

THE RUSSIAN CONNECTION OF THE INDIAN *MUHAJIRIN*, 1920-1924

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ABSTRACT

This paper will concentrate on the activities of those Muslims of British India who, in the autumn of 1920, migrated to Afghanistan as part of the *hijrat* movement and then from there moved to Russian Central Asia where the Bolsheviks were believed to be sympathetic to the oppressed people of Asia and Africa in their struggle for national liberation. On arrival in Tashkent, the Indian *muhajirin* were well received and given ideological orientation under the supervision of M. N. Roy, a member of the Central Asiatic Bureau of the Communist International. Those who responded to the overtures were given military and political training at the school known as the Indusky Kurs. A significant result of this exercise was the formation, in October 1920, of an *émigré* Communist Party of India. But then suddenly the Soviets changed their strategy: instead of direct intervention they opted for indirect penetration as a more appropriate alternative. In the middle of 1921, the Tashkent military school was shut down and the *muhajirin* were taken to Moscow. There, they were given advanced training at the University of the Toilers of the East (KUTV). Since the Russian leaders at the time were not particularly inimical to national communism, the emphasis at the University was on allying Islam, nationalism and Marxism. After training, around 1922, the *muhajirin* were sent back to India to spread communist doctrines among Indians. But they were caught by the British Indian government and convicted on charges of conspiracy and subversion (1922-1924). Though the Marxist *muhajirin* seemed to have accomplished little in their immediate objective, they subsequently provided good leaders to the socialist movements in South Asia. It would be instructive to analyse their programme and study its impact on the history of the subcontinent.

Key Words: Asia, Africa, India.

It is not unusual to find human emotions having an opposite effect on people than the one intended. Staunch believers in a religion or a particular philosophy sometimes swing to an opposite direction and start espousing a different set of beliefs when insecurity or failure to achieve objectives engenders disenchantment and causes recoil. This is what happened to a group of British Indian pan-Islamists

who emigrated to Afghanistan in the summer of 1920 hoping to seek military aid from abroad in order to liberate themselves from British rule as well as save the endangered Caliph in distant Istanbul. But when neither happened they were so dismayed that they left Afghanistan, took refuge with the Bolsheviks and turned round to embrace Communism as their last anchor. It would be instructive to see how the process of change from one extreme to another came about and what impact it had on those young *muhajirin* (émigrés) individually and on the socio-political situation in British India generally.

The concept of *hijrat* in Islamic *shari'at*, on which these pan-Islamists had based their withdrawal from India, is a sort of a safety valve that authorizes Muslims juridically to make a tactical withdrawal from an unfriendly and hostile situation (*daru'l-harb*) to a safe haven (*daru'l-Islam*). The idea is to find a sanctuary, gather strength, and then re-conquer the territory thus lost. As such, the obligation of *hijrat* is bound up with commitment to undertake *jihād*. While embarking on *hijrat*, the Indian Muslim *muhajirin* somehow imagined themselves following the example of the Prophet of Islam (*sal'am*) who had moved from Makkah to Madinah in AD 622 and on gaining power and adherents re-conquered the city of his birth some ten years later. History is full of such examples but in the British Indian context the first known case was that of Shah Muhammad Ishaq (1778-1846), an *'alim* of the Waliullahi family of Delhi, who migrated to the Hejaz in the 1840s and started espousing the Ottoman cause. The next such occasion arose in the aftermath of the 1857 Uprising when doubts about India's *shari'i* position and fear of reprisals drove several *'ulama* to seek a safe haven in the Hejaz and some ventured as far as Istanbul where they were personally honoured by the Sultan-Caliph.¹ But it was during and after World War I that the uncertain fate of Turkey (with which the Indian Muslims had historical and religious ties) prompted pan-Islamists to leave India and take shelter in neighbouring Afghanistan and then fan out to various countries in the Middle East, Central Asia, Europe and even the American continent. They were joined in this venture by their revolutionary friends, prominent among whom were Barakatullah Maulavie (1859-1927), Raja Mahendra Pratap (1886-1979) and Obaidullah Sindhi (1872-1944) who established a "provisional government of India" in Kabul. Then there were Maulana Mahmud Hasan (1851-1920) and his Deobandi associates who migrated to Makkah with a view to linking up eventually with the Kabul group to start anti-British activities from the Tribal area. There was also a group of revolutionaries that sympathized with the Bolsheviks and included Abdur Rab Burk (?1870-) from Peshawar, Trimul Acharya from a South Indian town and Dr Abdul Hafeez (1889-1964) from Lahore, who had been moving

¹ For details see M. Naeem Qureshi, "The **Ulama** of British India and the **Hijrat** of 1920", *Modern Asian Studies*, 13, part 1 (1979), 41-59; and id., **Pan-Islam in British Indian Politics: A Study of the Khilafat Movement, 1918-1924** (Leiden, 1999), esp. 16-18.

from place to place busily scheming to bring about the fall of the British in India. During the War, several Muslim students from Lahore colleges, for instance Zafar Hasan Aybek (1895-1989), Khushi Muhammad, Mir Abdul Majid (1901-1980), Rehmat Ali Zakrya (1896-) and other friends, overcome by the misfortunes of the Ottoman Turkey had fled to Afghanistan with similar objectives and later played a prominent part in anti-British intrigues.² There were also young men like Muhammad Shafiq (1900-), a twenty-year old settler from Akora Khattak (Peshawar) who had migrated to Kabul in May 1919 in the wake of the Rowlatt agitation and had joined Sindhi's group.³

The most amazing surf of *hijrat*, however, was the one that arose in 1920 under the banner of the Khilafat movement (1918-1924) on a *fatwa* from the prominent anti-British 'alim, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad (1888-1958), who declared that since the British and the Allied governments were actively involved in dismembering the Ottoman Empire, India under Britain had become *daru'l-harb*.⁴ The encouragement for this had come from the Amir Amanullah Khan (1892-1960) of Afghanistan who was simply trying to create difficulties for the British. Consequently, taking a cue from the Amir's invitation and the 'ulama's *fatwa*, some 60,000 Indian Muslims took recourse to the tenets of Islam that prescribe *hijrat* or *jihad*. After the initial flurry, however, the project collapsed, primarily because it was a miscalculated and ill-organized and had ignored all political and economic realities. It had been planned outside the main agenda of the Khilafat movement and was against the wishes of its central command. However, it received a *coup de grace* from the Afghans who were unable to cope with the influx of such a large number of people. As a result, about seventy-five percent *muhajirin* returned to India. Others either stayed on in Afghanistan or scattered to Central Asia, Turkey and Russia. A large number perished through exhaustion and disease.⁵

This paper is concerned with the activities of the *muhajirin* who, in spite of the hazards of the journey, decided to move beyond Afghanistan to Central Asia, Turkish Anatolia and Bolshevik Russia. The focus will be not just on the adventures of these daredevils but also on their impact on the situation in Afghanistan, Central Asia and British India in the backdrop of the rise of Communism then enveloping the East. It would be instructive to find answers to many unrequited

² Ibid., 78-81.

³ See Muhammad Shafiq's statement recorded before the Peshawar magistrate, in Crown vs. Muhammad Shafiq of Akora Khattak, 1924, Shafiq Papers (Private Collection).

⁴ Iqbal Shaidai later tried to defend Azad by suggesting that the 'alim had changed his views on *hijrat* though he did not rescind his *fatwa* fearing that it would be 'harmful for his reputation'. See Shaidai's notes 'How I became a Mohajir (Émigré): Phase Two', NAP, Shaidai Collection.

⁵ Naeem Qureshi, *Pan-Islam in British Indian Politics*, 174-232.

questions: What, for instance, prompted them to leave Afghanistan for Central Asia and align themselves with the Bolsheviks? What made them to give up pan-Islam and embrace Communism? Was it just a matter of expediency or a genuine change of heart? Why did the nationalist Turks spurn their offer to fight for them in Anatolia? And finally, what was the result of this whole episode on the future of pan-Islam in Asia? Evidently, disappointments and uncertainties about their future in Afghanistan had led to inertia that appeared to make their lives seemingly purposeless. Initially, the Afghan government did show some enthusiasm to welcome and settle the *muhajirin* but for a poor and almost a medieval tribal society it was difficult, both administratively and economically, to cope with such a multitude of people. On top of it, the Afghan government was locked in negotiations with the British over their future following the Third Afghan War and, therefore, was unable to be enthusiastic about supporting any overt action against the latter. The measures that the Afghan government took on the advice of the Anjuman-i Muhajirin, the non-official Indo-Afghan body created to look after the welfare of the *muhajirin*, remained largely unimplemented.

The problem started when Kabul was inundated by some 60,000 *muhajirin* who had little money, no job or vocation and no prospect of bettering their lot in the near future. The Afghan authorities panicked and persuaded the Amir to issue a *farman* on 9 August banning the entry of any more *muhajirin* into Afghanistan until those already there had been settled. In future, they were to be admitted only on a fixed quota and settled in a new colony to be set up in Katghan in Afghan Turkestan.⁶ The *farman* was taken as an unfriendly act and signalled the start of a mad rush back to India. Nobody bothered to appreciate the Afghan position or ponder as to how British India, pronounced *daru'l-harb* so vehemently a few months back, had suddenly become *daru'l-Islam*.⁷ The *muhajirin* began to return in the same impetuous manner in which they had left their homes. Even those who had enlisted in the Afghan army or had joined the faculty of the Habibia College deserted or resigned to join the trail to Peshawar. Attempts to dissuade the *muhajirin* from returning home did not succeed.⁸ The ultimate winner in this

⁶ Ibid. The Afghan government promised financial assistance to those *muhajirin* who were keen on starting vocations in trade, industry and education. At Kabul three regiments of the *muhajirin* were proposed for enlistment in the regular army and subject to its rules and regulations. The young *muhajirin* of good families ('Khanzadas') could enter the military college and, after the completion of their training, were to be appointed in these newly established regiments. Military training to other *muhajirin* was to be given by Afghan instructors in their respective colonies, such as Jabal-us-Siraj and Katghan. But they were to be considered volunteers and not entitled to any pay. Teachers, doctors and skilled workers were to be employed according to the requirements of the various departments. Those who desired to proceed to Anatolia 'for the purpose of Islam and in the interests of India' were allowed to send a delegation to explore the possibilities of an eventual emigration to that place.

⁷ Mir Rahmatullah Humayun's statement in *Zamindar* (Lahore), 16 Nov. 1920.

⁸ The statement of Shaikh Abdur Rahim of Kasur in *Zamindar*, 26 Sept. 1920. Also see Abdullah Quraishi's letter to *Siyasat* (Lahore), 26 Aug. 1920.

whole sordid affair, however, was the Government of India which won praise from the returning *muhajirin* by cleverly extending help to them.⁹

Those *muhajirin* who had decided to remain in Afghanistan were hopelessly divided and generally leaned on the Islamists and the Bolshevik sympathizers in Kabul.¹⁰ Within these two main groups there were several sub-factions. The most important was the one led by Obaidullah Sindhi that attracted the largest number of adherents. Its core consisted of the self-exiles, *émigré* revolutionaries and the *mujahidin* leaders. Sindhi had been ill-treated by the late Amir Habibullah (1872-1919) but had been reinstated by Amanullah. The second faction was under Abdur Rab who had, especially after his rift with Sindhi in 1918, gone over to the Bolsheviks. He was about fifty, subscribed to the “Wahhabi” creed and had served the British embassy in Baghdad during the war but subsequently defected to the Turks. He had returned to Kabul from Tashkent via Europe in December 1919 with Lenin’s envoy, Z. Suritz, whose mission also included Mahendra Pratap and Barakatullah Maulavie, who had since acquired Turkish citizenship. The third faction was led by Abdul Latif Kohati who was very close to the Afghan establishment and as such was believed to be influential. The fourth was headed by Muhammad Aslam from Peshawar who also boasted of connections with the Afghan officials and on that count seemed to attract a good following. The fifth was under Dr Abdul Ghani (1864-1943) and his brother Najaf Ali. Dr Ghani was an educationist and had been in the Afghan service for quite some time. The brothers had suffered under the late Amir Habibullah for sympathising with the “Young Afghans” desirous of introducing a parliamentary system in the country. But now they were back in the saddle and very much sought after by those who wanted Amir Amanullah’s attention. There were several other Indians, including Sardar Muhammad Aslam Baluch, the editor of the *Arain* of Amritsar, who offered their services to the *muhajirin* but were not very effective.¹¹

⁹ Free food shops were opened for immediate relief and free railway warrants were issued. They also arranged for safeguarding the property rights of the *muhajirin* and settling land disputes speedily under Section 8 of the Frontier Crimes Regulations rather than under the ordinary law. In the worst affected areas special officers were appointed to look after the interests of the soldiers and their families. See A. H. Khan, **Mard-i mu’min**, 58; ‘Report on the Hijrat Movement ...’, by DC, Peshawar, in NWFP Archives, Tribal Cell file 51/2-Pol./ii; Chief Com., NWFP, to Foreign Sec., Govt. of India, Tel. no. 868-P., 17 Aug. 1920, Oriental and India Office Collection (OIOC), British Library, London, L/P&J/6/1701, file 5703/1920; and Chief Com., NWFP, to Foreign Sec., Govt. of India, Tel. no. 895-P., 22 Aug. 1920 in *ibid*.

¹⁰ Usmani, **Peshawar to Moscow** (Benares, 1927), 6-8.

¹¹ Amritsari, ‘Tahrik-i hijrat ki tarikh’ in Jafri Nawi, **Auraq-i Gumgashta** (Lahore, 1968), 811-12; Aybek’s letter to me dated 26 Dec. 1967; and T. R. Sareen, **Indian Revolutionary Movement Abroad** (New Delhi, 1979), 30-1. For Barakatullah Maulavie see Shaikat Siddiqi, ‘kammunist party af Indiya kaise qa’im hui?’, 20 and 21, **al-Fatha**, 7/27-8 (12-19 Nov. and 19-26 Nov. 1976), 15-16 and 22-6; and Abdur Rahman Siddiqi, “Maulana Barakatu’llah Mahrum”, **Urdu**, 22/83 (1941), 391-403.

With such wide divisions there could be no unanimity of action. Obaidullah Sindhi and his associates, supported by the Afghan government, encouraged the *muhajirin* to move on and take up residence in Jabal-us-Siraj, a Tajik-dominated fertile land up north with plenty of water and fruit gardens some 40 to 50 miles (one mile is equal to 1.6 kilometres) from Kabul beyond the Koh-i Daman valley.¹² Another group led by Maulawi Abdul Haq (d. 1925) was in favour of proceeding immediately to Turkey to fight for the caliph whereas Abdur Rab encouraged the young *muhajirin* to go to Russia, especially to the Central Asian city of Tashkent, where the Bolsheviks were known to be sympathetic to the Indians.¹³ However, for the time being, the Amir's orders prevailed and a large number of *muhajirin* had to proceed to Jabal-us-Siraj from where they were dispersed to other areas, especially in Turkestan.¹⁴ The journey was difficult but the climate of the region was suitable for the Indians. By the middle of June 1920, nearly 200 *muhajirin* had been settled in Jabal-us-Siraj which encouraged the Afghan government to send more *muhajirin* to the area.¹⁵ Those who were driven off towards Panjshir, Katghan, and Badakhshan were reported to be in a crisis, as they had no means of subsistence.¹⁶

Meanwhile, the *muhajirin*, whether in Kabul or in Jabal-us-Siraj, were becoming increasingly upset by idleness and frustration. The event that proved the last straw was the rumoured peace terms that were being finalized between the Afghans and the British following their talks at Mussoorie. Fears began to take hold of the *muhajirin* that the Afghans might leave them in the lurch and disavow any help against the British. They had taken refuge in Afghanistan thinking that it was an ideal place for launching a *jihad* and now they were not so sure. Indeed, some hotheads among them had already started believing that Afghanistan had become *daru'l-harb* and, therefore, they must leave for some other suitable place from where they could launch their struggle. The alternatives before them were either to make Chamarkand in the Tribal belt their headquarters and work from there, or to go to Anatolia and support Mustafa Kemal Paşa whose nationalist forces were locked in a last ditch battle with the Greek invaders. Most of the *muhajirin* favoured the second alternative.¹⁷ They could do so via the neighbouring Central

¹² Usmani, **Peshawar to Moscow**, 6 ff.

¹³ Ibid., 6-11; and G. Adhikari (ed.), **Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India**, I (New Delhi, 1971), 39.

¹⁴ Amritsari, "Tahrik-i Hijrat ki Tarikh", 817.

¹⁵ Usmani, **Peshawar to Moscow**, 6-11; and Amritsari, "Tahrik-i hijrat ki tarikh", 821.

¹⁶ See the statements of the returned *muhajirin* in NWFP, CID file 1826, 12/8/4/xiii-xxiii, and 12/8/5/i-iv, S-379; and Viceroy to Sec. of State, Tels. nos. 211 and 212, 15 and 23 Sept. 1920, OIOC, Chelmsford Papers. Also see **The Times**, 22 Sept. 1920; and Aybek, **Ap biti** (Lahore, 1964), i, 213.

¹⁷ Mian Akbar Shah, **Azadi ki Talash**, (ed.), Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah (Islamabad, 1989), 86 ff.; and Shaukat Siddiqi, 'Kamunist parti af Indiya kaise qai'm hu'i', 6, **al-Fatah** (Karachi), 11-18 June 1976, 12.

Asia where the Bolsheviks were known to be sympathetic to the colonial people. The snag, however, was that the British might intervene as they had re-entered the stage once again to play out their plot in Central Asia. Without dwelling too much on the romance and complexities of the 'Great Game' it would be sufficient to call to mind briefly the economic and political ramifications of the Anglo-Russian rivalry in Afghanistan and Central Asia. Throughout the nineteenth century, they had been engaged in a costly and dangerous competition not knowing what exactly the other side was planning. Since most routes to Central Asia passed through Afghanistan, its geopolitical importance to powers was obvious. Afghanistan being weak, shaky and volatile became an easy target of the Anglo-Russian rivalry for influence and control through a mixture of economic incentives and political pressure. But, in the process, both powers ended up exaggerating grossly each other's intentions and capabilities.¹⁸ The rivalry entered a new phase in the early twentieth century when Russia passed under the Bolsheviks though the hegemonic objectives inherited from the tsarist predecessors remained the same. The British were thus drawn into a renewed tussle with the Bolsheviks who were struggling to move southwards in the hope of arousing support from the colonial people. But there was considerable confusion as to their policy towards pan-Islam and nationalism in the Muslim world because it exposed the contradiction that lay in the ideological and pragmatic aspects of Bolshevik policies. In spite of the irresistible pull of ideology, pragmatism required a compromise, especially in the case of 'the national liberation struggle' and the status of colonies in the Communist system.¹⁹ The Bolshevik policy towards the Muslims was unveiled for the first time in November 1917 when they issued an "Appeal to all Moslem Toilers of Russia and the East". But apart from its doctrinal merit it had little real impact until Lenin presented his "two-stage" thesis at the Second Comintern Congress at Petrograd/Moscow (17 July-7 August 1920) by which he wanted to support nationalists to gain power and then bring them down to complete the revolution. This strategy was adopted in preference to the "one-stage" proposal put forward by M. N. Roy (1886-1954), an Indian revolutionary from Bengal, which went straight for the overthrow of capitalism without extending co-operation with the nationalist movements. Later, the "Congress of the Peoples of the East" at Baku (18-21 September 1920), recognized the importance of extending support to revolutionary liberation movements in the colonies so that peasants were organized for ultimate victory. As a concession, Roy's thesis was accommodated by allowing those Asian countries that were ripe for revolution to

¹⁸ Suhash Chakravarty, *Afghanistan and the Great Game* (Delhi, 2002), esp. 271 ff.; and Mehmet Saray, *The Russian, British, Chinese and Ottoman Rivalry in Turkestan* (Ankara, 2003), 1-130.

¹⁹ Geoffrey Jukes, *The Soviet Union in Asia* (Sydney & London, 1973), 4-6.

run the “one-stage” course.²⁰ Roy was able to overcome all opposition, especially from Virendra Nath Chattopdhyaya (1883-1937), brother of Congress leader Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949), who had insisted that Moscow give up supporting pan-Islam to which Lenin seemed receptive.²¹ Here, Roy carried a high risk of clash with pan-Islam which was then being advocated throughout the Muslim East.²²

The sources on the *muhajirin*, which consist of the British and Indian official records, intelligence summaries, and memoirs and correspondence of those *muhajirin* played a central role in the events, are full of interesting accounts of their activities in Tashkent, Moscow and beyond.²³ They also throw light on the life of the *muhajirin* in Afghnaistan, especially Jabal-us-Siraj and Mazar-i Sharif. In Jabal-us-Siraj, for instance, they were housed in the Qila Sarwar Khan, a military garrison, under the watchful eye of Aminullah Khan, the official *mihmandar* (host), who knew Urdu and as such was the right person for the job. There were also about 200 Afridi soldiers stationed at the fort who had defected during the Third Afghan War and were happy to see their compatriots in the vicinity. The *muhajirin*, however, were restless souls and eagerly awaited the opportunity to acquire military training. They improvised sticks for rifles for training and the trainers were those *muhajirin* who had served with the British Indian army or had been in the university officers training course. They were a diverse group from as

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

²¹ B. B. Misra, **The Indian Political Parties: An Historical Analysis of Political Bolshevism up to 1947** (Delhi, 1976), 192-3.

²² Geoffrey Jukes, **The Soviet Union in Asia, 6-7**. Jukes, however, confuses the date of the Nov. 1917 appeal. See also J. P. Haithcox, **Communism and nationalism in India: M. N. Roy and Communist Policy, 1920-1939** (Princeton, 1971), 10-12; Zafar Imam, **Colonialism in East-West Relations** (New Delhi, 1969), 16-24; and Devendra Kaushik, **Central Asia in Modern Times** (Moscow, 1970), 26.

²³ Among the official records the more important are L/P&S/10 and L/P&S/11 series in Political & Secret Subject Files, L/P&S/18 and L/P&S/20 in Political and Secret Memoranda, and L/P&J/6 and L/P&J/7 series in Public and Judicial records at OIOC. The FO 371 series at the National Archives of UK in London is another invaluable archival source. An equally important source is the **Police Abstract of Intelligence, Punjab** for the 1920s to 1940s at the Special Branch Police Archives in Lahore. Among the memoirs (some have already been mentioned and others follow below) the important ones are those by Zafar Hasan Aybek (*Ap bitii*), Mian Akbar Shah (**Azadi ki Talash**), Abdul Akbar Khan Akbar (**Karwan-i azadi**, Charsadda, 1972), Faiz Muhammad Khan (**Hijrat-i Afghanistan** (ed.), Syed Darbar Ali Shah, Lahore, 1977), Iqbal Shaidai (Shaidai Papers, NAP) and Rafique Ahmad in Muzaffar Ahmad (**The Communist Party of India and its Formation Abroad**, Calcutta, 1962) and they have already been referred to. A critique of some of these memoirs is available in Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah Kaka Khel, ‘Some Indian Travellers in Central Asia’ in **Central Asia**, 25 (Winter 1989), 73-101. Khizar Humayun Ansari, in his **The Emergence of Socialist Thought Among North Indian Muslims (1917-1947)**, (Lahore, 1990), has appended a useful biographical data on the socialist-Communist *muhajirin* which he has drawn on various archival and secondary sources.

young as sixteen to as old as fifty-five and came from different socio-economic and educational backgrounds. Some of them were ordinary folks who had little or no education or were school dropouts while others were college graduates and belonged to middle class or even wealthier families. They had different objectives and views but adversity and a sense of mission had taught them the value of respecting the others' point of view. By consensus Muhammad Akbar Khan (1895-) of Hazara was chosen as the head of a *muhajirin* committee and he proved to be a good leader of men. Akbar Khan looked after their comfort, solved their personal problems, and served as a liaison with the *mihmandar*. Gradually, life seemed to return to the camp as the climate was healthy and the *muhajirin* were well provided for by the government. But then suddenly the news of the impending Anglo-Afghan peace disturbed the *muhajirin*. With the exception of those few who had come to Afghanistan to better their lives, the majority was concerned with finding ways to gather strength and strike back at the British power in India. For them Afghanistan was now as bad as any *daru 'l-harb* from where they must leave for a *daru 'l-Islam*. The matter was put to vote and after a prolonged and heated debate eighty-two *muhajirin* out of two hundred resolved to leave immediately for Anatolia through Central Asia while others decided to wait for a while. The first group chose Akbar Khan as their leader while the remaining *muhajirin* converged under Muhammad Akbar Jan of Peshawar. Information about the first group is more readily available and comparatively more detailed. We now know that the first *qafila* left Jabal-us-Siraj sometime in July 1920 on its perilous journey to Central Asia. The *muhajirin* wound their way to Mazar-i-Sharif through Gul Bahar, the Panjshir Pass, Bazargi, Narain, Baghlan, Ghaur, Aybek and Tashkarghan. The topography varied from lush green areas to dusty towns. The journey itself was demanding physically and several of the *muhajirin* either died or disappeared. Mazar-i Sharif, was then the only major town in the Afghan Turkestan some fifty miles this side of the Amu Darya with a dominant Dari speaking Tajik ethnicity and famous for the purported tomb of Ali, the nephew and son-in-law of the prophet of Islam. It was a bustling commercial and pilgrim centre and a tract of land around this area had been marked by the Amir for the settlement of the *muhajirin* which the latter had foolishly turned down. The last lap from Mazar-i Sharif to Termiz was even more difficult because they had to cross the hazardous Hindukush range. It was snow all around and bitterly cold. However, the topography changed dramatically when they descended into the sandy plains where it was mostly dry desert. First stop was Siyah Gard and Balkh before they reached the Amu Darya from where they could see the spirals of churches rising in the distance on the other side of the river.²⁴

²⁴ Akbar Shah, *Azadi ki Talash*, 93-132; and the narrative of Rafiq Ahmad in Muzaffar Ahmad, *The Communist Party of India*, 16-18.

The Amu Darya, the Oxus of the ancient world, is the largest river of Central Asia. It runs almost 2,540 km in a northwest course between modern Tajikistan and Afghanistan, continues northwest between Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, and then flows north through Uzbekistan into the Large Aral Sea. Finally, when the *muhajirin* reached Termiz on the other side of the river they were extremely tired and in tatters –broken shoes, torn clothes, and disheveled in every way– but the Bolshevik commandant received them courteously. Naturally, the *muhajirin* were deeply impressed by the Bolshevik civility and hospitality. Outside the cantonment, however, control was in the hands of the Emir of Bokhara. Conquered in 1866 by Russia, Bokhara (now a bustling city in independent Uzbekistan) was a protectorate and the Bolsheviks were insistent on extending their direct rule. And though the hostilities had not yet started the clouds of war were visible on the horizon. The Indians were anxious to reach Anatolia as quickly as possible but they had no specified route in mind and no definite itinerary to follow. They had only a vague destination. The Bolsheviks did not want the Indians to take unnecessary risk of leaving Termiz under uncertain conditions, especially when the countryside was infested with unruly Turkoman brigands. The *muhajirin*, however, were nonchalant about it believing that being Muslims, the Turkomans would not molest fellow Muslims. The Indians started upstream for Kerki and Charjew by way of the Amu Darya in two big boats with necessary provisions. They briefly stopped at Kiev where they realized that the party of guards sent with them from Termiz had deserted. Somewhere near Serai Nizam Beg, they were captured by the Turkomans who took them for Russians or Jadidists as some of the *muhajirin*, especially the Pakhtuns from the Frontier, were very fair and had blue eyes. In spite of their assurances that they were Muslims from India and were headed for Anatolia to help the Turks they were arrested, subjected to torture and kept without food and water. At night they were bound together like cattle so that they would not escape. They were also deprived of all their possessions and even their clothes. As a result, several *muhajirin* died or went missing. In fact, the whole party was condemned to death but escaped miraculously when a senior Turkoman realized that they had on them Afghan authorization papers and if harmed were likely to invite reprisals. Even then their ordeal did not end until the Turkomans melted away before the advancing Red Army. With much difficulty the *muhajirin* trickled into the Kerki cantonment where the Jadidist soldiers had been looking for them. They were now between sixty and seventy but the horrible experience with the Turkomans had made them reflective and focused. They repaid the Russian hospitality when some of them volunteered to fight for them against the Turkomans and did well in the ensuing skirmishes. The situation eased somewhat towards the end of August and beginning of September 1920 when the Bolsheviks successfully sacked Bokhara.²⁵

²⁵ Akbar Shah, *Azadi ki talash*, 133-85; and Muzaffar Ahmad, *The Communist Party of India*, 18-27.

With great difficulty the *muhajirin* managed to reach Charjew in eastern Turkmenistan on the Amu Darya, about nearly 85 miles southwest of Bokhara in present-day Uzbekistan. It was a major river and rail junction and transshipment point, as well as the site of the largest port complex on the Amu Darya. By this time the month of September had started and winter was fast approaching. At Charjew, the *muhajirin* found a courier of M. N. Roy, then a member of the Central Asiatic Bureau of the Comintern, waiting to invite them to Tashkent where all kinds of revolutionaries and runaways from the colonial world had collected.²⁶ In fact, Roy had been dispatched to Tashkent by the Bolsheviks specifically to woo and win over the *muhajirin*. He arrived fully prepared with two trainloads of military hardware and field equipment.²⁷ The plan was to train the *muhajirin* as the vanguard of an army of invasion designed to target British India through Afghanistan. This was not a novel idea as there had been on record several such attempts in the past directed at the British possessions in India. For instance, there was the plot by the Indian revolutionaries who were working in collaboration with the Germans and the Turks for an invasion of India. The establishment of the “provisional government of India” in Kabul that included Mahendra Pratap, Barakatullah Maulavie and Obaidullah Sindhi was a step in that direction. The plot also yielded the Turco-German-Indian expedition to Kabul (1915) that tried to create trouble in the Tribal region.²⁸ Then there was the clandestine “Silk Letter Conspiracy” of the Deobandi *‘ulama* which attempted to launch a *jihad* against the British from the Tribal territory with the help of Turkey and Afghanistan. This was the brainchild of Maulana Mahmud Hasan (1851-1920) who envisaged raising an “Army of God” from among the Tribes and the Afghans. The linchpin of the plot was Mahmud Hasan’s old pupil, Obaidullah Sindhi, then in Kabul. But the conspiracy fell through with the discovery of some incriminating material by a British Indian intelligence agency with the result that Mahmud Hasan and his associates were arrested in the Hejaz where they had made a detour before reaching Kabul.²⁹ Another plot, which had an eerie resemblance with that of Roy, was conceived by the Indian Khilafatist Mohamed Ali (1878-1931) in

²⁶ Akbar Shah, *Azadi ki Talash*, 185-89.

²⁷ M. N. Roy, *Memoirs* (New Delhi, 1964), 421-2; and Ansari, *The Emergence of Socialist Thought*, 31.

²⁸ The mission was under Werner Otto von Hentig and Oskar von Niedermayer and included Barakatullah and Kazim Bey. See Thomas L. Hughes, ‘The German Mission to Afghanistan, 1915-1916’, *German Studies Review*, 25/3 (2002), 447-76; and Barakatullah Maulavie to M. Briand, memo dated 10 Nov. 1925, NAP, Shaidai Collection.

²⁹ For details see OIOC, L/P&S/10/633, file 4260/1916; OIOC, P/Conf./51, ICH(P)P, July-Dec. 1919, Proc. no. 422; Sir Michael O’Dwyer, *India as I Knew it* (London, 1925), 180; Husain Ahmad Madani, *Naqsh-i Hayat* (Deoband, 1953), ii, 137-43, 145-9, 211-13, 153-65, 214-27 and 231-4; id., *Safarnama-i asir-i Malta* (Deoband, [1923]), esp. 14-16, 47-9, 64-126; Maulana Muhammad Ali Kasuri, *Mushahidat-i Kabul wa Yaghistan* (Karachi, n.d.), 11 and 32-3; and Naeem Qureshi, *Pan-Islam in British Indian Politics*, 79-81.

collaboration with the *émigré* Turkish leaders such as Mehmed Talat Paşa (1874-1921), Ahmed Cemal Paşa (1872-1922), and Enver Paşa (1881-1922) then living in asylum in Europe. Their plan also envisaged an invasion of India by an army raised in Afghanistan from amongst the Afghans, the *muhajirin* and the tribesmen on the Indian frontier.³⁰ The main support was to come from the Bolsheviks though the Indian Khilafat Committee was also to contribute financially.³¹ It is not clear whether any of the conspirators was aware of the other plots as they were conceived secretly and at different times. But even if Mohamed Ali and the Turkish leaders were unaware of Roy's plan, they must have noticed with comfort the advantages to be gained from the Bolshevik policy of supporting pan-Islamic and nationalist movements even though for their own motives.³²

Faced with the difficult choice of accepting Roy's invitation or heading for Anatolia, nearly half of the *muhajirin* decided to opt for Tashkent while others made a dash for Baku in Azerbaijan en route to Anatolia. Three days later, two trains moved in opposite directions from the Charjew station carrying about thirty-five *muhajirin* each for Tashkent and Baku. The Tashkent group included, Akbar Khan of Hazara, Rafique Ahmad (1899-) of Bhopal, Mir Abdul Majid (1901-1980) of Lahore, Sultan Mahmud (1899-) of Hazara, Firozuddin Mansoor (1903-1959) of Shaikhupura, Gawhar Rahman Khan (1897-) of Darvesh (Hazara), Mian Akbar Shah (1899-1990) of Badrashi (Peshawar), Abdul Qadir Sehrai (1901-) of Peshawar, Fida Ali Zahid of Peshawar, Ghulam Muhammad Khan of Peshawar, Abdullah Safdar (1895-) of Peshawar, Abdur Rahim of UP, Abdul Qayyum (1898-) of Peshawar, Shaukat Usmani (1901-1978) of Bikanir, Abdul Hamid (1892-) of Ramgarh (Ludhiana) and many others.³³ The youngest Mansoor was only seventeen while the oldest Hamid was twenty-eight. As to their family backgrounds most of these young men belonged to salaried class subordinate government functionaries

³⁰ The information is based on several documents in OIOC, esp. L/P&S/18, B. 350 and B. 361; Shaidai Papers in NAP and his "Memoirs" in *Imroze*, 25 May 1969; and Aybek, *Ap biti*, i, 221-2. The Turkish contacts with the Germans and the Bolsheviks can be seen in Masayuki Yamauchi, **The Green Crescent Under the Red Star: Enver Pasha in Soviet Russia, 1919-1922** (Tokyo, 1991), esp. 13-15, 19-20, 21-2, 26, 38-42, 47 and 53-63.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² For the Bolshevik policy towards India and Asia generally and their attempts to exploit pan-Islam, see Govt. of India, **Communism in India, 1924-1927**, comp. in Intelligence Bureau, Home Dept. (Calcutta, 1927); OIOC, L/P&S/18, A. 184, "Central Asia, Persia and Afghanistan: Bolshevik and Pan-Islamic Movements & Connected Information", Nov. 1919; OIOC, L/P&S/10/887, file 1847/1920; Ikbāl Ali Shah, 'The Drifting of Central Asia-II', **New Europe**, 17 (29 Apr. 1920), 615-16; **The Times**, 2 Jan. 1920; **Madras Mail**, 27 Nov. 1922; Harish Kapur, **Soviet Russia and Asia, 1917-1927** (Geneva, 1965), ch., ii; M. N. Roy, **Memoirs** (Bombay, 1964), part 3; G. D. Overstreet and M. Windmiller, **Communism in India** (Berkeley, 1959), 7-43; David N. Druhe, **Soviet Russia and Indian Communism** (New York, 1959), ch., ii; and Imam, **Colonialism in East-West Relations** (New Delhi, 1969), 65-82.

³³ See the narrative of Rafiq Ahmad in Muzaffar Ahmad, **The Communist Party of India**, 27-8.

serving as clerks, police officials, *risaldars*, or in professions like teachers, pleaders, *munsifs*, press workers, or held small *zamindaris*. Their educational standards varied from school going to college graduates.³⁴ First, they were taken to Bokhara where they stayed for three days. Bokhara had been captured by the Bolsheviks only a few days earlier when it capitulated on 30 August 1920 making it possible for the Red Army to move in two days later (2 September). The Emir had escaped with his prized possessions and a new administrative set-up was being put into place. While passing through Bokhara, the *muhajirin* found that the traces of old Islamic culture were disappearing fast and thousands of *madrasas* virtually crumbling from neglect. But they could do nothing to arrest the collapse. From Bokhara to Tashkent the journey took two days and two nights. At the railway station they were received by Maulawi Abdur Rab Peshawari and his group and taken to the Induskii Doma where they were to stay while in city.³⁵

Located in an oasis near the Chirchik River in the eastern region, Tashkent (now the capital of Uzbekistan) was also once the center of Islamic civilization and culture. The city had become a magnet for revolutionaries from all over who either stayed on looking for opportunities or passed through it to other more suitable places. Among the Indians who had already arrived in Tashkent early that year as a result of the Bolshevik propaganda in Kabul, were Muhammad Shafiq, Ahmad Hassan, Abdul Majid Kohati and Muhammad Sadiq. At Tashkent, Shafiq had cast away his allegiance to Obaidullah and joined Abdur Rab's party³⁶ who had already founded an *anjuman* with a branch at Baku looked after by one Fazal Qadir. The organization also included several Indian army deserters and ran a paper known as the *Azad Hindustan Akhbar*.³⁷ This was before he had left for Moscow in March 1919 with Mahendra Pratap and Barakatullah Maulavie to urge upon Lenin the necessity of driving the British troops from the Caspian-Oxus valley and befriending Afghanistan and Muslims of Turkestan.³⁸ On return to Tashkent, they decided to leave for Kabul again with Cemal Paşa.³⁹ In order to impress the Bolsheviks, Shafiq had started publishing a short-lived propaganda paper, the *Zamindar* (May 1920), which, however, was terminated after its first issue because the hosts found it unsatisfactory.⁴⁰ Shafiq and Acharya were though at daggers drawn, had attended the Second Comintern Congress in

³⁴ Ansari, *The Emergence of Socialist Thought*, 28-9.

³⁵ Akbar Shah, *Azadi ki talash*, 192-7; and Muzaffar Ahmad, *The Communist Party of India*, 28.

³⁶ See Shafiq's statement in Crown vs. Muhammad Shafiq of Akora Khattak, 1924, Shafiq Papers.

³⁷ Shaikat Siddiqi, "Kammunist Party af Indiya Kaise qa'im Hui?", 14, *al-Fatha*, 7/13 (6-13 Aug. 1976), 18-19.

³⁸ Barakatullah Maulavie to M. Briand, memo dated 10 Nov. 1925, NAP, Shaidai Collection.

³⁹ Shaikat Siddiqi, "Kammunist Party af Indiya Kaise qa'im Hui?", 14, *al-Fatha*, 7/13 (6-13 Aug. 1976), 18-19.

⁴⁰ See Shafiq's statement in Crown vs. Muhammad Shafiq of Akora Khattak, 1924, Shafiq Papers.

Moscow, where they met M. N. Roy and his fellow-Bengali, Mukharji, for the first time. Roy and Shafiq made favourable first impressions on each other that led the latter to ditch Abdur Rab and join the former. Three months later when Abdur Rab returned from Kabul, he found in M. N. Roy an implacable foe. The Rab-Roy conflict ran much deeper and apart from tussle over leadership had profound ideological basis. Abdur Rab was a revolutionary but not a Communist. Roy, on the other hand, was a staunch Communist, having been initiated into the intricacies of Hegelian dialectic, 'as the key to Marxism', by Michael Borodin. Moreover, Abdur Rab considered Roy an upstart and a gatecrasher. He did not think Roy was true a representative of India because he had attended the Second Comintern as a Mexican delegate. Abdur Rab's idea was to resume the defunct Pratap-Barakatullah-Sindhi 'provisional government of India' in Tashkent. Roy, on the other hand, dismissed Rab's plan as an agenda of the bourgeoisie and an obstacle in the way of the revolution.⁴¹ In this endeavour Roy was assisted by his Mexican wife Evelyn Trent-Roy, Abani Mukherji and the latter's Russian wife. They had also on their side now Muhammad Shafiq and one Maulawi Fazl-i Haq, who had arrived in Tashkent with the remnants of Akbar Jan's *qafila*. This eighty plus *qafila* of *muhajirin* had also ventured to reach Anatolia but met a disastrous fate. Most of the *muhajirin* were captured by the Basmachis and had to earn their release by joining them. Some managed to return to India through Afghanistan while a dozen or so reached Bokhara where Jan's brother was working in the Aghan consulate.⁴² A few of them, by avoiding the Turkoman route, had arrived in Tashkent earlier than the members of the first *qafila*. This group included Iqbal Shaidai (1888-1974), Abdul Akbar Khan, Habib Ahmad Naseem (whose quarrel with Akbar Jan cost him a term in jail) and Iqbal Shaidai (who decided to return to Kabul). Those of the first *qafila* who had gone to Anatolia from Charjew, finding themselves unwanted either joined Enver Paşa's forces or slowly trekked back to India. Some others, however, staggered into Tashkent. Fazle Elahi Qurban (1902-1959) belonged to this *qafila*. Thus the residue of the two *qafilas*, which had started from Jabal-us-Siraj in Afghanistan one after the other with the mission to fight for the Turks, came together once again in Tashkent dejected but wiser.⁴³ Yet another group which had arrived from Bokhara consisted of Faiz Muhammad Khan (1901-1975) and Sultan Mirza, a nephew of Hâkim Ajmal Khan of Delhi. At

⁴¹ Shaukat Siddiqi, 'Kammunist party af Indiya kaise qa'im hui?', 14, *al-Fatha*, 17, 7/16 (27 Aug.-3 Sept. 1976), 17. For Borodin's influence on Roy see Haithcox, *Communism and Nationalism in India*, 9.

⁴² Shaukat Siddiqi, "Kammunist Party af Indiya Kaise qa'im Hui?", 16, 7/15 (20-27 Aug. 1976), 9; Akbar Shah, *Azadi ki talash*, 197-201; and Muzaffar Ahmad, *The Communist Party of India*, 28-9.

⁴³ Muzaffar Ahmad, *The Communist Party of India*, 54-5. Also see the note wherein the writer has cited from the memoirs of *muhajir* Fazle Elahi Qurban. Also see Shaukat Siddiqi, "Kammunist Party af Indiya Kaise qa'im Hui?", 15, *al-Fatah*, 7/14 (13-20 Aug. 1976), 19.

Bokhara they had met Shafiq and it was at his prompting that Faiz stayed with him in Tashkent. A few months later when Shafiq went to Bokhara again on an errand, Faiz went with him. Evidently, he had a change of heart about Soviet Russia and joined a group of *muhajirin* who were returning to Kabul.⁴⁴

At Tashkent, the majority of the Indians gravitated towards M. N. Roy probably because of his personal magnetism, easy-going manners and an attractive wife who was not only considerate but also a committed Communist. At the time when the young *muhajirin* met Roy, they were least aware of the intellectual-philosophical debate over Marxism-Leninism or how India stood to gain from the Bolshevik revolution. Roy's harangues often went over their heads but gradually they began to pick up the essence of the Communist philosophy.⁴⁵ The Indians were given military and political training at the school known as the Induskii Kurs. At first it was housed in a monastery outside the city but later shifted to a large house within the city in a building which once belonged to a tsarist officer. Two classes, one for gunnery and the other for aviation, were started. The trainees were supplied with muskets, pistols and machine guns. Nineteen *muhajirin* started training though later their number increased considerably. One month was taken up in training with weapons. In spite of the extraordinary situation, scarcity and hardships, the trainees were clothed and fed by the state and, in addition, were paid a monthly subsistence allowance. In the beginning of January 1921, the aviation trainees were taken to a different school, known as the Lenin Academy. The subjects taught there related mostly to air navigation, theory of air war, photography & topography, assembling & disassembling of arms and practical training in flying. The medium of instructions was English. Because of the severe cold the training was held mostly indoors, except for the flying lessons. In four or five months, some of them learnt to fly and later distinguished themselves as ace pilots or died in flying accidents. But then suddenly the academy was closed down primarily because of the machinations of the British who had entered into a trade agreement with the Bolsheviks.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, it was here in Tashkent that in October 1920, Roy, Shafiq and Mukharji founded an *émigré* Communist Party of India (CPI) and later affiliated it to the Comintern. Shafiq was appointed its first secretary. Others who attended the meeting were Evelyn Roy, A. N. Mukherji, Rosa Fitingov-Mukharji, Mohammad Ali (Ahmed Hasan), and Acharya (M. P. Bhayankar).⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Faiz Muhammad Khan, *Hijrat-i Afghnaistan*, 52-3.

⁴⁵ Muzaffar Ahmad, *The Communist Party of India*, 28-9.

⁴⁶ Akbar Shah, *Azadi ki talash*, 204-9; and Shafiq's statement in Crown vs. Muhammad Shafiq of Akora Khattak, 1924, Shafiq Papers.

⁴⁷ See minutes of the foundation committee meeting, dated Tashkent 17 Oct. 1920, ecl., sec.-in-charge, Turkestan Bureau, Tashkent, to the central Committee of the Communist party of Turkestan, 20 Dec. 1920, in 'Formation of the Communist Party of India at Tashkent', M. N. Roy, *Selected Works of M. N. Roy* (ed.), Sibnarayan Ray, i (Delhi, 1987), 179. Also see Muzaffar Ahmad, *The Communist Party of India*, 33-4.

Several of the *muhajirin* were encouraged to become its members but only three, Abdul Qadir Sehrai, Masood Ali Shah and Akbar Shah, eventually signed up. Later, Rahmat Ali Zakrya also became a member. Abdur Rab never joined the Communist party and preferred to remain the head of his revolutionary society, known as the Jam'iyat-i Ahrar-i Hind.⁴⁸ It was a masterstroke on the part of Roy because it gave him an additional standing in Moscow as a special representative of Indian Communism.⁴⁹ Another reason was that the Bolsheviks, on whose support the anti-British conspiracy largely depended, became disinterested in 'liberating' India by armed action.⁵⁰ Their strategy, especially after the Second Comintern in July-August 1920, was to gain their objective by supporting the bourgeois national movement in India. This policy was endorsed in June-July 1921 by the Third Comintern.⁵¹

Whatever their real intentions the Bolsheviks, especially after the trade agreement with Britain in the Spring of 1921, avoided any direct confrontation with the British and chose instead to infiltrate India with underground movements and trained agents. The military school at Tashkent was abruptly closed and the remaining *muhajirin*, along with the newly formed Communist part of India, were taken to Moscow, which had then become a sort of 'a revolutionary bazaar'. Muhammad Akbar, the leader of the first *qafila*, however, chose to return to India where he was to establish a printing press for the distribution of Communist literature.⁵² The *muhajirin* were given intensive training at the Kommunisticheskii Universitet Trudiashchikhsia Vostoka (KUTVa) or the "Communist University of the Toilers of the East", popularly known as the "Eastern University". The KUTVa was established in April 1921 by the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party on the model of the Sverdlov University (founded 1918) with two main objectives in mind: first, to prepare national cadres for the Central Asian republics so as to ease their assimilation into the Soviet socialist system; and, secondly, to train revolutionary activists for the colonial and dependent countries with a view to fighting imperialism and its bourgeois collaborators through proletarian movements.⁵³ Initially, the Bolsheviks tolerated even the most discordant voices

⁴⁸ Shaukat Siddiqi, "Kammunist party af Indiya kaise qa'im hui?", 17, **al-Fatha**, 7/16 (27 Aug.-3 Sept. 1976), 18.

⁴⁹ Muzaffar Ahmad, **The Communist Party of India**, 34.

⁵⁰ Imam, **Colonialism in East-West Relations**, 147.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 148 ff.

⁵² Shaukat Siddiqi, "kammunist party af Indiya kaise qa'im hui?", 19, **al-Fatha**, 7/26 (5-12 Aug. 1976), 16.

⁵³ The information about KUTVa is based on the following sources: Н. Н. Тимофеева, 'Коммунистический Университет Трудящихся Востока (КУТВ) (1921-1925)', **Народя Азии и Африки**, No. 2, 1976, 47-57; and id, "Коммунистический Университет Трудящихся Востока (КУТВ) (1926-1938)", *ibid.*, 30-42; Alexandre A. Bennigsen & S. Enders Winbush, **Muslim National Communism in the Soviet Union: A Revolutionary Strategy for the Colonial World**

within the socialist fold and allowed KUTVa to develop as an intellectual laboratory of revolutionary ideas, ranging from a synthesis of Marxism and Islam promoted by Muslim national Communists to a strict adherence to the Marxist-Leninist path asserted by diehard Bolsheviks.⁵⁴ G. I. Broydo, deputy people's commissar on the nationalities affairs, was the university's first rector who served from 1921 to 1926. The governing body of the KUTVa was drawn from high profile circles such as the Executive Committee of the Comintern. Its educational structure was multifaceted and centred round specialized groups progressing from the basic to complex and covering both the theory and practice. At first the duration of the course was seven months but from 1922-3 the university adopted a three-year programme with an optional one-year preparatory course. The same year, courses on natural sciences and history were added. However, the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin formed the core of the curricula with special reference to their application to national and colonial problems of the East, strategy and tactics of the revolutionary movements and the challenge of building socialism in the Soviet republics.⁵⁵

The KUTVa attracted radicals from the world over but the majority of foreign students came from Afghanistan, Algeria, China, India, Iran, Japan, Turkey, Vietnam and several Arab and African countries. Therefore, effort was made to teach the students in their native languages and by the spring of 1923 lessons were given in at least seven languages, i.e. Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Persian, and Turkish, in addition to English, French and Russian. As for the number of students it is estimated that by the end of 1921, there were at least 622 students from forty-four nationalities. Within a year, their number increased to 933, including 147 women. By 1924, the figure shot up to 1015 and the number of nationalities to sixty-two. In 1926-7, the student strength rose to 1300 and the nationalities they represented swelled to one hundred. Most of them came from rural backgrounds and had problems comprehending the intricacies of political economy. The first convocation was held in March 1922 when 700 students were reported to have graduated. The KUTVa alumni included many future heads of state and

(Chicago & London, 1979), 110-11; and Alexandre Bennigsen and Marie Broxup, **The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State** (London, 1983), 94.. The objectives were forcefully reiterated by Joseph Stalin in his address to the students of the university on 18 May 1925. See J. V. Stalin, **Works**, vii (Moscow, 1954), 135-54. I am indebted to Dr. Belokrenitskey of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Moscow, for providing the two articles by Н. Н. Тимофеева (N. N. Timofeeva) during my visit to Moscow in 1989 and to Anna Gulamovna Berdiniyazova and Asma Naveed of the National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad, for translating them from Russian into English.

⁵⁴ Bennigsen & Winbush, **Muslim National Communism in the Soviet Union**, 108-9.

⁵⁵ Тимофеева, "Коммунистический Университет Трудящихся Востока (КУТВ) (1921-1925)", **Народа Азии и Африки**, 47-57; and id, "Коммунистический Университет Трудящихся Востока (КУТВ) (1926-1938)", 30-42; Bennigsen & Winbush, **Muslim National Communism in the Soviet Union**, 110-11; and Bennigsen & Broxup, **The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State**, 94.

government and leaders of Communist parties such as Nazim Hikmete (Turkey), Liu Shao-Shi and Deng Xiaoping (China), Ho Chi Min (Vietnam), Tan Malaka (Indonesia), Sen Katayama (Japan), Hasan Israilov (Chechniya), Khalid Bakdash (Syria), Jomo Kenyatta (Kenya), Avunor-Rener (Ghana) and Harry Haywood (America). It also produced historians like A. G. Krimov and A. Alimov. As for the teaching faculty, by 1922 there were as many as 138 lecturers and within a year their number increased to 165, with 28 of them holding professorships. The more prominent during the early and later years were revolutionaries and activists like Sultan Galiev, Turar Ryskulov, Nariman Narinamov, Najmuddin Efendiev-Samurskii, Galimjan Ibragimov, Ahmed Baytursun, Fayzulla Khojaev, and Mir-Yakub Dulatov. In addition, several specialists such as P. A. Miph, V. N. Kuchumov, E. M. Drabkina, Tsjuj Tsju-bo, C. Ashley, V. Y. Vasilyeva, G. N. Voytinsky, I. I. Potekhin, E. Shiekh, A. Palmbakh, S. M. Melman, L. I. Madyar, Aboni Mukerjee, M. N. Roy and prominent members of Executive Committee of the Comintern either served on the faculty or were invited for special lectures. But the atmosphere of mutual tolerance and forbearance towards heterodox ideas, which had been KUTVa's principal strength, gradually eroded and the staff had to suffer purges by the party bosses three times – in 1924, 1927 and 1930. Yet, KUTVa was able to survive and expand with regional branches in Baku (Azerbaijan), Irkutsk in Siberia, Sterlitamak city, and Tashkent.⁵⁶

In 1926, the KUTVa began a new phase when B. Z. Shumyatsky, a member of the Communist party and professional revolutionary, was appointed its Rector for three years (1926-9). In 1927, Shumyatsky introduced a four-year term with emphasis on courses on Leninism, history and tactics of the party, economy, history, foreign East, and historical materialism, in addition to natural sciences, linguistics, military theory and scientific research. Later, some specialized topics in area studies, such as imperialism and colonies, economic crisis in colonies, and development of capitalism in agriculture were added. In 1929, the KUTVa underwent another important change when it became a public university and ceased to be a part of the state structure. It is not clear who succeeded Shumyatsky as the next Rector but under the reorganized system the KUTVa reverted to the three-year term with one-year preparatory programme. The student intake was now dependent upon one hundred odd party schools that existed around the country. In 1930, the postgraduate programme was strengthened with an accent on research. By 1932, nearly 150 students were engaged in various research projects. In 1935-6, new courses on the history of colonial and dependent countries were introduced with special reference to Afghanistan, China, Egypt, India, Iran, Mexico and Turkey. Yet another important change occurred in 1937 when the KUTVa was

⁵⁶ Ibid.

divided into two separate organizations: the main university now catered only to the students from the Soviet East while the Scientific Research Institute was asked to look after the foreign students. Thereafter, the university that played such an important role in preparing Marxist cadres for the Communist world did not last very long. In 1938, following the reorganization of the party educational programme, the KUTVa was closed down and its work distributed among other institutions.⁵⁷

The Indian *muhajirin* who were sent to KUTVa were among the earliest students to be trained there. They had already joined the Communist party in Tashkent and those who had not yet done that were now enrolled as members. Though the figure varies in different sources, there were initially only seventeen Indian students at the KUTVa. They were identified as Rafique Ahmad, Mir Abdul Majid, Sultan Mahmud, Firozuddin Mansoor, Gawhar Rahman Khan, Mian Akbar Shah, Abdul Qadir Sehrai, Fida Ali Zahid, Ghulam Muhammad Khan, Abdullah Safdar, Abdur Rahim, Shaukat Usmani, Fazle Elahi Qurban, Habib Ahmad Naseem, Masood Ali Shah, Abdul Qayyum, Master Abdul Hamid, Muhammad Saeed Raz, Abdul Aziz, Aziz Ahmad, Abdul Majid Kohati, Rahmat Ali Zakrya and Khushi Muhammad.⁵⁸ Later, Zafar Hasan (Aybek) and Abdul Waris (who had worked with Cemal Paşa and Barakatullah Maulavie in Kabul) also studied there. Iqbal Shaidai and Dr Nur Muhammad, who had arrived in Moscow with Obaidullah Sindhi and Aybek in November 1922, did not find Communism palatable and stayed away from KUTVa. Reportedly, at one time there were about seventy Indians studying in the university. The accounts left by some of the *émigré* Indians, in addition to those by Mian Akbar Shah and Rafiq Ahmad, provide an insight into the life at the university. The KUTVa was then housed in a large white building in Pushkinskaya Street and the students hostel was located in a three-storey edifice nearby to the East of Tverskoy Boulevard. On reaching Moscow, they were first accommodated at the posh Lux Hotel but later shifted to the KUTVa hostel where the lodgings were barracks-like and crammed full with only the basic amenities on hand. The life was thus spartan but the redeeming feature was that the Indians were in a group and knew each other well. Since the university had just started, they were enrolled for a two-year course which was later reduced to six months and eventually shrunk into a four-month crash course in ideological indoctrination and Marxist propaganda techniques. However, some continued to study at the university for a much longer period. According to Zafar Hasan Aybek, who joined the university in November 1922 and completed a full-term course, testifies to this.⁵⁹ Another student later recalled that they were so raw and deficient even in basic schooling

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Muzaffar Ahmad, **The Communist Party of India**, 78.

⁵⁹ Zafar Hasan Aybek, **Ap biti**, ii (Lahore, n.d.), 20 ff.

that they encountered considerable problems grasping the philosophical nuances of the Marxist-Leninist ideology.⁶⁰ Yet another was of the opinion that the new creed was “a logical historical evolution and the most natural thing in the world”.⁶¹ But it appears that instead of gaining a perceptive knowledge of the Communist philosophy they learnt only the superficial slogans indoctrinated into them by the party tacticians. According to Fazle Elahi Qurban, who was at KUTVa for a longer duration, various committees looked after such matters as administration, cleanliness and health care. There were conference halls, theatres and a library. Every Sunday the students were taken to the Red Square for parade and were trained in the use of the latest arms and ammunition.⁶² The KUTVa was a sort of a melting pot where the boys and girls from different countries met socially after classes. But the Indians because of their cultural inhibitions, language barrier and extra burden of a crash programme, kept to themselves. But gradually, coaxed by Evelyn Roy and other faculty members, they began to shed their shyness and socialize with others to the extent that a few of them even got emotionally involved with girl students.⁶³ More important was the opportunity that they had of exchanging views and learning from experience and watching Soviet leaders, particularly Lenin, make history.⁶⁴

The training of the Indians at KUTVa ended abruptly in the middle of December 1921 when Moscow was covered in snow. They were found ready for missions abroad. Those destined for British India were to act as foci for the dissemination of sedition as well as act as the advanced guard for Bolshevik invasion of India.⁶⁵ They were divided in small groups but were to travel in pairs to avoid suspicion. For reasons of strict secrecy they were not to discuss or divulge any information to anyone, not even to their own fellow-trainees. Before dispersing they were addressed at the farewell dinner by Grigorii Zinovyev, one of Lenin’s lieutenants and president of the Third Comintern, who dwelt on the sacrifices they were required to make in the service of their country against oppressive British imperialism.⁶⁶ On 16 December, they were despatched to St. Petersburg by train with orders to wait for signal. A small group was, however, detached in Moscow to form the vanguard of infiltrators into India through different routes, especially Azerbaijan and Iran.

⁶⁰ Ibid. Also see Akbar Shah, *Azadi ki talash*, 228 ff.

⁶¹ See Fazle Elahi Qurban’s interview in *Viewpoint* (Lahore), 1/13 (7 Nov. 1975), 13.

⁶² Shaukat Siddiqi, ‘kammunist party af Indiya kaise qa’im hui?’, 19, *al-Fatha*, 7/26 (5-12 Aug. 1976), 16.

⁶³ Akbar Shah, *Azadi ki talash*, 228 ff.

⁶⁴ Shaukat Siddiqi, ‘kammunist party af Indiya kaise qa’im hui?’, 19, *al-Fatha*, 7/26 (5-12 Aug. 1976), 16–17, citing from Abdul Majid’s unnamed article.

⁶⁵ This was the conclusion arrived at the trial of Muhammad Shafiq in April 1924 at Peshawar. See the Judgment of the Sessions Judge, in *Crown vs. Muhammad Shafiq of Akora Khattak*, 1924, Shafiq Papers.

⁶⁶ Akbar Shah, *Azadi ki talash*, 243-8.

The first pair to move out was Shaukat Usmani and Masood Ali Shah, followed by Akbar Shah and Gawhar Rahman Khan (who joined at Baku from Bokhara where he had been recuperating), then Mir Abdul Majid, Firozuddin Mansoor and Sultan Muhmud Khan. Rafique Ahmad and Habib Ahmad Naseem tried their luck through the Pamirs. Others selected for this venture were Fida Ali Zahid, Abdul Qadir Sehrai, Sayeed, Abdul Hamid, Nizamuddin, Fazle Elahi Qurban and Abdulla Safdar.⁶⁷ The details of Shaukat Usmani and Masood Ali Shah are not known except that it was Usmani's second visit since November 1921 when he had managed to elude the surveillance. However, the accounts penned by Mian Akbar Shah and Rafique Ahmad give ample information about their adventurous journeys. Akbar Shah and friends first went to Baku on the Caspian Sea, an Azerbaijani city known for its beautiful parks, seaside walkways and rich oil wells. Here they encountered delay, as the Afghan and Iranian envoys were reluctant to give visas to the KUTVa alumni. In the event the Indians had no choice now but to travel secretly through the Caucasus, Iraq and Iran without papers. They went by rail touching on the way Tbilisi, Yerevan and Nakhichevan from where they had to turn back to Baku because of the uncertain situation further on and decided to try another route.⁶⁸ Meanwhile, Rahmat Ali Zakrya, the resourceful comrade who was one of the runaway students from Lahore, arrived from Moscow and put things right. Within three days he got fake Afghan passports for Akbar Shah and Gawhar Rahman, asked Majid and Sultan to lie low in Baku for the time being and took Firoz to Moscow along with him. It was now early March 1922. This time Akbar Shah and Gawhar Rahman took the boat to Bandar Anzali (Pahlavi) in the Gilan province. From Rasht they crossed the snow-covered Elburz Mountains in a motorcar for Tehran through Qazvin. In Tehran, they stopped for two months (15 March to 16 May 1922) and were helped by an official of the Russian embassy whom they had befriended earlier on. When the Russian was appointed consul in Shiraz he took Akbar Shah with him by way of Qum and Esfahan while Guahar Rahman followed later. From Shiraz, Akbar Shah reached Bushehr with much difficulty disguised as a poor Iranian pony haulier. On the way he came across Shaukat Usmani disguised as *darwesh* who, too, had been sent on a secret mission to India and he was now retuning from the errand. At Bushehr, he was caught and detained but his contacts managed to spring him from the lock-up and put him on a boat to Karachi where he reached on 19 July 1922. It had taken him nearly five arduous but adventurous months to get back to India. He spent some time in Lahore and met many former *muhajirin* but when he reached home in Kaka Khel, his arrival could not be kept secret and was caught and imprisoned. It was rather a tame and sad end to a promising story. The crash course at KUTVa

⁶⁷ Rafique Ahmad's account in Muzaffar Ahmad, **The Communist Party of India**, 34-5.

⁶⁸ Akbar Shah, **Azadi ki talash**, 248-78.

and all that talk of revolution and changing India resulted in a nought. Akbar Shah even reneged on his contract with his Communist trainers and was back into the fold of Islam.⁶⁹

As for Rafique Ahmad's group, the journey was equally dangerous and risky. The group included Habib Ahmad Naseem, Mir Abdul Majid and Firozuddin Mansoor. Towards the end of March 1922, they took the train for Tashkent and from where they accompanied a Red Army detachment going south from Morgellan to the Pamirs. At Osh, where the railway line terminated, their journey became nightmarish as they encountered unbearable cold and snow-covered terrain. They crossed the Amu Dariya but this time on horseback with their luggage on camels and reached Murgab via Kubasa. By the time they reached Kharog their animals were all dead and they had to march on foot with the Red Army soldiers. From Kharog, they trekked alone because that was the soldiers' last stop. The terrain was even more inaccessible but they managed to cross the winding Amu Dariya once more to reach the Afghan territory. Habib and Majid suffered most from fatigue and exhaustion but managed to survive the ordeal with frail bodies, swollen limbs and bleeding feet through the Afghan territory into Chitral State looking like *faqirs*. At places they had to be carried by the other two. With difficulty they reached the state capital. Somehow, the police chief got wind of their arrival and presented them to the Mehtar's private secretary and the political agent who turned them over to the police. They were taken to Peshawar where they recorded their statements and then sent to jail. They found that Muhammad Akbar Khan had already been captured and those who followed them met the same fate.⁷⁰ The Tashkent group of *muhajirin*, especially the Tashkent-Moscow alumni, had to suffer harsh treatment at the hands of the Indian police and intelligence agencies. They were particularly critical of Khan Bahadur Abdul Aziz of the CID for ill treatment towards them.⁷¹

The drop scene was the Peshawar Conspiracy Case (1922-1923) where ten of the Tashkent-Moscow alumni were tried on charges of conspiracy to deprive the King-Emperor of his sovereignty over India. The accused were: Mian Akbar Shah, Gawhar Rahman, Mir Abdul Majid, Firozuddin Mansoor, Habib Ahmad Naseem, Rafique Ahmad, Sultan Mahmud, Abdul Qadir Sehrai, Fida Ali Zahid and Ghulam Muhammad. The last named accused had returned from Tashkent long ago and was not even a member of the Communist party. His name was added when the trial had already begun merely to make him an approver. From

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 278-338.

⁷⁰ Rafique Ahmad's account in Muzaffar Ahmad, **The Communist Party of India**, 37-47.

⁷¹ Akbar Shah, **Azadi ki talash**, 375-6 and 387-8; and Faiz Muhammad Khan, **Hirat-i Afghanistan**, 101-10.

among the Communists, Fida Ali Zahid also agreed to become a state witness. The rest of the accused opted not to defend themselves but hired a lawyer just to see that the provisions of the law were followed in letter and spirit. The trial went through two stages: the magistrate's court and the sessions court. In the latter court the accused were represented by (Sir) Abdul Qadir, an able barrister and a well-known literary figure, and probably it was because of his expertise that the assessors found the accused not guilty. However, the Judge did not agree with their conclusions and sentenced Akbar Shah and Gawhar Rahman to two years' rigorous imprisonment while the rest to a year's hard labour. Of course, the two approvers were set free, as was Abdul Qadir Sehrai who repaid his debt later in the 1930s by writing frequently against Communism and was rewarded further by an appointment as instructor in Pashto at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.⁷² Masud Ali Shah surrendered to the British authorities in December 1921 when he returned to India via Iran. He agreed to spy for them against the Soviets and for that purpose in June 1922 he went back to Moscow. He met Roy in Berlin and returned to attend the Fourth Congress of the Comintern. Arrested by the Soviet authorities he managed to escape and in 1923 returned to India. In 1926, he confessed to A. V. Ghate, a leading Communist leader, that he was spying for the British. As a reward the British made him a petty official but resigned in 1928. He returned to Moscow to attend the Sixth Congress of the Comintern where in April 1929 he was arrested by the Soviet authorities and probably executed.⁷³ As for Muhammad Shafiq, after drifting for some time he got tired of running and hiding from the police and, towards the end of 1923, surrendered himself to British consulate in Siestan (Iran). He was brought to India, put in chains and produced for trial at Peshawar. In April 1924, he was sentenced to three years' rigorous imprisonment. In his judgment, the Sessions Judge, G. Connor, recorded that since the accused had returned to India 'in a chastened mood' a light sentence was enough.⁷⁴ The Judicial Commissioner, H. Fraser, to whom an appeal was made in May 1924, upheld the sentence.⁷⁵ Similarly, Shaukat Usmani was tried and convicted in the much-hyped Kanpur Conspiracy Case of 1924 and convicted again in the Meerut Conspiracy Case in 1929-33.⁷⁶ At Kanpur M. N. Roy was also tried but since he was outside India he could not be apprehended. Ghulam Husain (1894-1976), whom the Bolsheviks had given (while on a cover job in Kabul) substantial funds for propaganda work

⁷² Rafique Ahmad's account in Muzaffar Ahmad, **The Communist Party of India**, 47-52.

⁷³ Ansari, **The Emergence of Socialist Thought**, 274.

⁷⁴ See the judgment by the Judicial Commissioner in *Crown vs. Muhammad Shafiq of Akora Khattak*, 1924, Shafiq Papers.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Devendra Singh, 'Meerut Conspiracy Case (1929-33)', **Marxist Miscellany** (New Delhi), 15 (March 1979), 3-33.

in India through Khushi Muhammad, was arrested but later released after much clamour in the press. He continued to produce Communist literature for left-wing journals like the *Inqilab* of Lahore and the *Bombay Mail* that he also edited and was active in the All India Trade Unions Congress and the Railway unions. Professionally, however, he was professor of history and economics at various colleges and retired as vice-principal of Lahore's Islamia College.⁷⁷ Fazle Elahi Qurban, who had stayed back in Russia and had taken a Russian wife, graduated from KUTVa after four years with a Masters in Sociology and then completed a special course for revolutionary leaders. In 1926, he was sent to Europe and then to India through Afghanistan. From Peshawar he went to Calcutta to establish contact with the Briton, Philip Spratt, and later established himself in Bombay for underground work in conjunction with other Communist workers. But he was caught and in 1927 sentenced for three years' rigorous imprisonment.⁷⁸ The last one to turn up in India was Abdullah Safdar who arrived in 1933. Most of the time, however, he remained ungrounded and secretly pushed Roy's programme in the Punjab. He left for the Soviet Union during the early part of World War II and was heard of no more after that.⁷⁹

After serving various terms of imprisonment, these Tashkent-Moscow alumni reacted differently on their release. Gawhar Rahman, for instance, began editing with Mir Abdul Majid a left-wing Urdu weekly of Lahore called the *Mihnatkash* (1926-1927). He was also appointed a member of the action committee of the All India Trade Union Council to organize workers and peasants for political action. Still later, he busied himself with the distribution of Communist literature.⁸⁰ Mir Abdul Majid became a trade unionist and in 1927 edited the *Mihnatkash* with Gawhar Rahman. For his work for the Communist party, he was again hauled up in the Meerut Conspiracy case (1929-1933) and sentenced to one year in prison. On his release, he seemed to have drifted away from Communism.⁸¹ Ferozuddin Mansoor worked his way up in various left-wing papers. From 1924 onward, he became involved in the workers and peasants parties and groups in Delhi and the Punjab. By 1926, he was an important member of the Punjab Communist party. In the early 1930s, as a theoretician of the Punjab Communist group, he published party propaganda material. He continued his work during the 1940s and courted arrest a couple of times. After partition, he became a leading member of the

⁷⁷ See Ahmad Saeed, *Muslim India (1857-1947): A Biographical Dictionary* (Lahore, 1994), 134; id., *Islamia kalg Lahore ki sad sala tarikh*, ii (Lahore, 2001), 141-4; and Ansari, *The Emergence of Socialist Thought*, 247-8.

⁷⁸ Abdullah Malik, *Purani mahfilain yad a rahi hain* (Lahore, 2002), 194-5; and Ansari, *The Emergence of Socialist Thought*, 268.

⁷⁹ Ansari, *The Emergence of Socialist Thought*, 271-2.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 241-2.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 259-60.

Communist Party of Pakistan and was arrested and imprisoned for his activities. But he fell out with Fazle Elahi Qurban and got him expelled from the party. Mansoor is best remembered for his radical critique of Maulana Maududi's core religio-political works.⁸² Habib Ahmad Naseem, restarted the CPI work in Delhi. In 1928, he attended the Sixth Congress of the Comintern along with Shaukat Usmani, Muhammad Shafiq and Masud Ali Shah. However, he did not return to India and instead chose to settle in the Soviet Union.⁸³ Rafique Ahmad worked for a while with Habib Ahmad Naseem for the CPI in Delhi. Later, he returned to native Bhopal and joined the state service. However, as a staunch Communist, he remained in touch with his friends. In 1967, his services were recognized when he was honoured by the Soviet Union.⁸⁴ Mian Akbar Shah went back to Islamia College, Peshawar, to complete his graduation. Then he qualified as a lawyer from Aligarh and started legal practice in Nowshera. In 1939, he joined the Abdul Ghaffar Khan's Khudai Khidmatgars and helped Subhas Chandra Bose to escape to Afghanistan on his way to Berlin. After partition, he joined the Muslim League, supported Premier Qaiyum Khan and became a member of the provincial assembly (1951).⁸⁵ Sultan Mahmud dropped out of politics altogether.⁸⁶ Muhammad Shafiq was placed under restrictions but in 1928 was allowed to attend the Sixth Congress of the Comintern. He did not return to India until 1932 and then went out of picture altogether.⁸⁷ Fazle Elahi Qurban became involved in the CPI and trade union work in the Punjab, especially in association with the Congress socialists. In the 1937 elections, he tried unsuccessfully for a seat in the provincial assembly. Later, he was elected general-secretary of the TUF. After his release from a second term of imprisonment in the 1940s, he became involved in factional fighting with Mansoor and Sohan Singh Josh on one side and Qurban and Teja Singh Swatantar on the other. In July 1947, he floated the idea of the Communist party of Pakistan for which he provoked the ire of Sajjad Zaheer who would brook no opposition. At his prompting, in March 1948, Mansoor issued a charge-sheet to Qurban and despite the latter's denial of any wrongdoing was expelled from the Communist party in October 1948. With Qurban's expulsion the unified control of the party passed on to Sajjad Zaheer.⁸⁸

⁸² Ibid., 261-2; and Abdullah Malik, **Purani mahfilain yad a rahi hain**, 208-9.

⁸³ Ibid., 266.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 270-1.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 275.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 280; and Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah's introduction to Akbar Shah's *Azadi ki talash*, 37-43.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 273-4.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 268-9; Abdullah Malik, **Purani mahfilain yad a rahi hain**, 195-6; and DIG, CID, Government of the Punjab, **The Communist Party of West Pakistan in Action** (Lahore, 1952), 8-17.

From among the rest of the Tashkent-Moscow alumni, Abdul Qayyum (Kayum) Khan opted for Soviet citizenship, undertook higher party training, fought alongside the Red Army and married a Russian. Later in 1925, he became a railway engineer in the transport ministry but died in 1940 during the Stalin era in “unusual circumstances”, leaving behind a wife and two daughters, Liliana and Evelyn.⁸⁹ Rahmat Ali Zakrya also stayed back in Moscow, working with Roy to send out Communist literature to India through various sources. In 1923, he was in the eastern department of the Comintern. In 1925, he moved to Berlin from where he was deported. Two years later, he decided to settle in Paris. Studied at the Sorbonne, earned a Ph.D., married a French girl and was said to have daughter from her. In 1954, he visited Pakistan but found difficult to settle down and returned to Paris. In later life, he is reported to have developed memory loss through Alzheimer.⁹⁰ Khushi Muhammad also stayed back in the Soviet Union. In 1924, he shifted from Moscow to French Pondicherry as Roy’s emissary but was thrown out and had to leave for Antwerp. He managed to climb up the Foreign Bureau ladder as member with headquarters in Paris. In 1925, he was seen operating from Marseilles. Later, he married a Rumanian girl and settled in Paris where he met a violent death during World War II when Hitler’s forces occupied the French capital.⁹¹

Among the non-Communist *muhajirin*, Iqbal Shaidai changed his citizenship several times during his sojourns from British Indian to Afghan to Turkish and finally to Italian. In 1923, he moved from Moscow to Turkey and then to Paris where he got married to a French girl and had a daughter from her. For a time he worked with Roy’s group in Marseilles and Paris, joining the ‘League Against Imperialism’. He also worked for the Ghadr Party and was involved in gun running to the tribes on the Indo-Afghan border. In March 1929, he was expelled from France and went to live in Rome. During World War II, he supported the Axis and used to broadcast from ‘Radio Homala’ on Indian affairs with an anti-British tinge. In 1946 when the Interim government took office, Maulana Azad and Jawaharlal Nehru tried to arrange Shaidai’s repatriation to India but, instead, he chose to return to Pakistan that had come into being during his journey home. In Cairo, he arranged a ‘Pakistan Day’ on 23 August 1947 at which the guests included Shaikh Hasan al-Banna of the Akhwan al-Musulimin, Mufti Amin al-Husseini of Palestine and ministers of the Wafd party. Shaidai arrived in Karachi in October 1947 and met Jinnah before returning to Lahore. The Pakistan government, however, did not

⁸⁹ See **Frontier Post** (Peshawar), 14 and 18 Feb. 1990; and Liliana Kayumnova’s letter to me, dated 2 May 1990. Also see Ansari, **The Emergence of Socialist Thought**, 250-1.

⁹⁰ See Ansari, **The Emergence of Socialist Thought**, 285-6; and partly based on my interview with one of his relatives.

⁹¹ Ansari, **The Emergence of Socialist Thought**, 277-8.

utilize his services and he died in January 1974 at Lahore.⁹² Zafar Hasan Aybek, after graduating from KUTVa, worked for Roy making contacts and conducting propaganda. In 1924, he moved to Turkey and four years later became a Turkish citizen and took a Turkish wife. Aybek joined the Turkish army as a commissioned officer and represented Turkey on a mission to Kabul. He died in Istanbul in 1989 at the ripe old age of 94, leaving an adopted daughter as his heir.⁹³

In the final analysis, it is apparent that the *émigré* Indians in Afghanistan and later in Tashkent and Moscow were so greatly exercised about the anti-Turk policies of the British and Allied governments that they were willing to try any quarter for support. The non-fulfilment of their aspirations to help the Turks win back their lost empire and to expel the British from India made them to turn to the Bolsheviks. In the process, they failed to grasp the ground realities or comprehend the exaggerated foreign sympathy for their cause. In fact, the Bolsheviks and the Afghans were playing their own games and never made any serious attempt to dislodge the British from India who were too well established to be dislodged that easily. The *émigré* Turkish leaders were also unable to make any dent and soon Talat Paşa and Cemal Paşa fell victims to Armenian death squads in March 1921 and July 1922, respectively, while Enver Paşa died fighting in August 1922 in Bukhara alongside the Basmachi nationalists.⁹⁴ The Indian revolutionaries, Barakatullah Maulavie, Ubaidullah Sindhi, Mahendra Pratap, Chattopadhyaya and others, moved from country to country in search of support but no real help came forth. Dejected, they spent the rest of their lives far away from home, dreaming of freedom that never came their way. Those young exiles who did return to India had to suffer torture, indignities, imprisonment and later privations on release. Some wavered and dropped out of politics or were pressured to spy on their former friends but the majority remained steadfast to their cause. And even though the training of most of them had been brief, haphazard and rudimentary without much philosophical content, they supplied good leaders to the socialist-communist parties of India and Pakistan. Yet others chose to settle in different parts of the globe and died thousands of miles away from home.

⁹² NAP, Shaidai Papers; Interview with Shaidai's brother Dr Jamal Bhutta; Ahmad Saeed, **Muslim India (1857-1947)**, 172; and Ansari, **The Emergence of Socialist Thought**, 275-6.

⁹³ Based on his autobiography. Though I corresponded with Aybek from the late 1960s I did not meet him until 1987 when I visited Istanbul.

⁹⁴ See Derogy, **Resistance & Revenge**, esp. 58-61, 77-86, 163-73 and 175-90; OIOC, L/P&S/11/203, file P. 5111/1921; and Hopkirk, *Setting the East Ablaze*, 152-66.

