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# The Partition of Khorezm and the Positions of Turkestanis on *Razmezhevanie*

HASAN ALI KARASAR

## *Abstract*

Cold War historiography, in many instances, explained the delimitation of borders in Central Asia as a part of Moscow's divide and rule policy in Turkestan. However, the viability of this approach can be challenged by an examination of the archival documents of the time and the actual publications of the nationalities commissariat under Stalin. Among the Bolsheviks of Turkestan, Uzbeks were leading the drive towards the repartition of Turkestan, along with their Turkmen comrades who were trying to gain land from the former Khivan Khanate, at that time the People's Soviet Republic of Khorezm. The partition of Khorezm between three newly created administrative divisions, Uzbekistan, Turkmenia and Kirgizia, played a key role in the demarcation of borders in 1924. However, from the point of view of communists from the European parts of the former Tsarist Empire, as well as others from the region, delimitation was first a betrayal of internationalism; second it was an immature project both economically and theoretically; and third, it was believed that the liquidation of the traditional Muslim states of Turkestan, namely the Bukharan Emirate and the Khivan Khanate, would have a negative impact on the image of the Soviet revolution in the eyes of reformers in other Muslim countries in the Middle East.

SCHOLARS OF CENTRAL ASIA ARE USUALLY IN AGREEMENT on the necessity of studying the origins and practices of Soviet nationalities policy in order to explain today's trends in the region. The 1924 *razmezhevanie*<sup>1</sup> (national territorial delimitation of the borders) of Middle Asian<sup>2</sup> republics did indeed shape the legacy of these

<sup>1</sup>*Razmezhevanie* can be understood as national-territorial delimitation or demarcation. In some cases the word *peredel* (re-doing, reorganisation or repartition) was also used for this concept.

<sup>2</sup>The terms Middle (*Srednyaya*) Asia and Central (*Tsentrlnaya*) Asia were used in different contexts within the early Bolshevik literature, sometimes interchangeably, but mostly the former referred to the former Tsarist Turkestan Governorship along with the Bukharan and Khivan realms, whereas the latter referred usually to a greater 'centre' of Asia, meaning the territories including the former Tsarist Steppe and Turkestan General Governorships, and even in some cases the southern tier of Siberia, Mongolia and Eastern Turkestan under Chinese control. However, the usages changed depending on the authors of the documents, articles and their target addressees. The motivation for the employment of both of these concepts by Soviet writers was to replace the historical name of the region, Turkestan, with another concept with less ethno-political connotations.

post-1991 nation states. Cold War scholarship in the West usually explained this process of communist nation-building as a part of the *divide et impera* policy of Moscow. However, new archival documents might challenge this explanation, revealing the ambitious and enthusiastic support of some native communists of Central Asia for delimitation, which in some cases was also opposed by non-native communists. The study of *razmezhevanie* remains the key to an understanding of contemporary nation building, clan relations, nepotism and many other regional and domestic dynamics of Central Asian states. In early 1924, there were four Soviet Middle Asian Republics, namely the Turkestan ASSR of the RSFSR, the Kirghiz ASSR of the RSFSR, the People's Soviet Republic of Bukhara and the People's Soviet Republic of Khorezm. The People's Soviet Republic of Khorezm was the successor of the Khivan Khanate, covering the area from the south-western shores of the Aral Sea on the left bank of the Amu Darya River, including the cities of Kungrat, Kuhna Urgench, Khazavat, Urgench, Khiva and Khazarasp. Khorezm was the ancient name of the Khivan region as used by Herodotus.

This article is part of a larger study of the Chicherin Files on the national-territorial delimitation of Turkestan.<sup>3</sup> It analyses a field report addressed to the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR, Georgii Vasil'evich Chicherin<sup>4</sup> on the repartition of the Soviet Middle Asian republics (Akademiya Nauk UzSSR 1956, pp. 323–28; Togan 1960, pp. 1–11). There is neither a date nor a signature on the document. However, there is an attachment in the following pages, which dates this specific letter-report as 22 May 1924. This date might be correct since there are references in the report to the 11 May 1924 decisions of the Middle Asian Bureau, and also Chicherin's references and direct quotations from this report in his letter to the Politburo, Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party, dated 28 May 1924

<sup>3</sup>Important holdings of materials on the national-territorial delimitation of Middle Asian Republics are in the *Rossiiskii tsentr khraneniya i izucheniya dokumentov noveishei istorii* (RTsKhIDNI, Russian Center for Preservation and Study of Records of Modern History). This is to be found in the *Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii* (RGASPI, Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History) fond 17, op. 86, d. 24, l. 29. Most of the material on the delimitation of the Central Asian region is found in fond 62 of RGASPI. The first two *opisi* of this *fond* are extremely important in order to understand the delimitation of Khorezm and are full of official documents. However, there are scattered documents such as the one discussed in this article, in different parts of the archives. These are to be found especially in the personal folders of some leading Bolsheviks of the time. Such documents are usually reports, letters, and espionage pieces prepared for the personal use of the addressee.

<sup>4</sup>Georgii Vasil'evich Chicherin (1872–1936) was born in an aristocratic family and graduated from St Petersburg University. He served in the Foreign Service of the Tsar until 1904 when he joined the revolutionary movement and emigrated to Germany in the same year. In 1905, he joined the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party's Menshevik wing in Germany and worked with French and British socialists until 1917, when he was arrested in Britain just after the Bolshevik revolution. He was exchanged for the British Ambassador in Russia, Sir George Buchanan, in early 1918. On his way back to Moscow, he joined the ranks of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik). On his arrival, he was appointed as the deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs and attended the last phase of the Brest–Litovsk peace talks. In May 1918 he was appointed the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the RSFSR and served as the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR between 1923 and 1930. He showed sympathy for the orient but it is difficult to determine the degree of his personal influence on the shaping of Soviet foreign policy, given the almost limitless interference of the Politburo into the area of foreign relations.

(Karasar 2002, pp. 199–209).<sup>5</sup> From this letter it is also understood that the author of the field report was a ‘Comrade German’ (Hermann).<sup>6</sup>

The realisation of a national-territorial delimitation was the aim of various political projects including those of Turar Ryskulov<sup>7</sup> for the creation of a single Turk[ic] Republic with a single Turk[ic] people (Hayit 1975, pp. 294–99); and of M. Sultan Galiev<sup>8</sup> for the creation of a single Turkic Space with one Turkic nation (Bennigsen 1978, pp. 12–13); as well as the nationalist project of Mustafa Chokhaev for the establishment of an independent and united Turkestan (Çokay 1932, pp. 1–4). However, the impression given by the report of ‘Comrade German’ to Chicherin is that the delimitation was a victory for yet another project, that of the National Communists led by Faizulla Khozhaev.<sup>9</sup> Until now, it has been believed that Khozhaev was one of the Turkestan figures who opposed the *razmezhevanie* from the beginning. This was partly because he was accused in the 1938 show trials of opposing the national delimitation of Turkestan. Furthermore, Hayit has argued that

<sup>5</sup>The letter from Chicherin to the Politburo Central Committee RKP, dated 28 May 1924 (*RGASPI*, f. 17, op. 86, d. 24, l. 17–17 obr.), together with six others by Chicherin to the Politburo and prominent Bolsheviks, including Stalin, were published by the author in 2002.

<sup>6</sup>The author was unable to find any information on the political profile of this specific ‘Comrade German’, but Chicherin evaluated him as one of their ‘best Middle Asian’ party workers. He was most probably a Bolshevik of European Jewish origin in the party ranks of Turkestan ASSR.

<sup>7</sup>Turar Ryskulov or Ryskuluuly (1884–1938) became the chairman of the *Musbyuro* (Muslim Bureau) of the Central Committee and Communist Party of the Turkestan ASSR. In the 3rd Congress of the *Musbyuro* in January 1920, he proposed to change the name of Turkestan ASSR to Turk Republic and the name of the Communist Party of Turkestan to the Turk[ish] Communist Party. His proposals included the creation of a Muslim Turk[ish] army and the deportation of non-Muslim armed forces from Turkestan, the writing of a constitution of the Turk Republic which would give it complete autonomy on the matter of foreign affairs, military, commercial and financial policies. All proposals were accepted by the congress and these decisions were brought to the 5th Congress of the Communist Party of Turkestan ASSR by Ryskulov. They were also all accepted by this congress with an overwhelming majority, despite Rudzutak’s opposition. However the Central Committee of the RKP refused to recognise these decisions in a February meeting. Ryskulov travelled to Moscow with a delegation to lobby on his proposals but Lenin categorically denied all these in July 1920 and abolished the Central Committee of the Communist Party of TASSR, in which Ryskulov already had a majority support. Also note that TASSR was referred to as *Turkrespublika*, its fashionable Russian-Bolshevik abbreviation form, in most of the correspondence as well as publications. Here the official usage of *Turkrespublika* is the short form of *Turkestanskaya* ASSR, not the Turk Republic Ryskulov was proposing.

<sup>8</sup>Mir Said Sultan Galiev (1894–1938) became the symbol of National Communism among the Muslim-Turks of the early Soviet Union. He was one of the organisers of communist power among the Muslim Turks of the former Tsarist Empire, a staunch advocate of the union of Turkic peoples of the Soviet Union under one administrative unit as well as salvation of eastern colonial nations until his purge by Stalin in 1923, who accused him of Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism.

<sup>9</sup>Faizulla Khozhaev was a member of the Young Bukharan committee that worked against the Emir with other *Jadids*. In December 1917 he went to Tashkent to ask for military aid from the Red commander Kolesov to overthrow the Bukharan Emir. When the Russian march against the Emir failed in March 1918, Faizulla Khozhaev retreated to Tashkent with Russian troops, and at the end of 1919 he went to Moscow. When the second attack of the Reds in late August and early September 1920 succeeded, Faizulla Khozhaev became the Prime Minister of the first People’s Republic of Bukhara in October. He did not side with President Osman Khozhaev after December 1921 who declared a struggle against the Soviets. He went to Moscow in 1922 and became the Chairman of the People’s Commissars of Uzbekistan after delimitation. He was executed in Moscow during the 1938 purges.

Khozhaev's activities, as well as all other formulas of Middle Asian Federation or Greater Uzbekistan, were developed by the National Communists in order to delay the realisation of delimitation (Critchlow 1990, pp. 29–41; Hayit 1995, p. 299). However, German's report, together with Chicherin's seven other letters might challenge this attitude.<sup>10</sup>

Although Lenin, as early as June 1920, had ordered the *Turk[estanskaya]komissiya*<sup>11</sup> to draw a new map of Turkestan, divided into three ethnic parts named Uzbekistan, Kirghizia and Turkmenia (Lenin 1960, pp. 503–07; Soucek 2000, p. 218),<sup>12</sup> two members of the commission, Frunze and Kuibyshev, were urging the centre to be cautious about the sensitive political situation of such a move.<sup>13</sup>

The development of delimitation in the pages of *Zhizn' Natsional'nostei* (*ZhN*) provides the first signs of this project before 1924. As early as June 1919, there were ethnic departments within the Nationalities Commissariat of Turkestan, dealing with Uzbek, Kirghiz, Tadjik, Dungan, Russian, Armenian and Jewish questions;<sup>14</sup> and the separation of *Kara Kirghiz* and *Kaisak Kirghiz* had already been made.<sup>15</sup> There was a clear division between Khiva and several other towns where members of the Young Khivans<sup>16</sup> had established their authority and were running the government of

<sup>10</sup>In his letter to Stalin, with copies to Politburo Members and the NKID Collegium (*Narodnyi komissariat inostrannykh del*, Peoples' Commissariat of Foreign Affairs), dated 22 May 1924 (*RGASPI*, f. 17, op. 86, d. 24, l. 16) Chicherin described Faizulla Khozhaev as a 'very enthusiastic supporter of the event of national delimitation'. See also Letter from Chicherin to the Politburo, Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party with copies to the Politburo Members and the members of the NKID Collegium, dated 28 May 1924 (*RGASPI*, f. 17, op. 86, d. 24, l. 17–17 obr) in which Khozhaev is described as 'one of the initiators of the project', and the letter from Chicherin to Stalin, with copies to Politburo Members and the members of NKID Collegium, dated 6 June 1924 (*RGASPI*, f. 17, op. 86, d. 24, l. 19) where he refers to 'one of the leading supporters of national delimitation, Faizulla Khozhaev ...'.

<sup>11</sup>The *Turkestanская Chrezvychaynaya Komissiya* was a special commission sent to Turkestan to supervise the local Bolsheviks in the spring of 1919, and in March 1919 it established the *Musbyuro* (Muslim Bureau) which opened the ranks of the Communist Party to native cadres in Turkestan.

<sup>12</sup>Pipes argued that Lenin's attitude was to win over Turkestanis by establishing correct relations with the natives, rather than a direct implementation of a 'divide and rule' tactic at this stage (Pipes 1997, p. 183).

<sup>13</sup>Zlatopolskii cited in Hayit (1995, p. 342). Frunze was Commander in Chief of the RSFSR's *Turk[estanskii]front* from 11 August 1919 onwards. Kuibyshev was the RSFSR's representative to Bukhara in 1920. He was also the chairman of the committee for Turkestan's repartition created by the Central Committee of the RKP in September 1924.

<sup>14</sup>'Iz deyatel'nosti Turkestanskogo kommissariata po natsional'nym delam', *Zhizn Natsional'nostei* (hereafter *ZhN*), 20, 28, 1 June 1919, p. 4.

<sup>15</sup>'Kirgizskii narod i Sovetskaya Rossiya', *ZhN*, 9, 17, 16 March 1919, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup>With the introduction of the new schooling methods and reform programmes by the famous Crimean Tatar scholar İsmail Bey Gaspirali in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, his new ideas were spread all over the Turkic speaking world by his popular newspaper *Tercüman*. Young intellectuals (mostly school teachers) joined Gaspirali in his ambitious reform programme by opening up new-method schools all over Central Asia. They established philosophical circles, such as the Young Bukharans and the Young Khivans in Turkestan. Although the Bukharan Emir was a reactionary and banned their activities within the borders of his Emirate, the Khivan Khans were rather tolerant towards the reformers. In any case, these groups of young intellectuals saw an opportunity to undertake fundamental reform programmes after the October Revolution. Young Khivans were the leading 'revolutionaries' and occupied most of the administrative posts in the Khorezmian PSR until 1924. While some of them later joined the Bolshevik ranks, some remained in

Khorezm, and the countryside, including the Turkmen-*basmach*i controlled desert, which was under the control of the Turkmen resistance to the Soviets (Togan 1999, pp. 293–308). However, in the *Turk[estanskaya]respublika* native nationalities were not included into the category of national minorities,<sup>17</sup> and the potential assimilation of different Turkestanian ethnic groups with each other had been perceived as a threat to the creation of a united Turkestanian nation.<sup>18</sup>

The question was also presented in terms of the need to preserve the unique ethnographic features of each separate group (Dimanshteyn 1921, pp. 1–2). Especially after 1921, reference was often made to the existence of three separate ethnic groups in Turkestan (Dingel'shgodt 1921, pp. 3–4), and by then, the *Zakaspi Oblast'* of *Turkrespublika* was already identified as *de facto* Turkmen territory.<sup>19</sup> In 1922, voices advocating the establishment of a separate Turkmenia in *Zakaspi*, with the inclusion of some areas from Khorezm, were justifying their position by the argument that the Turkmen in Khorezm had already been assimilated by the Uzbeks (Kara İlkul 1922, pp. 4–7). However, the 1922 conference of the Khorezmian Communist Party was closed with a declaration of the brotherhood of the Uzbek and Turkmen peoples, implying that there were already existing problems (K. 1922, p. 11). Long before the actual realisation of delimitation, the authors of *Zhizn Natsional'nostei* had treated Turkmen territory as an already autonomous part of *Turkrespublika*.<sup>20</sup> Simultaneously, there was a strong tendency to keep the *Kir[gizskaya]respublika* out of the delimitation process, which had had nothing to do with the Turkestan *guberniya* in the past, during the Tsarist administration; and now it was simply a province of RSFSR (Ben-Arnazi 1923, pp. 46–57). However this view supporting the liquidation of the *Kir[gizskaya]respublika* and the transfer of its territories to RSFSR was never voiced loudly.

#### *From Khivan Khanate to Khorezmian People's Soviet Republic and razmezhevanie*

In order to understand the context in which the Soviet national-territorial delimitation process took place it is necessary to trace prior developments in the Tsarist period. From 1873 the Khivan Khanate was a subordinate state of the Tsarist Empire in Turkestan. Within the Khanate there was a history of ethnic tensions between Turkmens and Uzbeks over the sharing of water resources, and additionally,

the nationalist-democratic opposition against the Russians and the Bolsheviks in Turkestan and were forced to flee the country after 1924.

<sup>17</sup>See 'V Turkestane', *ZhN*, 3, 9, 138, 14–20 March 1922, p. 8. In the department of national minorities of *Turkrespublika*, there were Ukrainian, European Jew, Native Jew, Armenian, German, Irano-Azerbaijani, Polish and Latin bureaux.

<sup>18</sup>However, according to Francine Hirsch, the policy was focused on a '... double assimilation—the assimilation of diverse peoples into nationality categories and the assimilation of nationally categorized groups into the Soviet state and society ...' rather than the probability of a united Turkestan (Hirsch 2000, p. 213).

<sup>19</sup>'V turkestane', *ZhN*, 20, 118, 3 October 1921, p. 3.

<sup>20</sup>'Po avtonomnym respublikam i oblastyam RSFSR i po respublikam SSSR', *ZhN*, Second Book, 1923, p. 138. As early as the seventeenth century local sources inform us about the existence of an ethnic hatred between the Uzbeks and the Turkmens of the Khivan Khanate (Khorezm) (Ebulgazi Bahadır Han 1659, pp. 109–10).

from 1912 onwards, there were local conflicts between the Yomud Turkmens and Khivan 'Uzbeks' (or Khorezmian Turks as they were called at that time) resulting from a famous blood feud, which continued until 1916.<sup>21</sup> These tensions found political expression in the rivalry between the Khivan Khan Esfeniyar and the Yomud tribal chief Junayd Khan who, despite his non-royal tribal origins, also claimed the throne. Junayd Khan was the sole ruler of Novyi Urgench, the second biggest centre of the country.

A further source of tension in the politics of the Khivan Khanate resulted from modernising influences both from Russia and from Uzbek intellectuals within the Khanate. Compared with neighbouring Bukhara, the regime of the Khivan Khans was less conservative and much more tolerant of the activities of Russian professionals arriving in Khiva and their plans for economic, agricultural and health reforms. The Khivan Khan Esfeniyar was also more tolerant of local modernising forces as shown by his willingness to meet the demands of the Young Khivans and allow the opening of a parliament on 5 April 1917. By the end of April, the Khivan Parliament was already in operation and the president of the parliament, Pehlivan Niyaz Hoca, the Prime Minister Mat Murad and all other ministers were drawn from the Young Khivans. However, these developments were soon brought to an end by the support of the tribal chiefs for the claims of Junayd Khan<sup>22</sup> to the throne, and by mid-1917 they had forced Esfendiyyar Khan to expel the Young Khivans from parliament.<sup>23</sup>

Following the October Revolution the Bolsheviks swayed between allying with Esfendiyyar Khan and the Young Khivans. In December 1917, the Tashkent Soviet recognised the independence of Khiva under Esfendiyyar Khan. The Young Khivans continued their activities underground and contacted the Tashkent Soviet and the Soldiers' Soviet in Khiva, seeking their support. Since the Yomud Turkmens of Junayd Khan<sup>24</sup> were the staunchest anti-Bolshevik and anti-Russian elements in the Khivan Khanate, the Bolsheviks had no choice but to co-operate with the Uzbek intelligentsia of the Young Khivans (D.M. 1920, p. 3). In the longer term however, ethnic tensions between the Turkmen and Uzbek residents of the Khanate persuaded Moscow, from 1917 onwards, of the necessity for separating these two groups into different autonomous regions.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>21</sup>On the problems between the Uzbek and Turkmen portions of the Khivan population see Saray (1989, pp. 104–5). On the Khivan Khanate and the history of Russian expansionism in Central Asia see Ali Suavi (1873/1910/1977), Becker (1968) and Pierce (1960).

<sup>22</sup>For Junayd Khan's biography see Andican (2005, pp. 70–71, 82, 200–14). This volume is also available in English (Andican 2007).

<sup>23</sup>One of the best accounts of this period and the building of a Turkmen identity throughout the twentieth century is by Edgar (2004, pp. 34–40). Another good piece by Northrop (2004, pp. 46–55) is an excellent account of how national Uzbek identity was separated in the case of women's veils and anthropological and ethnographic differences.

<sup>24</sup>'Revolutsionnoe dvizhenie v Khive', *ZhN*, 9, 66, 21 March 1920, p. 1. See this article also for the Soviet preference to work with the Uzbeks in Khorezm against the Turkmens of Junayd Khan.

<sup>25</sup>See K. (1922, p. 11) and Edgar (2004, pp. 41–42 and pp. 51–59) on the difficulties of delimitation. One of the most difficult tasks facing the Soviet ethnographers was to assess which tribe belongs to which 'people', Uzbek or Turkmen within the Khorezmian/Khivan realm.

In the spring of 1919, a Turkestan Commission (*Turkkomissiya* or *Turkestarskaya Chrezvychaynaya Komissiya*)<sup>26</sup> was formed by the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party and sent to Turkestan to inspect the situation there. The Turkestan Commission, in turn, established the Muslim *Buro-Musbyuro* (*Musul'manskoe Byuro*) which opened the ranks of the Communist Party to Muslim cadres such as Turar Ryskulov and Nizam Khozhaev in April 1919. This drive for the 'nativisation' of cadres, which was called *korenizatsiya*, resulted in the rise of a new problem for Moscow—so-called 'National Communism'. Most of the native cadres of the Communist Party of Turkestan were *Jadids* with scarcely concealed nationalistic tendencies. During the period 1918–1919, the Bolsheviks made a temporary peace with the Muslim elements in the party. In March 1919, Stalin declared that Turkestan would be the 'core of the united-east under the communist banner', and it would unite all the oppressed peoples of the colonies (Stalin 1919, p. 2).<sup>27</sup> That argument soon became popular among the Muslim Communists as well (Narimanov 1920, p. 1):

After the murder of Esfendiyar Khan in 1918 by Ishim, the son of Junayd Khan, the latter became the *de facto* ruler of the country. Then, after the Tahta Agreement with the Turkestan ASSR on 9 April 1919, an amnesty was agreed for Junayd Khan's tribe, thus constituting a further recognition of the independence of Khiva by Soviet authorities. However, shortly afterwards, on 25 January 1920, Soviet forces occupied Khiva and brought Junayd Khan's *de facto* Khanate to an end. On 1 February 1920, the Khorezmian People's Soviet Republic was declared. The Young Khivan Pehlivan Niyaz Hoca was elected president and Baba Ahun was appointed prime minister in April 1920. However, events took another turn when a communist coup brought the arrests of the president and other Young Khivan members of the cabinet in March 1921 and Ata Mahdum, from the Khorezmian Communist Party, was elected president in May 1921.

The following period until spring 1924 was practically a period of independence for the Khorezmian People's Soviet Republic (PSR). However, the Khorezmian communists were still under the heavy influence of both the clergy and 'bourgeois-nationalist' Young Khivans.<sup>28</sup> Some reports from Khiva and Tashkent to Moscow, voiced suspicions of a conspiracy in which F. Khozhaev, Z. Validov (Zeki Velidi Togan) and Junayd Khan were involved against the Soviet power in Khorezm and

<sup>26</sup>The Turkestan Commission (*Turkkomissiya*), although operational by the spring of 1919, was only made official on 8 October 1919 as an organ of the Russian Communist Party and the All Russia Central Executive Committee. Its native members were A. Rakhimbaev, A. Turyakulov, K. Atabaev, T. Ryskulov and S. Khozhanov. This Commission practically operated as the government of Turkestan and worked independently from the Communist Party of Turkestan ASSR. Its operations were then brought to an end with the establishment of the Russian Communist Party Central Committee's Turkestan Bureau, and it was completely abolished in 1923 with a resolution of the Central Committee.

<sup>27</sup>The need to export the regime to the neighbouring countries was a popular theme. See the books by Pozdnyshov (1922, pp. 1–25) and Borisov (1922) for accounts of the colonial nature of the Russian Empire and collaboration between the Russian and Muslim bourgeoisie.

<sup>28</sup>See the speech by Broido at the Khorezmian Communist Party (*RGASPI*, f. 62, op. 2, d. 83, ll. 47–49).



Turkestan in general.<sup>29</sup> In 1922 Soviet intelligence records also reported ‘suspicious’ activity by Faizulla Khozhaev in Khorezm, concerning moves for the unification of the Uzbek population.<sup>30</sup> Underlying Soviet concerns was the suspicion that the signs of conflicts between the intelligentsia of the different ethnic groups in Turkestan represented a sham fight that concealed the real aim of achieving an anti-Soviet alliance in the region.

In line with the instructions of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party, in March 1924, the Khorezmian Communist Party agreed on the division of Khorezm into separate national autonomous regions, and thus started the national delimitation process. Simultaneously, during the 5th All-Khorezmian Congress of the Soviets, a resolution was adopted for the Turkmen, Uzbek and Karakalpak-Kazakh people of the republic to join newly created republics and regions.<sup>31</sup> On 15 March 1924 the Khorezmian Communist Party Central Committee accepted that the ‘Khorezmian PSR would go along with the Russian Communist Party Central Committee’s decisions on delimitation of nationalities’;<sup>32</sup> however, this was only agreed after some quite sharp disagreements and these continued into mid-May 1924 when the Khorezmian Communist Party adopted a resolution establishing Turkmen and Karakalpak-Kazakh *Vilayats*, as a last attempt to stop delimitation.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, on 9 June 1924 the Central Committee of the Khorezmian Communist Party finally agreed to abolish the republic and accepted the new regulations proposed by the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party.<sup>34</sup> Implementation of the abolition of the republic still took some time and faced some opposition from local communists. It was only after almost four months, on 29 September 1924, that the Khorezmian PSR abolished itself and its territories were divided between the Uzbek SSR and the Turkmen SSR (Hayit 1975, pp. 273–74).

The aim of *razmezhevanie* was to put all the traditional states of Turkestan into a big cauldron and then to re-divide them along ethno-linguistic lines. According to Chicherin, Faizulla Khozhaev’s ambitions were to take the ‘best and most delicious’ pieces of the Khorezmian PSR and Turkestan ASSR, and to establish a Greater Uzbekistan, prosperous and wealthy, having discarded all the impoverished parts.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>29</sup>See *RGASPI*, f. 17, op. 86, d. 133, ll. 1–2: ‘Intelligence Report Telegram from Khiva to Central Committee RKP, Molotov’. The full name of Velidi was Ahmet Zeki Velidi Togan, but in 1927 before the surname law, he did not use the surname Togan. So in bibliographical indexes, many Turkish authors have different names before and after the surname law. Conforming to this practice his publications are referred to in the reference section below under Velidi (1927) for his earlier work, and under Togan (1960, 1999) for his more recently published works.

<sup>30</sup>See the text of an intelligence report from Khiva to Molotov in 2 December 1921, *RGASPI*, f. 17, op. 86, d. 133, l. 3.

<sup>31</sup>*UzRMDA*, f. 71, op. 1, d. 31, l. 32: ‘Resolutions of the all-Khorezmian Congress of Soviets, 29 September–2 October 1924’.

<sup>32</sup>*UzRPDA*, f. 14, op. 1, d. 1229, pp. 20–21: ‘Khorezmian Communist Party Congress Records, 13 March 1924’.

<sup>33</sup>*UzRMDA*, f. R-17, op. 1, d. 31, l. 15: ‘Resolution of the Khorezmian Communist Party Central Executive Committee, May 1924, 4th Session’.

<sup>34</sup>*RGASPI*, f. 62, op. 1, d. 155, l. 156: ‘Resolution of Executive Committee of the Khorezmian Communist Party, 9 June 1924’.

<sup>35</sup>*RGASPI*, f. 17, op. 86, d. 24, ll. 13–14: ‘Letter from Chicherin to Stalin, 5 April 1924’.

The destruction of Khorezm, like that of Bukhara, meant the destruction of one of the two oldest states in the region, and this would inevitably influence the position of the Soviet Union in the eyes of the rest of the Muslim world.<sup>36</sup> Chicherin argued that the preservation of the Turkestan ASSR and even, if *razmezhevanie* would certainly take place, the inclusion of Bukharan PSR and Khorezmian PSR into the Turkestan ASSR would have been a more rational solution.<sup>37</sup>

The Chicherin files in the Russian archives show that there was a concrete and strong opposition to delimitation within the Khorezmian Communist Party. Accordingly, the Khorezmian Bolsheviks were categorically against the partition of their state into the three new national units. According to German the Khorezm republic, with its three ethnic groups, had one single unique economic structure of its own.<sup>38</sup>

Comrades from Khorezm ascertain in their 'note' that 'the main reason for national animosity in Khorezm was economic in nature' and 'there is no national intolerance among the masses'. Following these ideas, Khorezmian Comrades and the Khorezmian Communist State are against the partition of Khorezm, because, from a national point of view, Khorezm as a whole represents a colourful scene in the desert. Uzbeks and Turkmens here admit the existence of economic concerns and demand national independence. Khorezmian comrades oppose such a partition. They desire to keep the historical-traditional economic structure which belongs to all of the three peoples of Khorezm. For them Khorezm is their commonly owned republic.<sup>39</sup>

Khorezm, it was observed, while protesting against the partition, was ready to accept the creation of three national autonomous *oblasts*, if only the economic and political unity was maintained.<sup>40</sup> Thus, it was argued, Khorezm should be preserved as a unified whole albeit with inner autonomies. The questions concerning the establishment of Turkmenia and further delimitation should have been left to the development of a Middle Asian Federation.<sup>41</sup> However, the project of the Middle Asian Federation remained on paper for the rest of demarcation period.<sup>42</sup>

#### *The report of 'Comrade German'*

Based on mostly economic concerns, the report of 'Comrade German' explained the positions of both Bolshevik and non-Bolshevik Turkestanis on the matter of

<sup>36</sup>RGASPI, f. 17, op. 86, d. 24, l. 15: 'Letter from Chicherin to Politburo Central Committee of Russian Communist Party, 16 May 1924'.

<sup>37</sup>RGASPI, f. 17, op. 86, d. 24, l. 18: 'Letter from Chicherin to Zinov'ev, 28 May 1924'.

<sup>38</sup>'Report from German to Chicherin', RGASPI, f. 17, op. 86, d. 24, l. 23.

<sup>39</sup>'Report from German to Chicherin', RGASPI, f. 17, op. 86, d. 24, l. 23.

<sup>40</sup>'Report from German to Chicherin', RGASPI, f. 17, op. 86, d. 24, l. 26.

<sup>41</sup>'Report from German to Chicherin', RGASPI, f. 17, op. 86, d. 24, l. 26.

<sup>42</sup>The Middle Asian Economic Union or Middle Asian Federation (*sredazEKOSO*) was established during the 1st Economic Conference of Middle Asia on 5–6 March 1923. Its aim was to unite the three Soviet states of Middle Asia economically, the Turkestan ASSR, the Bukharan PSR and the Khorezmian PSR. In fact it was an inheritor of the Turkestan Economic Union, established in March 1921, by a resolution of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party. Its practical function was to regulate economic relations between the centre and three Turkestan states. The Central Committee of the Communist Party abolished it in October 1934.

delimitation and expressed strong opposition to the delimitation in Turkestan. However, the strength of the report lay more in its core argument on the status of Khorezm as one of the most complex cases of the whole delimitation project with its mixed population of all Uzbek, Turkmen and Kirghiz (Kazakh) ethnic groups. The basic arguments and perceptions in the report can be summarised as follows.<sup>43</sup>

First, German argued, the project of national-territorial repartition (demarcation or delimitation) was an immature project, especially in its economic aspects.<sup>44</sup> The project's focus purely on nationalities was also questionable on theoretical grounds.<sup>45</sup>

Second, instead of the *razmezhevanie*, which was already being carried out, the creation of a Soviet Middle Asian Federation should be supported, and Tashkent should be designated as its capital. This was strongly supported by the author and in general by the Kirghiz too, who opposed the transfer of Tashkent to the Uzbek Republic.<sup>46</sup> The idea of Federation was seen as inevitable in the long run, simply because of economic necessities.<sup>47</sup> The demarcation of Middle Asia could be rationalised only with an economic union.<sup>48</sup>

Third, the report contended, Turkmen party workers still displayed a 'narrow minded' petty-bourgeois style and presented themselves as the suppliers of national wealth to their people.<sup>49</sup> Turkmens were opposed to the idea of an economic union for fear that a strong Uzbek Republic might put their sovereignty in danger.<sup>50</sup> While Khorezm was not performing any better, the proposed project for the establishment of Turkmenia was considered unfeasible for economical and financial reasons.<sup>51</sup>

Fourth, the Khorezmian Bolsheviks were categorically against the partition of their state into the three new national units. This republic with three ethnic groups, according to the report, had one single economic structure of its own.<sup>52</sup> The Khorezmian government was not consulted while plans for the division of this republic were discussed. Khorezm, while protesting against the partition, was ready to accept the creation of three national autonomous *oblasts*, only if economic and political unity was maintained.<sup>53</sup> To them, Khorezm should be kept as a unified whole;<sup>54</sup> the question of Turkmenia and further delimitation should be left to the development of a Middle Asian Federation.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>43</sup>At this point it should be noted that many of the 'European communists' regarded 'the promotion of national-territorial autonomy as a betrayal of internationalism' (Edgar 2004, p. 57).

<sup>44</sup>Report, *RGASPI*, f. 17, op. 86, d. 24, l. 22.

<sup>45</sup>Report, *RGASPI*, f. 17, op. 86, d. 24, l. 22.

<sup>46</sup>Report, *RGASPI*, f. 17, op. 86, d. 24, l. 24.

<sup>47</sup>Report, *RGASPI*, f. 17, op. 86, d. 24, l. 25.

<sup>48</sup>Report, *RGASPI*, f. 17, op. 86, d. 24, l. 28.

<sup>49</sup>Report, *RGASPI*, f. 17, op. 86, d. 24, l. 23.

<sup>50</sup>Report, *RGASPI*, f. 17, op. 86, d. 24, l. 25.

<sup>51</sup>Report, *RGASPI*, f. 17, op. 86, d. 24, l. 26.

<sup>52</sup>Report, *RGASPI*, f. 17, op. 86, d. 24, l. 23.

<sup>53</sup>Report, *RGASPI*, f. 17, op. 86, d. 24, l. 26.

<sup>54</sup>However it was a well-known fact that some sub-tribes of Yomud Turkmens and Uzbeks living around the city of Khiva had been fighting each other since 1912. This existing ethnic tension was one of the bases for the pro-delimitation group's argument. For a comprehensive account of the chronology of events and history of the People's Soviet Republic of Khorezm see Nepesov (1962).

<sup>55</sup>Report, *RGASPI*, f. 17, op. 86, d. 24, l. 26.

Fifth, in trying to maximise their territorial gains, both Bukharan and other Uzbek Bolsheviks were enthusiastic about demarcation.<sup>56</sup> According to the author, Uzbeks were wishing to establish a Greater Uzbekistan by dividing the Kirghiz into Kara Kirghiz (Kyrgyz) and Kirghiz (Kazakh) in order to transfer Khorezm's Kirghiz populated region of *Karakalpakistan*<sup>57</sup> to the Uzbek Republic.<sup>58</sup> Uzbeks were categorically against the establishment of a Soviet Middle Asian Federation, whereas Kirghiz supported this idea.<sup>59</sup> Uzbeks were also against any kind of economic union.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, Uzbeks were planning to increase their advantages by taking possession of irrigation networks, cotton plantations and heavily populated areas; 'the Communist Uzbeks had always played a leading role on repartition'.<sup>61</sup>

Sixth, while agreeing with the separation of *Karakalpak* section of Khorezm, the Kirghiz (Kazakh) were against the transfer of this section to the Uzbek Republic.<sup>62</sup> These last three points were emphasised by German in the following passage:

To make the picture clearer, it should be noted that, a majority of Uzbek comrades are categorically against (e.g. Comrade Islamov) any kind of economic unification, whether in a form of SES [Social Economic Space] or in another way. The proof of this could be found in the appropriate stenographic records. The accepted formulation of 'regulatory centre' passed with a great delay. Also Turkmen comrades, especially comrade Atabaev, objected the economic unification of national republics, seeing in this the attempt to intrude upon the weaker republics the will of the strong Uzbek Republic. However, there was not a real fight on this point, like on the economic problems in general. The discussion took place, strangely, without hearing any presentation/report on economic circumstances and other possibilities of delimitation.

The decisions on the partition of the Khorezm Republic was taken without hearing the ideas of [consulting] the Khorezm Government. The Khorezm delegation consisted of comrades Azhiniev, Abdusalamov, Iakubov, Shukhinov, protested the partition of the Khorezm Republic. The comrades emphasized that Khorezm is satisfied with the formation of the three autonomous *oblasts* (Turkmen, Uzbek and Kirghiz) and that the partition of the Khorezmian economy and state unity into three independent parts was not needed at all. The Kirghiz party officers did not object to the wish of the Khorezmians to receive some territorial patches that was put in the 'note' of the mentioned delegation.

Seventh, despite the victory of the Bolsheviks, 'chauvinistic' and Pan-Islamist elements seemed to be still involved in the politics of the region somehow. Although they remained silent on the matter of delimitation,<sup>63</sup> most probably, they were on the side

<sup>56</sup>Report, *RGASPI*, f. 17, op. 86, d. 24, l. 24.

<sup>57</sup>This corresponds exactly to today's *Karakalpak Avtonom Respublikasy* in Uzbekistan covering an area of one third of modern Uzbekistan's land with its capital Nüküs.

<sup>58</sup>Report, *RGASPI*, f. 17, op. 86, d. 24, l. 24.

<sup>59</sup>Report, *RGASPI*, f. 17, op. 86, d. 24, l. 25.

<sup>60</sup>Report, *RGASPI*, f. 17, op. 86, d. 24, l. 25.

<sup>61</sup>This included the group of *Rakhimbaev*, *Khodzhaev* and *Mukhiddinov* Report. See *RGASPI*, f. 17, op. 86, d. 24, l. 27.

<sup>62</sup>Report, *RGASPI*, f. 17, op. 86, d. 24, l. 24.

<sup>63</sup>Even for the nationalist, Pan-Turkist émigré leaders such as A. Zeki Velidi, the context of delimitation was not clear as late as 1927, although they admitted the new usages of the names of the newly created national states in Turkestan (see Velidi 1927, p. 36).

of a form of demarcation that would increase their power.<sup>64</sup> Eighth, demarcation would have a negative effect on the international relations of the USSR. The reactionary-bourgeois neighbours would accuse the Soviet power of the liquidation of traditional Muslim states of Middle Asia and thus of an act of violence against Islam itself. This could, in turn, weaken the international position of the USSR in this part of the world.<sup>65</sup>

### *Conclusions*

The general scholarly perception of the *razmezhevanie* is that the national-territorial delimitation project was carried out from the centre by the Politburo despite the united opposition of the native peoples in Turkestan.<sup>66</sup> However, the report of 'Comrade German' raises questions about the reliability of some aspects of the basic assumptions on this issue. One should also note that some of the facts, especially concerning the position of Faizulla Khozhaev on *razmezhevanie* were revealed in the latter's book, *K Istoriï Revyolutsii v Bukhare i Natsional'nogo Razmezhevaniya Srednei Azii* (1932) as early as 1932 but since Khozhaev was one of the victims of Stalin's purges, and archival support for the claims in this book was unavailable, we have been forced, until now, to ignore the possibility that some native communists of Turkestan were ambitious and violent supporters of delimitation policy. The author of the report, 'Comrade German', pointed out that repartition was rather an Uzbek Bolsheviks' project with an objective of establishing a Greater Uzbekistan. He interpreted the silence of 'Chauvinistic and Pan-Islamist' circles as their support, or at least appreciation, of the act of delimitation, which was thought to grant them a greater space for national-cultural activities.

Partition of Khorezm among three national republics, Uzbekistan, Kirgizia and Turkmenia, was one of the most complex problem areas of the whole question of delimitation. Uzbek Bolsheviks were victorious in both the absorption of *Karakalpakistan* as well as the Tashkent region into the territories of the newly created republic. In the light of this report and other documents in the Chicherin files, it would be possible to argue that, in the eyes of at least some Bolsheviks, Turkmen and Uzbek cadres rallied for delimitation; while, for the first half of 1924 at least, Kazak and Kyrgyz cadres in the party advocated a rather federative-unionist solution in Middle Asia.

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<sup>64</sup>Report, *RGASPI*, f. 17, op. 86, d. 24, l. 27.

<sup>65</sup>Report, *RGASPI*, f. 17, op. 86, d. 24, l. 28.

<sup>66</sup>For one of the latest and best examples of such an approach see Zhuraev *et al.* (2000, pp. 282–302).

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