INTRODUCTION

The need for the development of 'socialist culture' was emphasised by Lenin when he wrote that after the victory of the socialist revolution one of the most important and immediate tasks was the development of culture. While the objectives were defined, there was a marked confusion over the strategies and tactics of the programme for the development of new socialist culture, particularly, in the Asian regions. In fact, from the initial vaguely worded pronouncements of the Party leaders one could even believe that Soviet policy of secularisation of political culture, as it actually emerged later, was against the solemn promises made to the national minorities of Soviet Russia in general, and the Muslims of Turkestan, in particular. Rather it appeared to be almost an extension of the old and familiar Tsarist policy of Russification. We may add that such an opinion would be extremely misleading and naive. Given the imperatives of Central Asian situation after the Bolshevik Revolution, the process of secularisation of political culture, as it unfolded in Uzbekistan, was in many ways inevitable for the breakneck pace of modernisation and socio-economic development that was accomplished during a short period. Stalin's definition

of secular political culture in a socialist state as "socialist in content and national in form", however, emerged as the basic guideline for the cultural transformation in Uzbekistan.

The process of secularisation of political culture in Soviet Socialist Republic of Uzbekistan during the period under study passed through two distinct phases of development. The first phase spanned from 1917 to 1927 and the second phase from 1928 to 1938. During the first phase the Soviets were mainly concerned with the expansion of pre-school and primary school education, basically meant for socialisation of the young native children. Direct recourse to force and coercion for socio-cultural and behavioural change was, as a rule, avoided. Efforts were mainly directed to mobilising the native public opinion for the acceptance of the new system of government as legitimate. For this purpose, programmes for the training of the native activists, propagandists and teachers were initiated. A large number of the natives were inducted in the newly created lower political organisations, exclusively controlled and guided by the Communist Party.

Because of the complexities of social, political and cultural life in Soviet Central Asia, the Bolsheviks adopted a cautious approach towards secularisation of
political culture there. For instance, although the primary instrument of political socialisation that could be found in the educationally backward Central Asian society was, traditionally the family, for tactical reasons the Soviet government and the Communist Party, to begin with, did not directly interfere in the traditional role of the family. Instead, it devoted its attention and resources to the rapid expansion of Soviet system of education for adults and children alike. Thus, during the first phase of cultural change in Uzbekistan the Soviets primarily concerned themselves with laying a widespread network of primary institutions of socialisation and the removal of illiteracy largely from urban areas. Towards the end of the first phase the Soviet Government and the Communist Party decided to liquidate the religions and traditional bottlenecks in their way of creating a uniform pattern of socialisation, which constituted the main programme of secularisation of political culture in Uzbekistan.

In the immediate post-revolution years the main problem before the Bolsheviks in Central Asia was that of legitimization of the revolutionary order and of building the socio-political infrastructure to enable the new system of government to survive. For a while, this demanded certain deviations from the main programme of secularisation of politics in Central Asia as the native masses were still
under the deep influence of religion and traditional socio-cultural value-system. Hence, the Soviets did not, immediately after the revolution abolish the traditional Kazi courts which dispensed justice on the basis of Islamic Shariah. Likewise, the existence of traditional religious schools, and the publication of religious books and printing of such materials in the native newspapers and journals were tolerated.

It was only after the consolidation of Soviet power in Uzbekistan, as we have discussed in the preceding chapter, that the Soviets embarked upon a well-defined socio-cultural transformation. Thus, during the second phase, there began the programme of liquidation of the traditional pattern of socialisation, involving fundamental changes in the role of native women, prevention of transmission of religious values to the children, a change in Uzbek script, from Arabic to Latin (and later from Latin to Cyrilic), restrictions on traditional customs, religious festivals, and a complete denial to own private property in land, water, cattle and inventories. Simultaneously, the programme for the creation of a uniform system of political socialisation was pushed through by generating rapid social mobility and by accelerating the process of nativization of the Soviet apparatus. Finally, the programme of creating a strong material base for the new