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История в лицах и личность в истории: Материалы Вторых Международных Усмановских чтений, посвященных 90-летию со дня рождения профессора Х. Ф. Усманова / Сост. И. М. Гвоздикова, М. Н. Фархшатов. – Уфа, 2013. – 286 с.

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В сборник материалов Вторых Международных Усмановских чтений, посвященных 90-летию видного историка-аграрника Башкортостана Х. Ф. Усманова (1923–2009), включены статьи известных и начинающих исследователей из различных городов нашей страны, Украины, Германии и Голландии о крупных действующих лицах отечественной истории, историческом опыте и проблемах взаимодействия села и города, особенностях модернизационных процессов в трех государствах-приемниках: Российской империи, Советском Союзе и Российской Федерации.

Для ученых-специалистов, профессиональных историков, а также широкого круга читателей.

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**THE TATARO-BASHKIR FEUD REVISITED:
ZAKI VALIDI AND THE BASHKIR AUTONOMY
IN WESTERN HISTORIOGRAPY**

The ‘Tataro-Bashkir feud’¹, or more precisely the split between Tatars and Bashkirs over the question of territorial vs. cultural autonomy after the first all-Russian Muslim Congress in May 1917 and the role that the Bashkir leader Akhmed Zaki Validi played in it, has produced an important body of historical research in the West. Western scholarship also dealt with the consequences of the proclamation of Bashkir autonomy for the relationship between Bashkirs, Tatars and Russians and with the momentous consequences for the development of early Soviet nationalities policies. In particular, Western scholars have been debating in which ways the Bashkir-Soviet agreement on Bashkirs autonomy in March 1919 played into the hands of the then commissar for nationalities, Stalin. It has often been assumed that the creation of two smaller autonomies within the RSFSR, the Bashkir ASSR in May 1919 and the Tatar ASSR in May 1920 (instead of the hitherto favoured larger Tatar-Bashkir autonomy) actually allowed Moscow to intensify its policies of *divide et impera* towards the non-Russian nationalities. In that sense, the creation of a separate Bashkir territorial autonomy appeared, in Richard Pipes’s formulation, as the ‘first experiment in Soviet national policy’².

By the virtue of circumstances – a critical reappraisal of early Soviet nationalities policies was largely impossible within the USSR – much of the historical literature on the Tataro-Bashkir feud was produced in the West. The debate was notably intense during the 1950s and then again when the Soviet Union disintegrated during the 1980s and early 1990s. The aim of this chapter is firstly to summarise the history of events between 1917 and 1920. Against this backdrop I outline the development of the historiographic debate in West. I examine the sources that Western scholarship was built upon and

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¹ The term was coined by Zenkovsky in the 1950s. Serge A. Zenkovsky, ‘The Tataro-Bashkir Feud of 1917–20’, *Indiana Slavic Studies* 2 (1958), 37–61.

² Richard Pipes, ‘The First Experiment in Soviet National Policy: The Bashkir Republic, 1917–1920’, *Russian Review* 9 (1950), 303–319. Pipes himself ‘borrowed’ the title from Fedor N. Samoilov, *Malaia Bashkiriia. Iz istorii pervogo opyta sovetskoi natsional’noi politiki*, (Moscow: 1933).

discuss the epistemological weight of earlier writings for contemporary historiography. Dealing with primarily with German, British, US and French scholarship, I also address the question in how far the opening of the archives in the 1990s had an impact on the historical judgement in Russia and the West. Did the circulation of new archival material challenge some of the entrenched stereotypes?

1. History

1.1. February to October 1917

When the Old Regime collapsed in the days of the February revolution, only remnants of the Muslim political party 'Ittifak' were still active. 'Ittifak' had emerged from the all-Russian Muslim emancipation movement during the first Russian revolution of 1905. Stolypin's coup d'état in 1907 severely curtailed Muslim representation in the State Duma. Muslim political organisations and trade unions were disbanded, too. Nonetheless, Russia's Muslims succeeded in organising an unofficial fourth congress of Ittifak in 1914 which reiterated central demands for religious and educational autonomy put forward during the 1905 revolution. However, after 1907 several interdepartmental conferences limited or inhibited educational reforms which had been at the very heart of Muslim political awakening in the Empire¹. Even so, the boundaries between spiritual and secular education slowly eroded and an increasing number of young Muslims received education in Russian schools. Finally, only some of the once mushrooming Turkic language newspaper and periodicals survived. Despite close censorship they were instrumental in preserving a Muslim public sphere that transcended the boundaries of actual face-to-face communication in the regions. Although the IV State Duma was dissolved during the war, the seven Muslim deputies continued to understand themselves as the legal representation of the Empire's Muslim population.

Muslim political activity quickly revived in 1917. In Petrograd, the remnants of Muslim faction and its bureau aspired to regain their role as the focal point of the movement, whereas in the provinces local and regional meetings and congresses were held to formulate grievances and demands which were then circulated in Russian and Muslim newspapers. The first phase of the Muslim revival in spring 1917 was thus characterised by attempts to retain the unity of the movement on the one hand, and to formulate a common Muslim opinion within the institutional framework of the February revolu-

¹ See Robert P. Geraci, *Window on the East: National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia*, (Ithaca: 2001).

tion that the provisional government presided over. Muslim engagement in the Soviets, for the time being, was marginal to non-existent.

A first all-Russian Muslim Congress was convened by the faction's bureau during the first days of May in Moscow. It was expected to formulate an authoritative common stance towards the incipient renewal of democratic Russia. Muslim leaders that had been politically active during the first revolution, many of them Volga Tatars, formed a substantial group among the 900 congress delegates¹. They expected to tie in where *Ittifak* had been forced to stop some ten years earlier. During the congress, however, their liberal agenda was challenged in two fundamental ways. Firstly the concept of a Muslim cultural autonomy within a unitary Russia was contested by a majority (291 votes for, 422 against), whereas the alternative model of territorial autonomy within a federal Russia, authored by the Azeri Topchibaev, was accepted by 446 delegates (with 271 votes against)².

This majority consisted essentially but not exclusively of delegates from the Empire's periphery. Russian colonisation was well under way there. Nevertheless Muslims still formed compact demographic majorities. The success of the motion on territorial autonomy was all the more surprising as many of the younger, left leaning delegates from Central Russia had also opted for a 'centrist' position and cultural autonomy, as they were highly suspicious of the more conservative social set-up in the Caucasus and Central Asia and the political outlook of the local elites. The relative weight of these young delegates became obvious when the congress accepted radical socio-economic demands, from the nationalisation of agricultural lands to the unconditional equalisation of the sexes. Indeed, the congress elected the one and only female assessor (*kazi*) to the Orenburg Spiritual Board³.

As a young delegate and explicit advocate of territorial autonomy, the future Bashkir leader Akhmed Zaki Validi was at the crossroads of events in Moscow. His biographical background and his crucial defence of territorial autonomy in Moscow were such stuff that myths were build around quite quickly after the events by his friends, foes and ultimately by himself, too. Although only 27 years of age at the time, Validi was already a well-know figure in 1917. His 1912 'History of the Turks and Tatars' had earned him

¹ Sources deviate as to the total number of deputies; numbers vacillate between 800 and 900.

² Timurbek Davletshin, *Sovetskii Tatarstan: Teoriia i praktika leninskoi natsional'noi politike*, (London: 1974), 75; Diliara Usmanova, *Voprosy natsionalno-gosudarstvennogo samoopredeleniia*, Ph.D. Dissertation (Kazan: 1994), 62–4.

³ For a detailed account of the programmatic debates in Moscow see Christian Noack, *Muslimischer Nationalismus im Russischen Reich. Nationsbildung und Nationalbewegung bei Tataren und Baschkiren, 1861–1917*, (Stuttgart: 2000), 499–510.

intellectual credit among Muslim intellectuals and Russian orientalists and he took part in several scientific expeditions to Turkestan before the war. He was co-opted into the Muslim faction's bureau precisely because of his expertise on Turkestan and he participated in Moscow congress not as a Bashkir delegate, but as a representative of the Muslim congress of Tashkent. When Bashkir and Kazakh delegates severely criticised the agrarian resolution of the Moscow congress because they amounted to the unconditional nationalisation of land, Validi endorsed their position. This rejection was, by the way, completely in line with earlier resolutions taken by regional congresses in Ufa, Orenburg and Tashkent. These had demanded an immediate halt to Russian peasant colonisation and a restitution of lands to their earlier Muslim owners¹.

The Moscow congress thus constituted a watershed in several respects. It firstly illustrated a generational conflict between the liberals, who had dominated the Muslim movement since 1905, and the more radically minded youth which had been marginal in 1905–07. The latter's influence had grown substantially in the regions by 1917 and their representation was strong enough to put radical motions through at the Moscow congress. Secondly, and probably more importantly, Moscow illustrated the degree of disintegration between the various Muslim communities within the Russian empire.

Moscow was the first and last genuinely all-Russian meeting. The following congress organised in Kazan in July 1917 was only nominally an all-Russian enterprise. It was almost exclusively attended by Muslims from Central Russia. The Moscow congress had installed a standing national council (*Milli shuro*) and a Muslim executive committee (*Iskomus*). The factual influence of these 'all-Russian' bodies was much weaker, though, than claimed by their leaders (the Caucasian social-democrat Akhmed Tsalikov and the Tatar writer Gaiaz Iskhaki). It continued to diminish in the course of 1917². Other than frequently stated, neither Validi, who for the time being returned to Turkestan, nor the emerging Bashkir movement under Sharif Manatov, severed all ties with the Tatars, the national council or the executive committee. Dissatisfied with the motion on land taken in Moscow, Bashkirs and Ka-

¹ See, for example, S. M. Dimanshtein (ed.), *Revoliutsiia i natsional'nyi vopros. Dokumenty*, t. 3, *1917 fevral'–oktiabr'* (Moscow: 1930), 361–3; B. Kh. Iuldashbaev (ed.), *Ocherki po istorii Bashkirskoi ASSR*, t. 2 (Ufa: 1966), 28–9; B. Hayit, *Turkestan im XX. Jahrhundert*, (Darmstadt: 1956), 45, 49; Martha Brill-Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, (Stanford: 1987), 83–99, 132–3; Geoffrey Wheeler, *The Modern History of Central Asia*, (London 1964), 99–100.

² See Salavat Iskhakov, *Rossiiskie musul'mane i revoliutsiia, vesna 1917 g. – leto 1918 g.* (Moscow: 2004). Iskhakov's account is certainly biased by his sources; still it is a useful counterweight to national Tatar and Bashkir historiographies.

zakhs had agreed, however, to conduct parallel regional congresses in Orenburg in July 1917, to coordinate their interests.

The first Bashkir *kurultai*, held between 20 and 27 July in Orenburg, reiterated the Bashkir positions in the land question, referring to the Ural as the ‘ancient homeland of the Bashkirs’ and suggesting that all Bashkir land should be declared the ‘property of the Bashkir people’. This formulation combined the conservative demand for land restitution with the contemporary socialist demand for redistribution, albeit limited to Muslims¹. During the congress, Validi repeated his conviction that Bashkirs, and possibly Tatars, too, could attain self-determination only in close cooperation with the movements of the Kazakhs and the Turkestanis². The *kurultai*, though, took no further action that could have been interpreted as an entrenchment of Bashkir territorial autonomy. On the contrary, the resolutions of the *kurultai* continued to speak of a ‘Muslim’ language and educational system which suggested the basic acceptance of a general Muslim cultural autonomy in these realms. Finally, the Bashkirs also elected two delegates to the central *Milli shuro*.

The Kazan congress, for its part, decreed the election of a ‘national parliament’ (*millet medzhlese*) to deal with all questions related to the cultural autonomy, i.e. in the first place the administration of the Spiritual board and the educational system of Muslim schools. It also basically accepted the quest for territorial autonomy in the peripheries and did not exclude the option that the Muslims of Inner Russia might opt for a territorial autonomy at later stage, too. In that sense, the stipulations of the Bashkir *kurultai* and the Kazan Muslim congress from July 1917 were complimentary rather than contradictory.

Tatar-Bashkir relations continued to taint, though. The institutions created at the Kazan congress continuously claimed to speak on behalf of the ‘Muslims of Inner Russia and Siberia’ – including the Bashkirs. The socialists’ ascent to prominence within the rump Muslim movement (now rather ethnically Tatar) did not help promoting an understanding for the Bashkirs’ allegedly elitist demands for the restitution of former land ownership. Nei-

¹ De facto this meant the expropriation of all lands acquired by non-Bashkirs after 1898 and the repeal of Stolypin’s agrarian legislation. The Bashkirs insinuated population exchanges and the resettlement of Muslim diaspora groups on land from which Russian settlers were to be evicted. Cf. Zaki Validi Togan, *Vospominania: Bor’ba Musul’man Turkestana i drugikh vostochnykh Tiurok za national’noe sushchestvovanie i kul’tury*, (Moscow: 1997), 132, 145; M. Guboglu (ed.), *Emopoliticheskaia mozaika Bashkortostana. Ocherki, Dokumenty, Khronika*, t. 2, (Moscow: 1992), 89–90.

² *Emopoliticheskaia mozaika*, t. 2, 64–66; Validi Togan, *Vospominania*, 131.

ther did the Muslim press refrain from deriding Bashkirs as backwards by pointing at what had become increasingly crucial in Bashkir self-identification, i. e. their language ('dialect') and their idealisation of their nomadic past¹.

During the summer of 1917, the weakness of the provisional government and the power struggle with the Soviets could not but exacerbate the political cleavages within the Muslim milieu. Central Muslim institutions like the *Milli shuro* and the *Iskomus* who had collaborated too closely with the provisional government lost their last remaining credit in the regions. Even reluctant Muslim political representatives saw themselves increasingly compelled to take action in order to be not outflanked by the Soviets. Across the country, Muslim-Soviet relations differed wildly. In some cases, like in Kazan or Ufa, growing numbers of left-leaning Muslim participated in the local Soviets. Soviets in the peripheries, like for example in Tashkent, tended by contrast to understand themselves exclusively as agents of the Russian population. In these cases, clashes with the Muslim population intensified.

For Tatars and Bashkirs, Ufa should become the site of stiff political competition during the late summer and autumn of 1917. As the Spiritual Board with the newly elected mufti Galimzhan Barudi (from Kazan) resided in the city, the bodies charged with the realisation of the Muslim cultural autonomy took residence there, too, in the last days of August. One of the intended consequences was to enhance the integration of the Bashkir Muslims². The Bashkirs demonstratively held their second *kurultai* in Ufa, too, between the 25 and 29 August. It proceeded to stake out the contours of the future Bashkir territorial autonomy which was to comprise the central and south-eastern parts of Ufa province (*gubernia*), the north-western parts of the Orenburg province and some adjacent territories from the Perm' and Samara provinces. The *kurultai* explicitly stated that indigenous Muslims 'known as *pripushchenniki*, *teptiary* and *novo-bashkiry*' could expect to be benefit from the restitution and redistribution of Bashkir lands on equal footing³. This was a provocation for 'Muslim' nationalists who had hitherto counted on the loyalty of the ethnic Tatar groups in the Ural provinces.

In Ufa, the Tatar 'Muslim' movement suffered a further blow when its left wing under the leadership of Galimdzhan Ibragimov began to favour territorial autonomy. Later that autumn, the Bashkirs and the Muslim left in the provinces of Ufa and Orenburg, balloted on separate list during the election

¹ See chapters 9.1 and 11.3 in Noack, *Muslimischer Nationalismus*.

² *Revoliutsiia i natsionalnyi vopros* t. 3, 317; Davletshin, *Sovetskii Tatarstan*, 115–6.

³ *Etnopoliticheskaia mozaika*, t. 2, 74.

for the constituent assembly on 12 November and outmatched the list of the nationalist *Milli shuro*.

1.2. From the October Revolution to the Civil War

The cleavages thus deepened but as of yet a parting of ways between Tatars and Bashkirs was by no means inevitable when the next phase began with the October revolution. The Bolsheviki took power in Kazan and Ufa on 26–27 October 1917, but their influence outside the larger cities and in the periphery remained restricted. Muslim organisations, characterised by an increased influence of socialist of different dyeing, took a ‘wait and see’ attitude. The Bolsheviki themselves, still in a delicate position, were not actively supporting Muslim nationalism. Yet they were at least ordered by their leadership to evade everything that could be taken as a provocation by the national movements. During November and December, though, it became increasingly clear that local Bolsheviki in Kazan and Ufa lacked the restraint that was expected of them in Petrograd and tended ignore Muslim interests on the spot. For the Muslims, the need to manoeuvre between the central and local contenders to power should remain characteristic for the whole period of the Civil War.

Initially, the situation had looked somewhat different in Orenburg. Here the Cossacks under Ataman Dutov seized power in the name of the provisional government. The Bashkir council supported the move, hoping for close collaboration on eye level. The Bashkirs expected the Cossacks to hold similar views; at least as far as the land question was concerned. Negotiating simultaneously with the Cossacks and the Sovnarkom for recognition, they finally struck an accord with Dutov and proclaimed Bashkir territorial autonomy in parts of the Ufa, Orenburg, Perm and Samara provinces (‘Little Bashkiria’) on 16 November. Without formal recognition by the Cossacks, local Muslim bodies or Soviets, the Bashkirs managed to convene about 200 delegates for a constituent assembly (‘Vsebashkirskii uchreditel’nyi kurultai’) in Orenburg on 8 December. It confirmed the declaration of territorial autonomy (maintaining the option of a later merger with the autonomies of the Kazakhs and Turkestanis), elected a government under Iunus Bikbov and decreed the setting up of a Bashkir administration, including a separate Muslim Spiritual board. When Red units began to fight against the Cossacks in December 1917, the Bashkirs declared themselves neutral. The intermittent expulsion of the Cossack from Orenburg between January and June 1918, however, exposed them to constant harassment both by Muslim revolutionary military committee and the provincial revolutionary committee.

Meanwhile, the Bashkir declaration of independence had waived any possible rearrangement with the Muslim movement dominated by the Volga

Tatars. When the *millet medzhlese*, elected without difficulties during the days of the October revolution, finally convened on 20 November in Ufa, it was thus confronted with another Bashkir fait accompli. Moreover, it had to define its relation to the new Bolshevik government, which it formally recognised without dangling active collaboration¹. Sitting between 17 November 1917 and 11 January 1918, the *millet medzhlese* struggled to combine the cultural autonomy decreed in July with a viable territorial arrangement. The aim was to devise borders for a federal autonomy in the Volga-Urals in which non-Russian nationalities, whether Muslim or not, would demographically outweigh the Russians. Validi and the Bashkirs, repeatedly offered to join, refused again². On 6 January 1918, the national assembly finally approved of a project including the provinces of Kazan and Ufa in total, and several districts areas of the Orenburg, Perm, Samara, Simbirsk and Viatka provinces overwhelmingly inhabited by non-Russians. It was neutrally designated as the 'Idel'-Ural-State' ('Volga-Ural-State'). Muslims would have accounted for 43–44 per cent of the population. The realisation of the project was postponed until a convention in May 1918 which should never materialise.

By early 1918, both Tatars and Bashkirs had thus to adept to conditions set by the Bolsheviks. The *millet medzhlise*, for its part, formally recognised the Sovnarkom in the expectation that Russia's future would finally be decided by the all-Russian constituent assembly convening in Petrograd on 18 January 1918. If, from a Muslim nationalist perspective, chances of an arrangement with the Bolsheviks had been frail before the dissolution of constituent assembly, the use of force against the democratically elected representation robbed many observers of the last illusions about the character of the new regime. That said, a growing number of leftist Muslim activists chose to work with the Bolsheviks in order to realise as much self-determination as possible. Among them were the Galimdzhan Ibragimov and other members of the board that had been established by the *millet medzhlise* to prepare the creation of the Idel'-Ural State. They succeeded in persuading Stalin of the advantages of a joint Tatar-Bashkir autonomy. Its establishment remained the declared aim of Bolshevik nationalities policies in the region from March 1918 well into 1919. Consequently, independent Muslim bodies in Kazan and Ufa were dissolved by force in spring 1918. For the time being, this meant that the Bashkirs, who had sent their erstwhile chairman Manatov to negotiate with Stalin, could no longer hope to achieve a formal recognition

¹ Stalin had offered to co-opt Tsalikov as Commissioner for Muslim Affairs into the Sovnarkom, but the latter declined.

² Etnopoliticheskaia mozaika, vol. 2, 85–7; Dzh[amaletdin]. Validov, 'U menja raznoglasija s sovvlasti'iu', *Ekho vekov* (1995) 1–2, 165.

of their Bashkir autonomy. Nonetheless, Manatov was co-opted into the Narkomnats by Stalin.

While Bashkirs and Tatars were trying to advance their autonomies under the auspices of Bolshevik rule, the local Soviets, dominated by non-Muslim radicals, displayed little consideration for greater designs. Efforts to create armed Bashkir units were thwarted by Red guards in the Urals. In mid-February 1918, leading representatives of the Bashkir government and council were arrested in Orenburg. Remaining members went underground to organise armed resistance. In April 1918, Validi and many of his comrades, who refused to cooperate with the local Soviets, were liberated by a joint Bashkir-Cossack raid. Efforts to create Red Bashkir organisations were also subverted by the local Soviets and quickly lost their *raison d'être* when the Narkomnats opted for the joint Tataro-Bashkir option.

1.3. State Formation under the Conditions of Civil War

The ensuing history of the Bashkir movement is extremely complicated and has been described in more detail in the works reviewed in the second part of my chapter. Here I can offer only a very brief sketch of the most important events.

The whole situation in the Volga-Urals changed quickly after the outbreak of the Civil War in spring 1918. White anti-Bolshevik armies closed in from Siberia, the Steppes and the South-west. Many Muslim nationalists recognised the Committee of Members of the Constituent Assembly ('Komuch') as the legal government and sought support for their autonomy projects there. Validi chose to negotiate with the Siberian white generals, the Cossack under Dutov and the Komuch simultaneously. With their support, Bashkir units with up to 10,000 men could be armed. At least temporarily the Bolsheviks had to retreat from much of the area during summer 1918, shelving the implementation of the Tatar-Bashkir autonomy.

Towards the end of 1918, much of the Middle Volga region including Ufa was recaptured by the Bolsheviks, while most of the Southern Urals remained in White hands. As a result, the larger part of Bashkir units was fighting on Bashkir soil. Meanwhile, Validi and the Bashkirs leaders had learned that in contrast to the SR dominated Komuch none of the other white commanders was taking the political ambitions of the Bashkirs seriously. The Bashkirs' room to manoeuvre was further tightening when Admiral Kolchak seized the supreme command and dissolved Komuch. Kolchak indeed annulled Bashkir autonomy, too. To save their autonomous government and its armed units, the Bashkirs left Orenburg, still under the control of Dutov, for Baimak on the eastern slopes of the Ural. As a result, the Whites stopped supplying the Bashkirs and began to dissolve those national units that were

still in their reach. Validi tried in vain to establish a common front against Kolchak with former members of the Komuch and the Kazakh *Alash Orda*. When this failed in November 1918, the Bashkirs began to contemplate the option of an arrangement with the Bolsheviks¹.

The Bashkirs, hard pressed by the Whites themselves, could expect some concessions from Moscow if their not numerous but relatively experienced units would leave the enemy camp and reinforce the Reds. Moreover, Bashkiria was an important strategic location at angle of several fronts. Secret meetings between Bolsheviks and Bashkir leaders took place from January 1919 onwards. Against the backdrop of earlier experiences with the Soviets, the Bashkir leadership demanded strong guarantees for inner autonomy, a Bashkir administration and the preservation of their national military units. An agreement was signed on 19. February, to the effect that four days later several thousand armed Bashkirs² switched sides and helped resisting Kolchak's advance. Validi and his comrades-in-arms formed a 'Bashkir Revolutionary Committee' (Bashrevkom) which signed an agreement with the RSFSR on 23 March 1919. It warranted the Bashkirs a significant degree of autonomy in the Bashkir Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, the first autonomy within the RSFSR. The borders of the BASSR largely coincided with those of 'Small Bashkiria' projected in 1917. If from the Bolshevik perspective this meant not yet the abandoning of the Tatar-Bashkir project, Bashkir intransigence in the question of a possible subordination of their autonomy rendered its realisation impossible for the time being. In December 1919, the Politburo of the Communist Party, on the one hand, rejected the plan for the creation of a Tatar-Bashkir federal state even without the inclusion of the BASSR's territories. On the other hand, Validi's suggestions to discuss a common Kazakh-Bashkir autonomy were thwarted by Tatars on the Second Congress of Communist Organisations of the People of East in convened in Moscow³.

For the time being, none of this was of utmost importance to the Bolsheviks because white troops reoccupied much of the Volga-Urals during spring and summer 1919. Only in late August the Bashrevkom could return from its temporary refuge in Saransk. It settled in the town of Steritamak which was located on the borders of 'Small Bashkiria', yet within the Ufa province. Bashrevkom's first orders, issued in August 1919, called upon the entire population to obey its authority. At the same time Soviets sprang up again in

¹ M. M. Kulsharipov, *Bashkirskoe natsional'noe dvizhenie (1917–1921 gg.)*, (Ufa: 2000), 195.

² In secondary literature numbers vary between 2,000 and 7,000 ca.

³ Kulsharipov, *Natsional'noe dvizhenie*, 245. A considerably smaller Tatar ASSR with the capital city of Kazan was not to be created before 23 May 1920.

the urban centres and factories of the Ural. This created a tense situation reminiscent of the dual power in early 1918. As the Bashkirs set out to seize and return lands from colonists, tensions with Soviet institutions, in particular the Ufa Soviet and its executive committee ('obkom') quickly exacerbated. In the long run, the land war also aggravated the shortage of supplies in the region and made the Bashkevkomb more dependent on provision from outside. Soviets and the Obkom decidedly took the sides of the non-Bashkirs in what they styled as a class conflict between workers and peasants on the one side, and the agents of Bashkir land-owning class on the other. During the same period, attempts by Moscow to integrate the Bashkirs into communist party structures created another source of continuous conflicts. Validi was frequently summoned to Moscow, yet he rejected to take up positions in the Narkomnats and other central organs. Made up of communists as well as of non-communists, the Bashrevkomb did not hurry to heed to Moscow's demands to build up a Bashkir branch of the party.

During these conflicts, Moscow repeatedly turned a blind eye on Bashkir violations of the February 1919 agreement or even actively took the sides of the Bashkirs, at least as long as the Civil War raged on. At the same time, determination by the local communist to break the power of the Bashrevkomb grew proportionally. Between January and June 1920 the Obkom tried to wrench Bashkir nationalists from positions of power in 'Small Bashkiria' and to subordinate Bashkir troops and secret services to Red Army and party control. With support from Moscow, Bashrevkomb fended off many of these attempts, but from April 1920 onwards the commissar for nationalities, Stalin, more and more openly displayed his impatience with the Bashkirs. On 19 May 1920, without prior consultation, the all-Soviet Executive Committee issued the 'Decree on the State Organisation of the Bashkir Autonomous Republic' which subordinated the Bashkir administration including its security forces to the direct control of central authorities. In a last symbolic showdown, Validi and the majority of the Bashrevkomb tendered their resignation and went underground.

The political reorganisation of Bashkiria, however, proceeded along Soviet patterns. An All-Bashkir Congress of the Soviets was convened in June. It installed a new Bashkir government under the communist Shamigulov. This provoked an armed rebellion which could not be controlled by the Red Army units that occupied Bashkiria in July 1920. Tensions relieved only when Bashkir units under Musa Murtazin returned from the Polish front in September and mediated a cease-fire, conditional on a general amnesty for the insurgents. Plagued by food shortages and violence since 1918, Bashkiria was engulfed by the famine that ravaged the Volga region in 1921. The following year, on 4 June 1922, the Soviet government decreed the inclusion of

several districts that had hitherto belonged to the Ufa and Cheliabinsk provinces into the BASSR. It enlarged the territory of the republic significantly but reduced the share of ethnic Bashkirs to less than one third.

2. Historiography

History is written by those who emerge victorious, not just in the USSR. The struggle against nationalist ‘deviations’, whose first prominent victim became Validi’s old foe Sultan-Galiev from 1923 onwards, the tightening censorship and the imposition of a authoritative party version of history effectively rendered the discussion of alternative views on early Soviet nationalities policies or the emergence of the Bashkir autonomy impossible. The bulk of publications written during the 1920s in the USSR were penned by Tatar and Bashkir Communists more or less directly involved in the sidelining of the Bashrevkom and the building of a Soviet style administration in the BASSR.

First hand reports in some cases, these publications were certainly biased. Some of the controversies within the Bolshevik camp showed through the contemporary Soviet journals or the collections of source material on the nationalities issue, which Stalin’s right hand in the Narkomnats, Dimanshtein edited. By the way, the bulk of both supporters and opponents of the Bashkir autonomy, including Dimanshtein, were ‘liquidated’ during the great terror. Validi and a few others that escaped abroad published their own views with a significant delay in time – Validi’s memories were not published before 1969 – and in languages customarily not accessible to scholars of the Soviet past¹. Hence the accounts by Atnagulov, Murtazin, Tipeev or Samilov², among others, formed the basis for the further historiographic development in the Soviet Union and the West.

2.1. German ‘Ostforschung’

Among the first scholars debating nationalities issues in the Soviet Union were young German specialists in the 1930s and 40s. Due to historical circumstances – the loss of German territory and German influence after WWI and the influx of Russian speaking émigrés – the study of Eastern Europe

¹ A first, much criticised Russian translation appeared in Ufa in 1994, a second, lavishly annotated by S. M. Iskhakov, in Moscow 1997. An English translation by H. B. Paksoy is available online under the title of ‘MEMOIRES: Struggle for National and Cultural Independence of the Turkistan and other Moslem Eastern Turks, no date of publication available: <http://www.spongobongo.com/zy9857.htm> (accessed 15 September 2013).

² Salakh Atnagulov, *Bashkiriia*, (Moscow: 1925); Musa L. Murtazin, *Bashkiriia and bashkirskie voiska v grazhdanskuiu voinu*, (Moscow: 1927); Shamson Tipeev, *K istoriiu natsional'no go dvizheniia v Bashkirii*, (Ufa: 1929); Fedor N. Samoilov, *Malaia Bashkiriia*, (Moscow: 1933).

gained in importance in interwar Germany¹. Politically serving reactionary goals, 'Ostforschung' was methodologically innovative. It combined elements of political, economic and cultural history, geography and demography to prove the historic supremacy of German culture in Eastern Europe. Nationalities studies were part of the political 'Ostforschung' agenda, since the Germans played with idea of pitting nationalities against the central Russian government, like they had already done with the creation of puppet states in the wake of the peace of Brest-Litovsk in 1918.

As early as 1936 the then 32 year old Gerhard von Mende published *Der nationale Kampf der Russlandtürken, ein Beitrag zur nationalen Frage in der Sovetunion*. This was a surprisingly well informed study of the pre-revolutionary Muslim movement, the increasing influence of ethnic (Turkic) concepts of identity among Russia's Muslims and the failure of Muslim and Turkic state building under Soviet conditions. Von Mende was born in Riga in 1904, his family fled to Germany after his father had been imprisoned and later executed by Red units in 1919. He graduated in Russian studies and Turcology at the Humboldt-Universität and pursued his career at the Wirtschaftshochschule, also in Berlin. Ideologically leaning towards national-socialism and intermittently SA member, von Mende accepted to collaborate with the *Reichsministerium für die besetzten Ostgebiete* under Rosenberg during the war and helped to build up legions recruited from Muslim prisoners of war².

Reading Russian and Turkic languages, von Mende was the first scholar outside the Soviet Union to make extensive use of Russia's Muslim press. This helped him, on the one side, to evade some of the foregone conclusions suggested by many contemporary Soviet sources. On the other, it brought a different bias into his account of the Tataro-Bashkir split. Von Mende extensively cited Tatar jadids, preferentially Dzhamaletdin Validov, whose treatment of the Bashkirs in general and Zaki Validi in particular was less than favourable. A good example is von Mende's long quote from one article in the renowned Orenburg paper *Vakyt* from 23 May 1917, where Dzhamaletdin Validov refused to accept the distinction of the Bashkirs as a separate nation on the grounds of a separate 'dialect' and the right 'to own 39 desjatinnes of land'. Validov and the Tatar intelligentsia expected that sedentism and the cultural dominance of Tatar language and culture would assimilate the

¹ It deserves mentioning that Zaki Validi himself tried to exploit the situation to pursue an academic career in Germany, between 1935 and 1939 held appointments at the universities of Bonn and Göttingen.

² Iskander Gilyazov, *Na drugoi storone. Kollaboratsionisty iz povolzhsko-priural'skikh tatar v gody Vtoroi mirovoi voyny*, (Kazan: 1998)

Bashkirs in the long run. For Validov, ‘the term Tatar does not only denote the Kazan Tatars, but all Muslims of Inner Russia, including the Bashkirs’¹.

In his memoirs, Zaki Validi, too, complained that von Mende’s account distorted his role on the Moscow congress, probably under the influence of Tatar sources. According to von Mende, Validi had been demanding autonomy for the Bashkirs already in Moscow, while he was in fact speaking on behalf of the Turkestanis. This version was later uncritically spread by other researchers, to whom the congress protocols remained inaccessible because they had been published in Tatar².

In the larger context of Ostforschung, another German scholar, Berthold Spuler, deserves mentioning. Spuler, born 1911, published his ‘Volga-Tataren und Baschkiren unter russischer Herrschaft’ (‘Volga Tatars and Bashkirs under Russian Rule’) in the journal *Der Islam* in 1950³. Spuler, like von Mende, had been active in the setting up of Tatar Legions under German command during the war. Obviously to avoid the impression that he was commissioned by the Nazis to do so, he claimed to have written his study on the Tatars and Bashkirs already in 1941. Spuler’s piece is very sketchy on the Soviet era, however. The Tataro-Bashkir feud is only mentioned in passing with a reference to von Mende’s *Nationaler Kampf* which should remain the more influential work.

2.2. Cold War ‘Sovietology’

In the US, Richard Pipes was the first to devote an article to the Bashkir efforts to build up their autonomy in the *Russian Review* in 1950. The title ‘first experiment in Soviet National Policy’ indicated that Bashkiria served as a case study for his seminal study on the ‘Formation of the Soviet Union’ which was to appear in 1954. In his introduction Pipes left no doubts of his intention to disprove the Soviet claims to have ‘solved the nationalities question’. For Pipes, Soviet historians had constructed a myth about the revolution and the civil war as class struggle transcending national boundaries. He aspired to demonstrate that, on the contrary, nationalism had often prevailed over class solidarity, and that this nationalism had to be suppressed by the Communist party which thus favoured, perhaps unwittingly, the interests of ethnic Russians over those of the national minorities.

This conviction determined Pipes approach of the subject. Initially he documented the specific socio-demographic developments in the Ural and

¹ *Vakyt* (Orenburg), 23 May 1917. Quoted in von Mende, *Der nationale Kampf der Russlandtürken*, 136–7.

² Validi, *Vospominaniia*, 122. Validi explicitly mentions Spuler and Zenkovsky.

³ Berthold Spuler, ‘Die Wolga-Tataren und Baschkiren unter russischer Herrschaft’, *Der Islam* 29 (1950) 142–216.

the land losses the Bashkirs suffered since the dissolution of the Bashkir host. His take on the Muslim movement in 1917 was rather brief and largely followed von Mende, including the distorted portrait of Validi's appearance on the Moscow conference. Pipes then focused on the period after October. He examined Bashkir efforts to realise autonomy with the blessing of the Lenin, against the resistance put up by local Soviets and, initially, Tatar competitors aiming at the formation of a joint Tatar-Bashkir autonomy. Before and after the volte-face of early 1919, Stalin, in contrast to a more benevolent Lenin, appeared as plotting and manoeuvring, while the Bashkirs' attitude towards the Bolsheviks was described as being non-ideological and naïve. In Pipes account, the 1919 arrangement is described as a 'far reaching concession on the part of the Soviet government and an abandonment of the project of the Tatar-Bashkir republic, and an establishment of an autonomous state with far greater political and economic self-rule than Moscow was generally willing to grant at the time'¹. This is remarkable in several respects. First of all, the implicit comparison is anachronistic, as there were no other autonomies within the RSFSR at the time. Secondly, Moscow at that stage still considered a merger of the Bashkir autonomy and the Tatar-Bashkir project. The latter was not shelved before the end of 1919.

For Pipes' narrative, however, this judgement is important as it provides the logic of the further developments: the Bashkirs misinterpreted the agreement as a 'carte blanche', whereas the centre aimed at reigning the Bashkirs back in as soon as the situation allowed, i. e., after recapturing the Southern Urals in summer 1919. Stalin in particular appears as the mastermind, using the conflict between Russians and Tatars, represented in the Soviets, on the one hand, and the Bashkirs on the other. The Bashkirs, described as 'naïve' once more, disregarded the role of the party, which facilitated its use by the centre to regain control. From a position of power Moscow was able to impose a new legal framework for the Bashkir ASSR in May 1920, which was then replicated for other autonomies within the RSFSR. Pipes account ends with 1920 and the lost 'showdown' between the Bashkirs and the Russians².

For the reconstruction of the history of events, Pipes used early Soviet Bashkir accounts and also contemporary periodicals. This allowed him to account for the political vicissitudes of the Bashkir case in a quite accurate manner. He also grasped the economic dimension of the Bashkir clashes with the Russian colonists and, to minor degree, with the Tatars, while he was completely disinterested in the cultural dimension of the Tataro-Bashkir feud. There is only one brief remark on the linguistic situation in the article.

¹ Pipes, 'First experiment', 311.

² He pointed, however, at the severe population losses reflected in the 1926 Soviet census.

What Pipes wanted to demonstrate was that in the Bashkir case national boundaries coincided with economic interests, thus revolutionary action 'took the form of a national, not a class struggle'. In Pipes account, the Bolsheviks accepted this as a tactical compromise, relying on 'superior organization' through the party and the chances to play out one minority against another in the long run¹.

E. H. Carr was the eminent capacity on Soviet history in Great Britain at the time. His direct response to the Pipes article, 'Some Notes on Soviet Bashkiria', appeared in the journal *Soviet Studies* in 1957. Carr accused Pipes of being 'defective' and 'one sided' in several respects. Not an expert on nationalities issues, Carr was interested in Soviet state building, too. He treated the Bolsheviks with more sympathy, though, because he openly admired Soviet achievements during the period of the first five-year plans. The structure of Carr's account followed roughly the same lines as Pipes', but differed in some details. As to the socio-demographic developments in the Southern Urals, Carr emphasised that not all Bashkirs were landowners, and that there were social cleavages among the Bashkirs themselves. He used the 1897 and 1926 census materials which showed strong variations in the numbers counted as 'Tatars' and 'Bashkirs' to argue that the ethnic boundaries between Tatars and Bashkirs were much more blurred than Pipes would have had it. In terms of the cultural dimensions of national identities, though, Carr was not going beyond an occasional reference to von Mende. Repeating Pipes' argument of the 'veritable ethnic mosaic' and the absence of urban Bashkir population, Carr rejected Pipes determinism and suggested that the Bolsheviks in 1917 were confronted with the choice to either create 'composite' or 'separate' national units².

For Carr, opting for the 'composite' Tatar-Bashkir variant in 1918 was a logical choice after the Bashkirs had allied themselves with Whites; he passed over in silence the short-lived efforts to build up a Red Bashkir movement. As to the further developments, Carr criticised Pipes for overstating the Bolshevik 'generosity' in the 1919 agreement and for being too partisan with the Bashkirs. In Carr's opinion, Pipes ignored the changing preference in Moscow's policies, from the pro-nationalities compromises of the Civil War to the economic necessities of the ensuing reconstruction period. In that framework, he argued, any Bashkir autonomy in the mountains, without larger cities or outlets, simply made no sense. Indeed, the 1922 extension of Bashkir territory and the industrialisation of the area during the five-year plans served Carr as further arguments to make his point. Moreover, Carr,

¹ Pipes, 'First Experiment', 319.

² Carr, 'Some notes', 220.

obviously at odds with Pipes characterisation of Soviet nationalities policies as Machiavellian and hypocritical, pointed at the political practice of other colonial empires in need of balancing the interests of settlers and natives¹.

For much of the developments between summer 1919 and May 1920, Carr followed Pipes' description. He took issue again, however, with Pipes' account of the 'Russification' and 'Tatarisation' of state and party organisations after the Bashkrevkom had gone underground. Without providing much evidence Carr claimed that simply no qualified Bashkirs were left to be employed by the Bolsheviks. He then pointed at the following policy of *korenizatsiia*, which created such cadres and opened up careers for native Bashkirs in the state and party apparatuses. Carr also re-appraised early Soviet language policies. On the one hand he understood it as affirmative action, too; as an 'encouragement of primitive languages and cultures'. On the other hand he shared Pipes overall argument of *divide et impera* at least in this field².

Carr's article had thus little to offer in terms of research on the Tataro-Bashkir feud that went beyond Pipes' publication. Using the same sources, if any, Carr hardly produced new historical evidence. He arrived at his alternative interpretations mostly through conclusions by analogy³. What Carr did offer indeed were outlines of an alternative framework. While Pipes was obsessed with Communism and the party, Carr tried to point at the links between the establishment of Soviet power and the preservation of empire, embedding the history of the early USSR in an international context. His points, however, were weakly argued and his ideas were taken up only by a new generation Western scholars in the 1980s and 1990s, when the Soviet empire began to crackle.

Neither Pipes nor Carr transcended the boundaries of a top-down approach. In both cases, they focused on decision-taking in the centre which they considered to be decisive in the long run. Both of them ignored that popular movements, among them national ones, defined political latitude during the revolutions and civil war⁴. And neither of them had any specific expertise or interest in Bashkir history. Only when Serge Zenkovsky published another take on the problem in 1958, readers were promised more of a focus on the Muslims and their national movements. The title of his piece,

¹ Carr, 'Some notes', 223.

² Carr, 'Some notes', 228.

³ Russian peasants could point at the Bashkirs' 'anti-Soviet involvement during their plundering of Bashkir property in 1920', Carr argued at one point with reference to similar occurrences in Kalmykia. Carr, 'Some notes', 225.

⁴ Pipes continued to ignore this up to his 1995 *Concise History of the Russian Revolution*. See Stephen Kotkin, '1991 and the Russian Revolution: Sources, Conceptual Categories, Analytical Frameworks', *Journal of Modern History* 70 (1998), 384–425.

‘The Tataro-Bashkir Feud of 1917–20’¹, related to inner-Muslim conflicts, and the paper derived from Zenkovsky’s larger book project on ‘Pan-Turkism and Islam in Russia’, published in 1960². In this book, Zenkovsky, an émigré historian and assistant professor at Stetson University, focused on the emergence of a joint Muslim movement in the wake of the 1905 revolution and traced in decomposition during the 1917 revolutions and the Civil war.

By and large, however, his ‘Tataro-Bashkir Feud’ did not reach far beyond of what had been written by Pipes and Carr before. Like Pipes, Zenkovsky focused on the three years between 1917 and 1920. In the introduction, the author noted the political and cultural patronising of the Volga Tatars over Russia’s Muslim population reports the dismissive reactions of the latter. He also explained the complexities of the Imperial administration of the Bashkir host in terms of ethnicity and social status. Remarkably, Zenkovsky’s main narrative started with the Kazan congress of July 1917. The May congress in Moscow, generally seen as the watershed by historians, is mentioned in passing. Zenkovsky then traced the competing and mutually exclusive claims by Tatars and Bashkirs from mid-1917 to 1920. Not unlike von Mende, but in sharp contrast to Pipes and Carr, Zenkovsky seemed to suggest that a fraternal struggle between the Muslims of the Volga-Ural prevented Tatars and Bashkirs alike from fending off Russian claims to their homeland, put forward by the colonists and the Soviets as their political representation.

Like in von Mendes account, the small Bashkir elites occurred as the perpetrators, due to their intransigent rejection of any joint autonomy projects. Validi’s distrust of the Tatars is described almost as pathologic. According to Zenkovsky, it would be ‘no exaggeration to state that the entire Bashkir national movement in the years 1917 to 1920 was the result of Validov’s [Validi’s] dynamic activities’³.

This position resembled earlier Tatar conspiracy theories, yet Zenkovsky did not use any indigenous sources other than Pipes, except for some works published by Validi during the 1940s in Turkey⁴. Referring to these publications, Zenkovsky suggested that Validi drafted larger plans for the autonomy of Turkistan as a reaction to the military situation in mid-1920 when the Poles advanced into Ukraine. Validi’s pre-revolutionary engagement in and for Turkestan, by contrast, was completely disregarded by Zenkovsky.

¹ Zenkovsky, ‘Tataro-Bashkir Feud’, 7–61.

² Serge A. Zenkovsky, *Pan-Turkism and Islam in Russia*, (Cambridge, Mass.: 1960).

³ Zenkovsky, ‘Tataro-Bashkir Feud’, 40.

⁴ A. Zeki Velidi-Togan, *Bugünkü TürkliveYakın Tarihi*[*Contemporary Turkestan and its Recent History*], (Istanbul: 1941–7).

Building exactly on the same canon of published Russian language material, much of the account covering the fate of the Bashkir autonomy throughout the Civil War was remarkably close to Pipes, to whom Zenkovsky, by the way, never referred in his footnotes. Readers might find Zenkovsky's more extensive analysis of the March 1919 Soviet-Bashkir agreement helpful; in accordance with his focus on the Tataro-Bashkir feud, his was also more detailed on the shelving of the Soviet Tataro-Bashkir project. Zenkovsky pointed out that not only the Idel'-Ural state, but also Validi's projects of a joint Bashkiri-Kazakh autonomy were discarded in Moscow in December 1919¹.

In general, Zenkovsky's article refrained from generalising conclusions beyond the assertion that 'the damage caused by Validi's autonomism was not limited to Bashkiria alone'. In Zenkovsky's phrasing, 'a new, previously inconceivable alienation between Bashkirs and Tatars, a decline in Tatar cultural influence in the Southern Urals, and a general undermining of Russia's Moslem solidarity and strength were the unintended by-product of the «autonomism»². Like Pipes, Zenkovsky described the Bolshevik policy as *divide et impera*. Where Pipes had underlined the Bolsheviks' skills and shrewdness, Zenkovsky emphasised Validi's 'unfunded political optimism and misunderstanding of the situation'³.

In the US and the UK of the 1960s and 1970s, historical research on the October revolution and the role of the nationalities in it lost much ground as Soviet studies focused on the development of Soviet Union after the civil war, producing the famous struggle between 'totalitarianists' and 'revisionists'. No further studies especially devoted to the Tataro-Bashkir feud emerged until the second half of the 1980s. During this period, research on Muslim nationalities gained some prominence in France, though. Here, specialists like the Russian émigré historian Alexandre Bennigsen joined young French specialist knowledgeable in Oriental language to study the nation building among the Soviet Union's Muslim peoples. In the early 1960s, Bennigsen published a voluminous study on Sultan-Galiev and his 'Red' Pan-Islamism (1964) in collaboration with Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay. Very sympathetic of Sultan-Galiev, the authors should dedicate him a second volume in the 1980s⁴. In their publications, Bennigsen and Quelquejay reproduced contemporary Muslim views on the Tataro-Bashkir feud. The Bashkir struggle for autonomy received an overall negative treatment insofar as it

¹ Zenkovsky, 'Tataro-Bashkir Feud', 50–1.

² Zenkovsky, 'Tataro-Bashkir Feud', 57.

³ Zenkovsky, 'Tataro-Bashkir Feud', 47.

⁴ Alexandre Bennigsen, Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay, *Sultan-Galiev. Le père de la révolution tiers-mondiste*, (Paris 1981).

threatened Sultan-Galiev's larger designs. The 1960 book had been advertised as the first volume in a series of studies on Muslim minorities. What followed, however, was a catalogue of the Muslim Press in late Imperial Russia and the revolutionary period (1964)¹. The announced series on Muslim minorities' nationalisms was discontinued, as Bennigsen increasingly regarded himself as an expert on contemporary Islam in the Soviet Union, stressing the latter's subversive potentials².

2.3. Post-Soviet Trends

When first clashes in Central Asia and the Caucasus betrayed the official Soviet narrative of the solution of the national question during perestroika, Western interest in the nationalities question revived. In France, H el ene Carr ere d'Encausse hit a nerve when she published another study to the early Soviet nationalities studies in 1987, *Le grand d efi* (The Great Challenge)³. The second part of the book reiterated some of the earlier observations by Pipes. Carr ere d'Encausse tended to emphasise the experimental character of early Soviet nationalities policies, though. In her view, the Bolsheviks simply adopted ideological convictions (including the right of nations for self-determination postulated by Lenin) to local circumstances on the one hand, or circumscribed them when they contradicted the ruling party's interests on the other.

Approximately at the same time the American historian Stephen J. Blank embarked on a project aiming to re-evaluate in how far the Narkomnats was a training ground for Stalin and helped him shape the characteristic traits of his later dictatorship. This was a classical approach in the wake of Pipes. Sifting through the contemporary newspapers and party documents, Blank came to reverse conclusions. He found the Narkomnats a 'weak and vulnerable organization'. Publishing his findings in the monograph *The Sorcerer as Apprentice: Stalin's Commissariat of Nationalities, 1917-1924*, Blank explained what he called Stalin's only failure in administrative assignment with his insight that 'any effort to invest Narkomnats with real federal power opened the way for decentralisation'. Real decentralisation would thus have diminished chances of Bolshevik survival during the civil war, if not the

¹ Alexandre Bennigsen, Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejey, *Les mouvements nationaux chez les musulmans de Russie, tome 1. Le sultangali evisme au Tatarstan*, (Paris: 1960); Alexandre Bennigsen, Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejey, *La presse et le mouvement national chez les musulmans de Russie avant 1920*, (Paris: 1964)

² Alexandre Bennigsen, Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejey, *Le Soufi et le commissaire: Les confr eries musulmanes en URSS*, (Paris: 1986); Alexandre Bennigsen, S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslims of the Soviet Union. A Guide*, (London: 1986).

³ H el ene Carr ere d'Encausse, *Le grand d efi. Bolcheviks et Nations, 1917-30*, (Paris: 1987).

prospects of Stalin's aspiration for the dictatorship¹. Among other cases Blank used the Bashkir autonomy to prove his points that Narkomnats had been indeed the training ground for Stalin to hone his skills in playing out friends and foe against one another².

Among the obvious shortcoming of this kind of Western literature was that it continued to research the early Soviet nationalities policies exclusively in a top-down approach. As to the nationalities as a subject in their own right, even sympathising accounts continued to rely on the same, limited scope sources. A good example would be Michael Rywkin's 1993 article on 'The autonomy of the Bashkirs'. Without providing further evidence, Rywkin denied that the 'Bashkir experiment' had any impact on later nationalities policies. His article amounted to a short history of events, based almost exclusively on Murtazin's *Bashkiriia and bashkirskie voiska*. At least it was the first English language journal article which provided a comprehensive map of 'Small Bashkiria'³.

Western scholarship thus continued to depend on Russian language sources. This was obviously also the reason why Validi's memoirs were largely ignored. The situation changed only with the publication of Russian translations; 1994 in Ufa and 1997 in Moscow. Other important Bashkir documents from the period between 1917 and 1920 were published by the Russian Academy's Institute for Ethnology in the anthology *Etnopoliticheskaia mozaika* in 1992. Beyond that, the opening of the archives in the Russian Federation created new opportunities for cohort of younger Western historians eager to rewrite some of the nationalities' histories from a local rather than a central perspective⁴. While only a minority among them used indigenous sources broadly⁵, a revision of the Muslim state and nation build-

¹ Stephen J. Blank, *The Sorcerer as Apprentice: Stalin's Commissariat of Nationalities, 1917-1924*, (Westport, Conn.: 1994), 223-4.

² This became also evident in a journal article he had published a decade earlier. Stephen Blank, 'The Struggle for Soviet Bashkiria, 1917-1923', *Nationalities Papers* 11 (1983), 1-26.

³ Michael Rywkin, 'The autonomy of the Bashkirs', *Central Asian Survey* 12 (1993), 47-57. Rywkin was then the president of the Association for the Study of Nationalities.

⁴ Robert Geraci, *Window to the East*; Christian Noack, *Muslimischer Nationalismus*; Charles Steinwedel, *Invisible threads of Empire: State, Religion, and Ethnicity in Tsarist Bashkiria, 1773-1917*, Ph.D. dissertation (Columbia: 1999).

⁵ In the United States, for example, Adeb Khalid, *Jadidism in Tsarist Central Asia*, Ph.D. dissertation (Madison: 1993); Allen J. Frank, *Islamic Regional Identity in Imperial Russia: Tatar and Bashkir historiography in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries*, Ph.D. Dissertation (Bloomington: 1994) or Paul W. Werth, *At the Margins of Orthodoxy. Mission, Governance, and Confessional Politics in Russia's Volga-Kama region, 1827-1905*, (Ithaca: 2002). In Germany, Michael Kemper, *Sufis und Gelehrte in Tatarien und Baschkirien. Der Islamische Diskurs unter russischer Herrschaft, 1789-1889*, (Berlin: 1998); in France Xavier Le Tonnellec, *Histoire des identités en Russie musulmane: la République autonome du Bachkortostan (1969-2003)*, Paris, Ph.D. dissertation (Paris: 2006).

ing processes and a rehabilitation of the ‘provincial’ perspective were well under way in the second half of the 1990s.

As far as Tataro-Bashkir relations were concerned, these historians dealt either with the pre-revolutionary period or devoted themselves to the study of ‘affirmative action’ during the 1920s¹. It was not until 1995 that a substantial study of the Bashkir autonomy was accomplished in the West again. Daniel Schafer’s Ph.D. dissertation on ‘Building Nations and Building States’, remained unpublished however². Only a summary under the title ‘Local Politics and the Birth of the Republic of Bashkortostan, 1919–20’, appeared in the volume *A State of Nations. Empire and Nation Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin* edited by Ronald Suny and Terry Martin in 2001.

In this chapter, Schafer concentrates on the 16 months of Bashkir autonomy under Bolshevik tutelage in 1919–20. In contrast to Pipes, Schafer set out to demonstrate that the Bolsheviks had no master plan for dealing with nationalist groups during this crucial phase of the civil war. Using the same body of published sources like his predecessors and new material found in the Russian and Bashkir state archives, Schafer analysed the Bolshevik-Bashkir collaboration as an example of the relationship between centralised decision making on nationality affairs on the one hand, and the ‘messy world of local political life in the provinces, with its opportunistic alliances and awkward coalitions, its sudden shifts in political fortunes and possibilities’ on the other³.

Schafer emphasised that for Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin the need to forge partnerships was situational, and that the option for the Bashkirs was probably unintentionally a decision for or against competing ideas of territorial autonomy. In fact, Schafer had to acknowledge that the opening of the archives did not help to provide an answer to the crucial question why Lenin and Stalin personally had taken this decision. Beyond the obvious military and strategic reasons, Schafer guessed that the leaders were firstly unaware of the depth of the inner-Muslim cleavages that should render an integration of the Bashkir autonomy in a larger Tatar-Bashkir republic impossible. At the same, he did not rule out that the split of the Muslim movement in the Volga-Urals was intended by Lenin and Stalin, who might simply have used the occasion Validi had offered them. Hence he took issue with the rather

¹ Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire. Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939*, (Ithaca: 2001), based on a 1996 University of Chicago dissertation.

² Daniel E. Schafer, *Building Nations and Building States: the Tatar-Bashkir Question in Revolutionary Russia, 1917–1920*, Ph.D. Dissertation at the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor: 1995).

³ Daniel E. Schafer, ‘Local Politics and the Birth of the Republic of Bashkortostan, 1919–20’, in Ronald G. Suny and Terry Martin (eds) *A State of Nations. Empire and Nation Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, (Oxford: 2001), 165–190, quote 166.

uncritical acceptance of the Tatar jadids' thesis about the 'artificiality' of Validi's construction of Bashkir identity, which most of the Cold War scholars had 'inherited' through their reading of the German Ostforscher von Mende. Schafer, on contrary, suggested that the 'declarations of a Tatar-Bashkir republic and later of a separate Bashkir republic did indeed represent policy of *divide et impera* but that the enemy that Lenin and Stalin sought to divide was not a Turkic nation-in-formation (be it Muslim, Turko-Tatar, or Tatar-Bashkir) but the anti-Bolshevik movement as a whole'¹.

This brought him in line with contemporary scholars of the early Soviet nationalities policies. They emphasised Lenin's and Stalin's combination of a firm commitment to the development of nations with a quest for a territorialisation. Realising this in the midst of the civil war could not but require a good deal of improvisation, which involved taking major political risks for everyone involved. Recognizing Bashkir autonomy, 'a step that had opponents at every level of party and government, from the smallest Russian township in the Urals all the way up to the Politburo – not to mention among important cadres of Tatar communists' – meant such a risk².

On the basis of new archival material, much of the second part of Schafer's chapter examined meticulously the ups and downs in Bashkir-Soviet collaboration. According to Schafer, it finally floundered due to five factors: (1) fundamental differences between Lenin and Stalin and on the one hand, and Validi and his followers on the other, over what 'autonomy' actually meant, (2) the improvised character of Soviet nationality policy during the civil war; (3) Moscow's dependence on obstructing local leaders to implement its policies; (4) conflicts resulting from the fact that the Bolsheviks had other priorities besides national autonomy, like military discipline and grain requisitions; (5) finally the escalation of anarchy and violence during the civil war.

Schafer's account of the Bashkir autonomy is thus the most balanced written by a Western scholar so far, but it still had little to say about the Bashkir perspectives or the emergence and deepening of an intellectual and political cleavage between the Tatars and Bashkirs in the second decade of the 20th century. Was it the precondition or the result of early Soviet nationalities policies?

Conclusion

For seven decades Western scholarship on the 'Tataro-Bashkir Feud' has been characterised by a high degree of epistemological consistence. Depend-

¹ Schafer, 'Local Politics', 168–70, quote 171.

² Schafer, 'Local Politics', 181–2,

ing largely on a narrow body of Russian language sources, Western scholars tended to review the problem in the light of Bolshevik nationalities policies and Soviet state building. Western historians usually approached the problem of the Bashkir autonomy in a top-down perspective, investing more effort into the examination of the better documented decision taking in the centre or the problems the implementation of these policies encountered on the spot. Basing themselves on retrospective accounts by leading Bashkir communists, they reconstructed the ups and downs in the relations between the Bashrevkom and the Bolsheviks in Moscow or the local Soviets with reasonable accuracy. As to the Bashkir perspective, they were as a rule sympathetic, but not too well informed.

It deserves mentioning, however, that Western scholars from the beginning had a keen eye for demographic changes, which made them perceptive for the fluency of identity concepts and the blurred character of ethnic boundaries among the contemporary Muslim population of the Volga-Urals. Western scholars were also remarkably aware of the Bashkirs' specific socio-political and legal situation under the old regime, which facilitated the development of a corporate identity on the basis of social factors in addition to cultural distinction¹.

In the rare case that Western scholars disposed of sufficient language skills to consult indigenous sources, they tended to adopt a contemporary 'Tatar' perspective. In other words, they 'culturalised' conflicts between Tatars and Bashkirs, pointing for example at the fact that Bashkir was developed as a literary language only under Soviet tutelage.

It would thus be an oversimplification to reduce Western scholarship to just being the Cold War anti-Soviet *alter ego* of the partisan party historiography produced in the Soviet Union. This is not to deny its politicisation. The enthusiastic reception of the Russian translations of Pipes, Carr, Werth and other Western scholars during the post-Soviet rebuilding of nations followed

¹ It should be kept in mind here that under Soviet conditions the established historical narratives of national development could not be challenged in terms of political. They could be supplanted and amended however, in the fields of social history and ethnography. Ethno-demography in particular became a battleground for Tatar and Bashkir scholars, accusing each other of exaggerating the size of either population by arbitrarily 'claiming' residents of mixed areas for one or the other nation. Z. M. Davletshina, *Tatarskoe naselenie Bashkortostana: Etnodemograficheskoe issledovanie*, (Ufa: 2001); D. M. Iskhakov: 'Dinamika chislennosti i osobennosti razmeshcheniia tatar v Volgo-Uralskom regione v XVI – nachale XX vv', in: *Materialy po istorii tatarskogo naroda*, (Kazan: 1995), 257–297; B. Kh. Iuldashbaev, *Bashkiry i Bashkortostan XX v. Etnostatistika*, (Ufa: 1995); M. V. Murzabulatov (ed.), *Bashkiriia i bashkiry v zerkale statistiki*, (Ufa: 1995); M. M. Kul'sharipov: 'Tragicheskaiia demografiia', in: *Aktual'nye problemy istorii i etnografii Bashkortostana: Proshloe i sovremennost'*, (Ufa: 1993). For a more balanced treatment: M. I. Rodnov, 'Chislennost' i sostav tiurksokogo krest'ianstva Ufimskoi gubernii v nachale XX veka', *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie* (1996, 6), 121–131.

indeed the logic of a total negation of ‘Soviet truth’ that rendered the enemy of the enemy a friend. An obvious case is the conversion of Zaki Validi from nationalist villain to national hero in Bashkortostan during the 1990s¹. The preoccupation with the re-nationalisation of historiography, usually by well established historians in the national republics, lead in 1990s to the ironic situation that important bodies of sources remained either untapped or were edited by scholars outside the national republics². This is particularly true for material in Oriental languages, like the contemporary press, which was used only by a minority of scholars³.

When a new generation of young Western scholars enter the field in the 1990s, they found ideal conditions to leave the limitations of earlier Western historiography behind them: Most of the archival material had been declassified, personal encounters and exchange with colleagues in Russia and the national republics became much easier. Due to the demise of the Soviet state, however, much of the ‘new’ Western and Russian historiography focused on the imperial past and created new paradigms and forums, among them the journal *Ab imperio* in Kazan.

Therefore some crucial aspects of the Tataro-Bashkir feud still await their thorough examination by historians, Western or indigenous. I think that, firstly, a review of Tatar-Bashkir relations in the *longue durée*, covering the second half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries and integrating social and cultural aspects of identity formation is overdue⁴. A systematic

¹ Kulsharipov’s post-Soviet national reinterpretation of the period between 1917 and 1920 is a good example. He frequently quotes Pipes and Carr to support his points. M. M. Kulsharipov, *Bashkirkoe natsional’noe dvizhenie, 1917–1921 gg.*, (Ufa: 2000). On the Validi hagiography in Bashkortostan see also Marsil Farkhshatov, Christian Noack, ‘Research Trends in Studies on the History of Islam and Muslim Peoples (Bashkirs, Volga and Siberian Tatars), Conducted in European Russia and Siberia ca. 1985–2000’, in Stéphane A. Dudoignon, Hisao Komatsu (eds), *Research Trends in Modern Central Eurasian Studies (18th – 20th Centuries). A Selective and Critical Bibliography of Works Published between 1985 and 2000*, Part 1. (Tokyo: 2003) 1–47.

² For example the above mentioned volumes of *Empoliticheskaiia mozaika* published in Moscow.

³ Ironically, historians in Kazan and Ufa were initially also reluctant to tap sources in Tatar and Bashkir, like the contemporary Muslim press. In Kazan, for example Diliara Usmanova and Aidar Khabutdinov were the first to base their revision of some of the clichés in established Tatar national historiography on close reading of newspapers. See D. Usmanova, *Voprosy natsional’no-gosudarstvennogo samoopredeleniia*; A. Khabutdinov, *Tatarskoe obshchestvenno-politicheskoe dvizhenie v dosovetskii period, 1900–1918*, 2 vols. (Kazan: 1997); idem, *Organy natsional’noi avtonomii tiurko-tatar musul’man vnutrennei Rossii i Sibiri v 1917–1918 gg.* (Vologda: 2001). The editors of the recent *Istoriia Tatar* chose to print three parallel accounts of 1917–18 by I. Tagirov, which still reflects the approach of party historiography, and by Usmanova and Khabutdinov. *Istoriia Tatar, t. VII: Tatars I Tatarstan v XX – nachale XX v.* (Kazan: 2013), 199–248.

⁴ Pioneering work in this respect has been published by Paul W. Werth and Allen J. Frank. See for example the latter’s *Muslim Religious Institutions in Imperial Russia. The Islamic World of*

review of contemporary Muslim publications including periodicals and meticulous research on the interaction in village communities may provide new insights into the complex interplay of different levels of identity. It is high time to challenge both *jadid* and Soviet oversimplifications passed down through historical literature.

Secondly, a critical biography of Zaki Validi remains still to be written. I understand that such research is conducted in Bashkortostan at present. It would certainly help to deconstruct some of the myths that either Validi deliberately created himself, or that were spread by his Tatar and later Soviet adversaries. The traces of such myths in later historiography have been discussed above. One could think of the seemingly deliberate break-up of the Muslim movement in 1917–18. A sober analysis of documents will show, on the contrary, that either side kept loopholes open until at least 1919.

Thirdly, I think that it is high time to re-appreciate Validi's vision of a confederation of Bashkirs, Kazakhs and Turkestanis. The consequence with which Validi engaged himself for Turkestan and the Steppe before and after the revolution have stubbornly been overlooked by historians although he constantly reminded the readers of his memoirs of such distortions in Soviet and Western literature. To be sure, such a re-appreciation would have to steer clear of the often used stereotypes of pan-Islamism and pan-Turkism. While Validi declared himself a pan-Turkist for several reasons in his Turkish exile, his plans for a 'confederation of steppes' was probably no less informed by contemporary Russian discourses on the nature of the Steppe belt and its inhabitants. These discourses were reflected, for example, in the Imperial practice of administering the steppes and the Bashkir host jointly by a Governor-general in Orenburg, or the Bolsheviks' decision to create a Kazakh ASSR as an autonomy within the RSFSR (and thus besides the Tatar and Bashkir ones), before it was upgraded to the Status of a Union republic in 1936¹.

Аннотация: В статье К. Ноака «Пересмотр татаро-башкирских разногласий: Заки Валиди и Башкирская автономия в западной историографии» рассматривается история татаро-башкирского конфликта по вопросу создания мусульманской территориальной автономии в Урало-Поволжском регионе в 1917–1920 гг. Автор особое внимание уделяет роли Башкирской автономии на раннем этапе национальной политики Советов. На этом фоне анализируются основные тенденции развития западной историографии по

Novouzensk District and the Kazakh Inner Horde, 1780–1910, (Leiden: 2001). I have barely scratched the surface in my own dissertation; see Noack, *Muslimischer Nationalismus*, Chapters 10.3. and 11.3.

¹See Svetlana Gorshenina, *Asie centrale: L'invention des frontières et l'héritage russosoviétique*. (Paris: 2012), chapter 3.

этой тематике с 1930-х по 2000-е гг. и рассматриваются проявляющиеся в ней познавательные или эпистемологические традиции у немецких, английских, американских и французских исследователей. На повестку дня поставлен также вопрос о том, насколько вовлечение с 1990-х гг. в научный оборот новых источников подтвердило или опровергло бытующие на Западе суждения о татаро-башкирском конфликте 1917–1920 гг. Наконец, автор попытался наметить возможные направления в изучении проблемы в будущем.

Abstract: The chapter provides firstly an overview over the history of the Tataro-Bashkir conflict over the creation of Muslim territorial autonomies in the Volga-Urals between 1917 and 1920 and the role of the Bashkir autonomy in early Soviet nationalities policies. Against this backdrop traces the Western historiography on the subject between the 1930s and 2000 and examines the emerging epistemological tradition in German, British, US and French scholarship. Finally, it addresses the question whether the circulation of new archival materials in the 1990s challenged the hitherto established historical judgements in the West and identifies possible directions of further research.

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