

**ISLAM and COMMUNISM**  
by Stephen Suleyman Schwartz  
2009



**Muhammad Ibn 'Abd El-Krim El-Khattabi, leader of the Rif Berbers**



# **ISLAM AND COMMUNISM**

## **IN THE 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY**

### **An Historical Survey**

**by Stephen Suleyman Schwartz**



**Center for Islamic Pluralism**

**Washington \* London \* Köln \* Sarajevo**

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Published in the USA in 2009  
by the Center for Islamic Pluralism  
1718 M Street NW #260  
Washington, DC 20036 USA  
and  
BM 2394, London, WC1N 3XX

First English edition June 2009

An abbreviated version of this paper was originally published in German as  
"Kommunismus und Islam im 20. Jahrhundert:  
Ein Historischer Überblick,"  
in *Jahrbuch für Historische Kommunismus-Forschung* 2009, Aufbau, Berlin

Design: Asim Mesih

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ISBN 978-0-9558779-3-3

**Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data.**

A catalogue record for this book is pending with the Library of Congress

**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data.**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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Cover photograph:

*Muhammad Ibn 'Abd El-Krim El-Khattabi, leader of the Rif Berbers*

# Islam and Communism in the 20th Century

## An Historical Summary

**The present study is mainly concerned with relations between international Communism and the Islamic *umma*, or global community, rather than Moscow's policies toward Soviet Muslims. The former topic has been neglected by historians and experts, while the latter has been treated in considerable detail.**

As in Christianity and Judaism, communistic, millenarian, radical-political, and revolutionary socialist movements have a notable presence in the history of Islam. Typical examples of each phenomenon may be cited. The legacy of pre-Islamic Iranian religious communism – the movement known as *Mazdakism*, a variant of Manichæism which briefly flourished in the 6th century C.E. – is reflected in aspects of Iranian Shi'ism. Mazdakism adopted social collectivism and principles of public welfare.

Radical Sufi or Islamic spiritual movements with tendencies toward millennialist, utopian, antinomian, and other forms of anti-authoritarian dissidence included Turkish Alevism, the Kizilbash variant of Shi'ism, and Hamzeviyya in the Balkans. Their doctrines stirred peasants, and occasionally, city dwellers, to rebellion against the Muslim authorities, and memory of their traditions of protest is often easily found in the Islamic world.<sup>1</sup> In addition, a body of scholarship on Sufism in general, produced by Christian, Jewish, and Muslim scholars, has perceived in it a social protest movement, from its beginnings in Islam.

For example, the outstanding Sufi Husayn bin Mansur Hallaj (858-922) was executed in Baghdad allegedly for heresy; he has traditionally been portrayed as having faced persecution for declaring, "*Ana ul-haqq*", or, "I am truth as a manifestation of God." But the definitive Western

scholarly examination of Hallaj, by the French scholar Louis Massignon,<sup>2</sup> identifies the Sufi with the threat of an Islamic social revolution. In Massignon's account, which may be skewed by the French scholar's own anti-Jewish prejudice, the intoxicated metaphysics involved in Hallaj's purported heresy fades into the background in a Muslim Baghdad in which public corruption was ubiquitous and supposedly complicated by the role of Jewish bankers. Some Sufis claim Hallaj was killed for disclosing state secrets to the people. One of the disciples of Hallaj, Ahmad Al-Amuli, told the court official Hamid bin Abbas that the alleged transgressions in religion of Hallaj were nothing compared with the acts of theft and cruelty committed by the rulers; Al-Amuli was then tortured, but, like his mentor, refused to submit.

The present-day critic of radical Islam Khalid Durán viewed Hallaj as a saint of the poor, and one Sufi source describes him as the patron of outlaws.<sup>3</sup> Some have taken him as a model of subversive and libertarian<sup>4</sup> conduct. Hallaj was, however, also a topic of verses by no less than Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini who wrote, "I forget my own existence and proclaim, 'I am the truth,' And like Mansur Hallaj I volunteer myself for hanging." Khomeini's identification with Hallaj embodies the revolutionary aspect of the dour Iranian cleric's personality, but also might indicate Khomeini's view of himself as a martyr to oppression.<sup>5</sup>



Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini

### Islamic Modernism and Revolution

Later prominent expressions of radical-political reformism in Islam include the activities of 19th century “Salafis” such as Jamalal’din Al-Afghani (1838-97), a Muslim ideological adventurer comparable in many respects to Mikhail Bakunin (although Bakunin is a problematical figure in this context, for his Pan-Slavism and inspiration of an anti-Muslim spirit in the Balkans in the 1870s).<sup>6</sup> A more developed example of Islamic reformism was found in the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP or *Itihaclar*), the leading force in the internal political transformation that occurred at the end of the Ottoman imperial state in the early 20th century.<sup>7</sup> The CUP included members of Turkish Freemason lodges whose organization was promoted by the Western powers, a historical development which left an unfortunate legacy of anti-Masonic “conspiracy theory” in Turkish and wider, global Islamic consciousness. In the aftermath of the failed 1905 revolution in Russia, Leon Trotsky and others argued that the 1906 constitutionalist movement in Persia and the 1908 Young Turk revolution led by the CUP both reflected the impact of the Russian upheaval on the tsarist empire’s eastern neighbors.

The Bolsheviks had become involved in the Persian constitutional revolution, with the Georgian-born activist Grigory “Sergo” Ordzhonikidze (1886-1937) crossing the Russo-Persian border to assist Iranian revolutionaries in organizing armed detachments.<sup>8</sup> Khrastyu Rakovski (1873-1941), the Bulgarian-born revolutionary socialist active in several countries, and a long-time associate of Trotsky, wrote on the occasion of the Young Turk Revolution:

“After Russia and Persia, Turkey now enters the revolutionary movement”<sup>9</sup>. The trope of a chain of revolutions beginning in Russia in 1905, continuing in Persia and Turkey, and resulting in the Chinese upheaval of 1911 was also the subject of theoretical meditations by Vladimir I. Lenin, outlining the opening of the anti-imperialist movement in the colonial nations as an adjunct to the socialist labor movement in the developed countries. Lenin wrote in 1908, in a “quite casual”

manner according to the 1930s Trotskyist author C.L.R. James:

“The revolutionary movement in the states of Europe and Asia has manifested itself so formidably of late that we can discern quite clearly the outlines of a new and incomparable higher stage in the international struggle of the proletariat... The class-conscious workers of Europe now have Asiatic comrades and their number will grow by leaps and bounds.”<sup>10</sup>



Vladimir Ilyich Lenin

Lenin summed up his view on this issue in 1917, when he wrote, on Bolshevik foreign policy:

“The Russian revolution, which as early as 1905 led to revolutions in Turkey, Persia and China, would have placed the German and British imperialists in a very difficult position if it had begun to establish a truly revolutionary alliance of the workers and peasants of the colonies and semi-colonies against the despots, against the khans, for expulsion of the Germans from Turkey, the British from Turkey, Persia, India, Egypt, etc.”<sup>11</sup>

The Turkish convulsion brought trade union organizations to the Ottoman territory, most remarkably under the leadership of Sephardic Jewish workers, as in the major European Ottoman port of Selanik, which had a large Jewish majority.

A separate and special instance of Sufi libertarianism, uniquely combined with *da'wa* or missionization of non-Muslims, support for the Ottoman state, Islamic heterodoxy, and progressive political attitudes is offered by the history of the Bektashi Sufi order. Bektashis formed the chaplain corps of the Ottoman military units known as *Yeniçeri* (Janissaries) or “new men,” originally





Yeniçeriler (Janissaries): The term in Turkish, *yeniçeri* means new troops, indicating what they were originally, an alternative to the regular army.

made up of Christian converts to Islam. The Bektashi order has been centered in Albania since the suppression of Sufism by Mustafa Kemal, founder of the Turkish Republic, in 1925; it comprises the only indigenous Shia Muslim community in Europe. Bektashism has played a major role in the Albanian national movement, as well as advocating women's equality and popular education. Its followers account for as much as a quarter of all Albanians, or two million people, and although shunned by some, but not all Sunnis for their nonconformism, the Bektashis are among the best-organized and most influential Sufi orders.<sup>12</sup>

The first major example of "Islamic socialism" appeared during the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, parallel with the first world war, in the Dutch East Indies, which later became Indonesia. The Indies Social Democratic Association (*Indische Sociaal-Democratische*



Hendrik Sneevliet, alias Maring

*Vereeniging* or ISDV) was created by Dutch radical socialists living in the colonial territories, the most notable being Hendrik Sneevliet, alias Maring (1883-1942). Sneevliet became a leader of the Third (Communist) International (CI), representing the CI in China, and then emerged as a left-oppositionist aligned with but independent of the Trotskyist movement in the 1930s. He is considered a national hero in the Netherlands for his involvement with the February 1941 strike

against the German occupiers of the country, in protest against anti-Jewish measures; a street and metro station in Amsterdam are now named for him. The strike, which took place during the Hitler-Stalin pact, was the first important solidarity action with the persecuted Jews to take place in Western Europe. It put forward the slogan, "Against National Socialism and National Bolshevism – International Class Struggle!" In April 1942 Sneevliet and other leaders of a small and independent anti-Stalinist entity called De Deerde Front (The Third Marx-Lenin-Luxemburg Front) were arrested and executed by the German occupation authorities in Holland.<sup>13</sup>

The Indonesian aspect of the revolutionary movement in the Dutch colony is best related by Tan Malaka (1894-1949), who followed Sneevliet into the Comintern. Indonesians were the earliest substantial group of Muslims outside Soviet-controlled territory (i.e. the Caucasus and Central Asia), and neighboring Turkey and Iran, to associate themselves with Moscow. Tan Malaka had cooperated with a Muslim nationalist movement counting millions of members, Sarekat Islam (SI or Islamic Union). A revolutionary faction, Red Sarekat Islam, was born from the ranks of SI in the Javanese city of Semarang. In a memoir, Tan Malaka eloquently recalled his view of the intersection of Islam and Communism, and the necessity of an alliance between Pan-Islamists and Communists: "When I stand before God, then I am a Muslim, but when I stand before men, then I am no Muslim, for God has said there are many Satans among men."<sup>14</sup> Thus, Islam could resolve spiritual issues but could not assure justice in the face of exploitation and other evils in human society. Examination of the Indonesian example puts in question the general typology of Muslim radical religiosity as "Islamist." The national movement in what would become Indonesia was Islamic but did not favor religious purification or an Islamic state.

### Marxist Attitudes Toward Muslims

The CI was the first of the revolutionary internationals to make a serious approach to the

Muslim *umma*; both the International Working Men's Association of Marx and the Socialist International that succeeded it were either “white racist”, in present-day terminology, or Western-imperialist in their main attitudes – their support for Irish revolutionary claims being the only notable exception. Historians of Bolshevism typically date the new strategy to the Soviet-sponsored 1920 Congress of Peoples of the East, held in Baku, but ascribe it to Russian ambitions in the East. In a speech at the 1920 Congress, Karl Radek, the former comrade of Rosa Luxemburg in the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (SDKPiL) and confidant of Lenin, charged that “the British capitalists resolved to break [Ottoman] Turkey into pieces as soon as possible... British capital condemned Turkey to death”, Radek declared, with the aim of better uniting the British colonial possessions in Africa and India.<sup>15</sup>

Marxist sympathy for the Ottomans and their successors against the British did not, however, begin with the CI. Karl Marx himself collaborated with the British politician David Urquhart (1805-77), defender of the Ottoman order in the Balkans (after participating in the Greek independence movement) and scourge of pro-Russian interests in Britain. Marx and Urquhart were united in accusing Lord Palmerston of selling out to Moscow.<sup>16</sup>

In terms of extensive practical encounters, prior to 1917 the main experience of the revolutionary Marxist movement with Muslims

came about in the Balkans, a theatre of war between Austria-Hungary and Russia. Luxemburg and the Austrian Marxists condemned Slavic demands for the breakup of the existing empires into small, ethnically-defined states, arguing instead for conversion of the multiethnic and multireligious Habsburg and Ottoman domains into socialist federations. Criticism of tsarist complicity in assaulting the Ottoman dominions and murdering local Muslims *en masse* – particularly the Turks and Albanians slaughtered by the Serbs in the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, which resulted in the Serb conquest of Kosova and other components of a disintegrating “Turkey in Europe” – was also forthcoming from “proto-Bolsheviks” such as Trotsky, who served as a war correspondent in the Balkan conflict.<sup>17</sup>

Similar condemnation of Slav atrocities against the Balkan Muslims and Albanians (the latter community including a significant Christian population) was put forward by the Serbian Social Democratic Party (SSDP), most of whose members would be absorbed into the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ) when it was founded in 1919. One of the first public figures to sound the alarm about the brutality of the Serb invasion of Kosova in 1912-13 was a leader of the SSDP, Dimitrije Tucović (1881-1914).<sup>18</sup>

Trotsky wrote on Serb atrocities in Kosova for the liberal Russian dailies *Kievskaya Mysl'* (Kiev Thought), *Dyen'* (The Day), and *Luch* (Ray). It is probable that Tucović, who was his friend and comrade, was the source of one of Trotsky's most



Karl Radek, Bolshevik functionary (1885-1939)



Above: the partition of European Turkey 1908-13



Historical Prizren, center of Ottoman Kosova



shocking dispatches. In “Behind the Curtain’s Edge”, published by *Kievskaya Mysl’*, Trotsky placed in quotes a first-hand account of Serbian military atrocities:

“‘The horrors actually began as soon as we crossed the old frontier... The sun had set, it was starting to get dark. But the darker the sky became, the more brightly the fearful illumination of the fires stood out against it. Burning was going on all around us. Entire Albanian villages had been turned into pillars of fire – far and near, right up to the railway line... Dwellings, possessions accumulated by fathers, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers, were going up in flames. In all its monotony this picture was repeated the whole way to Skopje.’”

The remainder of this long account consisted of an extraordinary series of murders, tortures, massacres, and thefts committed by Serbian soldiers and officers. Balkan Muslims and Albanians were not the only victims; Bulgarians and Sephardic Jews were also despoiled by the Serb forces. The authoritative historian of the once-distinguished Sephardic community of Manastir (Bitola) in Macedonia, Mark Cohen, describes Serbian atrocities as an incentive for early immigration of the Manastir Sephardim to the U.S.<sup>19</sup>

Tsarist Russian encouragement to Serbian aggression was a preoccupation of many commentators, and radical criticism of the Russian role was extremely sharp. Trotsky lashed at examples of “ethnic cleansing” – a term that had just then been coined by the Serbs<sup>20</sup> – and the complicity in it of Russian tsarist and democratic nationalist politicians including the liberal Pavel Milyukov, in two extraordinary texts, published in *Dyen’* in January 1913: “An Extraparliamentary Question to Mr. P. Milyukov”, and “Results of the ‘Question About the Balkans’ .”

In the former, Trotsky wrote:

“Mr. Deputy! ...You have frequently, both in the columns of the press and at the tribune of the Duma, assured the Balkan allies... of the unaltered sympathies of so-called Russian

society for their campaign of ‘liberation.’ Recently, during the period of the armistice, you made a political journey to the Balkans... Did you not hear during your travels... about the monstrous acts of brutality that were committed by the triumphant soldiery of the allies all along their line of march, not only on unarmed Turkish soldiers, wounded or taken prisoner, but also on the peaceful Muslim inhabitants, on old men and women, on defenseless children? ...Did not the facts, undeniable and irrefutable, force you to come to the conclusion that the Bulgars in Macedonia, the Serbs in Old Serbia [Kosova], in their national endeavor to correct data in the ethnographical statistics that are not quite favorable to them, are engaged quite simply in systematic extermination of the Muslim population? ...Is it not clear to you that the silent connivance of the ‘leading’ Russian parties and their press... makes it much easier for the (Bulgarians and Serbs) to engage in their Cain’s work of further massacres of the people of the Crescent in the interests of the ‘culture’ of the Cross?”<sup>21</sup>

In the succeeding text, “Results of the ‘Question About the Balkans’”, Trotsky’s polemic reached an intensity rare even for him. Addressing himself



Leon Trotsky (1879-1940), Russian revolutionary, was a war correspondent for the Kiev newspaper *Kievskaya Mysl’* in the Balkans and reported on the atrocities committed against the Albanians and Turks of Macedonia and Kosova during the Serb invasion of 1912

again to Milyukov, he wrote:

“Since the ‘leading’ newspapers of Russia... either hushed up or denied the exposures published in the democratic press, a certain number of murdered Albanian babies must be put down, Mr. Deputy, to your Slavophile account. Get your senior doorman to look for them in your editorial office, Mr. Milyukov!”

He continued:

“Indignant protest against unbridled behavior by men armed with machine guns, rifles, and bayonets was required for our own moral self-defense. An individual, a group, a party, or a class that is capable of ‘objectively’ picking its nose while it watches men drunk with blood, and incited from above, massacring defenseless people is condemned by history to rot and become worm-eaten while it is still alive.”<sup>22</sup>

Dimitrije Tucović (1881-1914)



The SSDP leader Dimitrije Tucović had volunteered for service in the Serbian army, and had marched in its ranks into Kosova, on the belief that socialists needed to be with their people wherever they were. He had been won to

socialism as a middle-school student, a characteristic East European phenomenon of the time, and his internationalist beliefs were sincere and profound. Almost immediately, he began writing about the horrific character of the Serbian conquest of Kosova in the Belgrade socialist newspaper *Radničke Novine* (Workers’ Journal). His statements were extraordinary for their candor and their author’s authentic solidarity with the Albanians.

When Prishtina, the capital of Kosova, was occupied by the Serbs, *Radničke Novine* printed the following as a letter from a soldier:

“My dear friend, I have no time to write to you at length, but I can tell you that appalling things are going on here. I am terrified by them, and constantly ask myself how men can be so barbarous as to commit such cruelties. It is horrible. I dare not (even if I had time, which I have not) tell you more, but I may say that Luma [an Albanian region along the river of the

same name], no longer exists. There is nothing but corpses, dust, ashes. There are villages of 100, 150, 200 houses, where there is no longer a single man, literally not one. We collect them in bodies of forty to fifty, and then we pierce them with our bayonets to the last man. Pillage is going on everywhere. The officers told the soldiers to go to Prizren and sell the things they had stolen.” The *Radničke Novine* editor added, “Our friend tells us of things even more appalling than this, but they are so horrible and so heartrending that we prefer not to publish them.”

In later articles published by *Radničke Novine*, summarizing the Balkan Wars, the acquisition of Kosova, and particularly the suppression of the Albanians, Tucović wrote among other things:

“It is at the very least now necessary to look truth in the face and, setting aside all prejudices, recognize that the struggle that the Albanian people are today conducting is a natural, inevitable historical struggle for a different political life from the one they had under Turkey, and different from the one imposed on them by their ruthless neighbors, Serbia, Greece, and Montenegro. [Emphasis in original.] A free Serbian people must value and respect that struggle as much for the freedoms of the Albanians as for their own, and deny every government a means to carry out a policy of aggression.”<sup>23</sup>

“We have carried out the attempted premeditated murder of an entire nation. We were caught in that criminal act and have been obstructed. Now we have to suffer the punishment... In the Balkan Wars, Serbia not only doubled its territory but also its external enemies...

“Our lordly people dreamed of foreign lands and foreign freedoms, but we who had been heralds of national liberation brought with us, instead, the banner of national enslavement... The basis for all of the misfortunes we now suffer and which we will continue to suffer in the future lies in the fact that we invaded a foreign land.”

“Voltaire said the poor always like to speak of their past... This is clearly true of the

tiny Balkan states, which wanted to create their future on the basis of the past. Some recall the rule of Tsar Dušan, they dream of a Greater Serbian state... The memory of that 'illustrious' past is inseparably linked to territorial expansion by the ruling classes..."

"Serbian overlords are trying to turn a national minority [Kosova Serbs] into a majority by means of a police state, and they are preparing their subjects not to be free citizens but submissive subjects. The regime of extraordinary police measures... is inspired by the reactionary desire to advance one nation and subdue another... On the other hand, it gives rise to new urges... provoking intolerance and hatred between peoples.

"The Serbian bourgeoisie desires freedom for its own nation at the price of freedom for other nations... We want freedom for our nation without denying the freedom of others. This goal can be achieved in the Balkans only by the formation of a political entity in which all nations would be completely equal... without regard to who ruled what region centuries ago."

Tucović was an extraordinary figure. A capable soldier, although he was a firm antimilitarist, he remained a reserve officer in the Serbian army, and was killed in action in the first months of World War I. He was not only an enemy of Serbian imperialism, he was also a real friend of the Albanian people. He believed, in effect, and with considerable reason, that the Serb, Montenegrin, and Albanian inhabitants of north Albania formed a single, interrelated regional community, embracing two nations, Serbo-Montenegrin and Albanian, and three religions, Catholic, Orthodox, and Muslim.

But he saw this in a way completely different from certain Serb chauvinists, who declared the population of Kosova to be no more than "Albanized Serbs." In reality, Tucović argued, it was the other way around: Karađorđe, leader of the Serb national uprising of 1804 and progenitor of a Serb monarchical house, the Karađorđevićs, was, Tucović said, of Albanian origin. Above all, Tucović defended Albania's right to independence, and the Albanian-majority character of Kosova.

Tucović insisted:

"Relations with foreign nations, and therefore with the Albanians, must be built on a democratic, civil, and humane foundation of tolerance, cooperative existence, and labor."

Alone in its uncompromising rejection of "Greater Serbia", the SSDP which Tucović led was a tiny political formation, founded in 1903. Other notable internationalists in the party included Kosta Novaković, who also served as a combat soldier in the Serbian army, Dušan Popović, Dragiša Lapčević, and Triša Kaclerović. Novaković, Lapčević and Kaclerović were all elected to the Serbian parliament. Their party had links with the Russian Bolsheviks prior to the 1917 revolution and the formation of the CI, and with the similar Bulgarian left socialist tendency known as *Tesnyaki* or "Narrows," as well as with Trotsky, then affiliated to no party, and other independent Russian Marxists. Tucović and Lapčević were Serbian delegates to the 1910 congress of the *Tesnyaki*, a major regional political event of the time.

Popović, editor of *Radničke Novine*, wrote of the 1912 Albanian campaign:

"The details concerning the operations of the Serb armies are frightful. They plunder, lay waste, burn, plow up, massacre, and destroy everything, down to the roots... It is no wonder that our peasant masses have such barbaric instincts since this state never saw to it that they were educated and civilized; nor should we be shocked at the narrow and meagre political and spiritual horizons of our military commanders who are trained to regard the brutal and cold-blooded murder of tens and hundreds of Albanians, their wives and children, as heroic... The slogans in which such ideas and views are expressed come from the highest social and political strata in Serbia. It is not merely a question of a protest by Serbian workers against the Albanian policy of the Serbian bourgeoisie; we must rescue the image of the Serbian people in the eyes of cultured and democratic Europeans. We must show that there are people in Serbia, many people, who oppose this, and that at the head of this opinion stands the



working class and Social Democracy.”

Lapčević wrote at the same time, with great prescience:

“Through the politics of our government conditions have been created so that for a great many years (perhaps even decades!), there will be repeated clashes and suffering between two unfortunate nations... Serbia has ordered its armies to subdue and enslave... Our soldiers have marched with guns and cannons but have not only created dishonor for their land, which once had a tradition of revolution and liberation, but they have also created conditions for eternal discord. We shall constantly have conflict and misfortune if Serbia does not change its policies.”

Nearly 20 years later Kosta Novaković recalled:

“The invasion of Albania by the Serbian army was a Serbian imperialist attempt to capture the ports of Shkodra, Durrës and Shen-Gjin... The Serbian imperialist government left nothing undone against Albanians during its occupation. It issued orders for scaffolds to be erected in a dozen parts. It massacred, killed and plundered the impoverished Albanian population. And it persecuted only the poor...”

“When they invaded Kosova, the Serbian imperialists proclaimed that they were going to regain the historical rights they had in 1389. Basing themselves on these ‘historical rights,’ Italy or France, Greece or Turkey, could demand half of Europe, because they had held those parts at one time. Indeed, France could demand a piece of Russia, because once in 1812 Napoleon went as far as Moscow.

“Kosova is a purely Albanian territory; it has only 10-15 per cent Serbs. The Serbian imperialists employed the tactics and methods of medieval warriors or colonial invaders: the annihilation of the population under the pretext of military operations, the disarming of people, and the suppression of the armed resistance. Thus... 120,000 Albanians – men, women, boys, old folk and children, were wiped out; hundreds of villages, more in Kosova and fewer in Macedonia, were bombarded and most of them completely destroyed. It should be pointed out that the representative of the tsarist Russian

imperialist policy, Hartwig, the minister of Russia to Belgrade, blessed Belgrade’s policy of annihilation. The Orthodox Russian tsar urged his Orthodox Serbian brothers, King Petar and his son Aleksandar, to kill a whole people and to spread the Orthodox faith in the Balkans. At least 50,000 Albanians were forced to become refugees and flee to Turkey and Albania to save their lives. This annihilation thinned out the Albanian nation in Kosova, but in no way changed the Albanian character there. The objective of these massacres of Albanians in Kosova was to replace them with Serbs and to colonize and Serbianize it. However, until the end of 1912, as long as there was resistance on the part of the Albanians, the colonization progressed rather slowly. Only a few Serbs settled in the Kosova region at the start.”

Novaković wrote these lines in *Liria Kombëtare* (National Liberation)<sup>24</sup> an Albanian-language periodical printed in Geneva, which, supported by the CI, backed Kosovar Albanian rebels against Serbian domination in the late 1920s.

A CI-directed front, the Balkan Federation, came to include the leading Kosovar revolutionary groups. It should be noted that the social-revolutionary Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO/VMRO), which like Serbian Social Democracy contributed many cadres to the CI, was also, originally, an internationalist formation. VMRO projected a future Macedonia in which Slav Muslims, Albanians, and local Turks would have equal rights with Christian Macedonians, Bulgarians, Serbs, Greeks, Gypsies, and Sephardic Jews. The official language of independent Macedonia, to foster unity between these disparate peoples, was to be Esperanto. Decades later, during and after the period of Titoite Communism, the VMRO became almost exclusively Slavist in outlook. But at the beginning of the history of the KPJ, in the 1920 elections in monarchist Yugoslavia, then known as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (KSHS), the KPJ received a major share of votes in Macedonia, and in the same year the Macedonian metropolis of Skopje experienced a general strike or “commune.”<sup>25</sup> Throughout this period,

Macedonia no less than Kosova was in considerable insurrectionary upheaval, with whole districts liberated from the control of monarchist and Great-Serbian Belgrade.

Political activists from Muslim-majority Bosnia-Herzegovina played a significant role in the early history of the KPJ. Josip Cizinski, alias Milan Gorkić (1904-39), a member of the Czech minority community born in Bosnia, was a dominant figure in KPJ activities, although not Muslim.<sup>26</sup> A Muslim-born former head of the KPJ in Herzegovina, Mustafa Dedić, became one of six members of an executive committee of Yugoslav Trotskyists living in Russia, formed in 1929.<sup>27</sup>

### The Baku Congress of 1920 and Its Aftermath

With much of Eastern Europe aflame with revolt, at the Baku Congress of 1920 the CI revealed that its interest in an alliance with Turkish and other geographically “near” elements in the Muslim

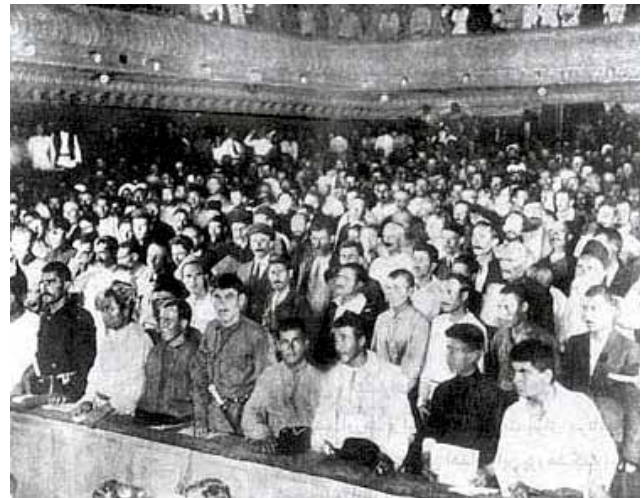
world exceeded the expressions of anti-imperialist solidarity with the Ottoman Muslims previously enunciated by Marx, the Serbian Social Democrats, and Trotsky. A Turkish Communist Party was briefly prominent in the country’s political life, but was curbed by Mustafa Kemal. Franz Borkenau described the fate of the Turkish Communists in this period as “a catastrophe”, writing “The Comintern had to choose between Kemal and the Turkish Communists. For the first time the interests of Russian foreign policy actually involved the existence of a communist party. The Russians chose Kemal in preference to Turkish communism... in the later congresses and meetings of the Comintern no Turkish delegates took part... The decision about Turkey was taken while Lenin was formally and actually at the head of the Soviet state.”<sup>28</sup>

Soviet approaches to Muslim communities had predictably begun within the borders of the former tsarist empire, now Soviet territory. In some regions, mainly in the Caucasus, where tsarist



*Azeri communists painting slogans for the conference.*

*South Caucasus 1917*



*Congress of the Peoples of the East. Baku, September 1920*

*Republic of Azerbaijan, 1919-1920*





aggression had been cruel and caused continuous resistance, Communism was welcomed and adopted an Islamic vocabulary (e.g. *shura* or “Islamic consultative body” for “soviet” or “council”) during the Leninist period. The Leninist administration also granted religious privileges to previously-suppressed Caucasian Sufi shaykhs.

During the Baku Congress, of an impressive total of 1,891 attendees, 1,275 had filled out personal questionnaires. Given the new Soviet policy in the Caucasus, it is unsurprising that Chechens, who had been active combatants in defense of Islam through much of the 19th century, were the sixth largest delegation, with 82 present (plus 13 Ingushes, a national group related to and typically associated with Chechens), numerically following 235 Turks, 192 Persians, 157 Armenians, 104 Russians, and 100 Georgians. The Daghestani revolutionary Jalalad'din Korkmasov declared to the Congress, “heroic struggle... has dyed Daghestan in the color of its own blood, shed for the glorious Red Flag... what is at stake is the world revolution. What faces us is a great world war... even before the [Baku] Congress... before the call issued by our leaders, we began *ghazawat*,<sup>29</sup> a holy war.”<sup>30</sup>

In the Central Asian regions where tsarism had been much more successful as a military power but had left much of local Muslim governance in place, Communism was perceived, with considerable justification, as an “ethnic Russian” and antireligious phenomenon, and was resisted by

Muslim combatants with moral help from elements elsewhere in the *umma*. Muslim dissidence was fed by the legacy of *jadidism*, an Islamic reformist effort among the Turkic communities of the Russian empire, as well as the Turkestan rebellion of 1916 against tsarist orders for military conscription. The 1916 insurrection is commonly known as the *Basmachi* movement, and is unfortunately neglected by Western historians. Having begun as opponents of tsarist imperialism, the Turkestani rebels maintained their resistance to Slavic domination after the establishment of Soviet rule. Soviet political agents treated the *Basmachi* in Central Asia and another movement, the *Musavat* in Azerbaijan, as equal, Pan-Turkic enemies of the new regime.

It is noteworthy that the questionnaires for the Baku Congress listed only three Arabs, surpassed by 12 Jamshidis and 11 Hazaras (both Muslim ethnic groups living mainly in Afghanistan and Iran), and eight Kurds. The final *Manifesto* of the Congress listed Arabia, Syria, and Palestine as countries represented by delegates. As in the aftermath of 1905, outside Moscow’s annexed territories, Russian political developments exercised a greater influence over the Muslim states bordering on the former empire than in the broader *umma*. Until the late 1940s, Soviet policy toward Muslims manifested a reversal of the common attitude of the Western powers, which treated Islam as “the Arab religion”, and therefore as mainly a factor in dealing with the colonized Arab peoples,



In the summer of 1918, Mensheviks and right Social-Revolutionaries staged a counter-Revolutionary coup and seized power in Baku. They invited British forces into the city and arrested 26 leading members of the lawful Soviet of Peoples' Commissars, mainly Bolsheviks and a few left Social-Revolutionaries. Then, on 20 September 1918, on orders from the British, the Commissars were taken out to a remote location in the desert where they were shot and beheaded. Painting by Isaak Izrailevich Brodsky



Soviet Desert Police commandant cross-examines an Uzbek Caravan leader



*Central Asia and the Caucasus: focal point of 'The Great Game'*



*Training Azerbaijani soldiers for the Red Army (under General Frunze)*

*Red Army troops advancing into the Pamirs*



*Dance of a bacha (dancing boy), Samarkand, ca 1905 - 1915  
Sergei Mikhailovich Prokudin-Gorskii*

*Bukhara, Uzbekistan: Left, the Mir Arab Madrasah; right, the Kalan Masjid; between them the 'Tower of Death'*







Victor Serge      Larisa Reisner      Ruth Fischer      Hermann Remmele

and secondarily with the Indian Muslims. For the Russians, relations with the Turks and Iranians were more important, at the beginning, than with the Arabs.

Nevertheless, elements of confrontation between Soviet politics and the movement for Jewish colonization in Palestine, in which Arabs would be subject to considerable Russian blandishments over time, are visible early in CI history. The *Baku Manifesto* included the following: “What has Britain done for Palestine? There, at first, acting for the benefit of Anglo-Jewish capitalists, it drove Arabs from the land in order to give the latter to Jewish settlers; then, trying to appease the discontent of the Arabs, it incited them against these same Jewish settlers.”<sup>31</sup> Only three years later, in 1923, the ex-anarchist and future Left Oppositionist Victor Serge, functioning as a CI journalist in Germany, expressed the common hostility of both the German Communists (KPD) and the rising National Socialist movement to the Jewish petty-bourgeoisie. In that period, CI representatives like Ruth Fischer and Karl Radek (in the notorious Leo Schlageter case) expressed their solidarity with ultra-nationalist extremists in Germany. Much commentary on this example of Communist flirtation with fascist Jew-baiting has treated it as a temporary aberration, but Serge’s writing shows others beside Fischer and Radek conforming to the posture of the CI. Serge reported that in Breslau, then in Germany, and today Wrocław in Poland, young fascists had incited the looting of Jewish shops; according to Serge, the mob “had given a good lesson to some vicious grocers.”<sup>32</sup> Serge further praised Radek and Hermann Remmele, a German Communist leader, for their speechifying and debates with fascists, writing, “‘You are fighting Jewish finance,’ said Remmele to the fascists. ‘Good, but also fight the

other finance, that of Thyssen, Krupp, Stinnes...!’ He thus got those fascists to applaud the class struggle.” This idiom was identical to the better-known rhetoric of Ruth Fischer.<sup>33</sup>

Meanwhile, the lure of the Orient had become a powerful motif in Soviet literature. The Soviet Muslim communities produced numerous works in vernacular languages exalting the regime, but little is of enduring worth. By contrast, the legendary woman Bolshevik Larisa Reisner (1895-1926) joined her then-lover Fyodor F. Ilyin, known as Raskolnikov (1892-1939), in a diplomatic adventure in Afghanistan in 1920, when the Leninist regime tried to assist the anti-British policy of Amanullah Khan (1892-1960), the Afghan monarch from 1919 to 1929. Reisner composed a kind of prose-poetry about Central Asia, resembling the Sufi classics, in which she observed, “Between a flat earth and a flat sky, smoke drifts into nothing... Smothered silence for hundreds of miles... All fades on the steppe, where stones are made of moonlight and clouds petrified in emptiness.” She also described “Tashkent blazing like a dark emerald” – a simile few would find appropriate today, given the shabbiness and demoralization of the capital of independent Uzbekistan.<sup>34</sup> She further discerned “a silence which makes the birds dumb and the trees stop growing... High in the pale sky a snowstorm of fighting white eagles... But... in the long, hopeless clay wall, raised from the earth and splashed by the breath of tired laden donkeys and camels – who can deny that here, in that exhausting, pitiless wall there is a green window, from which one may see a garden hidden from view like a jewel inside a ring.”<sup>35</sup> She later wrote brilliantly on the failed German Communist revolution of 1923.<sup>36</sup> Reisner also became the lover of the ill-fated Radek, who along with Ilyin-Raskolnikov was a victim of the Stalinist purges, and it is not unlikely that had she lived she would have become involved with the Left Opposition (LO). The first wife of Josip Broz-Tito, Pelagea Denisova-Belusova, was a member of the Trotskyist group and remained one until she was purged by the Stalinist apparatus.<sup>37</sup>

Another Soviet writer with a heterodox reputation, Andrei Platonov (1899-1951), wrote in his novella *Dzhan* with considerable insight on the difficult situation facing the Soviet Central Asian peoples; a Turkmen is its tragic hero.<sup>38</sup>

The Soviet authorities sought to transform Soviet Central Asia into a “display window” for modernization of the Muslim East, a policy that achieved some minor victories, perhaps best symbolized by the construction of a mass metro transit system in Tashkent. In addition, from 1933 to 1943, *de facto* Soviet control was extended to Eastern Turkestan (called Xinjiang by the Chinese), which has a Muslim majority. Eastern Turkestanis viewed this as a progressive development, saying today that when they were under Soviet administration they turned to (and even considered themselves part of) Europe, but with the reestablishment of Chinese authority during the

*Turkmen villagers*



*Left: a Bukharan Uzbek; right, an Afghan*



second world war they were forced to look toward Beijing – and to accept wide-scale Han Chinese colonization. Although tsarist and Soviet Russians alike colonized the Soviet Muslim republics, they made no such attempt in Eastern Turkestan. According to one authority on Soviet nationality policy, pro-Soviet Turkestanis, especially Turkic-speaking Muslim Uighurs, “took upon themselves the tasks usually reserved for Russian and Ukrainian settlers.”<sup>39</sup>

In 1924-25, the CI encountered its first important ally from the Arab world in the person of Abd el-Krim (c. 1882-1963), the Berber leader of resistance in the Moroccan Rif to Spanish and French imperialism. In 1927, the Soviet Union was the first government in the world to recognize the totalitarian Wahhabi supporter Abd Al-Aziz Ibn Sa’ud as ruler of Hejaz.<sup>40</sup> CI support for the Arabs in the Palestinian anti-Jewish riots of 1929 has been

*Andre Platanov, author of Dzhan (1930)*



*Uighurs of Eastern Turkestan (Xinjiang)*



a subject of considerable historiological comment. CI commentary on the riots was, however, contradictory, with the Berlin Communist daily *Rote Fahne* praising the Arabs and branding Jewish defenders as fascists, while the CI weekly *International Press Correspondence* detailed the suffering of the Jewish victims.<sup>41</sup>

The latter outcome was predictable in that Jewish settlers then comprised the overwhelming majority of Palestinian Communists. With the turn of the CI toward the People's Front strategy, heralded by a Russo-French military pact, after 1935, the position of the Soviet Union became even more convoluted and self-contradictory. The election of the Front Populaire to power in France in 1936, in which the French Communists (PCF) were represented, led the PCF to oppose Arab nationalism in the French North African possessions. The first substantial modern Algerian revolutionary group, l'Étoile Nord-Africaine (The North African Star, hereinafter l'Étoile) was led by Ahmed Ben Messali Hadj (1898-1974), who cooperated with the CI and PCF in the 1920s.

*Muhammad Ibn 'Abd El-Krim El-Khattabi, leader of the Rif Berbers*



Messali Hadj and his movement became associated with the French Trotskyists after the PCF failed to protest the suppression of the Algerian organization in 1937; the Trotskyist Fourth International was proud to continue the line of the CI in mobilizing the colonial masses.<sup>42</sup> L'Étoile was later known as the Parti du Peuple Algérien (Party of the Algerian People, or PPA), the Mouvement pour le Triomphe des Libertés Démocratiques (Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties, or MTLD), and the Mouvement National Algérien (Algerian National Movement, or MNA.)

### Arabs in the Spanish Civil War

Independently of CI action, and at the same time as the PCF had turned against colonial protest, the European and American left adopted an anti-Muslim viewpoint based on the involvement of Moroccan troops in the Spanish counter-revolutionary movement led by Gen. Francisco Franco in 1934-39. Franco had been a commander of Moroccans in the Spanish Foreign Legion during the 1920s, and led Moroccans into the

*Ahmed Ben Messali Hadj, founder of the Mouvement National Algérien*





Asturias region of Spain to suppress the 1934 proletarian commune briefly established there. The introduction of colonial forces into Asturias was profoundly shocking to the Spanish left, in that Asturias was the only Spanish region that had never been conquered by Muslims. While the Spanish right claimed to defend the country's traditional Christian religiosity and culture, it did not hesitate to allow Moroccans to invade Asturias in liquidating a revolutionary uprising.

Employment of the contemptuous term *moros* or “Moors” to refer to the Moroccans serving with the Spanish Nationalists became, and today remains, a staple of Western leftist discourse, as well as the Francoist narrative, on the Spanish conflict, which became an open war in 1936. Moroccan Islamic clerics (*ulema*) declared the Spanish struggle to be a *jihād* against atheist Communism, in which martyrs would be guaranteed entry into Paradise. African volunteers from then-Spanish Guinea (now Equatorial Guinea), as well as Senegal and Mali in then-

French Soudan, also served in the Franco forces.

But as many as 1,000 Arabs, Berbers, Africans, and non-Soviet Asians, presumably Muslim if only by birth, also fought in the Soviet-controlled International Brigades (IB) as well as in the party and trade-union militias on the Republican side in the Spanish war.<sup>43</sup> The PCF, notwithstanding its bad record on Algerian decolonization, opened recruiting offices for Spain in Oran, as well as in the French-controlled Moroccan cities of Casablanca and Agadir, and in Tangier, then under international jurisdiction. The PCF even pondered the organization of an “Arab Legion” to fight in Spain. But while some Algerian Arabs, along with Franco-Algerian Communists, joined the IB, the attempt to create a substantial unit failed because of the superior appeal of l'Étoile Nord-Africaine, members of which had attempted unsuccessfully to get to Spain for enlistment in the Republican army. L'Étoile, through its periodical *Al-Umma*, decided to emphasize propaganda against the Francoists, especially targeting the



Franco's Moroccan troops enter the city of Oviedo, October 1934

First meeting of the Committee of (Anti-Fascist) Militias in Barcelona on July 21, 1936. Of its members, the leading elements were six anarchists, plus the Catalan Left and other republicans with five, the POUM with three representatives, and Catalan peasants with one. In addition, four were socialist trade unionists and the Stalinist Communists had one official delegate





*International Brigaders arriving in Albacete*

Berbers of the Rif, rather than direct recruitment to the Spanish Republican forces. L'Étoile participated in a 1935 European Islamic conference in Geneva, alongside the Syrian Druze emir, Islamic modernist, and occasional contributor to Communist periodicals in French, Shakib Arslan (1869-1946)<sup>44</sup>, grandfather of the present-day Lebanese Druze leader Walid Jumblatt (b. 1949).

Arslan, who knew Spanish Muslim history well, wrote, “The fire of civil war in Spain has been lit between the two big parties: the conservatives, and, joined with them, priests, bishops, the greater part of army officers (sic)<sup>45</sup>, monarchists, and moderate republicans (sic)<sup>46</sup>; and [against them], the workers, Communists, the poor, the peasants who demand land, the extremist Republicans, those in rebellion against the past.”<sup>47</sup> While his knowledge of contemporary Spanish politics was imperfect, Arslan’s Islamic modernism seems to have naturally merged with the radicalism of the Spanish non-Muslim masses.

Egyptian Arabs were included in the British Battalion of the IB. Some hundreds of Palestinian Arabs and Armenians (the latter, and perhaps some of the former, of Christian origin) joined the Palestinian Jewish majority in the Naftali Botwin Company of the IB. Palestinian Arabs also served in other sections of the IB, along with small numbers from other Arab lands. An Iraqi-American, N. Anwar, who had been a leading functionary of the Syrian and Lebanese CP, fought in the IB and joined the Spanish CP, later returning to the U.S. where he pursued his professional

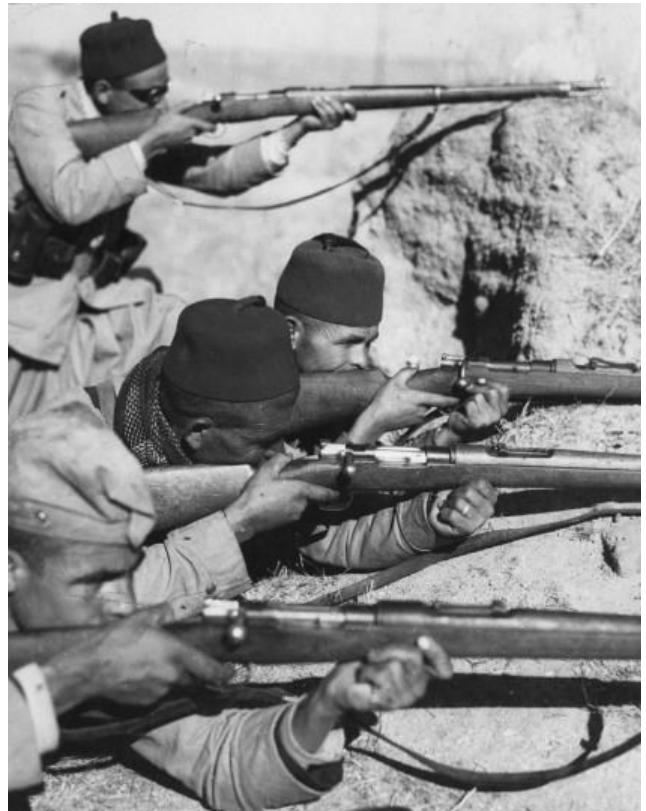


*Hashim al-Atasi, President of the National Bloc on a short visit to Geneva on April 8, 1936, to meet with the Syrian-Palestinian Congress. Front row (from left to right): Ihsan al-Jabiri, unknown, Hashim al-Atasi, Shakib Arslan, Saadallaah al-Jabiri. Back row (from left to right): Dr. Abd al Kader al-Jabiri, Urfan al-Jabiri and Awnallah al-Jabiri.*

career in engineering.<sup>48</sup> In Spain, Communist and anarchist propagandists appealed to Moroccans, in the Franco army as well as in the colony of Spanish Morocco, by describing the Islamic *umma* as an anti-imperialist force, much as CI supporters had intimated at Baku in 1920.

The Palestinian Arab Communist Nayati Sidki (1905-?), in Moscow when the Spanish war began, was sent by the CI to Spain to conduct propaganda directed at the Moroccans, and preached, with visible success as reported by the Soviet journalist Mikhail Koltsov, that those serving Franco were enemies of Islam. Sidki was, however, treated badly by the Spanish Communist leaders, who preferred to see all Muslims as brethren of Franco’s Moroccan cohorts. Sidki left Spain after realizing that only the Spanish anarchists – who, even more than the CI, viewed the *umma* as a universal area of rebellion against oppression – the anti-Stalinist Partit Obrer d’Unificació Marxista (POUM), in the militias of which Orwell served, and the Catalan nationalist left supported liberation of Spanish Morocco from imperialist control. Sidki published a volume on the Spanish war in Arabic in Damascus in 1938, but was excluded from the Syrian Communist movement by its Stalinist leader, Khaled Bagdash (1912-95), who aggravated the humiliation by appropriating Sidki’s book on Spain as if it were his own work. Sidki was the first Arabic author to comment significantly on the wartime murder of





Moroccan volunteers with the International Brigades



Left, POUM leaders: Julián Gorkin (editor of the daily *La Batalla*, second from left) and Andreu Nin (political secretary of the POUM, second from right)



1934, Puerto de Santa Maria prison: Generalitat government ministers: Lluís Companys, Joan Lluhi Vallescà, Joan Comorera (later Soviet agent), Martí Barrera, and Ventura Gassol, arrested after the insurrections of that year



Buenaventura Durruti, CNT militant  
Juan Garcia Oliver, CNT militant



Andreu Nin, later co-founder of the POUM, while in Russia  
Joaquin Maurin, Gen Sec., POUM



the Andalusian poet Federico García Lorca, whose work bears a strong Islamic stamp. Sidki composed new memoirs in Arabic between 1958 and 1975.

Some 50 to 100 Albanian IB members, representing the only Muslim-majority nation in Europe, refused assignment to the South Slavic detachments of the IB, which were commanded by Serbian officers, and the Albanians were included in the Italian Garibaldi Battalion. Unfortunately, the Albanians were involved in the suppression of the 1937 anti-Stalinist demonstrations in Barcelona known as the “May events,”<sup>49</sup> recorded by Orwell. In allowing themselves to be so used, the Albanians may have directed fire not only at Orwell but also at an Algerian anarchist, Michenet Es’said Ben Amar. Bosnian, Macedonian, and other Muslims from Yugoslavia, including a handful of Kosovar Albanians, for their part, had no objection to serving in the South Slav ranks of the IB. Some Turkish citizens, who may have been either Muslims, Sephardic Jews, or Greek or Armenian Christians, also enlisted in the IB.<sup>50</sup>

### **Soviet Communism and Muslim Liberation Movements**

The aforementioned Shakib Arslan later became associated with the notorious Haj Amin Al-Husseini, installed by the British, in usurpation of the rights of the local *ulema*, as “mufti” (chief Islamic jurist) of Jerusalem, and eventually employed as an agent of Hitler’s Germany. Like other prominent 20<sup>th</sup> century ethnic liberation movements, Arab nationalism had two wings between which it vacillated: one leaning toward socialist anti-imperialism, the other toward the rival imperialism of the Germans and other “revisionist”<sup>51</sup> powers. For anticolonialist movements in Latin America, the Middle East, and the Far East – the latter two areas including many Muslims – German and Japanese ambitions often appeared to represent, rather than fascism and imperialism, a major counterweight to Britain, France, and the Netherlands. The CI, when engaging with such movements, at first seldom intervened to support the dominance of the leftist factions – rather, Moscow preferred the

establishment of Communist Parties that would draw members from or cooperate with the nationalist milieux, in the belief that, given historical development, the appeal of Communism would replace that of narrow nationalism.

Thus, the CI did not actively seek to divide the Irish, Macedonian, Catalan, Chinese, or Indochinese national movements (except, in the latter cases, ordering their opposition to Trotskyists). Through much of the 1930s, while on one side of the globe the Chinese Communists sought an alliance with the Guomindang, on the other the KPJ cooperated with the Croatian rightist-nationalist *Ustaša*. By contrast, the Zionist, Ukrainian, and other national movements with constituencies inside the Soviet Union were targets of extreme ideological enmity by the Soviet regime. A similar pattern is visible in the Muslim *umma*: Central Asian and, under Stalin, Caucasian Muslim resistance trends were subjected to repression, while the CI and the Soviet Communist leadership dealt benignly with the competing forms of Arab nationalism – perhaps also because of Soviet anti-Jewish ideology, disguised as an aggravated anti-Zionism. The Soviet Union supported the pro-Nazi regime of Rashid Ali, established by a military coup in Iraq, early in 1941 – i.e. during the Hitler-Stalin pact.

With the German invasion of Russia and Soviet alliance with Britain, and then the U.S., however, the Soviets began an accelerated program for establishment and expansion of Communist Parties in the Arab world, with the immediate goal of countering Axis influence. In furtherance of Soviet war aims, the French Resistance movement included many Arabs living in the metropole. But some of the new Arab Communist Parties were largely made up of Sephardic or Italian Jews (the latter living around the eastern Mediterranean) rather than Muslims. In Egypt, where a Communist Party operated briefly in the 1920s, several further efforts to organize a CP were fostered by the CI in the 1930s, yet the Soviet-controlled movement was only effectively created during and after the second world war. Egypt also produced a significant Trotskyist movement.



An Egyptian Trotskyist and surrealist group, *Art et Liberté* (Art and Liberty), established in 1939, founded the first Arabic-language socialist newspaper in Egypt, *At-Tatawwur* (Evolution). The leading personality in the group was a Copt, Georges Henein (1914-73), who remained an anti-Stalinist.<sup>52</sup> Henein's Cairene radical milieu originally included the enigmatic Henri Curiel (1914-78), a Sephardic-Italian Jew who became a prominent Egyptian Communist. Curiel was a close relative and recruiter of the Soviet spy George Blake (b. 1922), who escaped from prison in Britain and reportedly still lives in Russia. Curiel eventually served as the operational chief of Soviet clandestine operations in Europe, residing in Paris, with special connections to the Arab countries and Africa; he was prominent in supporting the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) and the African National Congress (ANC) in their periods of illegality. After his cover was "blown" in the French conservative weekly *Le Point* in 1976, Curiel was assassinated in Paris. The case has never been solved.<sup>53</sup>

Perhaps because of his Coptic, i.e. Christian Orthodox, background, Henein, remarkably enough, perceived that a Soviet-backed revival of Pan-Slavism in 1945 had reestablished an expansionist nationalism supported by Orthodoxy and redolent of tsarism. A direct line may be drawn between that 1945 development and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1978, followed by atrocities against Balkan and Caucasian Muslims. This last phase began with the expulsion of Bulgarian Turks and compulsory Slavization of indigenous Bulgarian Muslims in the 1980s, the incitement of the Armenians against Azerbaijan during the collapse of the Soviet Union, the horrors suffered by the Chechens, and the wars of aggression against the Bosnian Muslims and Muslim-majority Kosova. In the latter cases, Russian antipathy to Balkan Muslims is visible as this paper is completed, in the position of Vladimir Putin's regime supporting Serbia against Muslim Bosnians and Kosovar independence.

Soviet activity in the Islamic *umma* during and after the second world war was riven with

contradictions typical of an openly imperialist, rather than a social-revolutionary strategy. These dissonant elements included reinforcement of the visible distinction between aggressive imperialism in the border nations, such as Iran, Afghanistan, and the Muslim regions of the Caucasus and Balkans, and more cordial alliances with radical Arab states and movements. From the Islamic viewpoint, the Russian borderlands, which suffered most from Soviet interference, were countries in which Islam had long overcome Christian power, and which were considered hereditary rivals or enemies of Slavic Orthodox expansionism. By contrast, Egyptian, Syrian, Lebanese, and Palestinian Arab societies included large and often prosperous Orthodox Christian minorities, giving them a certain status as allies for Russian ambitions. This may be one of several paradoxical explanations, in addition to that of a greater appeal of fundamentalist Islam among Arab Muslims, for the relative success of Communism *per se* in the non-Arab components of the *umma* and its general failure among Arabs.

The proclamation of independence by Israel in 1948 followed the decolonization of Syria and (imperfectly) Lebanon, both former French colonies, and was succeeded by the Free Officers coup of Gamal Abd Al-Nasr and his comrades in Egypt. The Soviet government and the Communist Parties had temporarily supported Israel as an opponent of British influence in the Middle East, but the Soviets quickly decided that aid to the Arabs was a more promising option. In addition, Zionist sentiment among Soviet Jews was considered deeply threatening to Stalin's regime. Blatantly anti-Jewish show trials were held after the second world war in Budapest (against László Rajk [1909-49] et al)<sup>54</sup> and Prague (vs. Rudolf Slánský [1901-52] et al). Venomous Judeophobia on the pretext of anti-Zionism characterized Soviet Communist policy until the end of "really existing socialism," and post-Soviet Communist parties such as the CP of the Russian Federation (KPRF), headed by Gennady Zyuganov, have perpetuated anti-Jewish rhetoric.

Arab components of several Communist





Left to right: Hassan el-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, assassinated in 1949; Henri Curiel, founder of the Egyptian Communist Party, assassinated in 1978

factions in Israel gained a significant niche as political representatives of the “Arab sector” in Israeli institutions. But in Israeli Jewish life, Communism also long persisted as a powerful force. Communist Parties led by and recruiting large numbers of born Muslims burgeoned, during the second world war, in Iran (the Party of the Masses or *Tudeh*, founded in 1941, while the country was partitioned between the Soviet Union and Britain) and Iraq (the Iraqi Communist Party was originally established in 1934).

The *Tudeh* was a major factor in the social agitation preceding the overthrow of Mohammad Musadeq in Iran in 1953. It was banned by the government of the Islamic Republic created by the 1979 Revolution, and appears extremely weak, now mainly working outside the country. Because Iran borders on Russia, and given the partition and implantation of various pro-Soviet statelets on Iranian territory (including Iranian Azerbaijan in 1920-21 and 1941-46), as well as the role of the secular and Islamic left in the Khomeini Revolution, the history of Iranian Communism is extremely complex. At the commencement of the Iranian Islamic Revolution, the Soviets were viewed outside Iran as sympathetic to it. Comical

aspects of this emerged in Western leftist and rightist opinion; the former at first ascribed the leadership of the popular movement to the *Tudeh*, while the latter feared that the revolution would lead to Soviet control of Iranian and even Arabian energy resources. Both proved wrong.

The Iraqi CP was a key supporter of the regime of Abd al-Qerim Qassem in Iraq from 1958 to 1963. It was ferociously repressed by the Ba’athist governments that followed Qassem’s overthrow, and, in yet another Middle Eastern paradox, the U.S.-led overthrow of Saddam in 2003 has led to its large-scale rebirth.

Elsewhere in the Muslim *umma*, the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI), originating with the ISDV of Sneevliet, became the world’s largest CP out of power between the achievement of Indonesian independence in 1949 and the bloody liquidation of the party, with hundreds of thousands of its supporters killed, in 1965. Tan Malaka, its most remarkable figure, was murdered in 1949. The PKI has never been restored to legality and its present or potential strength cannot be adequately assessed. It also now works mainly abroad.

A Communist Party of the Sudan was founded in 1946 and was a leading element in the country’s military government under Jaafar Al-Nimeiry, until the CP briefly overthrew the latter in 1971; Al-Nimeiry was restored to rule, and the CP was suppressed. Its current level of mass support, in the complicated environment of a country under the failed “*shariah*” regime of Hassan al-Turabi, with considerable north-south and other regional conflicts, is difficult to gauge.

In the 1950s, the three major figures in the “nonaligned bloc” of anti-colonialist states represented two countries with overwhelming Muslim majorities and one with a significant Muslim minority: Sukarno of Indonesia, Nasr of Egypt, and Tito of Yugoslavia. Political development in the core Arab countries fell to Nasr-style elites incapable of effecting significant social progress. Communist Parties continued their activity in Syria and Lebanon, with varying prospects, and do so today. But fear of Nasr’s



11 May 1958, Khosrow Roozbeh, the leader of the intelligence branch of the Military Organization of the Tudeh Party, was executed by a firing squad of the Shah of Iran, who had established dictatorship through the 1953 CIA-SIS-backed 28 Mordad coup d'état against the Musadeq government. Refusing to be blindfolded, Roozbeh shouted to the firing squad: "Long Live the Tudeh Party of Iran! Long Live Communism! Fire!"

influence, especially after Egyptian aid proved decisive in the liberation of Algeria, led to the creation by Saudi Arabia of the Muslim World League (MWL) in 1962, as a buffer against Nasrist expansion. The MWL united Saudi Wahhabism, the *Ikhwan ul-Muslimun* or Muslim Brotherhood, and Pakistani jihadists, and much later was important in the organization and financing of the anti-Russian Afghan *mujahidin* as well as their successors in Al-Qaida.

The Indonesian bloodbath of 1965 temporarily ended the period of euphoria in the Islamic wing of the anti-colonialist movement, coming, in the same year, between the overthrow of Ahmed Ben Bella, elected president of the revolutionary Algerian government, and the kidnapping and disappearance in France of Mehdi Ben Barka, a popular Moroccan leftist supported by the Soviets.

### Soviet Manipulation of Post-Colonial Regimes

Nevertheless, the decline of Muslim revolutionary enthusiasm was quickly followed by another phase of Soviet manipulation, based on the expansion of two well-established tactics: support for Nasr and incitement against Israel. During the Khrushchev and early Brezhnev periods, the Soviet camp and the countries friendly with or receiving substantial aid from the Soviet Union fell into three groups:

- "People's democracies" (e.g. Bulgaria) were ruled by Communist cadres;
- "National democracies on the road to socialism" (e.g. Egypt, where Soviet economic and military aid and advisers



Josip Broz Tito



Gamal Abd Al-Nasr



Sukarno

were of major importance until Nasr's death), were governed by "national bourgeois forces;"

- In countries "struggling for national liberation from imperialism" (including Algeria, Guinea, and Mali, which are Muslim in their majority), a "national bourgeoisie" had yet to emerge.

In a clear understanding of this categorization, only two criteria were applied to all such countries: subordination to or pronounced sympathy with Soviet international strategy, and the erection of single-party states.

The former South Yemen had the distinction of being the only Arab country to become a fully-defined Soviet satellite, between 1970 and 1990, until the state was integrated with the Yemen Arab Republic. The Yemeni Socialist Party was recognized by Moscow as a Marxist-Leninist cadre organization. South Yemen troops were sent to Cuba for military training, and some utilized their experience in later joining jihadist combat elsewhere. One of the most striking narratives about the lives of Arab *mujahidin* in Afghanistan and their introduction into the 1992-95 Bosnian war is that of Al-Battaar Al-Yemeni, an example promoted in the propaganda of the Palestinian-born Abdullah Azzam (1941-89), mentor of Osama bin Laden:

"Al-Battaar was in the Communist army of Yemen and they sent him to Cuba... to train in tanks. He learnt the ins-and-outs of tanks until he knew nearly every thing about them. When he returned to Yemen, he became a good practicing Muslim and, instead of returning to the Communist Army, he went to Afghanistan and fought there for some time. After that he returned to Yemen.

“When he heard about the Jihad in Bosnia, he traveled there. He had the opportunity to go and he took it. In Bosnia, he set about training all the brothers about tanks. He taught the brothers how to lie under a moving tank, in order to build their confidence whilst dealing with the Serb tanks on foot. His ultimate dream was to take a tank in the fighting as booty (*ghaneema*) and use it against the enemy. He wanted to be the first one to capture a tank for the *Mujahidin*... the brothers caught a tank and they called him on the radio. He was injured in his hand at the start of the operation but, with his hand bandaged... he did not go away, nor did he rest but he went with his injury back to the front line. While helping to remove an injured brother from an enemy bunker, Allah took him as *shaheed* [martyr for Islam] when a mortar bomb exploded next to him.

“One brother... said, ‘O al-Battaar! We do not deserve martyrdom. We are not good enough to be *shuhadaa* [plural for ‘martyrs’].”

While it is often claimed that Western support for the Afghans fighting against Russian intervention after 1979 enabled “blowback” with the emergence of al-Qaida, this episode illustrates how Soviet penetration of the Muslim world had already produced a more direct effect.<sup>55</sup> Anterior to the emergence of the Afghan *mujahidin*, Westerners were wrong in believing that the Soviets would use Iran to seize control of the Persian Gulf region; rather, sudden fear in Moscow at the radical-Islamist victory in Tehran contributed to the series of decisions in furtherance of a Sovietized Afghanistan, which resulted in the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

After the 1967 Israeli-Arab war the Soviet Union reinforced its anti-Israel profile and became a major sustainer of “rejectionist” Arab states and armed movements such as the Palestine Liberation Organization, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, etc. The Soviet government had already extended support to the PLO at its organization in 1964. All of the original Palestinian radical groups were secularist or Marxist, with many led by Christians rather than Muslims (e.g. Georges Habash [1926-2008, dead as this text was written],

Wadi Haddad [1927-78], and Nayef Hawatmeh [b. in the late 1930s], all from Orthodox Christian family backgrounds. Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement derived from the Palestine branch of the *Ikhwan* (Muslim Brotherhood), did not emerge as a rival to the PLO and the para-state Palestinian Authority until the 1980s.

The global radicalization of the 1960s produced a revival of the Turkish left as well as various Kurdish radical groups, but in neither case did Soviet-controlled Communists assume a prominent role, although Turkey fell into a period of significant violence between its left and socialist trends and the religious and nationalist right. A competent historiography of this phenomenon is absent in English. Turkish secularism continues to exercise a considerable influence in the country’s political life, not least among Alevis, who both in Turkey itself and in the Turkish diaspora in Europe are markedly oriented toward the radical left.<sup>56</sup> In the same region, Greek governments after 1974 participated in the “Orthodox alliance” with the Soviets by opposing U.S. influence in the eastern Mediterranean, but also assisted the Palestinians as well as Kurdish radicals. Ex-Yugoslavia provided guerrilla training of Palestinians, while the former Communist regime in Romania did the same for the Kurdish Workers’ Party (PKK).

The narrative of Al-Battaar Al-Yemeni indicates the single most important fact about the link between Communism and Islam in the 20th century: the complete collapse of Soviet policy, and even of the Soviet social system, following the adventure initiated in Kabul by Leonid Brezhnev. This penultimate chapter in Soviet history began at a moment when, late in the day as it was for the Leninist system, Communism seemed solidly established as a permanent element of the global political landscape. If anything, the Russians appeared to have tipped the worldwide balance of forces decisively to their advantage when their Vietnamese clients harried the U.S. and its allies out of Southeast Asia. Yet at the same time the internal crisis of the Soviet system advanced, largely misunderstood in the West, through the 1970s. The Russian Communists would soon be





*Mujahideen, Kunar province. 1985*

compelled to find an internal enemy that could be manipulated to unify their people and an external target against whom to mobilize their Slav subjects. The “new” foe was the same both within and without: Islam.

No sooner had they gained an impressive apparent victory over the West in Indochina than the Communist ship ran aground on the shoals of history. The year 1978 included three decisive indicators of the future: the seizure of power in Kabul by Nur Muhammad Taraki (1913-79), a literary figure and leader of the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) in April, the commencement of the final agony of the Iranian monarchist regime with bloody repression of student demonstrations in September, and the election of a Pole, Karol Wojtyla, to the Roman papacy, in October. Each of the three countries in which these dramatic events were focussed bordered the Soviet Union, and each had played a special role in Communist international politics. Further, each of these states saw events in 1978 that were, or appeared, shockingly novel to the world.

Afghanistan had long been considered a zone in which Soviet and Western power competed for influence, but was the first country to undergo an open Communist coup since the immediate aftermath of the second world war. Unlike Cuba and South Yemen, as well as the later Soviet and Cuban satellites in Ethiopia, Guiné-Bissau, Angola, Moçambique, Grenada, and Nicaragua, Afghanistan under the PDPA attempted to leap ahead of the usual progression of widening Soviet influence. Taraki sought to move from the typical



*PKK women guerrilla fighters, Kurdistan*

Soviet-defined position for a country like Afghanistan, as “struggling for national liberation from imperialism” to a full-fledged “people’s democracy.” This radical attitude would undermine Muscovite confidence in the rule of Taraki and his close comrade Hafizullah Amin (1929-79). Amin wrote incoherently but insightfully:

“If we had waited to follow the same class pattern of working-class revolution through a national democratic bourgeoisie, then we would have followed such a long and thorny road that it would have required not only years but centuries.”<sup>57</sup>

As the same time, it is believed by some that the Soviets had found “national liberation” leaders imitating Nasr unreliable and had decided to return to a policy of activist intervention by Leninist parties.

The Iranian exploits of the *Tudeh* in 1953 were then still well-remembered, but the Islamic Revolution completely transformed the global political sensibility of the Muslim *umma*. The reassertion of nationalism in Poland in 1956 had inaugurated the long transition or “de-Stalinization” in the East European people’s republics, delayed in the aftermath of the Tito split in 1948 and suppression of the East Berlin labor uprising in 1953. And Wojtyla was the first non-Italian to be elected Pope since the 16th century. Moscow was therefore beset on its frontiers by unpredictable phenomena: the Marxist radicalism of Taraki, who removed his Soviet-subsidized but “neutral” predecessor, Muhammad Daud Khan; the

appearance of an incomprehensibly new ideology in Iran, and the rebirth of a Poland that, a traditional foe of Russian power, was inspirited by the unexpected global importance granted it by Wojtyła's ascension to the throne of Peter.

The PDPA, which was less than 15 years old in 1978, was split between ethnic and class factions: the *Khalq* or "Masses" tendency led by Taraki and Hafizullah Amin, made up of rural, poor Pashtuns, and the *Parcham* or "Banner" grouping under Babrak Karmal (1929-96), associated with urbanized, elite speakers of Dari, a dialect of Farsi. Hafizullah Amin has been widely described as the real power behind Taraki. *Khalqi-Parchami* rivalry was so extreme that it often veered toward, and later was expressed in, outright intraparty violence. The *Khalqis*, as illustrated by the previous citation from Hafizullah Amin, were notable in their zeal for social reorganization, and their immediate measures included adoption of the title "Democratic Republic of Afghanistan," with a startling Communist-style red national flag, hostility to Islamic religiosity and customary habits in one of the least-developed and most tribal societies in the world, and recourse to brutal repression, including executions. It is less paradoxical than illustrative that the Stalinist PDPA of Taraki was more radical in its approach to Afghanistan in the late 1970s than the Bolsheviks Ilyin-Raskolnikov and Reisner had been in supporting Amanullah Khan during the great age of Leninism. (Ilyin-Raskolnikov himself had become a near-Trotskyist by 1937 and was probably assassinated by NKVD agents in 1939 after his dismissal from a post as Soviet ambassador to Bulgaria.) The Taraki regime proved brief in duration; in September 1979 Taraki was overthrown and killed by his fellow-*Khalqi*, Hafizullah Amin. But the Afghan peasants were already deeply disaffected with the new regime, and the *mujahidin* had begun combat against the Soviet-style modernization of the country.

At the end of 1979, Hafizullah Amin was killed in turn, as Russian troops marched into Kabul and installed the *Parchami* Karmal in power. Moscow appeared to have become especially

alarmed by events in Iran, where Khomeini had been carried into the summits of authority after the flight of Shah Reza Pahlavi. The *Parchamis* were said to be more moderate in their attitude toward Islam than their *Khalqi* victims, but the arrival of Karmal was insufficient to calm the *mujahidin*, whose ranks had swelled as Afghan refugees poured into Pakistan, where they were organized and armed, soon with the generous support of the U.S. and Saudi Arabia. Afghanistan was, in a certain sense, a parallel to Poland, in its capacity to resist Russian subjugation, although Afghan culture was Islamic and, by comparison with that of the Poles, unworldly. Both the Poles and Afghans were, nevertheless, imbued with sentiments of ineluctably intense religious duty in defying Soviet power.

For that reason alone, Afghanistan could not be stabilized as a Soviet possession. Karmal handed over power to Muhammad Najibullah (1947-96), a *Parchami* Pashtun, in 1986, but the Soviet order in Afghanistan was doomed. The PDPA changed its name to the Party of the Nation (*Hizb-i Watan*) and Najibullah went even further than Karmal in seeking to appease Islamic resistance to the Soviet-backed government. By 1987, however, Mikhail Gorbachov had decided on the withdrawal of Russian troops from Afghanistan. Yet Russian military and financial assistance to Najibullah continued until 1990, fighting the *Khalqis* as well as the divided (and therefore often weak) *mujahidin*. Najibullah's government outlasted that of Gorbachov; the latter oversaw the Soviet state until its definitive breakdown in autumn 1991, while Najibullah held on to power for a half-year more, resigning in April 1992. The revolutionary regime in Afghanistan, with its bloody, gangster-style quarrels and eventual replacement by the fundamentalist Taliban, represents the most ignominious and squalid chapter in the history of Soviet expansionism, and expresses the utter decadence of the Leninist system.

It is seldom noted that "blowback" from the Soviet incursion into Afghanistan produced something new in Soviet history. It provoked



Muslim opposition to Moscow in Soviet Muslim republics such as Uzbekistan, from which army conscripts were sent to Afghanistan to fight, as well as leading to interference with the Chechens and other oppressed Muslim nationalities of the Caucasus by “Arab Afghans” – i.e., jihadist volunteers from Arab countries that had joined the Afghan resistance. The Afghan war wrecked any credibility the Soviets had gained in the *umma*, devastated the Soviet system, and convinced the jihadists that, having destroyed the world’s second leading political power, the combat capacity of the “Islamic awakening” could not be restricted.

### Concluding Observations

Concluding considerations have more to do with the character of radical Islam than of Communism.

With the collapse of Soviet Communism, many academics, intellectuals, and political or media figures worldwide have alleged that the U.S. “needs” jihadism as a “necessary enemy,” filling the role formerly occupied by the Communist movement. The argument is much more accurate when applied to Russian, post-Communist politics. Similarly, some analysts interpret jihadism as a form of social protest, based in the economic problems of the Muslim countries. Much Western discussion of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood typifies this attitude. In my view it is more appropriate to describe the present-day convulsions in the Muslim world as products of inevitable modernization and development, and jihadist movements as reactionary phenomena comparable to the Black Hundreds in tsarist Russia. I have written at some length on “Islamofascism” as the best construct for understanding jihadism.<sup>58</sup>

One movement that has embraced a “theoretical” and currently non-violent *jihad*, the Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HuT) or Islamic Liberation Party, was founded by the Palestinian Taqi’ud’din Al-Nabhani (1909-77), and is banned in some countries, but has focused a serious effort in ex-Soviet Uzbekistan and its neighbors. HuT calls for establishment of a global Islamic *khilafah* or caliphate, in a manner that seems to promise ex-Soviet Muslims a new social system that would

restore or improve public benefits, including permanent employment, state-subsidized education, and free health care as provided under the Soviet regime. Above all, a new *khilafah* would allegedly save the Muslims from the post-Soviet insecurity of globalization. HuT employs a revolutionary vocabulary, organizes according to the traditional conspiratorial cell system, and has apparently attracted to its ranks some Western leftists who became Muslim. It is perhaps the only phenomenon to have effectively merged Islam and the legacy of Communism, notwithstanding its ferocious denunciation of the former atheist regime in Russia.

In a parallel fashion, Central Asian post-Soviet allies of Vladimir Putin such as Islam Karimov in Uzbekistan have replaced the Leninist cult of rulership with a similar exaltation of Islamic figures such as the 9<sup>th</sup> century religious scholar Imam Bukhari, and the Sufi Bahaud’din Naqshband and the ruler Amir Timur (known to the West as Tamerlane), both of whom lived in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. But while Karimov has maintained the pattern of governance of Soviet Communism, including a one-party state, controlled media, a pervasive police surveillance, and bloody repression of dissidents, his government embraces neither a revolutionary ideology, nor a socialist program, nor internationalism of either the pan-Islamic or Soviet type. The same model is visible in Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, to a greater or lesser degree, and, more benevolently, in Kazakhstan. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzia, among the former Soviet Muslim republics, have made significant steps toward authentic democratization – the former after a war with Islamist radicals, the latter following the “Tulip Revolution” in 2005.

After almost three decades, marked by conflicts in Afghanistan, the Caucasus, and the Balkans, the majority of Muslim believers around the world despise anything associated with Communism. In this regard, the hopes



expressed at the 1920 Baku Conference have resulted in total failure. With political change advancing in countries as diverse as Turkey, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, we may anticipate the emergence of an entirely new intellectual-religious “left” in the Muslim *umma*. But we must also expect that the rise of Putin may render the conflict between the West and radical Islam merely episodic, and return the globe to a polarization between the West and the Russian empire. In such a context, the history of Communism as an expression of Russian ambitions would, along with the relations between Communism and Islam, be irrelevant except to specialists.

\* \* \*

## NOTES

1 A remarkable expression of the memory of Muslim popular social radicalism, transformed into literature, is provided by the novel *The Fortress (Tvrđava)*, by the Bosnian Muslim author Meša Selimović (1910-82), set in Bosnia in the 18th century. Originally published in ex-Yugoslavia in 1970, *The Fortress*, tr. by E.D. Goy and Jasna Levinger-Goy, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1999; *Tvrđava* has also been translated into French and Italian. The better-known work of Selimović, *Derviš i smrt (The Dervish and Death)*, originally pub. in 1966, has been translated into German.

2 Massignon, Louis, *Hallaj: Mystic and Martyr*, Princeton, Princeton U.P., 1994.

3 On Hallaj, Massignon, and Durán, see my volumes *The Other Islam: Sufism and the Road to Global Harmony*, New York, Doubleday, 2008, and *The Two Faces of Islam*, New York, Doubleday, 2002.

4 “Libertarian” is employed in its original sense of freedom-loving or anarchist, rather than in the narrow economic context the term has acquired in the U.S. and other Western countries.

5 *The Wine of Love: Mystical Poetry of Imām Khomeinī*, tr. by Ghulām-Ridā A’wani and Muhammad Legenhausen, Tehran, Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imām Khomeinī’s Works, 2003. p. 53. The cited verse is adapted by Stephen Schwartz..

6 Ample literature is available, in many languages, on 19th century Salafism, which should not be confused with the assumption of the term “Salafi” by Sunni Muslim fundamentalists, including Saudi Wahhabis, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (*Ikhwan*), Pakistani jihadists, and the Taliban, at the end of the 20th century

and beginning of the 21st. This latter-day disinformation has become extremely troublesome for experts on Islam as well as observers of radical Islamist ideology and extremism. In addition, the very concept of “Salafism,” based on an equation of recent interpretations with the original Islam of the Prophet Muhammad (*saws*), his Companions, and the first generations of his successors, is anathema to traditional Muslim scholars as an impermissible innovation in religion or *bid’a*. This opinion holds that no contemporary individual should be compared with the Prophet, the Companions, the four Righteous Caliphs who succeeded him, or the early Islamic jurists and other scholars. A useful volume on the 19th century Salafis is Weismann, Itzhak, *Taste of Modernity: Sufism, Salafiyya, and Arabism in Late Ottoman Damascus*, Leiden, Brill, 2001.

7 An important and neglected source on the Young Turk movement and the transformation of the Ottoman dominions is *The Memoirs of Ismail Kemal Bey*, ed. Somerville Story, London, Constable, 1920. Ismail Kemal Bey, also known as Ismail Qemali, was an Albanian who assumed a leading role both in Ottoman diplomacy and in the Albanian national movement.

8 See Khlevniuk, Oleg V. *In Stalin’s Shadow: The Career of “Sergo” Ordzhonikidze*, Armonk, NY, M.E. Sharpe, 1995, p. 10.

9 See Rakovsky, Christian, “The Turkish Revolution”, originally published in French on August 1, 1908. Tr. by Ted Crawford and included in *The Balkan Socialist Tradition*, special issue of *Revolutionary History* (London), 2003, p. 106. The latter extensive and garrulous collection is marred by its attempted defense of Serbian aggression in Kosova in 1998-99.

10 Lenin, V.I., “Inflammable Material in World Politics,” in *Collected Works*, Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1973, v. 15, pp. 182-188.

11 Lenin, V.I., “The Foreign Policy of the Russian Revolution,” in *Collected Works*, Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1977, v. 25, pp. 85-87. Also see James, C.L.R., *World Revolution 1917-1936: The Rise and Fall of the Communist International*, London, M. Secker and Warburg, 1937, pp. 62-63.

12 For example, while Albanophone Sunni clerics in Macedonia oppose and refuse any recognition of the Islamic identity of the Bektashis, the Sunni clergy of Albania proper maintain official, friendly relations with them. In Kosova, Sunni-Bektashi relations are ambivalent, notwithstanding the leading role of Bektashis in the Kosovar struggle against Serbia. In the

Albanian diaspora, Sunni and Bektashi clerics maintain a cordial attitude of cooperation.

On Bektashism in the evolution of the Turkish republic, Küçük, Hülya, *The Role of the Bektashis in Turkey's National Struggle*, Leiden, Brill, 2002. On Bektashism in Albania, see my book *The Other Islam* (note 2.) Although a significant corpus of scholarly literature on Bektashism has appeared in English, French, and other languages in recent decades, most authoritative works on Bektashism remain available only in Albanian, and are as yet untranslated. Volumes (listed in chronological order of publication) such as Popovic, Alexandre and Gilles Veinstein, eds., "Bektachiyya," *Revue des Études Islamiques* [Paris], 1992; Mélikoff, Irène, *Hadji Bektach: un mythe et ses avatars*, Leiden, Brill, 1998, and Bougarel, Xavier, and Nathalie Clayer, *Le Nouvel Islam balkanique*, Paris, Maisonneuve & Larosse, 2001 are seriously flawed by their authors' general lack of thorough knowledge of Albanian language, culture, and history. The volume of Bougarel and Clayer is also markedly Islamophobic.

**13** Sijes, B.A., *De Februari-staking (The February Strike)*, Amsterdam, H.J.W. Becht, [1978]. One of few valuable sources in English on Sneevliet is Poretsky, Elisabeth, *Our Own People*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1970. Poretsky's work is a memoir of her husband, the defected and assassinated Soviet secret agent Ignacy Porecki-Reiss (1899-1937), who was associated with Sneevliet when he turned against Stalinism. Sneevliet is also discussed in works on the history of Chinese Communism and in the post-exile writings of Trotsky.

**14** Tan Malaka, *From Jail to Jail*, tr. by Helen Jarvis, Athens, Ohio University, 1991, p. 92. Although supportive of pan-Islamism, Tan Malaka himself was more sympathetic to a southeast Asian revolutionism embracing Filipinos and Chinese along with Indonesians and other Malays. He acquired a Trotskyist reputation although there is no evidence he was ever involved with the Trotskyists, or that Trotsky was aware of him.

**15** *Congress of the Peoples of the East – Baku*, September 1920, Stenographic Report, tr. by Brian Pearce, London, New Park Publications, 1977, p. 41. Originally published in Russian, Petrograd, Publishing House of the CI, 1920.

**16** Riazanov, D.B. *Marx and Anglo-Russian Relations And Other Writings*, tr. by Brian Pearce, London, Francis Boutle, 2003.

**17** Trotsky, Leon, *The War Correspondence: The*

*Balkan Wars 1912-13*, Monad Press, New York, 1980.

**18** Tucović, Dimitrije, et. al., *Srbija i Albanci, Pregled Politike Srbije Prema Albancima od 1878 do 1914* Godine (*Serbia and the Albanians, An Examination of the Policy of Serbia Toward Albanians from 1878 to 1914*), published by Časopis za kritiko znanosti, Ljubljana, 1989. This collection includes texts of Tucović, Dušan Popović, and Dragiša Lapčević cited here.

**19** Cohen, Mark, *Last Century of a Sephardic Community: The Jews of Monastir, 1839-1943*, New York, Foundation for the Advancement of Sephardic Studies and Culture, 2003. Another useful volume on this topic is Lebel, Jennie, *Tide and Wreck: History of the Jews of Vardar Macedonia*, tr. from Serbian by Paul Munch, Bergenfield, New Jersey, Avotaynu, 2008.

**20** Durham, Edith, *Albania and the Albanians*, London, Centre for Albanian Studies, 2001.

**21** Trotsky, Leon, *The Balkan Wars*, op. cit., pp. 285-286.

**22** Ibid, pp. 287-295..

**23** Tucović, Dimitrije, "Serbia and Albania," in *The Balkan Socialist Tradition*, special issue of *Revolutionary History*, periodical cit., p. 225.

**24** See Novaković, Kosta, "The Colonization and Serbianization of Kosova," *Liria Kombëtare* (Geneva), July 13, 1931. Cited in Schwartz, Stephen, *Kosova: Background to a War*, London, Anthem Press, 2000, p. 55.

**25** On the Serbian Social Democrats, Kosovar Albanian revolutionaries, the Macedonian revolutionary movement, and the KPJ, Banac, Ivo, *The National Question in Yugoslavia*, Ithaca, Cornell U.P., 1988, the outstanding work on the topic. An important volume on Soviet and CI attitudes toward Albanians, including Kosovars, in the 1920s as well as during the consolidation of the regimes of J.B. Tito and Enver Hoxha, is Lauka, Islam and Eshref Ymeri, *Shqipëria në Dokumentet e Arkivave Ruse (Albania in Documents from the Russian Archives)*, Tirana, Botimet Toena, 2006. Also see my article, "Enverists' and 'Titoists': Communism and Islam in Albania and Kosova, 1941-1999: From the Partisan Movement of the Second World War to the Kosova Liberation War," in *The Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, special issue on Muslims and Communists, March 2009.

**26** Banac, Ivo, *With Stalin Against Tito*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1988, p. 64.

**27** Schwartz, Stephen, "Ante Ciliga: 1898-1992,"



*Journal of Croatian Studies* (New York), 1992; published in Croatian as “Ante Ciliga (1898-1992): Život no povijesnim raskrižjima,” in *Društvena Istraživanja* (Zagreb), number 2-3, 1995. The English version is accessible at [www.revolutionary-history.co.uk/](http://www.revolutionary-history.co.uk/) [reviewed January 2008].

**28** Borkenau, Franz, *The Communist International*, London, Faber & Faber, 1938, pp. 293-294.

**29** *Ghazawat* meaning “raiding,” rather than *jihad* (effort), is the standard Islamic term for wars of conquest.

**30** *Congress of the Peoples of the East – Baku*, September 1920, Stenographic Report, op. cit., p. 67.

**31** *Ibid.*, p. 167.

**32** Serge, Victor, *Witness to the German Revolution*, tr. Ian Birchall, London, Redwords, 2000. p. 34.

**33** Serge, *ibid.*

**34** Porter, Cathy, *Larissa Reisner*, London, Virago, 1988, p. 116

**35** Porter, Cathy, *ibid.*, pp. 118-120.

**36** Reisner, Larisa, *Gamburg na barrikadakh*, a classic in the bibliography of the CI, tr. by Richard Chappell, as Larissa Reisner, *Hamburg at the Barricades and Other Writings on Weimar Germany*, London, Pluto Press, 1977.

**37** Schwartz, Stephen, “Ante Ciliga: 1898-1992”, op.cit., p. 191

**38** Platonov, Andrei, *The Fierce and Beautiful World.*, tr. Joseph Barnes, New York, Dutton, 1970.

**39** Kolarz, Walter, *Russia and Her Colonies*, New York, Praeger, 1952, p. 297.

**40** See my *Two Faces of Islam*, op. cit.

**41** Kistenmacher, Olaf, “From ‘Jewish Capital’ to the ‘Jewish-Fascist Legion in Jerusalem’: The Development of Antizionism in the German Communist Party (KPD) in the Weimar Republic, 1925-1933,” published by the online journal *Engage*, issues 2 and 3, May and September 2006, accessible at [www.engageonline.org.uk/journal/](http://www.engageonline.org.uk/journal/) [reviewed January 2008].

**42** Messali Hadj, “Response to M. Deloche of *l’Humanité*” (1937), in *Messali Hadj par les textes*, ed. Jacques Simon. Algiers-Paris, Editions Bouchéne, 2000, tr. by Mitch Abidor, accessible in English at [www.marxists.org/archive/messali-hadj/](http://www.marxists.org/archive/messali-hadj/) [reviewed January 2008]. Trotskyists were also notably active and prominent in French-occupied Vietnam and British-controlled Sri Lanka (then-Ceylon), and supported the independence movement in the U.S. possession of Puerto Rico.

**43** See Sánchez Ruano, Francisco, *Islam y Guerra Civil Española*, Madrid, La Esfera de los Libros, 2004. This volume is ample but must be used with caution when its author strays from Spanish, Moroccan, and French matters. An earlier and tendentious work that nonetheless confirms the statistical level of participation of North African Arabs as fighters for the Spanish Republic is Bensalem, Abdellatif, “Los Voluntarios Arabes en las Brigadas Internacionales (España, 1936-39),” *Revista internacional de sociología* [Madrid], October-December 1988.

**44** Cleveland, William L., *Islam Against the West*, Austin, U. of Texas P., 1985, is a biography of Shakib Arslan, but treats Messali Hadj superficially and speculatively.

**45** Notwithstanding contemporary reportage, the majority of Spanish military professionals honored their oaths to the Republican regime, and did not join the Franco insurrection.

**46** Very few moderate Republicans sided with the Francoists in the Spanish war.

**47** Arslan, Shakib, quoted in Alonso, N. Paradela, *El otro laberinto español: Viajeros arabes a España entre el siglo XVII y 1936*, Madrid, UAM, 1993.

**48** Sánchez Ruano, op. cit.

**49** On Albanians in the IB, see Uli, Prenk, and Qemal Sarajeva, *Asim Vokshi*, Tirana, “8 Nentori,” 1982. Their experience is also evoked in a popular novel, *Hasta la Vista* by Petro Marko (1913-91), first published in Tirana, Ndërmarrja Shtetërore e Botimeve, 1958. Marko was jailed under the Enver Hoxha regime in the late 1940s. He is considered a major Albanian modernist and *Hasta la Vista* has remained in print. According to the Albanologist Robert Elsie, writing in *Albanian Literature: A Short History*, London, I.B. Tauris, 2005, the leading Albanian poet Migjeni (Millosh Gjergj Nikolla, 1911-38), who was of Slav ethnic origin and had Trotskyist associations, also wanted to go to Spain to fight but was prevented from doing so by his acute tubercular condition, which led to his early death. Orwell’s *Homage to Catalonia*, describing the “May events” in Barcelona, is a modern classic available in many languages.

**50** Kapor, Čedo, *Za Mir i Progres u Svijetu (For World Peace and Progress)*, Sarajevo, Sarajevska Skupština Međunarodnih Dobrovoljaca Slobode 1936-39, 1999, includes a list of several hundred Yugoslav veterans of the Spanish war, including both Slavic Muslim and ethnic Albanian names.

**51** I.e. “revisionist” in the sense of revision of the global

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**51** I.e. "revisionist" in the sense of revision of the global order after the first world war, rather than of Bernsteinian reformist Marxism, or as the term was applied by the Maoist Chinese against Moscow after 1960.

**52** On Henein, see Renton, David, *Dissident Marxism*, London, Zed Books, 2004.

**53** On Curiel, see Breytenbach, Breyten, *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist*, New York, Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1985, and Schwartz, Stephen, *Intellectuals and Assassins*, London, Anthem Press, 2000. Curiel's papers are held at the International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam, with useful notes accessible at [www.iisg.nl/publications](http://www.iisg.nl/publications).

**54** Rajk was not Jewish. A fresh review of the Rajk trial

is included in Schwartz, Stephen, *Sarajevo Rose: A Balkan Jewish Notebook*, London, Saqi Books and The Bosnian Institute, 2005. Bosnian translation: *Sarajevska Ruža: Bilješke o Jevrejima na Balkanu*, Sarajevo, Tugra, 2006.

**55** This text is unsigned but originated with Azzam Publications, the primary global jihadist propaganda agency prior to the events of 11 September 2001, and remains accessible at [www.as-sahwah.com/](http://www.as-sahwah.com/) [reviewed January 2008].

**56** A useful ethnographic study of present-day Alevism in Germany is Sökefeld, Martin, *Struggling for Recognition: The Alevi Movement in Germany and in Transnational Space*, New York and Oxford, 2008. Also see the important work by Vermeulen, Floris F., *The Immigrant Organising Process*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2006.

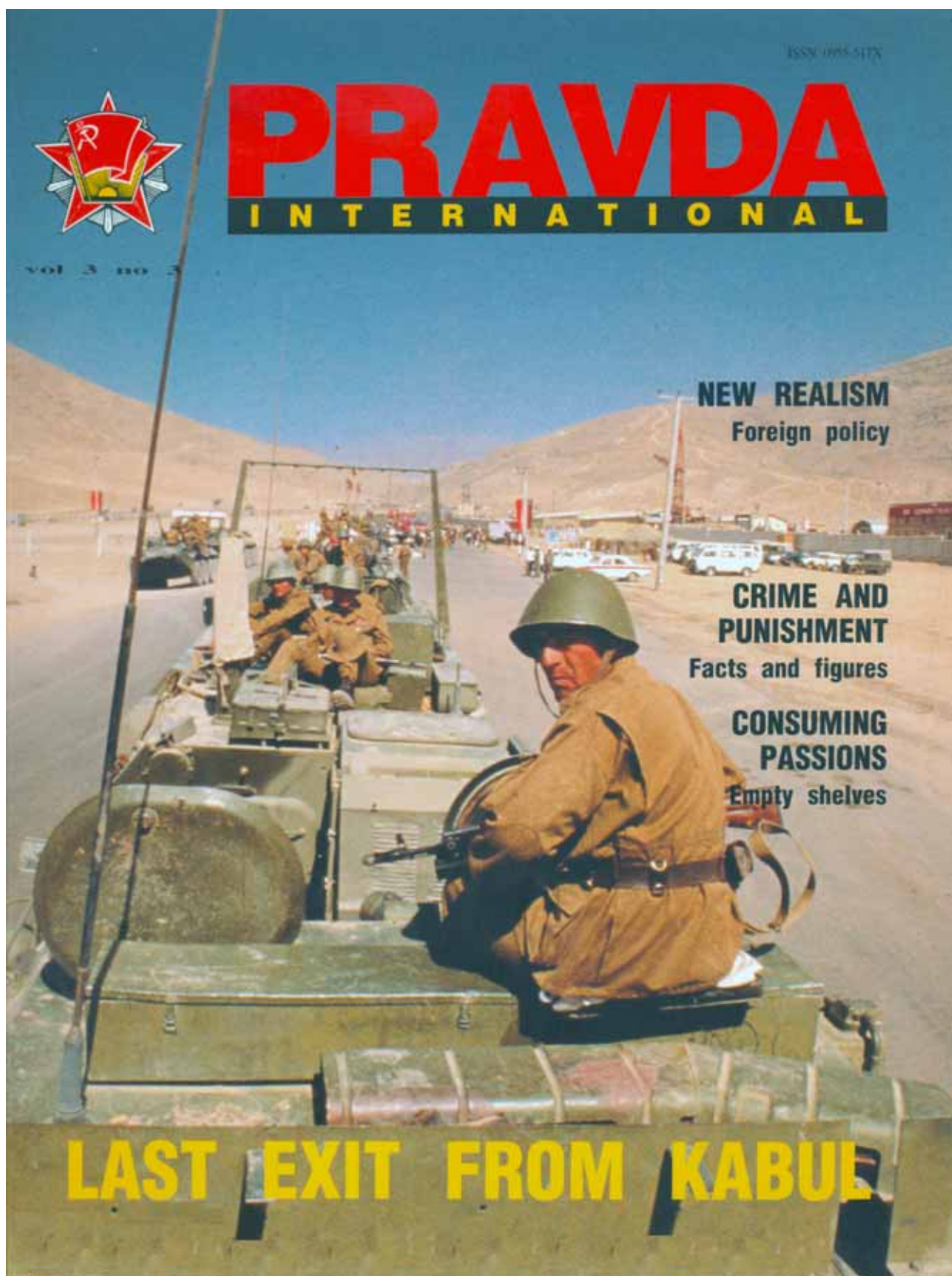
**57** Ewans, Martin, *Afghanistan: A Short History of Its People and Its Politics*, New York, HarperCollins, 2002. Notwithstanding its considerable importance as a political event, the history of pro-Soviet rule in Afghanistan remains poorly documented.

**58** See my *The Two Faces of Islam*, op. cit.



'Green, how I love you, green! Green wind. Green branches. The ship on the sea and the horse on the mountain.'  
**Federico García Lorca** (1898 - 1936)—from the poem "Romance Sonambulo"  
 Oil on canvas, by Emily Tarleton









## **OBEY YOUR COUNTRY'S LAWS!**

**Marje Sistani urges Muslims in West**

**By Mohamed Ali**

**MONTREAL, Canada:** Iraq's Al-Marje Al-Alaa Ali Sistani sent a message to Muslims in Western nations, urging them to obey the laws of the countries in which they live.

The fatwa was delivered at a Montreal news conference of prominent Shia Muslims on behalf of Ayatullah Sayyed Ali As-Sistani.

"Muslims have undertaken to obey the laws of the country of their residence and thus they must be faithful to that undertaking," the statement read.

It condemned all acts of violence and encouraged imams to keep a watchful eye on what's going on inside their mosques.

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**ISBN 978-0-9558779-3-3**