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# Participation of Tatar-Bashkir and Turkish military specialists in the formation of the national army in Turkestan

## E.G. Radjapov

Agency for Innovative Development under the Ministry of Higher education, Science and Innovation of the Republic of Uzbekistan Tashkent, Republic of Uzbekistan rajabiy1986@gmail.com

Abstract. The article examines participation of Tatar-Bashkir and Turkish military specialists in the formation of the national army in the Turkestan region. The participation and role of Tatar and Turkish soldiers involved in the formation of the national armed forces during the existence of the Turkestan Autonomous Government, and later for the formed People's Soviet Republics with capitals in Bukhara and Khorezm are analyzed. The purpose of attracting soldiers is pointed out. It consisted of their involvement in the creation of military schools and a national army. Special attention is drawn to the attitude of the Soviet government to these processes and the history of diplomatic relations between the Turkestan Autonomous Government and the headquarters of the "Ittihad i Terrakki" ("Unity and Progress") Party, created in Istanbul to form a national army. The author reveals the activities of military specialists of Tatar-Bashkir and Turkish origin, which became possible thanks to the efforts of progressive Jadids. Their participation in the formation of the national army and the creation of national military schools have been highlighted. It is presented that all that happened despite the pressure and repressions from the Soviet government. The article is based on archival documents and sources.

**Keywords:** Provisional government, Turkestan Autonomy, the Party "Ittihod va taraqqiy", Bukhara People's Soviet Republic, Khorezm People's Soviet Republic, national military forces, military experts.

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# Участие татаро-башкирских и турецких военных специалистов в формировании национальной армии в Туркестане

### Э.Г. Раджапов

Агентство инновационного развития при Министерстве высшего образования, науки и инноваций Республики Узбекистан Ташкент, Республика Узбекистан rajabiy1986@gmail.com

Резюме. В статье исследуется участие татарско-башкирских и турецких военных специалистов в формировании национальной армии в Туркестанском регионе. Анализируется участие и роль татарских и турецких солдат, привлеченных для формирования национальных вооруженных сил в период существования Туркестанского автономного правительства, а позднее для образованных Народных советских республик со столицами в Бухаре и Хорезме. Показывается цель привлечения солдат, а именно к созданию военных школ и национальной армии. Отдельное внимание уделено отношению советского правительства к этим процессам и истории дипломатических отношений между Туркестанским автономным правительством и штабом партии «Иттихад и терракки» («Единство и прогресс»), созданной в Стамбуле для формирования национальной армии.

Автор раскрывает деятельность военных специалистов татарско-башкирского и турецкого происхождения, которая стала возможной благодаря усилиям прогрессивных джадидов. По-казывается их участие в формировании национальной армии и создании национальных военных школ. Показывается, что все это происходило вопреки давлению и репрессий со стороны советской власти. Статья основывается на архивных документах и источниках.

**Ключевые слова:** Временное правительство, Туркестанская автономия, партия «Союз и прогресс», Бухарская Народная Советская Республика, Хорезмская Народная Советская Республика, национальные вооруженные силы, военные эксперты.

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After the conquest of the khanates in Turkestan by the Russian Empire, the colonial policy did not go around the military sphere as well as various spheres of public life. This further-aimed government administration did not want the Turkestan peoples to take up arms and get military training, and they were not recruited into military service at all. Even those who wanted to become soldiers as volunteers were not allowed to. Patriotic men of Turkestan, who had a strong desire for freedom, were also forbidden to wear swords and knives. Regarding this, the enlightener Abdulla Kodiriy wrote in his article under the pseudonym Ju-boy, "After our homeland (Turkestan – author) was conquered by the tsarist government, the Russian tyranny also forbade carrying knives" (Ishtirokyun, 1919).

Offensive phrases like "A thousand Sarts (non-tribal settled Uzbeks) are not worth the heel of a Russian soldier" also became a "slogan" of autocratic officials at that time. According to O.Girs, a secret adviser who inspected the Turkestan region, "By the present time (1883 – author.), the number of native men in Turkestan is 1 million 150 thousand people, and if we involve five out of a thousand of them into military service every year, it will be 5750 people. In the first year of mobilization, this indicator is 19,1% of our troops in Turkestan. In 15 years, the number of native people who have completed military service will increase to 86 250. A few of them can become non-commissioned officers or soldiers with excellent military training and may fight against us. If we can't recruit local nationals for military service, it's better to charge them for military service. If the military tax is collected from the local population in Turkestan in return for military service, it is possible to earn 3 million 125 thousand rubles per year" (Girs). He advocated the policy of not recruiting the people of Turkestan into the army at all. Girs mentioned that the people of the country would remember the political independence and would not forget the enmity towards the victorious Russians. Regarding the consequences of the Russian Empire's military policy in Turkestan, Akhmad Zaki Validy said, "Before, in Turkestan, according to the old custom, there was an incentive and desire to be a soldier. Now, the people of Turkestan have been released from military service, so their passion has gradually faded and they have become relaxed..." (Validiy, 1981: 114).

On June 25, 1916, the decree of Nikolay II "On the recruitment of non-Russian men of the Empire to work on the construction of defense structures and the roads of military affairs in the area of the army in action, as well as in any other affairs necessary for the defense of the state" was announced. According to the decree, people between the ages of 19 and 43 in the Syrdarya, Samarkand, Fergana, Yettisuv and Caspian regions of the Governor General of Turkestan were to be recruited. Among the local people that decree was called "recruitment for manual labour".

About 123 000 men from Turkestan were sent to work as manual labourers in many cities of the Russian Empire according to the decree, and this decree caused sharp protests and uprisings among the people of Turkestan. The decree also caused a complete change in the concept of military service for the men of Turkestan. The policy of the tsar's government to recruit the natives of Turkestan into military service ended in this way.

The Romanovs dynasty was overthrown as a result of the victory of the February Revolution, which took place on February 28, 1917 in Petrograd, the capital of the Russian Empire. On March 2, 1917, a provisional government was established instead of the overthrown tsar's government. Under the influence of those processes, political processes became active in Turkestan. The intellectuals of the country paid special attention not only to establish an independent state in the region, but also to establish state institutions that would serve to support it. Along with a number of institutions of the independent state to be established in the region, they also paid special attention to the issue of forming the national army, which was considered its support and protector.

Although large-scale works were carried out by Turkistan's progressives and progressive representatives of the country to form national military structures, it was not possible to create a strong Muslim army due to the growing influence of the Bolshevik Party. While the February Revolution of 1917 opened the doors of opportunity for freedom in the democratic spirit, the events of October, which took place later, chose the method of ending all democratic principles and ideas, physically losing the supporters of such principles, and ruling the power on the basis of a single ideology.

In July 1917, a general assembly of Muslims of all Russia was held in the city of Kazan, where the Central Muslim Military Commissariat was located. A joint assembly of the All-Russian Muslim Military Council and the All-Russian Council of Islamic Scholars worked there. Among the issues presented in the assembly, a decision was made to establish a national autonomy and some national factions from Muslim soldiers. The newspaper *Ulug Turkistan* ("The Great Turkestan") reported about the issues discussed at the meeting, "The Muslim soldier, who has been oppressed for centuries and in the lowest position, will start living a new life from now on. He will serve in his country, in his national regiment, speaking with Muslim leaders in his native language. He will perform the prayers imposed on him in time and will have special (halal) meals for the Muslims" (Ulugʻ Turkestan, 1917). After that proposal, the processes went against the interests of Turkestan people.

On November 28, 1917, Turkestan Autonomy was announced in Kokand city as a result of the efforts of the country's progressives to create an independent state in the region. From the first days of their work, the members of the government considered the issue of establishing the public police and the national army in order to maintain the peace of the nations living in Turkestan as the most important task (Ulug Turkestan, 1917). The Autonomy consisted of 8 people (Azamkhuzhaev, 2000; Madyarova, 2010: 127), and the position of the responsible military minister of the Autonomy was occupied by Ubaydulla Khojaev (New history of Uzbekistan..., 2000: 18), a lawyer by profession. As soon as the announcement of Turkestan Autonomy, the national Muslim battalion was established under the leadership and initiative of Ubaydulla Khojaev to protect it.

Later, Makhdi Chanishev, an agronomist from Ufa, served as the commander of the Autonomous Army for some time. According to the sources, Makhdi Chanishev was appointed commander-in-chief of the entire police to maintain order and discipline in the city during the Kokand events (Ulug Turkestan, 1918).

It should be emphasized that they established cooperation with a number of foreign military experts in order to raise the army of the Autonomous Government to the level of the advanced army of its time. In this regard, Polish and Turkish officers closely helped the members of the government of the Turkestan Autonomous Republic. The autonomous government decided to use the experience of Turkish officers in order to develop the military sphere. One of the main reasons for this was ethnicity, language, religion and cultural closeness and feeling of brotherhood.

Obidjon Mahmudov, the Turkestan Autonomy Minster of Food, in addition to the tasks within his authority, also paid considerable attention to the issue of provid-

ing (Karimov, 2013: 232), the soldiers of the Autonomous Region with weapons and involving professional experts. He met Hasan Ravshani in Azerbaijan, who was the leader of the Party "Ittihod va taraqqiy" (Union and Progress), which was founded in the Caucasus at the beginning of 1918. During the meeting, O.Mahmudov handed over a letter of the Union and Development Society of Turkestan written to Hasan Ravshani. In that letter, written on January 9, 1918, experienced specialists were requested for the establishment of national forces in Turkestan. Hasan Ravshani immediately sent the letter and request of the Union and Progress Society of Turkestan to the headquarters of the "Ittihod va taraqqiy" Party in Istanbul. On March 8, 1918, Hasan Ravshani sent a reply letter to Obidjon Mahmudov. In his letter he replied, "...in order to train officers in Turkestan, officers were also sent to establish a military school, a military organization, and form national regiments... Officers will also unconditionally obey the party "Ittihod va taraqqiy" and will be engaged only in military affairs. If the work is done in this order, I hope that you will achieve great success, and I promise that Turkey will help our Turkestan brothers in every area, Efandim" (Andican Ahat, 2003: 114). Being unaware of the overthrow of the autonomy, Hasan Ravshani sent a man named Yusuf Ziyo<sup>1</sup> (Andican Ahat, 2003: 114) and about 20 Ottoman soldiers to Turkestan together with O. Mahmudov according to his promise. However, by that time the opportunity had been lost, the Autonomy had been violently overthrown by the Bolsheviks.

The activities of the military force, which was the basis of autonomy, were covered in detail in several issues of the Ulug Turkestan ("The Great Turkestan"). For example, Mukhtar Bakir in his articles such as Duty of the Autonomous Government, Turkistan Autonomy and Turkestan people (Ulug' Turkestan, 1917), Force is needed for the establishment of Turkestan Autonomy (Ulug' Turkestan, 1917), it was considered necessary to form the national army of the Autonomy, establish military courts and organizations as the main tasks facing the government of Turkestan Autonomy. In the article entitled Duty of the Autonomous Government, it was reported as "So many armed soldiers were brought to Turkestan during the reign of the Tsar government. The need for these soldiers ended with the declaration of autonomy and the transition of the government to the hands of the people. It should be taken into account that now the soldiers who are in other cities of Turkestan started to return to their homeland", and in the article entitled Autonomy of Turkestan and Turkestan people we can see the reports that say, "It is not difficult to declare autonomy and independence". However, its implementation and execution requires a lot of experience, knowledge, and dedication. With the declaration of independence, Turkestan people are facing great and difficult tasks, as well as sacred and responsible services. Among these challenges, one of the most important tasks is the establishment of military tribunals and organizations and the organization of police work.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Later Yusuf Ziyo bey together with mufti Sadriddin Khan opened the Tashkent branch of the Union and Development Society in Turkey (Andican Ahat, 2003).

It should be noted that the Turkestan Autonomy was overthrown by the Soviet authorities through force, and even after the establishment of the Turkestan ASSR, the progressive figures of the region continued to prepare military specialists from local representatives who were true patriots and fought for the independence of Turkestan. They included such organizations as the "Izchilar tudasi", "Milliy Ittihod", and "Ittihodi Taraqqiy" which gathered many progressives like Munavvarqori Abdurashidkhonov (1878-1931), Ghazi Olim Yunusov, Said Ahroriy and others, established schools for future soldiers based on the English Boy Scouting methods at secondary schools. In 1918-1919, this system was officially included in the curriculum of all schools in Tashkent. These groups operated under the slogan Giving strength to the weak, knowledge to the ignorant. The groups "Izchi", "Temur", "Turon kuchi" and "Turk kuchi" had branches like "Bobirkhon qo'li" and "Qoyikhon qo'li" not only in Tashkent but also in other cities of Turkestan, such as Chimkent, Oqmasjid, etc. The services of Turkish officers who came to the Turkestan region were widely utilized in the process of teaching military sciences to the youth of Turkestan. In the schools organized by the progressive figures of Turkestan, Turkish officers held gymnastics classes.

The main goal of the national schools established by the progressives was to educate the youth of Turkestan aged 16-30 under the national flag, turn them into welltrained specialists, raise them physically strong, send them abroad to obtain education; develop the arts, establish literature and press in a national spirit, organize military training, and ultimately to educate the people of Turkestan as fighters for national independence. However, in the 1920s, many of the 72 Jadid schools established in Tashkent had Turkish officials as teachers. By the end of 1919, the Turk Bureau strictly opposed the activities of those groups, and by late 1920, all Turkish officials were expelled from the Soviet country under the pretext of "the return of military prisoners. Only the "Izchilar tudasi" under the leadership of Akmal Ikramov continued its activities until the end of 1921. Before the national-territorial demarcation was carried out in Turkestan, a number of reforms had been implemented by the Soviet authorities in the military sector, and extensive measures were taken to involve representatives of the local population in the ranks of the worker-peasant Red Army's national units. Although the worker-peasant Red Army national units established in Turkestan were used to serve the interests of the Soviet authorities, they also played a significant role in forming a new generation of national military specialists and in the development of the military sector.

Even after the overthrow of the autonomy, national intellectuals and local leaders preferred to use the experience and services of Turkish officers (subays) in the military field. The Bukhara Emirate was violently overthrown by the Bolsheviks in September 1920, and Bukhara People's Soviet Republic (BPSR) was established in its place.

As soon as Bukhara People's Soviet Republic was established, the help of Ottoman Turkish officers (subays), who were captured by the Russian Empire in the First World War and came to Turkestan from exile in Siberia, was used in the for-

mation of the armed forces of the republic. Turkish officer Ali Rizobey was appointed as the Deputy of the Inspector of Military Affairs of the BPSR Abdulhamid Oripov (Raci Çakiröz, 1987: 44–45). Turkish officers (subays) were recruited by the government of Bukhara in the fields of defense and military education, and military skills and experiences were learned from them. The fact that the language, culture, and religion of the Turkish soldiers were very close to the local nation also helped the government of the BPSR in this regard.

Abdulhamid Oripov, the inspector of military affairs of the BPSR and the chairman of the Soviet of inspectors of the BPSR, established a military school in Karmana in 1921 and started to train officers from the local people representatives. According to Ahmed Zaki Validi, that military school consisted of captured Turkish officers (Zakiy Validi Tugon, 1997: 105).

Abdulhamid Oripov together with Zaki Validi invited several talented specialists to Bukhara to form the national military units of the city. In particular, Abkhazian Ishmurzin from Bashkirdistan, his assistant Ibrahim Ishakov (Zakiy Validi Tugon, 1997: 125), Tatar officer colonel Haybatulla Sadikov and some of his close officers came to Bukhara and assumed leadership roles in military units. The military units of Karshi, Shahrisabz, Nurota, Guzor, Karmana were assigned to them. All of them were appointed to the military posts by Abdulhamid Oripov. The purpose of their appointment to those positions was, firstly, to train qualified national military specialists; secondly, if the Soviet government did not allow establishing national military units in the BPSR in an official and legal way or began to disband the military units that had begun to be formed, they would unite with the commanders and start a general upsurge. Certainly, in order to achieve the second goal, it was necessary to convey the national goal message to the commanders on a large scale.

It should be noted that in 1920 the command of the Red Army appointed Tatar military men to the position of the inspector of military affairs of both republics (the BPSR and the KhPSR), but Riza Shokirov (the inspector of military affairs of the KhPSR) and Bagautdin Shegabutdinov (the inspector of military affairs of the BPSR) did not work long in this position. Later, A. Oripov (1921–1922) and famous statesman F. Khojaev (1922), R. Boymurodov (1922-02.1923), N.A. Verevkin (Rakhalsky) (02.1923-06.1923), F. Khojaev (06.1923–1924), M. Mirsharopov (1924) worked in the position of the inspector of military affairs of the BPSR, while Shaykhutdin Khasanov (1921), Hasan Muhammadzhanov (1921) and Jabbergon Kochkarov (1921–1922), Mikhail Voloshin (1922–1923), I.V. Godetsky (1923–1924), Nikolay Shaydakov (1924) worked as inspectors of military affairs of the BPSR (Matkarimov, 1993: 18–19).

Turkish officers participated in the formation of the national armed forces not only of the Bukhara People's Soviet Republic, but also of the Khorezm People's Soviet Republic. Some of them even worked as teachers in schools, such as "Namuna", "Turon", "Mukhtoriyat", "Irfon" whih opened in Tashkent (Raci Çakiröz, 1987: 42–43). Under the pressure and threat of the Bolsheviks, who did not want the KhPSR to have its own national armed forces, the Turkish officers were expelled by Safonov,

the representative of the RSFSR in Moscow, and the military school was closed (Zakiy Validi Tugon, 1997: 172).

In organizing the armed forces of the BPSR, the experience and skills of Turkish officers and Tatar military specialists, who were captured by the Russians in the First World War and later came to Turkestan, were used, and they were assigned responsible military positions. Despite the difficult conditions and restrictions, the leaders of the government of the BPSR tried to organize the army of the BPSR independent from the interests of the Turkestan Front and the RSFSR. However, the Center did not approve those efforts and for that reason several of the leaders of the republic were persecuted.

The Bolsheviks decided to use Tatar military experts to break the influence of Turkish prisoners of war in the region. In order to protect and strengthen the Soviet power in Turkestan, the military units sent from the Volga and Ural regions were used as military experts.

The main reason for that was that Tatars and Bashkirs, whose language and religion were similar to those of the local people of Turkestan, lived in those areas, and unlike Russian-speaking soldiers, they understood the language of the local population of Turkestan well. The troops of the Orenburg front, the Kazan national troop, the combat troop of the Samara communes, the Nizhegorod, Chelyabinsk troops, the 20th Moscow national regiment and other military units were mobilized for that work. Those military units were sent to Turkestan in the second half of July and the first half of August, 1918, to participate in the battles of the Caspian Front (Rasulov, 2005: 72). They also played a special role in providing the national military units being formed in Turkestan with appropriate personnel.

Although the first stage of the formation of the national military units of the Red Army by the Soviet authorities was very complicated and difficult, that stage ended with the formation of the following national military units:

Table

Name of the unit of the Red Army	The year of establishment	Location
Tashkent Red Guards Squad	January, 1918	Tashkent
Kokand Party Squad	January, 1918	Kokand
Tashkent National Troop of Commanders	January, 1918	Tashkent
I Tashkent National Red Army of Workers Battalion	June, 1918	Tashkent
Tashkent National Military Team	August, 1918	Tashkent
I Tashkent Independent National Battalion	September, 1918	Tashkent
III International 1-Footsoldier Battalion	February, 1919	Tashkent
I National Cavalry Regiment	March, 1919	Tashkent
III International 2-Footsoldier Battalion	May, 1919	Samarkand
Special Uzbek Battalion	August, 1919	Andijan

In the following years, the organization of the national units of the Red Army in the Turkestan ASSR was carried out on the basis of precise plans, and the results expected by the Soviet authorities were achieved. In that regard, propaganda work carried out by force among the Turkestan people played a big role. Besides, a number of decrees and decisions were adopted by the Soviet authorities in order to recruit the population of TASSR into military units. On May 7, 1920, according to order No. 228 of the Turkestan Front, TASSR Central Executive Committee (CEC) issued an order to recruit 30 000 people from the native population of Turkestan into the Red Army (NAUz. F. 17. Op. 1. C. 1038. P. 172). In addition, on June 31, 1920, an order was issued to recruit Turkestan population into the Red Army (NAUz. F. 39. O. 1. C. 257. P. 1). In the same year, the population of Turkestan began to be recruited into military service on the basis of compulsion.

This stage of the formation of national military units in Turkestan is characterized by the formation of the Bukhara People's Soviet Republic (BPSR) and Khorezm People's Soviet Republic (KhPSR), the organization and formation of their national military units by the government of both countries. Because the military units established by the governments of the BPSR and the KhPSR served as the basis for the formation of the national military units and structures of the UzSSR, which were formed after the national-territorial demarcation in Central Asia.

In conclusion, the participation of the Tatar-Bashkir military and intellectuals in the formation of the national armed forces in the Turkestan region had a special place, and in its turn, that issue was raised by a number of Tatar intellectuals in the national press of Turkestan as the main issue that should attract greater attention. In particular, the issue of establishing a national army of Turkestan autonomy and its maintenance was raised many times by Tatar intellectuals. Moreover, the participation and support of Turkish military experts in the formation of the national army was remarkable. In this process, due to the commonality of language, religion and culture, a number of positive results were achieved in the formation of the national army in the Turkestan region. Taking into account that the formation of national armed forces in the region would destroy the interests and influence of the Soviet government, Turkish military experts were expelled from the region.

#### Конфликт интересов

Автор заявляет об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

#### **Conflict of interests**

The author declares no relevant conflict of interests.

#### **SOURCES**

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Сведения об авторе: Раджапов Эркин Ганиевич, PhD (история), Агентство инновационного развития при Министерстве высшего образования, науки и инноваций Республики Узбекистан (100174, ул. Университетская, 7, Ташкент, Республика Узбекистан); https://orcid.org/0009-0008-6609-0383; e-mail: rajabiy1986@gmail.com

**About the author:** Erkin G. Radjapov, PhD (History), Agency for Innovative Development under the Ministry of Higher education, Science and Innovation of the Republic of Uzbekistan (7 University St., Tashkent 100174, Republic of Uzbekistan); https://orcid.org/0009-0008-6609-0383; e-mail: rajabiy1986@gmail.com

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