CENTRAL ASIA

Aspects of transition

Edited by Tom Everett-Heath

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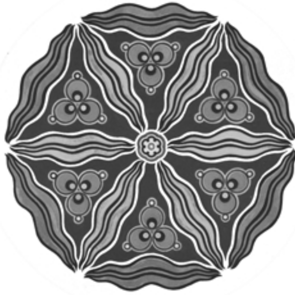
CENTRAL ASIA

What is the legacy of Soviet colonialism in Central Asia? How can nation states be formed in the twenty-first century? Does political Islamism pose a threat to the secular regimes of Central Asia?

The collapse of the Soviet Union led to the creation of five states in Central Asia which had never before existed. Over the last decade, the region's leaders have attempted to forge nations and carve countries from a complex political, historical and sociological mix. This pioneering collection examines the radical transition Central Asia experienced in the twentieth century – from Russian colonialism, through Soviet hegemony, to a sudden and largely unsought independence. The shifting approach to identity construction during the Soviet period continues to have crucial relevance today. Soviet educational and institution-building initiatives have provided the ideological, social and governmental building blocks manipulated by the leaders of the new independent states. Their success can be measured by the speed with which the nation states have been constructed, the political stability that has been prevalent in all but one of the five countries, and the ease with which institutional – if not constitutional – continuity has been maintained.

Following President George W. Bush's declaration of a 'War on Terrorism' and the subsequent ousting of the Taleban regime from power in Afghanistan, the strengths and policies of Central Asia's regimes have become matters of geopolitical significance. This collection assesses these policies against the backdrop of a Soviet legacy and the vigorous attempts of these countries to build secular states within the Islamic world.

Tom Everett-Heath is editor of the *Middle East Economic Digest.*



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Aspects of transition

Edited by Tom Everett-Heath

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CONTENTS

Notes on contributors *vii*
Acknowledgements *ix*

Introduction 1
TOM EVERETT-HEATH

1 Turkfront: Frunze and the development of Soviet counter-insurgency in Central Asia 5
ALEXANDER MARSHALL

2 The Kokand Autonomy, 1917–18: political background, aims and reasons for failure 30
PAUL BERGNE

3 Ethno-territorial claims in the Ferghana Valley during the process of national delimitation, 1924–7 45
ARSLAN KOICHIEV

4 Land and water 'reform' in the 1920s: agrarian revolution or social engineering? 57
GERARD O'NEILL

5 Nation building in Turkey and Uzbekistan: the use of language and history in the creation of national identity 80
ANDREW SEGARS

6 Nation building and identity in the Kyrgyz Republic 106
ROBERT LOWE

7 The use of history: the Soviet historiography of Khan Kenesary Kasimov 132
HENRI FRUCHET

8 Soviet development in Central Asia: the classic colonial syndrome? 146
ALEX STRINGER

9 Environmental issues in Central Asia: a source of hope or despair? 167
LARS JALLING

10 Instability and identity in a post-Soviet world: Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan 181
TOM EVERETT-HEATH

11 The Uzbek *Mahalla*: between state and society 205
ELISE MASSICARD AND TOMMASO TREVISANI

12 'Fundamentalism' in Central Asia: reasons, reality and prospects 219
PETRA STEINBERGER

13 Water: the difficult path to a sustainable future for Central Asia 244
KAI WEGERICH

Bibliography 264
Index 283

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Since its inception, this book has been through any number of permutations, and responsibility for editing has passed through different hands. Although she may not recognize its final shape, the efforts of Petra Steinberger, in particular, have been invaluable, and I am most grateful to her.

I should like to thank my father, John Everett-Heath, who was kind enough to read and give his opinion on a number of the chapters. My thanks also go to Rachel Saunders at RoutledgeCurzon for both her assistance and her patience.

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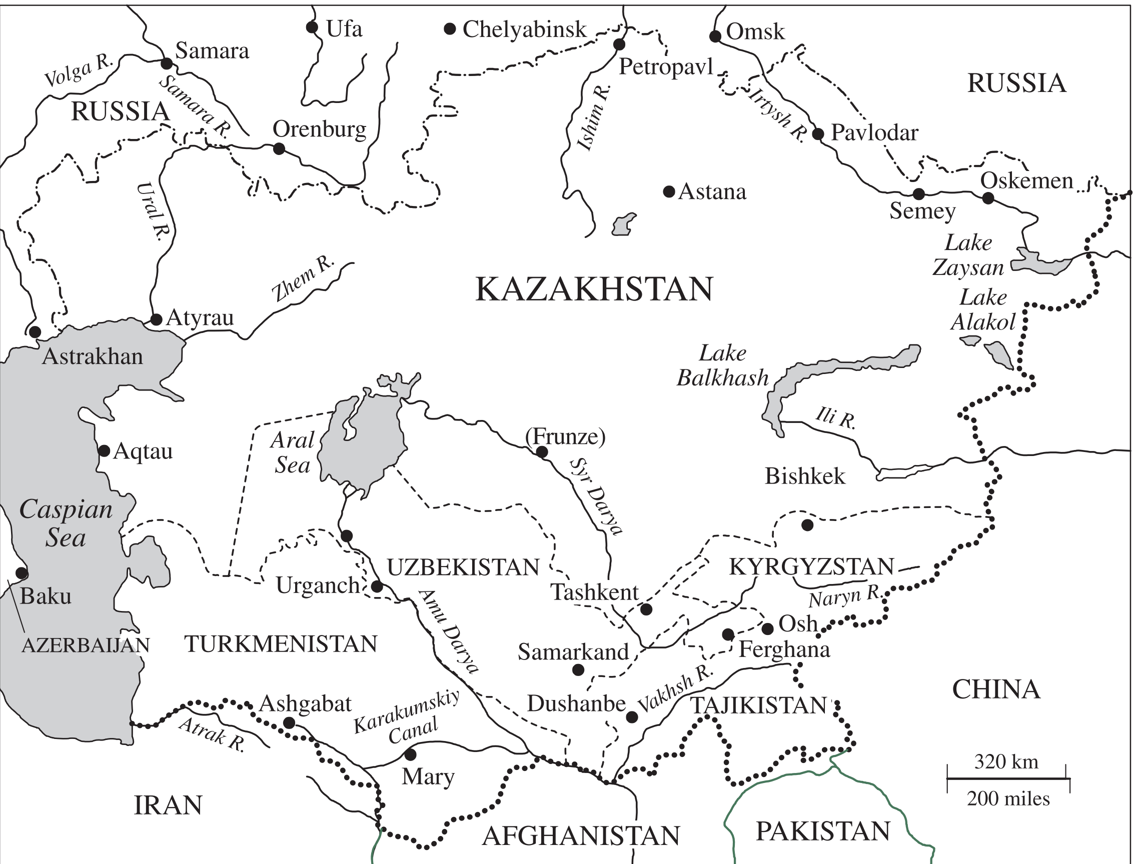
Tom Everett-Heath, October 2002



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INTRODUCTION

Tom Everett-Heath

On 1 March 2002, a website focusing on Uzbek news ran two headlines: 'Kyrgyz and Uzbeks continue talking over frontier' and 'Uzbek national song festival ends in Tashkent'.

The first story detailed the slow progress made in establishing the boundary between Kyrgyzstan and its southwestern neighbour. After two years of hard work, a mere 290 kilometres of the 1,400-kilometre-long frontier had been agreed. The Uzbek border was not alone in needing definition: Kyrgyzstan had only signed agreements on the delimitation of its frontier with two states, China and Kazakhstan, and even preliminary consultations had not been opened over what was likely to be its most heavily disputed flank, the border with Tajikistan.

The second story focused on Uzbekistan's first festival of national variety songs – '*Aziz ona yurtim navolari*' (Melodies of the Motherland) – in which participants performed modern compositions based on folk songs and classical music 'revised' by Uzbek poets and composers.

The news stories highlight two of the most important themes running through this collection of essays: the modern redefinition of frontiers underlines the political importance of the Soviet legacy in Central Asia; the complex methods by which identity has been negotiated during and after the region's Soviet experience is illustrated by the contemporary need for national song festivals.

A decade old, the five states of Central Asia that emerged from the ruins of the Soviet Union – Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan – are struggling still with their colonial past. The lines drawn on maps by the Soviets during the 1920s – which were initially adopted at independence in 1991 – are being redrawn, throwing into sharp relief the importance of the original Soviet methodology, its objectives and the way in which those objectives have shaped the political and economic development of the region.

Equally important to any understanding of modern Central Asia are the Soviet attempts to forge national identities in the 1920s where no nations had ever existed. Some of the same tools, and many new ones, have been taken up by the regimes that assumed control a decade ago. The science or, perhaps, art (as in the case of national folk songs) of identity construction and nation building is once again of crucial importance to the very survival and stability of the region's states.

Also significant is the exceptional speed and extent of Central Asia's period of transition. In Kazakhstan, for example, communities were transformed from nomadic animal husbandry to heavy industrial labouring within a single generation. Perhaps only the indigenous inhabitants of the Arabian peninsula, after the discovery of oil, experienced such a rapid shift from the pre-agricultural to the post-modern. In contrast to the Arabian experience, however, that of Central Asia was complicated by the imposition of Soviet ideology. More importantly, the transition was controlled by external forces – the over-arching demands of Moscow – as opposed to being a semi-organic process engendered by domestic needs.

This century of upheaval contains the defining forces of contemporary Central Asia. Just as the very existence of five independent states is the direct result of the early Soviet nationalisation programme, so can many of the major issues facing each of these states find roots either in the period of Soviet rule, or in the indigenous reaction to that experience. The legacy extends far beyond the political or the macroeconomic: another headline of 1 March 2002 read, 'Kazakhstan: Study says fallout from nuclear tests affected three generations'. The impact of Soviet nuclear experiments in Semipalatinsk is as serious an issue today as the environmental crisis in Uzbekistan that has resulted from Soviet attempts to establish a cotton monoculture.

The trials of independence are inextricably linked to the region's colonial past, a fact which encourages the chronological division of the essays in this collection: seven chapters focus on the years of Soviet rule, the other six concentrate on the post-independence period. The first group includes a case study by Arslan Koichiev of the Soviet approach to national delimitation during the 1920s. Then, as today, complex issues of ethnicity and the tessellated nature of settlements and enclaves provoked fierce controversy. That these borders are once again under dispute is a reflection not only of the arbitrary nature of the previous attempt at delimitation, but also of how the ideological connection between ethnicity and nationalism – first introduced in the 1920s – has taken root and flourished.

Two detailed examinations analyse indigenous resistance to Soviet hegemony. Alexander Marshall explores the Soviet response to the *Basmachi* uprising, which, despite a lack of political coherence, posed such a considerable threat to the Revolution in the east that the military establishment was forced to develop an entirely new approach to counter-insurgency. The legacy of the *Bashmachi* movement, having rapidly entered the realms of folklore, was fought over and rewritten by Soviets, nationalists and separatists alike. Equally, the Kokand Autonomy, a brief and doomed attempt to establish an independent government within present-day Uzbekistan, has become an historical battleground, as discussed by Paul Bergne.

Other chapters deal directly with the Soviet impact on the development of the region. Gerard O'Neill looks closely at the transformation of landownership. The diktats of Marxist-Leninist thought – and later the *realpolitik* of Stalinism – demanded the abolition of traditional structures of land tenure and the forma-

tion of vast collective farms. The re-engineering was as much a social as an agricultural process, but it paved the way for the subsequent drive for massive cotton production, particularly in Uzbekistan. Fuelled by the political will and the economic needs of the core – Moscow – large parts of Central Asia underwent the most radical of transformations, the results of which are still felt keenly today. The micro and macro benefits of a cotton monoculture continue to be fiercely debated, and the associated impact on the environment and patterns of water use has become a highly contentious issue.

Alex Stringer offers a broad assessment of colonial influence, significantly focusing on the benefits to the Central Asian republics of inclusion in the broader Soviet superstructure. Tempting as many in the West have found it to identify only the negative elements of the Soviet period, rule from Moscow brought massive advances to the availability and quality of healthcare and education, as well as dramatically developing intangibles, such as the emancipation of women.

The Soviet authorities also actively sought social transformation through ambitious identity-building programmes. While boundaries were used to carve Russian Turkestan into five discrete Soviet Socialist Republics, initiatives were launched to create and shape national identity within these states. Although the ultimate goal was to be the emergence of New Soviet Man, the efforts made during the 1920s and 1930s provided the foundations upon which more recent attempts at nation building have been based. Andrew Segars offers a compelling comparison of the Soviet use of history and language to forge a new framework for identity construction in Uzbekistan with contemporaneous efforts by Atatürk to build a strong concept of 'Turkishness' from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire.

Henri Fruchet tackles a similar theme from a different perspective. His study of the historiography of Khan Kenesary Kasimov illustrates the importance of doctrinal orthodoxy within Soviet Central Asia and the urgency with which accounts and analysis of the recent past were moulded to suit the ideologies of the present.

Many of the instruments used by the early Soviets to build national identity, such as the rewriting of history and legend and the reworking of custom and tradition, have been taken up again by the post-independence regimes. Robert Lowe examines the process in Kyrgyzstan where semiotics and 'ethnosymbols' have been used by the regime of President Akaev with both sophistication and simplicity. From the inclusion of tent-shaped designs on the national flag, symbolic of the nomadic past, to the country's preoccupation with the mythical hero Manas, the state has sought to construct a new Kyrgyz identity.

In Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and other post-independence Central Asian states, one of the greatest barriers to successful nation building has been ethnic diversity; when consensus is lacking, attempts to construct national institutions can be more divisive than cohesive. In Kazakhstan, the continued presence of a substantial number of Russians, particularly in the north of the country, has

proven destabilising and disruptive to attempts to build a Kazakh nation and state. Tom Everett-Heath offers a case study that illustrates how clumsy identity construction in Kazakhstan and the perceived threat of radical Islamism in Uzbekistan – together with deteriorating economic conditions and threatening demographic trends – could prove to be the fault-lines along which internal tension and instability might emerge.

The issue of radical Islamism is examined more closely by Petra Steinberger, who argues that the term 'fundamentalism' is misunderstood and misused, and that the Central Asian approach to Islam on both state and individual levels remains a crucial tool of identity construction as well as an instrument of authority, control and political opposition.

Elise Massicard and Tommaso Trevisani contribute a focused study of a different use of tradition for the support of the state and the extension of its influence into the private sphere of life in Uzbekistan. The memory of the *Mahalla* has been reawoken and is being warped into an instrument of rule through which the central government's authority has been legitimised and enhanced.

The remaining two essays of the collection dealing with the post-Soviet period focus on the environmental challenges faced by the region. The first, by Lars Jalling, addresses issues on a broad front: the impact of nuclear tests in Kazakhstan; soil erosion; the desiccation of the Aral Sea; and the ways in which environmental issues have been politicised. Kai Wegerich offers a detailed and sophisticated analysis of the politics and practicalities of water usage in the Amu Darya and Syr Darya basins and the future of the Aral Sea.

The core themes of Central Asia's decades of transition are addressed from multiple directions due to the diverse subject matter of these essays and the eighty-year period covered by the collection. Two simple conclusions can be extracted. The Soviet legacy – be it political, economic, social, ideological or environmental – is crucial to an understanding of contemporary Central Asia. More importantly, this legacy and the reactions to it – the fruits of transition – will be the key determinants of the region's future.

1

TURKFRONT

Frunze and the development of Soviet counter-insurgency in Central Asia

Alexander Marshall

The revolt begins, 1916–19

The Russian Civil War witnessed a sudden upsurge of separatist and anarchist guerrilla movements in many parts of the old Tsarist Empire, but in few areas was one so pronounounced as in Central Asia, where groups of mounted raiders – *Basmachi*, to use the local term, meaning 'bandit'[1] – conducted a sporadic and violent struggle against the Soviet authorities for over ten years. During this period of violent civil unrest, the nascent Red Army was driven to collate and assess both its own civil war experience of high manoeuvrability (militarily and politically) and some of the practical experiences of its Tsarist predecessor to produce a formula that would enable the settlement of this territory. The methods of one man in particular – the future 'Soviet Clausewitz', M. V. Frunze, himself a son of settlers in Central Asia – provided the Reds with the key to achieving victory against their disorganised, yet elusive, foes.[2] This was a key that would notably elude the Soviet Army over sixty years later when it found itself fighting a similar opponent in Afghanistan. The reason for the loss of this key may lie ironically with Frunze himself, whose lasting legacy to Soviet military art was that of the 'Unified Military Doctrine' – a doctrine of flexibility in his own day that came to exhibit increasing intellectual rigidity under later proponents.

The crisis that arose in the Tsarist system in Central Asia in 1916 had a considerable prehistory, stretching back to the nineteenth century. Ever since the Andijan uprising of 1898, the indigenous population of Central Asia had expressed increasing dissatisfaction with a corrupt bureaucratic regime that first drove them into a cotton monoculture, with attendant economic complications, and then repeatedly and openly seemed to steal from them via the expropriation of 'surplus lands' to Russian settlers. This latter movement resulted in yearly famines between 1910 and 1913.[3] Fears of future rebellions led by fanatical mullahs grew and led to something of a 'siege mentality' amongst the Russian population – every Russian settler was issued with a Berdan rifle,[4] and administrative posts came to resemble miniature forts.[5] When, in 1916, the manpower crisis on the Eastern Front led to the call-up of the Central Asians to serve as

labour workers behind the front lines, these fears proved justified as a vicious rebellion exploded amongst the Sarts, Kyrgyz, Kazakhs and Turkomen, swiftly assuming the aspect of a savage ethnic conflict. Russian settlers were killed, their wives raped, their houses burnt, in an uprising so violent that Cossack and artillery units had to be withdrawn from the Eastern Front to help deal with it.[6] Whilst the Russians, under Governor-General Kuropatkin, eventually dealt with this revolt using their own extreme methods, several leaders emerged (notably Dzhunaid Khan) who were to head the roving *Basmachi* bands in future years.[7] A condition of general anarchy was created which the Bolsheviks took several years to overcome.

The stability of the civil state was further eroded by no less than four political upheavals over the following three years: the February Revolution saw the power of Governor-General Kuropatkin replaced by the dual authority of a Provisional Government committee and Soviet in Tashkent; Muslim congresses called by Muslim nationalists in May led to the formation of the Muslim Provisional Government of Autonomous Turkestan in Kokand in November 1917; the Bolsheviks, meanwhile, having set up their own government that same month in Tashkent in opposition to their Menshevik and Socialist Revolutionary (SR) rivals, launched an attack on Kokand which culminated in an infamous pogrom on 18 February 1918. They were then themselves challenged by the 'January Events' of the Osipov rising in Tashkent in 1919 before the final arrival of Frunze and the Turkkommissia. This hurricane of events played a large part in the formation of the *Basmachi* revolt, and figures prominently in the Soviet and Western historiography of the period. The nature of the Revolution in Central Asia received cogent analysis from early Marxist historians in the USSR during the 1920s, who suffered in considerable number under Stalin. Their studies, whilst necessarily rather rigidly class-based, give an important insight into the events of the early revolutionary period and the errors of the first Bolshevik government in Tashkent, the Sovnarkom, which was widely blamed in early Soviet literature for the explosion in *Basmachi* strength between 1918 and 1925. (Later, even more ideological accounts stressed the role of 'foreign interventionists' in sparking the *Basmachi* revolt, often arguing from flimsy evidence.[8])

The political situation in Central Asia in 1917–20 evolved from the peculiarities of the Tsarist administration, where 400,000 Russians (less, if one counts actual administrators alone) ruled approximately six million natives.[9] Local politics focused on the interaction of three groups: the Russian colonists, cut off from contact with Moscow for nearly two years by the forces of the White Cossack, Ataman Dutov, at the so-called 'Orenburg cork', who correspondingly developed their own form of communism in relative isolation; the 'traditional' rulers and leaders of the local population, the Khans, Beks and Mullahs; and the new and fragile generation of Muslim intellectuals who had grown up between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth under the influence of Ismail Gasprinskii – the 'Jaddidists' who formed the 'Young Khivan' and 'Young Bukharan' movements.

The Central Committee of the Communist Party in Moscow itself recognised the deep flaws in the policies of the early Tashkent Soviet:

> Cut off by White bands almost from the first days of the revolution in Soviet Russia, Turkestan found itself left to rely on its own strength. Not having itself a strong revolutionary tradition or experience of sustained class struggle, the thin layer of Russian workers, naturally, to a considerable degree fell under the influence of colonial-nationalist elements and involuntarily moved to politics at odds with the international interests of proletarian revolution. … Former servants of the Tsarist regime, adventurists and kulaks under the guise of class struggle, carried on their own wild persecution of the local population.[10]

Local observers were even more blunt and frank in their criticisms of the Sovnarkom's failings. Ryskulov, a leading member of the Young Kazakh party, recorded Tobolin, a member of the Tashkent Soviet at the time, as saying that resources would be better expended on the war fronts than in trying to preserve the lives of the famine-wracked Kazakhs, who were doomed anyway.[11] It was estimated in 1919 that one half of the population was starving. Taking into account those also affected by the epidemics of typhus and malaria, Ryskulov later calculated that 'about one third of the population must have died'.[12] Having enumerated the faults of the Tashkent committee – 'recognition of Armenian 'Dashnaktsutiun' party, ruination of the Ferghana population, collaboration with Semirechie *kulaks*, the [first] expedition to Bukhara, and incomprehension of our mission in relation to the *dekhkans* [peasants]' – he opined that communism in Turkestan had only been saved by the actions of 'a handful' of *native* revolutionaries.[13] Some of these same criticisms were repeated even by later Soviet historians, who, at the same time, were anxious to accentuate the fact that the Kokand government was a creation of White Guards and foreign interventionists; Shamagdiev claimed that in about fifteen months the Armenian *dashnaks* employed by Tashkent had tortured and murdered around 20,000 people,[14] and admitted that local Red Guard detachments were 'not regulated by discipline … [and] supplied themselves from the [local] population'.[15]

Most accounts, even later Soviet ones, therefore acknowledge the crucial role of the Sovnarkom's policies in antagonising the local population:[16] by banning Muslims from participating in the political life of the Soviet, claiming they were not members of the proletariat (which, from the Marxist perspective, was true), by banning the rule of shariah, and by actual aggressive acts, such as the requisitioning of *waqf* lands and persecution of the natives, the Sovnarkom swelled the ranks of the criminal bands traditionally known as *Basmachi* with both starving peasants and a small number of disaffected Muslim intellectuals.[17] The influence of the latter should not, however, be exaggerated; one of the great flaws of the *Basmachestvo* was that at no time did it become a modern nationalist movement, despite the claims

made for it by individual participants such as Professor Zeki Veledi Togan, whose views were influential amongst Western scholars over a considerable period.[18] Rather, it remained in many aspects essentially a tribal rebellion, and what organisation and strength it later developed, particularly under Ibrahim Bek (Ibragim, in Russian accounts), revolved around its tribal character and the support granted it by the feudal Emir of Bukhara and the rulers of Afghanistan. Mustafa Chokaev, who, as leader of the Kokand Provisional Government, was in a good position from which to judge Turkestan's political development, was adamant about the true situation in Turkestan at the time of the Revolution – the fall of Kokand had effectively quashed any hopes of the political nationalist movement gaining power, and the *Basmachi* movement bore no relation to that struggle:

> The movement became a sheer spontaneous struggle of the masses against the 'Soviet colonisers'. This was the weak point of the movement. Each of the leaders of the [*basmachi*] detachments, whose numbers constantly increased, the so-called 'Kurbashi', set himself his own aim and programme. … The front was not a national or national-political one. *The Turkestan Basmaji movement is the evidence of our political weakness.*[19]

So it was that the *Basmachi* evolved from being pre-war bandit gangs to functioning as large-scale symptoms of the famine, terror, distress and repression prevalent in Central Asia during the early Civil War, while simultaneously becoming real enemies of Russian rule. Invariably mounted on horseback, swift-moving and chiefly armed with swords, grenades and carbines, the *Basmachi* could offer no real resistance to Soviet forces on the field of battle, yet they made maximum use of their knowledge of the local terrain to carry out raids and ambushes.[20] Whereas in the Ferghana Valley, *Basmachi* activity remained limited to hit-and-run raids, in both Lokai and the deserts of Turkmenistan it took on a much greater scale, with larger defensive battles. Under the Turkmen leader, Dzhunaid Khan (possibly the most able *Basmachi* leader bar Ibrahim), attacks were made on villages and cities, and Khiva itself was occupied temporarily.[21]

Against such opponents, the early Soviet government had the great advantage (noted by Chokaev) of retaining control of most of the cities and lines of communication from the very beginning. However, its army, mostly composed of foreign prisoners-of-war and mercenaries like the *dashnaks*, fatally lacked the element of discipline so necessary to fighting an irregular opponent.[22] This was never more evident than in the aftermath of the fall of Kokand. In Soviet accounts this is usually presented as a heroic rescue of the besieged local Soviet garrison[23] (Soviet claims that they were 'forced' to intervene would become a recurring theme of their foreign policy), but this does little to explain the slaughter of 14,000 people there or the days of rape and looting that followed.[24] So weak was the army's discipline, in fact, that in the subsequent expedition to Bukhara in March 1918, the city's enraged population savagely repulsed the soldiers after a brief parlay. By the

time the main Red Army broke through to reach Tashkent, the local communist authorities had ceased even trying to rule the countryside. Instead of pursuing the *Basmachi*, the authorities negotiated with them. The two main leaders of the *Basmachi* at the time of the arrival of the Turkkommissia were Madamin-Bek and Irgash, who ruled the Margelan and Kokand areas, respectively. Madamin was aided by Monstrov's 'Peasant Army' – a group of armed Russian peasants – whom the Sovnarkom, with typical political incompetence, had managed to alienate. With the arrival of Frunze and his fellow colleagues from Moscow, however, Soviet policy in Central Asia was about to change dramatically.

The revolt encompassed, 1920–6

M. V. Frunze

Mikhail Vasil'evich Frunze was perhaps the most successful military commander produced by the Bolsheviks during the Civil War to come to Central Asia. In early 1920, aged only 34, he had risen through the ranks of the early Bolsheviks by virtue of unswerving diligence to the cause and his long-recognised ability to study the military implications of implementing a political revolution. As a result, on taking command of the Eastern Front in 1919 against the armies of Kolchak, he immediately demonstrated his grasp of tactics and the need for political work alongside military operations. His regrouping of forces for the Ufa counter-attack, where a brilliant victory was achieved by manoeuvre rather than any overwhelming overall numerical superiority, can be seen as the first stepping-stone in the development of Soviet 'operational art'. His actions thereafter on the Turkestan Front revealed his continuing dedication to manoeuvre and envelopment operations. Overall, his achievements in practice during the war, and as a theorist after it, easily excelled those of his only slightly younger contemporary, Tukhachevskii, though the latter's name remains better known in the West.

On his final arrival in Tashkent on 22 February 1920, in addition to his military abilities, Frunze brought three valuable factors. He was the only man in the six-man policy-making Turkkommissia with personal experience of Central Asia, having been born in Pishpek amongst the Kyrgyz and speaking fluent Kazakh. Secondly, he had already established a harmonious and fruitful relationship with Kuibyshev, the political officer who would serve as his right-hand man in Central Asia, and who was also a member of the commission. And finally, he also brought two disciplined, well-equipped and battle-hardened armies, the 1st and 4th, with junior commanders who knew his methods, and a large Muslim element (Tatars and Bashkirs) which would prove useful in political work. Between 1920 and 1923, this force amounted to between 120,000 and 160,000 men, with artillery, aircraft, armoured cars and trains, a naval flotilla and heavy machine-gun support. Nothing like it had ever been seen before in Central Asia.

Although his influence and precepts would prove to be the decisive element in turning the tide of the *Basmachestvo*, Frunze's actual time in Turkestan would be

short – from February to his departure again to the Southern Front against Wrangel in September 1920. In addition, he was preceded by his five fellow commission-members, who reached Tashkent in November 1919, and immediately began the important political work that would soon change Soviet fortunes. The numerous independent supply organisations were unified, the Turkestan Cheka were disbanded, as were the notorious Armenian units, and the more prominent local Russian officials put on open trial, with about 1,000 expelled. Troops were dispatched to purge local authorities and aid resettlement of the persecuted Kyrgyz and Kazakhs.[25] On Frunze's arrival, however, a political crisis had arisen which he alone addressed and resolved. Local Muslim intellectuals, led by Ryskulov and with the sympathy of Eliava, a member of the Turkkommissia, had come forward via the Fifth Conference of the Turkestan Communist Party with demands for more autonomy for Turkestan. This issue demanded control of foreign policy, an individual Turkic Communist Party and a Turkic Red Army. Frunze's reaction to these proposals was to reject them categorically and to instruct the Turkkommissia to place its own men in all organs of party and government so as to prevent such nationalist deviations arising. Although this may appear to have been a reprehensible and even backward step on Frunze's part, from a military perspective it was vital and necessary. It immensely simplified lines of supply and administration between the centre and the periphery at a time when the Red Army was on the verge of making an all-out effort to suppress the *Basmachi*. In trying to re-create a stable civil society from a state of chaos, the first demand had to be administrative simplicity; to have attempted to create devolved local authorities at this stage, when all else was still in flux, could have proven truly disastrous and set back stability in Turkestan even further. Although Ryskulov and his fellow local communists took an appeal against the decision to Moscow, Frunze's decision stood, leading ultimately to their resignation in protest.[26]

Frunze's second political success, which puts the first in perspective, was to banish the local communist organisation of ethnic Russian railway workers. These men had been behind the original revolution in Tashkent, and believed that they alone had a right to the reins of power. Some of them had been plotting a 'second October' against the Turkkommissia, which was seen as too sympathetic to native demands.[27] Their expulsion ended this danger. Frunze's measures ensured that communist efforts in Central Asia would henceforth neither be complicated by party-nationalists nor be stained with the same racial bias as the previous Sovnarkom.

For his opposition to autonomy, Frunze has sometimes been seen by Western historians as simply the brutal instrument of Russia's centralising desires, a man who conquered Central Asia simply by virtue of the large forces at his command. In actual fact, numbers can prove an illusory advantage in a guerrilla war, as later generations have time and again discovered, and Frunze's policies were considerably subtler. By May 1920 he had already outlined the general tactics that he and his successors would pursue against the *Basmachi*:

> (1) Quickly to set about decisive action against remnants of *Basmachi* bands, setting the goal of their complete annihilation.
>
> (2) To produce for this a definite plan, including 1) occupying with strong garrisons all the most prominent *oblasts*, capable of being bases of *Basmachi*, such as, for example, Uch-Kagan, Balikchi, Naukat, Sharikhan and so on. 2) The formation of sufficiently strong detachments for carrying out active operations. Attached to every garrison there is to be a flying column for the destruction of petty bands appearing in their area.
>
> (3) In action to display firmness and decisiveness. Every kind of negotiation with [*Basmachi*] band ringleaders is to cease.[28]

This order should be taken in conjunction with his later private conversation with Mel'kumov: 'The liquidation of the *basmachi* is a necessity in a short time. … This is possible. *It is necessary only to isolate the* Basmachi *from the peaceful population, who are exhausted by the extortions of the* Kurbashis.'[29]

Frunze's policies showed a remarkable grasp of the necessities of twentieth-century counter-insurgency. By creating a 'sieve' of forts to occupy ground and flying columns able to catch the guerrillas, he hoped to separate the *Basmachi* from the population amongst whom they hid, and to destroy them in open battle. The effect of the forts was to be complemented by the creation of home-guard units in the small *kishlaks* (the winter quarters of nomadic tribes), cutting off the predatory *Basmachi* from their main sources of supply and support.[30] As well as demonstrating the counter-insurgent response to Mao's 'fish-in-water' thesis of the modern guerrilla, almost ten years before Mao himself wrote on the subject, this also suggests that Frunze must have had some knowledge of the Boer War, where such techniques were first attempted on a large scale by Lord Kitchener.[31]

Frunze knew, however, that military policy had to be buttressed by a suitable political stance. He was the first Red Army commander to understand the true nature of the *Basmachestvo*, having condemned the Sovnarkom, claiming that under them '[c]ontrolling organs of power were seized by a group of adventurists, desiring to fish in troubled waters.'[32] He then went on to note:

> The *Basmachi* are not simply brigands: if they were, then obviously they would long ago have been killed off. No, the main strength of the *Basmachi* consists of hundreds and thousands of those who, one way or another, were blocked or offended by the previous authority: not seeing anywhere any defenders they fled to the *Basmachi* and imparted to them fantastic strength.[33]

Political education and political reform were fundamental to Frunze's overall plans for Central Asia. The direct attacks on Islam that had occurred under the

Sovnarkom were curtailed, native religious schools and courts were allowed to continue functioning, and *waqf* land was returned. Party schools opened in every *oblast* of Turkestan, and the prosecution of those associated with the crimes of the previous Soviet regime continued, with Kuibyshev disarming and disbanding the Soviet 4th Regiment for committing crimes against the populace.[34] The implementation of the New Economic Policy (NEP) in Central Asia continued this constructive political work, as bazaars were reopened and the grain requisitioning of 'War Communism' was replaced by *prodnalog* (tax in kind), tax assistance for peasants, and the delivery of seed to farmers. Kuibyshev urged the use of magic lantern shows and cinematographs to spread the Soviet message to the largely illiterate population.[35] Two 'agitation trains', the *Rosa Luxemburg* and *Red East*, made rapid cross-country propaganda tours.[36]

Despite the generally progressive nature of his policies, which in the long term assured Soviet victory in Turkestan, during his actual stay there Frunze undoubtedly made some political errors as well. First, despite the aforementioned instructions to cease all contact with *Basmachi* ringleaders, negotiations continued intermittently, causing lulls in activity that gave the deceptive impression of peace. Monstrov's army, having suffered a severe defeat during its joint attack with Madamin-Bek on Andijan from the forces of the newly arrived Red Army in September 1919 – losing in battle over 1,000 dead and injured – defected to the Russian (Soviet) side in early 1920.[37] Following the mysterious death/disappearance of Irgash in 1919, negotiations opened with Madamin-Bek, the premier *Basmachi* leader, which led to Madamin himself becoming a Soviet emissary.[38] The futility of such policies was demonstrated, however, when Madamin was assassinated during negotiations with a fellow *Basmachi* leader. Such *Basmachi* as did transfer their allegiance to the Soviet side were invariably only 'winter Bolsheviks', those who would return to their original bands, freshly armed, the following spring.

On 7 May, Frunze signed a directive to conscript 35,000 Central Asians into the Red Army, allowing entire units of individual nationalities (Turkoman, Kyrgyz) to be set up, despite his earlier opposition to autonomous forces. Such decrees created fierce opposition in a country unaccustomed to military service, as the earlier Tsarist decree had demonstrated, and Frunze's armies had too few native cadres to deal with the influx of reluctant recruits. Many Muslim draftees fled to the *Basmachi* with their arms, and the Bolsheviks were forced to disarm the 1st Uzbek Cavalry Brigade. The ambitious conscription decree proved a disastrous failure due to the lack of resources necessary to ensure its efficient implementation, and the final effect was to swell *Basmachi* strength to 30,000 during the summer of 1920.[39]

The final political drawback during Frunze's stay in Central Asia, though an unavoidable one in the circumstances, was the complication created by his own attack on Bukhara, which resulted in the forces of the large army hastily recruited by the Emir eventually joining and supplementing *Basmachi* strength. The Emir, who had pursued increasingly reactionary policies since his first

encounter with the Soviets in 1918, was now seen as a menace to the Soviet regime, and an attack under Frunze's guidance was launched on his capital in September 1920. The aim of Frunze's forces was, allegedly, to aid the local rising of the 'Young Bukharans', though it is questionable how many of these were left after the failure of Kolesov's initial contact with Bukhara and the repression of liberal elements that followed. Certainly, if they were anything like their kindred 'Young Khivans', whom Soviet forces had 'aided' in finally expelling Dzhunaid Khan from Khiva in January 1920, their contribution must have been small. Skalov, the major Red Army participant, was driven to comment on the latter: 'The strength of the Young Khivans is more inflated than a soap bubble, their influence in Khiva is almost nil, and they do not conduct any work at all. One has to watch them all the time in case they commit some stupidity.' [40]

Frunze's operation against Bukhara, a classic encirclement by four independent operational groups which assembled and deployed in complete secrecy, encountered fierce resistance and unexpected difficulties – the city's thick ancient walls absorbed artillery shells without any effect, leading fire to be concentrated on the gates and so reducing avenues of attack – but after five days it resulted in the fall of the capital.[41] The Emir managed to escape, however, retreating to his residence at Dushanbe, from where he needled the Soviet authority in Central Asia.

During an expedition to complete the rout of the forces at the Emir's disposal – from his sanctuary in Eastern Bukhara he gathered around him the forces of Kurshirmat, a leading *Basmachi*, and Ibrahim, destined to be his most loyal supporter – the difficulties of local conditions became fully apparent for the first time. The first problem was one of supply. During the 'Gissar [Hissar] Expedition' in February 1921, men were issued 200 cartridges and machine-guns limited to five belts of ammunition from the outset. Light machine-guns enabled the Red cavalry forces to repulse the mass charges of the enemy they encountered and artillery provided effective cover for their own attacks, but climatic conditions were severe, with two days spent in a malaria-infested valley.[42] The *Basmachi* demonstrated for the first time their alarming propensity to avoid, and to infiltrate behind, large columns of troops.[43] Ultimately, the Emir again escaped, this time to the safe haven of Afghanistan, from whence he continued to fund *Basmachi* activity.

With the fall of the fort at Gissar, and the subsequent occupation of Dushanbe, the *Basmachi* practically gave up defending fixed positions and the war took on a fully mobile character. In 1921–2, the Red Army began to conduct large-scale sweeps. Whole cavalry brigades with air support advancing on wide fronts from their well-garrisoned bases and strong points may have managed to capture large numbers of *Basmachi*, but the main ringleaders and their small corps of hard-line followers always escaped.[44] The war might have continued for some time in this desultory manner but for the rise of a *Basmachi* leader who enabled the Reds to destroy their mobile opponents in precisely the fixed battles they sought. It is ironic, therefore, that most Western sources should consider this

man the greatest leader the *Basmachi* had, a view usually based on the pan-Turkic writings of the aforementioned Professor Togan.[45] But this leader was already famous, if not for his military competence. His name was Enver Pasha.

Enver

When Enver Pasha, the former Turkish Minister of War, arrived in Central Asia in 1921, following an eventful journey via Berlin and Riga, he came initially as a Bolshevik ally and participant at the Baku Congress of Toilers and Workers of the East.[46] Not long after his own participation at that conference, however, Enver, who had always been prone to pan-Turkic dreams, defected to the *Basmachi* side and rode out of Bukhara on an alleged hunting trip to meet *Basmachi* ringleaders. With him he took a number of disaffected Bukharan Jaddidists, the most prominent amongst them being Usman Khodzaev, along with some of his own entourage of seventy-four Turkish officers whom the Russians had hoped would help to raise a loyal Muslim army. It is symbolic of Enver's own alien status as a Western Turk in Central Asia, however, that Ibrahim Bek immediately took him prisoner on suspicion of his being a double agent. With the Emir's intercession, he was released eventually and given permission to raise an 'Army of Islam' to combat the Soviet presence. He came at the crest of a wave of renewed *Basmachi* activity, the reasons for which are disputed in the existing literature – Mel'kumov implied that certain nationalist Young Bukharans deliberately fostered differences between the Red Army and the local population,[47] whilst the Emir claimed that it was the depredations and routings by the Red Army that created a backlash in the countryside.[48] In January 1922, Enver launched a successful attack on Dushanbe, taking the town, 120 rifles and two machine-guns.[49] With that success behind him, he proceeded to launch a series of fruitless attacks on Baisun, defended by the 5th Rifle Regiment, each charge withering under the concentrated fire of the Russian troops.

Baisun was symbolic of Enver's ambitions – a small town, it lay on the approach to the 'Iron Gates', the strategic pass through the mountains between Eastern and Western Bukhara, so-called from the days of Tamerlane.[50] Such an objective would have been suitable for an army, but not a guerrilla force. The Red Army, seizing this opportunity to destroy concentrated numbers of *Basmachi* in the field (estimates of the strength of Enver's army vary wildly between 7,000 and 17,000 men), abandoned their former policy of slow 'partridge drives' on a wide front in favour of lightning strikes by small, mobile columns.[51] Red Army forces possessed no overwhelming numerical superiority – the main (right) striking column mustered only 1,500 sabres, 800 bayonets and eight guns – but were considerably more disciplined and better equipped.[52] On 15 June, the right column, divided into a number of smaller tactical groups and marching to their starting positions by night to achieve surprise, surrounded and destroyed Enver's headquarters at Kofrun. Many of his troops, trapped in the trenches devised for them by their Turkish advisers, lacking artillery or reserve ammunition, were

annihilated in a storm of shrapnel, high-explosive and machine-gun fire.[53] As his defences crumpled under repeated cavalry and infantry attacks, Enver and a small group of men escaped to the mountains to the south, but in Mel'kumov's apt words: 'The Army of Islam ceased to exist.'[54] In contrast with previous operations, Red Army pursuit, aided by consistently accurate information from their scouts and *agentura* (local informers), was to prove relentless for over two months. Enver fought for three days to hold a bridgehead at Denau at the end of June, but retired ultimately, leaving 165 dead on the field. Dushanbe was retaken in July, the *Basmachi* once more dying in their trenches in precisely the type of set-piece confrontation they should have avoided, and Enver was driven further and further east to Bal'dzhuan. A three-day battle ensued in this town in August 1922, with Red Army 'artillery preparation' allegedly leading to around 12,000–15,000 *Basmachi* casualties being taken out of the town when it fell.[55] Enver escaped again, but Red Army cavalry caught up with him at a small *kishlak* to the north-east of Bal'dzhuan on 4 August. The first squadron spread out and, moving uphill to Enver's camp, was met by a charge from their quarry – in the vanguard on his favourite grey horse, Dervish – and twenty-five of his men, and driven back downhill. At that moment, however, Enver's men came under fire from a machine-gun squadron dismounted in the rear to cover just such an eventuality. Enver was hit five or six times in the chest and head and killed instantly, as was his second-in-command, Davlet, a few seconds later. The Reds retired without apprehending the extent of their victory.[56]

Although it is difficult to extract true figures of casualty returns from the available sources, there is little doubt that Enver's campaign struck a disastrous blow to the *Basmachi* movement, inflicting losses due to a premature move to semi-regular warfare from which it never really recovered. Far from being a visionary leader, Enver, displaying the same mixture of ineptitude and arrogance that had destroyed his Third Army at Sarikamis in 1915, gave the Bolsheviks an assured victory.[57] It is little wonder that Ibrahim Bek, the most tactically astute *Basmachi* leader, would have nothing to do with Enver, though their differences were undoubtedly over political as well as military matters. Achieving as much as Enver (forming disciplined semi-regular forces with uniforms and standardised equipment), and at less cost, Ibrahim symbolised the paradoxes of the *Basmachi* movement.[58] A brilliant leader, he was also a political reactionary, and the Emir's man, and would even aid the Soviets in the persecution of the liberal Jaddidist nationalists, whom he loathed.[59] During Enver's campaign he carried out his own independent raids. As if deliberately trying to highlight Enver's shortcomings as a guerrilla leader, Ibrahim's ambushes and retreats were, more often than not, highly successful. Even Soviet historians conceded that '[i]n October 1922 Ibrahim Bek was struck some appreciable blows, but he on every occasion managed to hide in the mountains.'[60]

Measured objectively, therefore, few of the claims made for Enver – that he was 'a leader of overriding authority' or that he alone provided 'an efficient army organisation' – stand up to close scrutiny.[61] Even the claim that he may

have been able to draw additional aid from Afghanistan, as 'a man very popular' there,[62] should be questioned. Madamin-Bek had received aid from the Afghans as early as 1919,[63] and Glenda Fraser argues that Enver may have discouraged aid from that country by his foreign, pan-Turkic ideology.[64] What is certain is that 1922 marked a crucial turning point in the war between the Soviets and *Basmachi*: 'The year … was the last in which the *Basmachi* could be said to rival the Soviets in apparent power in Turkestan.'[65] The year ended with the Bolsheviks in the ascendant. Responsibility for that must lie in greater part with Enver Pasha.

Ibrahim Bek 1923–6

With his death, Enver left his most lasting positive input to the *Basmachi* movement: his grave became a shrine, symbol and gathering point for mullahs until the Soviets banned meetings there after a few years, realising its political value to the *Basmachis*.[66] The war continued meanwhile, though increasingly difficult political conditions for the *Basmachi* compelled them to take refuge either in remote mountainous or desert areas, or in Afghanistan itself. The *Basmachestvo* had, by now, largely ceased to be a mass movement and was increasingly peopled purely by professional guerrillas, who formed two main groupings: the followers of Dzhunaid Khan, who carried out his own private campaign in the deserts of the Kara-Kum, a sideshow within a sideshow; and those *Kurbashis* who worked under the guidance of the ex-Emir of Bukhara in Kabul. Haji Sami, Enver's immediate successor (and the Salim Pasha of Soviet accounts), formed part of the latter group, though, like his former master, he had his own dictatorial tendencies. Conditions were increasingly difficult for subversive activity in Turkestan itself. Bolshevik propaganda continued apace. The country began to be flooded with Cheka intelligence agents, while Tatars operated in the Soviet-backed Bukharan secret police. The Reds' administrative grasp on the state tightened, symbolised by the increasing number of Bolshevik-initiated local congresses, or *kurultais*, and Moscow's growing success in insisting that *dekhkans* play a role in government. The holding of such a *kurultai* of Lokai, Ibrahim's own tribe, in December 1923, represented a particular coup for the Bolsheviks.[67] The tribal authorities of the *kishlaks* and the feudal classes were increasingly undermined by practical aid and propaganda, and in 1923 the Bolsheviks conceived a further political tool to unseat the *Basmachi* by forcing the peasants to grow cotton. The principle was simple: corn, normally prohibitively expensive to the country *dekhkan*, was offered on the condition that it was only for food and not for sowing, and that the peasants planted only cotton. 'By reducing the sowings of wheat in the spring of 1923, the Russians succeeded in driving the *Basmachi* into forcible extortion of corn, alienating the sympathies of the natives and causing dissension among the *Basmachi* bands.'[68]

This political policy was complemented by continued military campaigns, which once again assumed the form of large-scale sweeps and clearing opera-

tions, but with tactical modifications. From 1923 onwards, a key aspect in all Soviet operations was the increasing political disaffection of the local population from the *Basmachestvo*. By now, Red Army expeditions were invariably accompanied by small groups of militia and volunteer detachments (*dobrovol'cheskie otriady*), which might occasionally be political liabilities, but did provide invaluable knowledge of local terrain. A special sixty-man cavalry unit of Lokai tribesmen was formed, for example, to track down Ibrahim, their fellow Lokai.[69]

The effect of these changes was manifested when the *Basmachi* launched their spring campaign of 1923. This marked the first time that the *Basmachi* consciously tried to operate as a coordinated body: the tactics and strategy had been decided during a meeting between the Emir and leading *Kurbashis* at Kabul in August 1922.[70] This presaged the growing tendency for professionalism associated with the *Basmachi* that later would lead, through strict accounting of weaponry, not only to the assignment of each *Kurbashi* to a particular sphere of action, but also to a better system of communications to 'the best *Basmachi* force, man for man, ever fielded' under Ibrahim Bek.[71]

Coordinated plans demanded greater internal discipline. This was encouraged during the latter part of 1922 when Haji Sami recrossed the border from Afghanistan to settle local disputes between *Basmachi* leaders and have himself declared supreme leader of the movement. The introduction of discipline required stern measures, and Haji's intervention in the dispute between Fuzail Maksum and the brothers Ishan Suleiman and Ishan Sultan concluded with the latter two being hanged.[72] At the subsequent meeting of *Basmachi* leaders at Muminabad (within Soviet territory) the plans for the coming campaign were articulated, and Haji was recognized as *lashkar bashi* (commander-in-chief). The *Basmachi* plan was ambitious, based on the reoccupation of Eastern Bukhara through uniting all *Basmachi* forces, whilst at the same time increasing their numbers through local agitators – a goal that the *Basmachi* largely achieved. The general number of *Basmachi* increased from 2,945 to 5,030 men between December 1922 and June 1923.[73] Attacks were to be launched on Soviet garrisons, but also this time on the Russian's *Revkoms* (Revolutionary Commissions) and local party workers, reflecting the *Basmachis*' understanding that they were now fighting a political, as much as a military, war. *Basmachi* strategy had become far more sophisticated than anything that had preceded it.

Nonetheless, this plan failed, partly because of the improved methods of the Soviets, and partly because Haji Sami remained, like his late master, over-ambitious. His initial attack on the Red Army garrison at Kuliab in December 1922–January 1923 was successful: the fort fell after its ammunition supply was exhausted, but Sami's band was driven from that point shortly afterwards by relieving forces of the 15th Cavalry Regiment. Retiring and regrouping in the Gissar Valley, Sami united his forces with Ibrahim Bek's in February. Leaving Ibrahim to cover his rear in Lokai, he proceeded westwards with 600 men to spread the revolt throughout the thinly garrisoned Karsh–Kerk–Termez–Baisun area. Here, however, he was outmanoeuvred by the vigorous activity of the Turkfront commander A.I. Kork (later a

prominent victim of Stalin's purges). Kork dispatched the 3rd Cavalry Brigade with a 76 mm battery to surround and annihilate Sami's group as they advanced. These Red Army forces, conducting an encircling manoeuvre over a distance of more than 175 kilometres, trapped Haji Sami's force in the triangle of Koludar–Guzar–Tegi Khoram on 13 March and routed them.[74] Retiring in disarray, Sami retreated through Denau to Kelif, where a further blow completed his forces' disintegration and ended the *Basmachis*' short-lived unity of command. In the words of the Russian official history, the detachments of Sami now split into two groups, 'those content and discontent with Salim Pasha'.[75] This situation continued until July 1923, when Sami fled across the border to Afghanistan, never to return. He was to die shortly afterwards, far away from Central Asia, at the hands of Kemalist secret police.[76]

With the defeat of the *Basmachi* advance, the initiative passed to the Bolsheviks, who launched their own campaign in March under the auspices of the newly arrived corps' commander, the renowned Civil War leader Pavel Andreevich Pavlov. Pavlov instituted three measures that rendered the Bolshevik counter-offensive particularly devastating. First, he instituted the principle that attention would be focused on seizing and occupying the bases of *Basmachi* support, rather than on fruitless pursuit of the bands themselves. Three main such 'seats of *Basmachestvo*' now existed: the mountainous stronghold of Matcha; the adjoining areas of the Lokai and Gissar Valleys to the south; and the capital of Fuzail Maksum, mountainous Garm, far to the east. For executing his mission, Pavlov possessed greatly increased forces. In response to the requests of the Bukharan Soviet, Moscow bolstered the Turkfront to the point where 5,832 men with 222 machine-guns and artillery pieces were operating in Eastern Bukhara in 1923.[77] Second, he planned to strike against all three *Basmachi* bases simultaneously, allowing them no time to prepare or regroup. Lastly, he earned Mel'kumov's admiration by freeing the cavalry from being bound to follow the pace of accompanying infantry, increasing their effectiveness by allowing them greater independence and freedom of movement.[78]

The campaign that followed was notable for the striking successes achieved in difficult conditions. Matcha, for example, had long proved particularly difficult to penetrate, with the snow-capped peaks and avalanches common to the area giving it a resemblance to the Caucasus. In 1922, elements of the 11th Cavalry Division, part of the famous 1st Cavalry Army, had suffered a serious tactical reverse in Matcha. The Division's indigenous field guns and machine-gun carts (*tachanki*), so suitable for fighting on the plains, proved difficult to transport into the mountains, and division officers were so inexperienced in mountain fighting that they neglected to send dismounted scouts ahead of the main column. The resulting retreat of the 2nd Brigade had come close to being a military disaster.[79] The March offensive of 1923 was marked, by contrast, by methodical advance and suitable supply and transport; all guns and machine-guns were assigned to pack trains, and supplies were stockpiled on the Samarkand–Pendzhikent line in

advance.[80] In the fighting that followed, the three Red Army columns, greatly aided by local volunteers who served as interpreters, scouts and engineer labour, eventually took and occupied the main *kishlak* of Oburdon and its accompanying arsenal on 2 April 1923.

An advance by two columns from the Dushanbe and Samarkand military districts against Garm to the east proved equally successful. Garm fell on 29 July after a twelve-hour battle and Fuzail Maksum fled to Afghanistan, slightly wounded, on 12 August.[81] Only in the southern Gissar–Lokai area was Soviet action less than decisive. However, as long as Haji Sami remained in the country, the Soviets exploited the rift between him and Ibrahim Bek to strike blows at both men's forces. The greatest gains came from the increased level of political work carried out in the Lokai Valley, culminating with the introduction of land reform in November and the *kurultai* in December, where it was declared that Islam was not incompatible with communism. These measures were to benefit some of the military campaigns in the shape of growing numbers of local informers, as Mel'kumov noted: 'The new tactics, adhered to by Pavlov, countered the traditional representatives of the *Basmachi*. In May 1923 the forces of Ibrahim Bek were struck blows wherever they appeared.'[82]

In September, however, Ibrahim, by now *lashkar bashi* and the last major *Basmachi* leader still in Eastern Bukhara, retained enough strength to launch his own counter-attack. His plan, typically well conceived, was to strike the Soviet garrison at Naryn at the moment when Soviet recruitment turnover meant that the greatest number of inexperienced, untested troops would be in position there.[83] Soviet political measures had had some success in separating the *Basmachi* from the local population, however, and Mel'kumov claimed that Ibrahim was reduced to threats of execution to help raise troops.[84] The garrison held out long enough to be relieved, and the final result was a string of serious defeats for Ibrahim. Soviet sources put his losses at 117 *Kurbashis* and 1,565 soldiers.[85] A lull ensued in the conflict. Ibrahim remained active, however, and sought professional soldiers for his movement, a process that involved not only greater regimentation and centralisation of command, but also the formation of special propaganda groups to counter the Soviet message in the *auls* and *kishlaks*.[86]

In the interim, the Soviets maintained their political effort, whilst their military forces concentrated on inflicting a major defeat on Dzhunaid Khan in the Khorezm Desert in 1924.[87] The following year was notable for a Soviet impetus whose repercussions were felt in the wider political situation. Red Army forces occupied the island of Urta-Tugai on the Soviet–Afghan border, forcing the Afghan government to tighten their border controls, and rendering the traffic of *Basmachi* between Afghanistan and Turkestan considerably more difficult.

If Enver Pasha's misconceived 1922 campaign had done much to destroy the *Basmachi* as a mass movement in the field, Pavlov's 1923 campaign had done much to remove the natural roots of the hard-line insurgents. Though Ibrahim continued to receive residual support from the Lokai, and though Fuzail Maksum would return to Garm on a wave of popular support in 1929, the

Basmachi bands that continued to operate in Central Asia were considerably reduced in number, and poorly supported. The Soviet campaign of 1926, intended to remove Ibrahim Bek once and for all, was launched on the command of Inspector of Cavalry Semen Mikhailovich Budenny in March. It relied on crushing Red Army numerical superiority to carry out an intensified form of the type of operations first conceived by Frunze in 1920. By the construction of many more forts on the valley floors to isolate *Basmachi* sources of supply, and the activity of special flying columns composed of the best men and horses, the *Basmachi* were to be hounded out of existence. The constant recurrence of these tactics, incidentally, would fully justify Frunze's claim to be the true 'Father of Modern Soviet Counter-Insurgency', and not the more commonly mentioned Tukhachevskii.[88]

In 1926, radio was still unavailable, but heliograph stations were set up to help coordinate the actions of the garrisons and flying columns, alongside a permanently mobile field staff.[89] Implicated against their will in this increasingly dense web, the isolated *Basmachi* under Ibrahim Bek faced either starvation coupled with harassment in the hills, or military annihilation on the valley floors. Despite being a war of attrition, the turning point of the campaign was not a military encounter, but the seizure of 1,500 head of sheep belonging to Ibrahim by one of the flying columns.[90] An attempt by Khurram Bek to join Ibrahim met with a series of disasters, Khurram being pursued by cavalry only to cross the path of garrison forces warned of his approach in advance by a heliograph signal. Meanwhile, the small force Ibrahim dispatched to learn what had happened to Khurram was completely annihilated. On 21 July, Ibrahim crossed the border to Afghanistan, unable to operate any longer under the burden of military pressure. To the minds of many, the *Basmachestvo* was now truly finished.

The forgotten revolt: 1929–33

Though both *émigré* and later western observers were loath to recognise it, the success experienced by the Russians in their war against the *Basmachestvo* following Frunze's debut in Central Asia owed much to the Bolsheviks' astute adjustments to local political conditions, and to the legal and administrative reforms they had introduced. During the latter half of the 1920s, however, the Bolshevik political approach to Central Asia became more rigid and tightly centralised, leading to policies that alienated the local population and favoured a recurrence of the *Basmachestvo*. The first sign of this Moscow-led change of policy came with the *khudzhum* campaign of 1927, which sought to alter the social status of Muslim women. In that same year, traditional courts were finally abolished, efforts to increase secular education were redoubled, and *waqf* lands were substantially reduced. The onset of the campaign of collectivisation, which sought in particular to settle the nomad population, and which took grip from 1929 onwards with devastating results, completed this cycle of political change. This political transformation was soon inciting local unrest at the same time as