the latter were in many cases not very pronounced. This cultural unity had been reinforced by their resistance to attempts to convert them to Christianity and to turn them into Russians, an attempt which they perceived not as an ideological struggle, but as a colonial aggression against their common cultural heritage.

These ideas worried the Bolshevik leaders. Stalin supported Sultan Galiev against those who wanted to fan class war in Muslim circles and break off all contact with the non-proletarian elements. But unlike the Tartar, he saw the class alliance as only temporary. Once Koltchak and the Czechs had been defeated, the support of the Volga and Ural Muslims, whose cadres had been disabled during the struggle, became less important. The Muslim Communist Party lost its autonomy and the idea of a lasting alliance between the petty bourgeoisie and the proletariat was rejected by the September 1920 Congress of Oriental Peoples in Baku. It was proclaimed that the national revolution had to be led by the proletariat, that is to say, the Western proletariat, and that, as one Congress delegate declared, 'the salvation of the East lies only in the

victory of the proletariat'.<sup>4</sup> The project of a great Muslim state was dropped. Instead, two small republics were created, the one Bachkir and the other Tartar. Most Tartars lived outside the latter, and its population was only 51.6 per cent Tartar. Its towns were almost 80 per cent Russian. Kazan, the capital, was a Russian centre.

It was at this stage that Sultan Galiev, who still held an important official post, moved into opposition, in an attempt to fight the manifestations of what he called 'Great Russian chauvinism', and sought to infiltrate his Tartar partisans into Party organisations and Soviets. He wanted to make Kazan into a centre for Tartar national culture and a revolutionary seedbed from which 'Muslim Communism' would spread to all the Muslim peoples of the Soviet Union and beyond, to the whole Muslim East. He struggled against the leftists who argued for a more anti-bourgeois policy and were backed by the Russian elements. And he worked towards making Tartar and not Russian the official language of administration.

Having come up against the unflinching opposition of the Central Government and the Russian Communists, especially after the 10<sup>th</sup> Party Congress had passed a clear resolution condemning the 'nationalist deviation', Sultan Galiev established more or less secret contacts with a number of discontented militants. He wanted to set up a common front against the Russians, whom he accused of readopting Tsarist colonial policy. How far did he go in seeking support for this front? Stalin accused him of having gone so far as to contact the Basmatsh, the gangs of insurgent Muslims who were waging armed struggle against the Bolsheviks of Turkestan. But there is no reason to take Stalin's words at face value. Be that as it may, in 1923 Stalin had Sultan Galiev arrested and expelled from the Communist Party. He was released shortly afterwards, but Kamenev was later to regret that he and Zinoviev had given their consent to this 'first arrest of an eminent member of the Party on Stalin's initiative'.<sup>5</sup>

Little is known of Sultan Galiev's life after 1923. He was perhaps exiled, re-arrested, then released. He worked in Moscow in the state publishing houses. But he continued his struggle, clandestinely. He had created a whole underground organisation which had attracted a great many Muslim communists, mainly Tartars. He developed his ideas in the light of the evolving situation. As he now saw it, the socialist revolution did not resolve the problem of inequality between peoples. The Bolshevik programme amounted to replacing oppression by the European bourgeoisie with oppression by the European proletariat. In any case, Soviet rule was being liquidated; NEP was in full swing. It would either be overthrown by the Western bourgeoisie or would turn into state capitalism and bourgeois democracy. Whatever the outcome, the Russians as a people would once again become dominating oppressors. The only possible remedy was to ensure the developing colonial world's hegemony over the European powers. This meant creating a Communist Colonial International, which would be independent of the Third International, and perhaps even opposed to it. Russia, as an industrial power, would have to be excluded. The spread of communism in the East, which this new International would promote, would make it possible to shake off Russian hegemony over the communist world.

As the Russian regime grew stronger it became less and less tolerant of dissent. On several occasions the Russians realised they were facing an organised Tartar opposition. Stalin clamped down on it. In November 1928 Sultan Galiev was arrested and sentenced to ten years' hard labour, which he served in Solovki. He was released in 1939 and we lose track of him in 1940 . . .

### **Lessons of a forgotten history**

Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Quelquejay deserve our gratitude for having revived this forgotten history. Their task of sifting, scrutinising and organising a mass of documents in Tartar and Russian was a difficult and important one. Hopefully we can draw certain conclusions from their findings.

The first thing which comes to mind is that analysis of the political struggle over the problem of the Muslim minorities in the Soviet Union clearly demonstrates that there can be contradictions under a socialist regime. This is not new of course: Mao Tse-tung himself has said so - albeit with the quite gratuitous rider that such contradictions can only be 'non-antagonistic'. But that does not change the fact

that every time someone highlights one of these contradictions on a practical level everything is done to deny it or to minimise it. Naturally, the most dogmatic make no attempt to analyse such contradictions, to explain them or to understand their causes and their repercussions. On the contrary, each phase of the policy adopted by the communist leaders is presented as determined by a superior wisdom which carefully follows the twists and turns of the national and international conjuncture, guided by the infallible compass of Marxist doctrine. Of course the reality is quite different: each policy decision is the outcome of constant struggles between opposing tendencies and expresses the balance of forces between them. The social background to these struggles is probably quite different from that in a class society, but the mechanism is essentially similar. In other words, history continues and we have not yet entered the timeless realm of the holy city. Many people will answer that all this is quite obvious, but perhaps they do not grasp all its complications.

Soviet policy could have been different, more oriented towards Asia, for example. Some of Sultan Galiev's ideas could perhaps have been put into practice. But there were very real obstacles to such a programme: the lack of Muslim cadres, the situation in the East at the time. In the interior there was a definite danger of Tartar nationalist deviation, strengthened by harmful Tartar chauvinism. Abroad, even if Sultan Galiev's ideas, which were partly shared by the Indian communist Manabendra Nath Roy and others who defended them during the first Comintern Congresses, had been applied, the benefits would probably have been few and far between. Even Walter Z. Laqueur agrees with this pessimistic view, and nobody could suspect him of being indulgent towards the Bolshevik leaders.<sup>6</sup> But it is clear that the choice of orientation in this respect was also influenced by other considerations: there was the dogmatism of the leaders, the fact that at certain periods the idea that the proletariat was the predominant force in the revolution was applied mechanically and against all common sense, even to areas in which the proletariat was non-existent. Indeed, on the whole, and until quite recently, the communist leaders have been as obtuse as the capitalists in their approach to the colonial people's awakening. And, although their lack of understanding is excusable on many levels, the fact remains that it has had many disastrous consequences even from their own point of view.

## **Socialism and the national question**

It is also clear that socialism, by which I mean the socialisation of the means of production, does not automatically resolve all problems. Stalinism has shown us that despotism was possible under socialism, and hence that there was a problem of political power. Other events suggest that the national problem also does not necessarily vanish under socialism. 'The fact that the proletariat will have carried out the social revolution will not turn it into a saint,' wrote Lenin in 1916. 'But eventual errors (and the selfish interests which push one to ride on the backs of others) will inevitably lead it to realise the following truth . . . By turning capitalism into socialism, the proletariat creates the possibility of entirely abolishing national oppression: this possibility will "only" ["only"! ] become fact when democracy has been completely established in all fields.'<sup>7</sup>

The example of Sultan Galiev demonstrates that between 1920 and 1928 the Tartars were very wary of the Russian communists, and feared a Russian communist neo-colonialism. The Bolshevik leaders denied that such a fear was justified. Stalin himself declared, in 1923, that 'If Turkestan is effectively a colony, as it was under Tsarism, then the Basmatsh are right, and it is not up to us to judge Sultan Galiev, but up to him to judge us, as the sort of people who tolerate the existence of a colony in the framework of Soviet power.'<sup>8</sup> But things were not quite so simple. Soviet policy towards the Soviet Union's Muslim minorities has, on the whole, been extremely attentive. The Muslims have been well cared for and their areas have been industrialised. Indigenous cadres were gradually promoted, and this process continues. Muslims are protected by exactly the same laws as other Soviet citizens, and in practice the 'locals' have even enjoyed certain privileges vis-a-vis the Russians. But this evolution has been carefully controlled. A tight grip is maintained over all key posts. Furthermore, the general tendency of Stalinist mores did not favour interpenetration between communities. The situation has nothing in common with colonial situations elsewhere. But national problems persist, as was clearly shown by the behaviour of many minority groups during World War II, and as is borne out by many small incidents even today.<sup>9</sup> And incidentally, such

happenings would attract less attention, and might well be less distorted abroad, if the Soviets did not put so much effort into covering them up and attacking the 'slanderers' who dare to suggest that everything is not absolutely perfect in these areas of the Soviet Union.

## **A precursor**

Sultan Galiev does not seem to have had any real spiritual heirs in the Muslim areas of the Soviet Union. We do not know what would happen today if political pressure groups were allowed to emerge. But what one can surmise about the aspirations held by the peoples of these areas shows them to have little in common with Sultan Galiev. Their demands appear to be much more 'reformist', much less revolutionary. If they could, they would press for slight changes, without questioning the regime's right to rule. The role of propagators of the Revolution in the East seems to hold little attraction for them. It is possible, or course, that the lid of official conformism hides a much more ebullient reality . . .

But it is outside the Soviet Union, in the so-called underdeveloped countries, that the contemporary situation constantly makes one think of Sultan Galiev's ideas. To what extent can he be said to be a precursor of the new line adopted by the Soviet Union since 1954, a line which backs the Afro-Asiatic neutralist bourgeoisie? To what extent can he be said to be a precursor of Maoist communism, which concentrates essentially on the immediate struggle for socialist revolution in the ex-colonies?

The attitude of Sultan Galiev and the Tartar communists in 1918 stemmed from their refusal to serve as a mere back-up for a European proletarian movement, however justified. They wanted the Revolution to be their revolution as well, and to follow a course determined by their own actions, not by those of their somewhat over-paternal elder brother, the Russian proletariat. One should note that one of the latter's methods of intervention, which was later to be used elsewhere, was an insistence that indigenous support should be drawn only from amongst the proletariat. In countries where the proletariat was still embryonic, this amounted to arbitrarily designating the individuals who were worth talking to. The Tartars' essential demand 'to carry out our own revolution' came at the wrong time. The Bolshevik leadership was already taking a very different turn: careful bureaucratic control over every aspect of the mass movement. Both the Soviets and the trade unions at home and allied or communist parties abroad, were being kept on a very tight rein.

Significantly, the man of the moment was Stalin, whose universal and petty wariness was later to become quite pathological. The ailing Lenin was ignored when he warned that 'The harm which a lack of unity between the national state apparatuses and the Russian state apparatus may cause is nothing compared to the damage which will result from an excess of centralism; this will injure not only ourselves but the whole International, and the hundreds of millions of Asians who will soon follow in our footsteps and burst onto the historical scene.'<sup>10</sup> In theory the International's purpose was to further the world's march towards socialism. Its task would therefore seem to have been to develop a Marxist nationalism fighting for national independence and socialisation in the dependent countries. The social development of the East at the time precluded any more ambitious ventures. In spite of all his mistakes, it is clear that this was Sultan Galiev's basic intuition. The Stalinist system made it impossible for the colonial Communist Parties to accomplish this task. Essentially, it was their rigid subordination to the world strategy of an International centred on the European world which was to blame for this failure. These colonial Communist Parties were sometimes even directly dependent on their European equivalents. A Marxian nationalism did nonetheless eventually emerge, borne on the tide of history. But it did not do so in the framework of the communist parties, and it took American anti-communist imbecility to push the Moroccan and Algerian left, Castro, Sekou Toure and Modibo Keita into the arms of what remained of the Third International.

Today the Colonial International recognised by Sultan Galiev exists. It takes the form of the Afro-Asian bloc, which is beginning to extend to Latin America, and is united against white domination, as the Tartar commissar dreamed it would be. But already there are differences, which do not yet amount to a split, between a Marxist wing committed to rapid advance towards socialism, and a bourgeois wing which

favours slow transformation or even no change at all. There are also a number of ambiguous cases which are particularly interesting.

Since 1954 the Soviet Union has supported this Colonial International. But Khrushchev is only apparently and partially following Sultan Galiev's line. The colonial peoples are still seen only as a back-up force whose function is to exert pressure on the Soviet Union's white adversaries, to extract concessions from them, not to destroy them. The Soviet Union does not encourage socialisation in the Third World and probably does not even desire it. It would seem that the Soviet authorities finally agree with Sultan Galiev on this point, but their motive is not to strengthen the revolution; the aim is a much more selfish one. The world triumph of socialism is still seen essentially as the result of the more or less revolutionary evolution of the industrially advanced countries. It is only in China, where distance and ancestral Chinese cunning made it easier to sidestep the Stalinist international strategy, that Marxist nationalism was able to emerge triumphant in the framework of a traditional Communist Party. Indeed, Mao Tse-Tung was quite content to apply the ideas defended by the Comintern during its popular or national front phases. But he applied them systematically and consistently. His victory and the ensuing circumstances, the militant hostility of the white nations and the socialisation of Chinese society, led him to take the helm of a new type of colonial communism, which he proposed as a model for the whole underdeveloped world as early as 1949. Since then, events in China have constantly brought the ideas of the new Chinese leaders closer and closer to some of Sultan Galiev's. The primacy of the colonial revolution and the fear that a neo-colonialism, or a neo-paternalism at least, might eventually emerge from within the heart of the socialist world itself have been constantly reiterated themes.

Thus Sultan Galiev's ideas have resurfaced in the two main currents of world communism. Of course, nobody quotes this condemned champion of yesterday's obscure struggles. And yet he can be seen as the first prophet of the colonial struggle against white hegemony within socialism itself, as the first to forecast a break between the Russians' European communism and Colonial communism. He could also be celebrated as the man who first proclaimed the importance of Marxist nationalism in colonial countries, and the international relevance for socialism of those national movements which do not immediately envisage complete class war and socialisation. Mao himself was still adopting this position at Yenan. The future will no doubt pass its own verdict on this first representative of the Third World within the communist movement. Surely it will not fail to recognise his role as an outcast prophet.

## References

1. Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Quelquejay, *Les Mouvements Nationaux chez les Musulmans de Russie, 1: Le 'Sultangalievisme' au Tartarstan*, Mouton, La Haye, 1960 (Documents et Témoignages, 3).
2. In fact, throughout one of the speeches delivered to the IVth Conference of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party, extended to include militants responsible for the republics and national regions, June 9 to 12, 1923. See I.V. Stalin, *Sotshineniya*, Bk. V, Moscow, 1947, pp.301-312. For important details of this conference, which had been specially called to condemn Sultan Galiev, who had been arrested in late April or sometime in May, see E.H. Carr, *A History of Soviet Russia*, Vol. IV, *The Interregnum*, Macmillan, London, 1960, pp.287-9; Bennigsen and Quelquejay express some reservations about the passage. A photograph of the participants in the congress, which was only numbered IVth in order to play down its importance, appears in the official *Istoriya Kommunistitsheskoy partii Sovetskogo soyuza*, Bk. IV/I, Moscow, 1970, p.283. The accompanying commentary makes it clear that the condemnation of Sultan Galiev still persists in the official ideology, and is indeed reinforced by contemporary considerations.
3. For example, Sariddine Aini, *Boukhara*, translated from the Tadjik by S. Borodine and P. Korotkine, Gallimard, Paris, 1956; Moukhtar Aouezov, *La Jeunesse d'Abai*, translated from the Kazak by L. Sobolev and A. Vitez, Gallimard, Paris, 1959.
4. *Premier Congrès des peuples de l'Orient*, Bakou, 1920, Petrograd, 1921, French edn., quoted by Bennigsen and Quelquejay, *op. cit.*, p.140.

5. As he once told Trotsky. Cf. L. Trotsky, Stalin, Hollis and Carter, London, 1947, p.417.
6. Walter Z. Laqueur, The Soviet Union and the Middle East, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1959, p.22.
7. 'Summary of a discussion on the right of nations to self-determination' in V.I. Lenin, Critical Remarks on the National Question, Collected Works, Vol. 20, pp.1-34 (4<sup>th</sup> Russian edn.), (Lenin's punctuation). For an analysis of how Lenin's position evolved, how it differed from Stalin's and how the problem manifests itself in the Soviet Union today, see H. Carrère d'Encausse, 'Unité prolétarienne et diversité nationale, Lenine et la théorie de l'autodétermination' in Revue Française de Science Politique, Vol. XXI, No. 2, pp.221-255.
8. Stalin, Marxism and the National Question, various edns.
9. I was probably minimising the problem. See A. Bennigsen and C. Lemerrier-Quelquejey, L'Islam en Union Soviétique, Payot, Paris, 1968, for an objective account.
10. Remarks on 'nationalities and autonomy'; see Marxist Quarterly, October 1956, p.255. 'National apparatuses' refers to the apparatuses of the non-Russian Communist Parties in the Union.

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### **P.S.**

This article was first published in French in Les Temps Modernes, No. 177, Paris, 1961, and formed a chapter of Rodinson's Marxism and the Muslim World, Zed Press, 1979. The introducer, Richard Price, is journalist at Workers action ( UK), which has published Rodinson's article in october 2004.