

## TATAR PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS ACTIVITIES IN MARCH-APRIL 1917

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**Abstract:** After the February revolution of 1917 the task for the formation of institutions of state public power in the center and on the ground. Different social and political groups and parties began to fight for power and tried to implement their own projects of state structure of the country. One of the leading national and confessional forces in the late Imperial period in Russia were the Muslim Turks of the Volga-Ural region. After the February revolution, the goals of the national movement became the creation of religious and national-cultural autonomy, ensuring the official status of the Tatar language. Representatives of all major social groups of the Muslim community (the bourgeoisie, the intelligentsia, and the clergy) took part in the formation of Muslim Committees and Bureaus.

**Keywords:** The Volga-Ural region, national organizations, social movement, Turkic-Muslims, religious autonomy, national-cultural autonomy, bourgeois revolution

### 1 Introduction

The purpose of the article is to analyze the process of formation and evolution of national public organizations in March-May 1917, created by the Turkic-Muslim elite of the Volga-Ural region of the former Russian Empire. The basis of the national movement of Muslims in the region was formed by pre-party forms of social movement. After the February revolution these were Muslim committees and bureaus, i.e. bodies focused on solving urgent socio-economic problems of the population: education, charity, religion. Among the elite groups that formed the basis of these committees and bureaus, we should note, first of all, the bourgeoisie, the clergy, and the national intelligentsia – mudarris (madrasah teachers) and lay school teachers. As a result, in July 1917, in the government of the national-cultural autonomy of Milli Idare (the National government) three ministries were created, representing the interests of the bourgeoisie (Maliya Nazarat), the clergy (Diniya Nazarat) and the teachers (Magarif Nazaraty). This group was focused on creating of the united Muslim religious autonomy and Muslim representative organ (the all-Russian Milli Shuro). By political orientation, they represented national liberals and moderate socialists. The basis of this movement was formed by the middle generation: 30-50 years (mostly 35-40 years) – the "Gasprinsky generation". In rural areas the public organizations were dominated by clergy.

### 2 Methods

In the late Imperial period the history of the national movement is partly reconstructed on the basis of the regional gendarmerie department data, but in 1917 an analysis of the social movement

by gendarmerie was not conducted, and the archives of the institutions themselves, unfortunately, have not survived. In this situation, the main source is the national press. In our work, we used the newspapers "Yoldyz" and "Koyash" (Kazan), "Irek" and "Tormysh" (Ufa). The first-hand data on the all-Russian movement of Muslims is given in the manuscript of I. Teregulov "Essays of the revolution and the social movement of Muslims in Russia" (Teregulov, 1926). A detailed study of the movement of Muslims in the Volga-Ural region in March-April 1917 in the Kazan and Ufa provinces is given in the work of A. Y. Khabutdinov (Khabutdinov, 2001). The discussions about the "Muslim" and "Turkic-Tatar" nation among Russian Volga-Ural Tatars in the early 20th century and transformation in the Volga-Ural region in 1917 were analyzed by D.M. Usmanova (Usmanova, 2018); (Usmanova, 2019). A.Y. Khabutdinov, M.M. Imasheva, B.R. Fahrutdinov discussed the projects of state and political development of Muslims in Russia in 1917 (Khabutdinov, Imasheva, Fahrutdinov, 2019). A.Y. Khabutdinov, M.M. Imasheva, R.R. Fahrutdinov, M.R., Yafyasova, A.N. Youzeev (A.Y. Khabutdinov, M.M. Imasheva, R.R. Fahrutdinov, M.R., 2019) analyzed the religious movement of that period. The corresponding sections of the 7th volume of the History of the Tatars (History of the Tatars, 2013) are devoted to this topic.

The methodological basis of the article is a systematic approach combined with the principle of historicism. The general scientific system approach involves the use of socio-historical, general scientific and interdisciplinary methods: problem-chronological, comparative-historical, retrospective, etc. The principle of historicism assumes consideration of the peculiarities of the formation and evolution of the national Tatar movement in the Volga-Ural region in the spring of 1917. The study of the evolution of the Tatar social movement in this period was carried out on a chronological basis. A systematic approach to the problem and a systematic analysis of the source material made it possible to identify the features of the Tatar-Muslim movement in Russia allowed to determine its content, clarify the range of tasks facing the bodies created by the Tatar national leaders, highlight their specific activities aimed at creating a national autonomy of Muslims in the Volga-Ural region and solving specific socio-economic, cultural and educational tasks.

### 3 Results and Discussion

Right after the February revolution in Petrograd, the leaders of the Turkic ethno-confessional movement in the Volga-Ural region began to reform the only body that represented their community in the Russian Empire at that time. Already on March 3, 1917, national leaders in the city of Ufa, where the Orenburg Mohammedan Spiritual Assembly (OMSA) was located, took this body under their control and deposed its head mufti M.-S. Bayazitov and qadi (judge) G. Kapkayev. The new body was called the Muslim Committee. At its request the Presidium of the Ufa Committee and the Provincial Committee of public organizations decided on March 7 to arrest M.-S. Bayazitov and G. Kapkaev. A 16-person Commission (Bureau) under the chairmanship of Imam Khabibulla Akhtyamov was established to manage the OMSA. It included two qadis, five Ufa imams, three Commissars and representatives of the Muslim Committee (Tormysh, March 8, 1917). Interim mufti Salihjan Urmanov issued an appeal to the OMSA clergy to support the new government (Tormysh, March 14, 1917).

On March 10, 1917, the Bureau elected two temporary qadis. At the same meeting, Ufa Committee for the dissemination of ideas of citizenship among Muslims was created, and its governing body was formed. Its Chairman, was social-democrat, Gumer Teregulov, Vice-chairmen – Zakir Kadiri (mudarris, editor of the "Tormysh" newspaper) and Galimjan Ibragimov (head teacher of the "Galiya" madrasah). Representatives of lay school and madrasah teachers dominated among its members. (Tormysh,

March 12, 1917). In fact, the same persons created the OMSA Commissariat and the Ufa Committee. (Tormysh, March 14, 1917). The Committee itself promoted the idea of cultural and national autonomy, giving the Tatar language an official status in state institutions in areas with a Muslim population, teaching in their native language in primary schools, educating the Tatar nation through lectures and articles in the media. The Committee played a major role in organizing and holding Muslim congresses in Ufa (April, August, 1917), and reforming of the OMSA (Bikbulatov, 1997).

On March 7, 1917 in Kazan the Provisional Muslim Committee was set up and a telegram was sent to the Provisional government expressing support. At first, the Committee consisted of 30-35 people and its main tasks were to "study the needs of the Muslims, organize their forces in a unified position, and prepare for the Constituent Assembly elections" (Koyash, March 9; March 12, 1917).

On March 12, 1917, the leadership of the Kazan Muslim Committee was finally formed. Its Chairman was socialist-revolutionary Fuad Tuktarov, Vice-chairmen – Gabdulla Apanay (from the imams) and Validkhan Tanachev. It's members included representatives from teachers, military, bourgeoisie and clergy. In the Kazan Muslim Committee itself, especially in its leadership, we see the predominance of the middle generation: 30-50 years (mostly 35-40 years) – the "Gasprinsky generation", i.e. the champions of Russian Muslims unity. The younger generation was represented by the military and the teachers, who advocated the separate existence of different Russian Muslims ethnic groups. The Committee elected members to the Executive Committee of the Kazan Soviet (Koyash, March 14, 1917). On March 19, the Committee forms it's commissions: financial, legal, informational and newspaper. (Koyash, 1917, March 23).

At the beginning of April 1917 the Kazan Muslim Committee moved from organizational to practical issues. On April 9 the organization of national military units and "Milli Sermaya" ("The National Treasury") were discussed (Koyash 1917, April 13). On April 23, the program of the Kazan Muslim Committee was published. According to it, Russia had to be declared a Federal Republic. The autonomy of the Turko-Tatars was formulated as extraterritorial. In areas with a large number of representatives of the nation, the Turkic-Tatar language had to be declared an official one (Koyash, 1917, April 23).

In March-April 1917, two social groups were most active: imams and teachers, and a meeting of the bourgeoisie was held in Kazan. In Kazan the Clergy society (Golama jamgiyate) on April 26 adopted a project according to which the national autonomy was to be focused on solving religious, national and cultural issues. The Central organs of cultural autonomy were the Merkez Dini Shuro (Central Religious Council) and Milli Shuro (National Council) (Koyash, 1917, April 6). On March 25, the Ufa branch of the Union of clergy (Rukhanilar Itifaky) was established. On March 22, it was announced that the "Society of teachers" headed by the mudarris of the "Muhammadiyah" madrasah Akhmetzhan Mustafa had been established in Kazan and announced the preparation of the all-Russian Congress of Muslim teachers.

On March 4, 1917, in Kazan, a meeting of the most respected members-elders of the community, primarily the bourgeoisie decided to officially create the "Milli Sermaya" ("The national treasury"), for material support of projects of national-cultural autonomy, which amounted to 825.223 rubles on March 27. (Koyash, 1917, March 27).

On March 5, 1917, the first meeting of Muslims was held in Orenburg. It established a permanent Orenburg Muslim Bureau, which a few days later included representatives of teachers, clerks, imams and workers. The peculiarity of the Orenburg Bureau zone was the predominance of urban communities in the Urals, Kazakhstan, Turkestan and the Lower Volga.

After the provincial centers, the next level of organization was the district centers of the Kazan, Ufa and Orenburg provinces. On March 12, a Muslim Committee was formed in Belebey, Ufa province, headed by akhun (head of district clergy) and imam JamaletdinKhuramshin, a former member of the I State Duma, and the Society of teachers was established (Tormysh, 1917, March 15). On March 25, a district Congress was held in Belebey under the chairmanship of imam J. Khuramshin. The delegates supported the ideas of elections to the Constituent Assembly; proclaiming the people's republic; creation of Muslim committees in large auls(villages) and turning them into a branch of the Ufa Committee for the dissemination of ideas of citizenship among Muslims; convening the provincial Muslim Congress, and convening the all-Russian Muslim Congress in Ufa. The appeal to the Provisional government and the Ufa Council also called for the Constituent Assembly to stop the war.

On March 12, a Muslim Bureau headed by Garif Faizi was formed in Sterlitamak, Ufa province. It included representatives of imams and teachers, and the Bureau supported the solution of national and religious issues (Tormysh, 1917, March 15). In the Birk district of the Ufa province, the newly created charitable society became the center of activity. Imams constituted the majority of participants of the district assembly.(Tormysh, 1917, April 15). On March 22, a Muslim Committee was established in Mamadysh, Kazan province. (Koyash, 1917, April 12). The Chistopol Muslim Committee consisted of 2 clerks, 3 workers, 3 merchants, 1 peasant, 3 burghers, 1 soldier, 1 craftsman. (Koyash, 1917, May 4).

On April 14, a branch of the Union of clergy (Imamnar Itifaki) was established in the village of Arslanovo, Ufa province. Representatives were delegated to the Ufa district and provincial committees, to the Ufa provincial Muslim Congress, the all-Russian Muslim Congress, and to the permanent Commission under the OMSA. This assembly supported the activities of Zemstvo schools in their native language (Tormysh, 1917, April 14). On April 29, at a meeting of the mullahs of the Tetyushiyuezd of the Kazan province, a decision was made to create a uyezd society of clergy (ZhamgyateGolyama) and imams' committees in the volosts. (Koyash, 1917, May 8).

The Muslim committees and bureaus were set up in Troitsk and Orsk, Orenburg province. They sent telegrams to the Provisional government expressing support and demanding the lifting of all restrictions on religious and national grounds. Representatives of Kazakhs arrived at the Muslim Bureau in Troitsk, who were accustomed to consider Troitsk as their spiritual center.

#### 4 Summary

After the February revolution Muslim Committees and Bureaus viewed themselves as national autonomous bodies representing all strata of Tatar society, rather than party organizations. The Muslim population was mobilized to address their issues in representative and executive bodies. In March 1917, the Muslim faction of Russian state Duma demanded that representatives of Muslims must be included in the executive power (Tormysh, 1917, March 17). Among Tatar society, we see a high level of support for the Provisional government, which declared equality for all Russian citizens.

On March 17, 1917, in Petrograd, a Provisional Central Muslim Bureau was formed from members of the Bureau of the Muslim faction and delegates from regions, in order to prepare for the all-Russian Muslim Congress and coordinate actions (II, 1917, March 23). On March 23 Sadri Maksudi urged to the convening of a national Congress in Ufa under the OMSA to turn it into a "religious and national center". S. Maksudi called for widespread organization of meetings and the creation of local bureaus (Koyash, 1917, March 23). On April 8, 1917 the Central Muslim Bureau it in Petrograd announced the convocation of the all-Russian Muslim Congress on May 1, 1917 in Moscow. The main issues on the agenda of the upcoming Congress were declared the way of governing the state, national and cultural autonomy, elections to the Constituent Assembly, attitude to the war, the

creation of the all-Russian Muslim Council (MilliShura), the labor and land issue. (Koyash, 1917, April 9).

### 5 Conclusions

Thus, in March-April 1917, Muslim committees and bureaus were established in many localities with sufficient Tatar population as national bodies that united representatives of all social groups. They focused on the political development of the Tatars, cultural and educational activities, creating the foundations of cultural, national and religious autonomy, and ensuring national proportional representation in government bodies. The leading role in these committees and bureaus was taken by the intelligentsia, represented by the leaders of the period of the Russian revolution of 1905-1907, both liberals and moderate socialists. Muslim Committees and Bureaus were mostly national, not political bodies (with the exception of Kazan, where the Muslim Socialist Committee was established). In the Muslim committees and bureaus in the provincial centers, we see the representation of such groups of the national elite as the clergy, mudarrises, bourgeoisie, teachers, military, and in the Ufa province – the nobility. In the uezd (district) centers and in rural areas, we see that the clergy have the most significant representation. In the second half of April, we are already seeing higher-level forums. April 14-17, 1917, the first Muslim Ufa provincial Congress was held, and April 20-27, 1917, the all-Russian Congress of Muslim teachers was held in Kazan. At this time, delegates are being elected to the all-Russian Muslim Congress in Moscow, which has brought the movement of Russian Muslims to a qualitatively new level.

### Acknowledgements

The work is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University.

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**Primary Paper Section: A**

**Secondary Paper Section: AB**