

Today, the country needs an adequate state cultural policy, the national priority of which will be the quality of life of people, their spiritual and moral condition, the development of civic culture, overcoming inter-ethnic alienation, the formation of a single cultural space of the country. The activities on the revival and development of the spiritual potential of the nation cannot be effective without involving civil society institutions in this process, primarily the family, the education system, as well as the media, secular and religious organizations.

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The article examines the influence exerted by the February and October revolutions in Russia on Eastern nations. Special attention is paid to the reaction of the Muslims in the Russian Empire and the impact on the national-liberation movement of the Arab people on the territory of the former Ottoman Empire. As noted by Robert Landa, the conservative part of society, including the Muslim aristocracy of Russia, its military elite and clergy called the February revolution of 1917 “a great anarchy, which should have been done away with as soon as possible.” At the same time liberally-minded Muslims supported the February revolution. However, more influential liberals adhered to the old rule and

maintained that the overthrow of the “White Czar” undermined the prestige of Russia and its abilities to fulfill its liabilities concerning Muslims. On the whole, the unpredictable Russian reality born of February 1917 has provoked great dissent among the Russian Muslims and given rise to a certain feeling of separatism.

The Provisional government formally guaranteed all nationalities of Russia the property rights, freedom of movement, electoral rights, and the right to study in the native language. The Provisional government also allowed the Muslims to set up such organizations as the Committee of mountain dwellers of the North Caucasus and appointed influential representatives of Muslim aristocracy as commissars of the Provisional government and the State Duma. A Muslim People’s Committee came into being in Moscow consisting of Kasimov Tatar entrepreneurs loyal to the Russian authorities, who were later joined by the opposition members Ahmed Tsalikov, Menshevik faction member, and Tatar writer Gayaz Iskhaki. In St. Petersburg Ahmed Tsalikov organized the Temporary Central Bureau of Muslims, which convened the First All-Russia Muslim Congress in Moscow in May 1917. Part of its delegates came out for the victory on the Russian army in World War I, but most of them supported the chief delegate of the Cadet party Sadri Maksudi, who came out against partition of Turkey and destruction of Constantinople, but his speech for “a war with victorious end” was met with disapproval by most delegates, who denounced the “imperialist slogans of the Cadets.” Contrary to the view of the “traditionalists,” most delegates supported the idea of freedom not only in Europe, but also in Asia and Africa, among all peoples of the world, irrespective of their origin, religion, color of skin and race. For the first time solidarity was proclaimed between the supporters of the Russian February revolution and the downtrodden peoples of Asia and Africa. It was actually the first attempt of the supporters of the February revolution to emerge in the international arena. However, the February 1917 events in Russia did not evoke any tangible

response outside Russia. They had too many contradictions, disagreements, etc., factions fighting one another, and ethno-confessional trends and currents, whose interests clashed and leaders rivaled.

The collapse of the Russian monarchy in February 1917 gave great hopes to each nation inhabiting the country. The national minorities living in the territory of the old empire awaited equality proclaimed by the Provisional government. But the Petrograd Soviet put forward only the cultural-national autonomy, whose very idea was discarded by the train of events. The February leaders were paralyzed by World War I and adhered to formally legal approach to all major problems, while awaiting the forthcoming elections to the Constituent Assembly. Such approach disappointed national minorities living in Russia. During the summer of 1917 they began to move away from the revolution which failed to take the initiative and meet their hopes and aspirations. Supporters of the Provisional authorities did not understand properly the scope of the changes that had taken place after February 1917 events in Russia, primarily the sentiments of workers, peasants and soldiers and their thirst for immediate transformations. Besides, the authorities were not really interested in the wishes and aspirations of Russian national and religious minorities, thus alienating them. Although Muslims alone numbered twenty million in Russia in 1910 and thirty million in 1930 (despite the losses suffered in World War I and the Civil war). This force could have solved much in the course of the political struggle of 1917–1921, but the Provisional authorities did not take this factor into consideration, virtually overlooked it. This was why it was not only national minorities, but also entire social strata and organizations that began to abandon the Provisional government, which brought it to complete failure in October 1917. The crucial role in that process was also played by unreliability, indetermination and lack of support from the Provisional government, as well as cohesion, better organization and the

revolutionary drive of a numerically smaller Bolshevik party, which overpowered its weaker rivals.

The February 1917 developments in Russia did not have a broad response in other countries because they were concentrated on solving internal Russian problems, but did not succeed in it. In as much as Russia continued its engagement in the war, its Entente allies were not worried over its "behavior." The remaining countries are at war (there were 38 of them with a population of about 1.5 billion, including the inhabitants of China, India. Egypt and other colonies and semi-colonies were drawn in to military hostilities. As a result, of the 70 million men fighting in various countries in 1914–1918, nine-and-a-half million were killed, over twenty million were wounded and 3.5 million of them remained cripples. The great Muslim country – the Ottoman Empire – lost 600,000 in killed and two million in wounded. Industry and agriculture deteriorated almost three times over. Up to 40 percent of the population in Syria and Lebanon (parts of the Ottoman Empire) died from hunger and sickness in 1914–1916. The situation in Iraq, Palestine and other Arab regions was hardly any better. By October 1917 not a single Arab country was independent. Algeria was a colony of France, Libya – a colony of Italy. Morocco was under protectorate of France and Spain, and Egypt and Sudan – under protectorate of Britain, although formally the latter was considered a local possession of Britain and Egypt. Yemen and other countries of the Arab Peninsula were parts of the Ottoman Empire, except Aden, which became one of the first British colonies in the Arab world at the beginning of the 19th century, and a number of princedoms of the Persian Gulf turned into British protectorates by that time. In the Middle East from the very beginning of World War I military hostilities were going on: the British forces largely consisting of Indian Muslims and other inhabitants of British colonies under the command of British generals were engaged in fighting the Turkish armies which numbered hundreds of thousands of Arab soldiers under the command of German generals. At the same time the Bedouin

militia and certain Arab tribes led by Emir Faisal and the British Intelligence officer Colonel Lawrence staged a rebellion against Ottoman domination on the Arab Peninsula.

The Ottoman Empire devastated as it was by World War I and subjugated by Germany was inhabited by sixty peoples and ethnic groups of twelve confessions, and was by right regarded "prison of nations." The Young Turks who came to power in 1909 carried on mass reprisals against non-Turkish inhabitants of their empire, having intensified them during the war years, especially against the Armenian people. In those years up to 1.5 million Armenians lost their life due to persecution, harsh reprisals, torture, hunger and banishment of peaceful civilian population from their traditional place of residence. The plight of other national minorities – Greeks, Assyrians and Arabs was also heavy. The latter (10.5 million) surpassed in number the ethnic Turks living in the empire (7 million). However, they had only 60 deputies in parliament representing them, as against 150 of those representing the Turks. There was a forcible assimilation of national minorities, persecution of their national organizations. Closing down of their native schools was an ordinary thing. This was why within the empire, as well as outside it and also in the Ottoman army illegal patriotic organizations of the downtrodden peoples began to be formed.

After the start of World War I the situation in most Arab countries has deteriorated. Hundreds of thousands of Arabs died from hunger and disease, were killed, wounded or maimed while serving in the Ottoman army. All this contributed to the growing revolutionary crisis in the Arab world. The phenomena of economic and political collapse exacerbated due to the impact of such factor of world importance as the October revolution of 1917 in Russia. An upsurge of the liberation struggle of the Arabs was stepped up by the fact that the Entente troops were deployed in Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq, where they attempted to stamp the fight of the Arabs for freedom, thus stepping up their resistance.

The developments in Russia in October 1917, as well as the position of the Russian Muslims in the course of the Civil war in Russia and its turning into a federative state became the factor preventing the Muslim ummah to disintegrate. This followed a stubborn struggle, which was also waged by Russian Muslims, contrary to assertions of certain western researchers.

In December 1917 the Soviet government proclaimed the annulment of the secret treaties of the former czarist regime with the Entente imperialists. Among these treaties was the secret Sykes-Picot agreement between Britain and France signed in 1916, with participation of the Russian czar's government, which envisaged the partition of the countries of the Arab East, which were dominated by the Ottoman Empire at the time. The Soviet government disclosed the essence of that document, which evoked an upsurge of patriotic sentiments of the Arab people. That treacherous deal was unmasked by the Soviet government in Petrograd in December 1917 and later published in Beirut, which had an effect of a bomb blast. In January 1918 the news became known in Cairo about the decision of the 2nd All-Russia Congress of Soviets, which rejected the methods of secret diplomacy, annexations and seizures. At the same time the Congress supported the right of nations to self-determination.

In the spring of 1918 action committees began to be formed in Arab countries against the Sykes-Picot agreement. The denunciation by the Soviet government of this secret plot of colonialists against the Arab people was an incentive to an upsurge of the Arab liberation struggle. Proof of this was the revolutionist movement of 1919-1921 in Egypt, Libya, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Tunisia and Morocco. At the same time the Paris Peace Conference evolved, on the U.S. initiative a system of mandate rule, which was subsequently applied to the Arab countries, whose partition was envisaged by the Sykes-Picot agreement. In the implementation of their program the imperialists, despite their military superiority, came across a powerful resistance of the Arabs: one thousand Syrians died in

battles with the 50,000-strong French army at Maysalun Pass. The French army captured Damascus, but the struggle continued. By the summer of 1924 the French army lost up to nine thousand men and officers. The Arabs of Morocco were fighting the French and Spanish colonialists until 1934, and the Libyan Arabs resisted the Italian fascists up to 1932. For them, just as for the people of Algeria, Palestine and other Arab countries, the October 1917 revolution in Russia served as an example of courage and fortitude, concludes the researcher.

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