CHAPTER I

CONCEPTS AND IDEAS

The conceptual framework of secularisation of politics, under study here, stems from the Marxian model of change and development of a society which is essentially based on a dialectical relationship between its base and superstructure. As in the "Preface" to A Contribution to Critique of Political Economy, Karl Marx wrote:

"In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes, the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness."1

Needless to emphasise that to Marx material forces of production and its stages of development are of primary importance and as a result the real foundation of a society is its economic structure. The superstructure of a society correspondingly emerges, and to him it is no less important. To quote Marx, "neither legal relations nor political forms, nor religious norms and values could be comprehended whether by themselves or on the basis of so-called development of human mind."2 (Italics added). Thus, politics or political form, religious norms and values, or the role of religion in

2. Ibid.
general, etc., are the features of superstructure corresponding to a given stage of the development of the base.

Marx viewed the relationship between the base and superstructure of a society in a given stage of development as essentially dialectical. While assigning the primacy to the base over the superstructure, Marx regarded their dialectical relationship as the most crucial process bringing about change and development in a society. As Marx explained:

"At a certain stage of development the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto; from forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begin an era of social revolution."3

Later, Engels further clarified such a nature of relationship. Reacting sharply to the debate whether the relationship between the material base and the superstructure is a causal and deterministic one, he pointed out that by stressing the primacy of material base they (Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels) did not mean that it was always "the cause and alone active." In fact, Engels maintained that in specific historical situations superstructure may enjoy some measure of autonomy and wield considerable influence on the social processes. But he hastened to add that such a situation could not last long; sooner or later, the base would assert its supremacy over the superstructure. In a letter to Bloch, Engels observed:

3. Ibid., p.21.
"... Political, juristic, philosophical theories, religious views and their further development into system of dogmas - also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form. There is an interaction of all these elements in which amidst all the endless host of accidents... the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary."4

Thus it was Engels who advanced the concept of relative and transient autonomy of 'various elements of superstructure' in a given specific stage of the development of the material base of the society. Following Marx, he, however, did regard such autonomy of the superstructure as relative to its sub-structures, indeed transient, because the growing contradictions in production relations, in the ultimate analysis, would make the material productive forces assert their primacy, and thus the complex relationship among various levels of substructures of the superstructure must qualitatively change.

In other words, some measure of autonomy of the superstructure, however relative and transient, may arise in specific conditions corresponding to the stage of development of material productive forces of society. Likewise, as these specific conditions are transformed corresponding to further advance in the stages of development of material productive forces, e.g., abolition of private property as a result of social revolution the dialectical relationship between the base and superstructure becomes more decisive and thus autonomy increasingly becomes relative to the substructure of the

superstructure and eventually ceases to be deterministic. But to make the dialectical relationship truly decisive, in such specific conditions, the political power of social revolution needs to be employed deliberately and programmatically for transforming both the base and superstructure simultaneously. Such a simultaneous process does not make the base over-deterministic, while various levels of substructures are themselves transformed, and consequently complex relationship among them remain determinant and not deterministic. Briefly, such appears to be the Marxian model of change and development in a society that has entered the era of social revolution.

Hence, it follows that consciousness, ideas, movements and institutions, etc., being the essential elements of the superstructure comprising its various levels, may enjoy some measure of autonomy from the base corresponding to the stage of material productive forces. This is more relatively true in the conditions of corresponding underdevelopment of material productive forces, as for example, the combinations ... of pre-capitalist feudalism with colonialism (e.g. Central Asia under Tsarist rule). In such a context, the all-embracing role of religion, one of the essential elements of superstructural forms of pre-capitalist feudal societies, particularly needs to be examined.

5. For a brilliant exposition of the relationship between base and superstructure and relative autonomy of substructures of superstructure, see, for example, Louis Althusser, For Marx (Penguin, 1969), pp.89-127.
Religion and its Role

Elaborating the dialectical materialist concept of history, Friedrich Engels traced the emergence of religion to a certain stage of social development. The origin of religion was found to be related in the "erroneous and primitive ideas of man about their own nature and their external world surrounding them." In their works, The German Ideology, The Communist Manifesto and the Communism of Rheinischer Beobachter, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels described religion as one of the forms of social consciousness which in a class society is primarily instrumental in generating false consciousness. They explained that religion, folklore, common sense and the so called general philosophy of life delude the general working masses by presenting social reality in mystical, supernatural and uncomprehending terms. In the words of Antonio Gramsci, these "influence the popular masses as an external political force, as an element of force binding together the leading classes, as elements, therefore, of subordination to an external destiny which limits the original thought of popular masses negatively..."7


Hence, to remove the negative influence of religion, folklore and general philosophies, the proletariat which has been "entrusted by history - the task of transforming society consciously must devise its own strategy by taking into account its immediate interests and the final goal." 8

Marxism-Leninism, thus, conceives religion and its all-pervasive role as transitory phenomena in man's quest for attaining the ultimate - a classless society under Communism. Whereas its origin is traced in the erroneous and primitive understanding of nature and its forces, its continued existence is explained in terms of the prevalence of illiteracy, superstitions and, above all, private property and class contradictions. Changes in material forces of production and consequently, production relations deprive religion of its all-pervasive role as well as undermine false consciousness generated by it. But its total liquidation is considered to be a long drawn-out complex process to be accomplished in stages, after a social revolution by a deliberate and programmatic use of its political power.

Nonetheless, it is a myth that Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels could not comprehend the historically integrative and positive role of religion to which later social scientists like Durkheim devoted their attention.

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In fact, Engels himself had described the positive role which Christianity played in the early period of its inception. They, however, believed that blind faith in religious dogmas ultimately leads to social stagnation and oppression of the working masses and that uncritical attitude towards religion and religious precepts blunts the creative faculty. Thus, religion breeds, in their view, an 'happiness in the mind of the believers. Marx was, therefore, particularly critical of the idea that religious beliefs would ultimately compensate for this-worldly miseries of the people by rewards in heaven. In his critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, Marx stresses that religion is a state of alienation. He, therefore, advocates its abolition because of its illusory character. Marx writes:

"The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of men, is a demand for their real happiness. The call to abandon their illusions about their condition is a call to abandon a condition which requires illusions." 11

In the same vein, Lenin, later explained that religion by generating false hopes in the mind of toiling masses tend to perpetuate the domination of exploiting classes. Lenin observed:

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10. Ibid., pp. 41-58.
11. Ibid., p. 42.
"Those who toil and live in want all their lives are taught by religion to be submissive and patient while here on earth, and to take comfort in the hope of a heavenly reward. But those who live by the labours of others are taught by religion to practice charity while on earth, thus offering them a very cheap way of justifying their entire existence as exploiters and selling them at a moderate price tickets to well-being in heaven." 12

In other words, religion is regarded to be a source of false consciousness; it completely distorts social reality by relating it to some supernatural force; and it also stands in the way of mastering of nature by man. It is, thus, a form of superstructure which gives the illusion of being totally independent of the base and above the societal processes.

Hence, one of the immediate tasks of social revolution is to uproot religion from social existence of man and to discard it from his consciousness. The proletariat must engage itself in the battle for social consciousness and for liberating the working masses from the ideological hang-overs of the past. 13

Thus, a programme of action was needed. Even before the Bolshevik Revolution, Lenin and the Bolsheviks began to preoccupy themselves with debating various ideas and concepts that finally shaped the programme of action. Lenin did recognise that the emancipation from religion in a multi-national and multi-religious backward society of

Tsarist Russia would be problematic. But he was confident that it can be accomplished by a planned and programmatic use of political power keeping in view specific characteristics of Tsarist society. 14

Before we discuss the concepts and ideas that went in the making of such a programme of action, we may turn to some peculiarly specific problems vis-a-vis Tsarist Central Asia. The foremost among these was the exploitation and national oppression.

National and Colonial Question
and the Right to Self-Determination

The Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) at its Second Congress, held in 1903, upheld "the right of self-determination for the nationalities which form composite parts of the state." 15 The context, in which the right of nations to self-determination was then discussed, was related to the demand for federalism and cultural autonomy voiced both within and without the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP). At the Second Congress of the RSDLP, the Social Democrats did not agree to the demand for federalism. They, however, formulated a programme which allowed for "broad local self-rule, regional self-rule, for the localities which


distinguish themselves by separate living conditions and composition of population." 16

It was generally believed that both colonial and national oppression are the manifestations of capitalism. Once capitalism is made to retreat and social revolution begins, both these problems stand consequently to be resolved. 17

By 1913, it was no other than Lenin himself who further elaborated upon such a simplistic formulation. In general, Lenin's conception of national question emanated from his understanding of the essential nature of colonial exploitation by imperialism. He believed that the basic cause behind the national problem was rampant exploitation and suppression of colonial and semi-colonial peoples by imperialism, further intensified by active collaboration of native ruling and dominant class. Accordingly, he advocated


17. In fact, the Marxist concept of national self-determination soon became controversial. Among the Bolsheviks and other Social Democrats there were considerable differences on the nature and scope of national self-determination. Earlier, before the October Revolution, Rosa Luxemburg, and later, Lenin, H.K. Roy and many other leading spirits of the International Communist Movement interpreted the concept of national self-determination from different angles. Here, we have mainly tried to delimit our analysis to the parameters of our scope, without detaining ourselves by these debates and controversies. For a detailed discussion on various earlier dimensions of the concept, see for example, Zafar Iman, Colonialism in East West Relations (New Delhi-1969), pp. 2-10; also Xenia Joukoff Eudin and Robert C. North, no. 15.
more or less identical policies towards these exploited peoples in whom he saw a natural ally against imperialism.

In the widespread political upsurge in Asia, subsequent to the Russian Revolution of 1905, Lenin saw a general weakening of the hold of the imperialist powers. In May 1913, he wrote:

"Everywhere in Asia a mighty democratic movement is spreading and gaining in strength. There the bourgeoisie is still siding with the people against reaction... What delight this world movement is arousing in the hearts of all class conscious workers... all young Asia, that is, hundreds of millions of toilers in Asia have a reliable ally in the proletariat of all civilised countries. No force on earth can prevent its victory which liberates both, the people of Europe and the people of Asia."18

Accordingly, Lenin in his famous work, Right of Nations to Self-determination, published in 1916, advocated that the right of nations to self-determination was a fundamental and democratic right of all nations, big or small. Recognition of the right of nations to self-determination was, for Lenin, both a tactical move against imperialism as well as a precondition for the success of socialism. He believed that "Socialism cannot be victorious unless it introduces complete democracy... The proletariat will be unable to prepare for victory over the bourgeoisie unless it wags a many-sided, consistent and revolutionary struggle for democracy."19

In the specific conditions of Tsarist Russia, the national and colonial question assumed added dimensions. Even a cursory glance at the available literature on the social democratic movement in Russia as well as the writings and speeches of Lenin and other Bolshevik leaders amply confirms that there were no two opinions on the exploitative nature of the Tsarist rule over Central Asia and other regions. By advocating the right of nations to self-determination, Lenin was acutely conscious of the need of ending this exploitative relationship and thus ensuring a union on a new basis. For instance, Lenin, in 1917 (before the October Revolution) declared:

"If we assumed power we would at once recognise the right (of separation) of Finland, the Ukraine, Armenia and any other nationality which had been oppressed by Tsarism (and by the Great Russian bourgeoisie). But we, on our part, do not at all wish for this separation. No, we want largest possible state, the closest possible union, the largest possible number of nations who are neighbours of Great Russia. We desire this in the interests of bringing into the struggle of the proletariat the largest possible number of workers of all nations. We desire a revolutionary proletarian unity, a unification, and not the separation of peoples. We desire a revolutionary unification, and therefore we do not advance the slogan of the unification of all and every state in general. The immediate task advanced by the social revolution is the unification only of the states which have passed over or are passing over to socialism, of the colonies which are freeing themselves, and so forth. Desiring a free unification, we are duty-bound to recognise this freedom of separation (otherwise free unification would have no meaning). We are duty-bound to recognise this freedom of separation all the more because tsarism and the Great Russian bourgeoisie with their oppression have left a heritage of great irritation and distrust toward most great
Russians. Only by action, and not by words, can we conquer this distrust. Nonetheless, unification means much to us, and this must be stated and emphasised in the programme of the Party."20

Besides, the existence of various nationalities with strong religious orientation in Central Asia at diverse levels of socio-economic development brought into sharp focus the problem of nationalities, as well. Indeed, both colonial exploitation and the national question were regarded so much interlinked as to convince Lenin that the granting of the right to national self-determination may solve both the problems at one stroke.

The Bolshevik revolution, however, clearly demarcated these two problems. The capture of political power by the Soviets and its subsequent immediate policy measures ended in a sense the essential aspects of colonial exploitation while the nationality question assumed new dimensions. Characteristically enough, these problems, coming after the Bolshevik Revolution, were initially sought to be resolved by implementing the right of nations to self-determination. The incorporation of large parts of Central Asia into Soviet system immediately after the Revolution appeared to have shown the validity of such an approach. But in no time anti-Bolshevik nationalist movement in Central Asia and other regions, of which more later, brought into focus the question, which

social class expresses the will of nations insofar as the right of nations to self-determination was concerned. Initially, Lenin adopted a cautious approach as against the hard-liners in the Party, like Stalin. As early as in January 1918 as the Commissar of the Nationalities, Stalin had advocated a re-appraisal of the old policies in the light of new realities. He told the III All Russian Congress of Soviets, held in January 1918, that "All this (emerging national movement in Russia and Central Asia - added) pointed to the necessity of implementing the principles of self-determination as the right to self-determination not of the bourgeoisie but of the labouring masses of a given nation. The principle of self-determination should be a means in the struggle for socialism and should be subordinated to the principle of socialism." Stalin further elaborated his ideas in Pravda and argued that "The socialist conception of self-determination, with its slogans of all power to the toiling masses of oppressed nationalities... entered its own and obtain the opportunities of being applied into practice."23

In spite of Lenin's hesitation and caution, the VIII Party Congress, held in March 1919, decided the issue

when it declared: "On the question as to who is to express the will of the nation to secede, the Russian Communist Party, adopted the class historical viewpoint (it said) and in this takes into consideration the state of historical development of the given nation, whether it is evolving from medievalism to bourgeois democracy and from bourgeois democracy to Soviet or proletarian democracy." 24 Elaborating further Stalin declared that "it is necessary to approach it from the Soviet viewpoint, subordinating it entirely and finally to the interest of the toiling masses organised into Soviets." 25

It is thus obvious that a deliberate and programmatic use of political power by the proletariat, after making a social revolution, was considered to be the most effective tool to deal with such problems as national and colonial question found in societies like that of Central Asia. It was further hoped that once the policy and practice of national oppression were done away with in the era of socialist revolution the union of nations would become truly international on the basis of conscious choice as well as the freedom to secede from the union. Thus, to quote Lenin: "The goal of socialism is not to do away with the separation

24. KpSS v rezoliutsiiakh i resheniakh sezdev Konferentsiy i plenumov TsK (the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the resolutions and decisions of the Congresses, Conferences and plenums of the Central Committee) 7th ed. 3 Vols (Moscow, 1954), II, p. 117.

of mankind into small states and with every kind of isolation of nations, not only to bring nations, closer together. The goal of socialism is also their fusion... Just as mankind can reach the state when classes no longer exist only through a transitional period of the dictatorship by the oppressed class, so can this inevitable fusion of nations be reached only through a transitional period of the complete liberation of all oppressed nations, i.e., through their freedom to recede.”

By all intents and purposes the solution of the problems of the nationalities in Central Asia was linked with the success of social revolution in Tsarist Russia and consequently with a concentrated drive to uproot religion from the socio-political life of the nationalities; it was this aspect which added specific dimensions to the solution of national question in Central Asia. It was precisely against this background that the resolution of the Second Muslim Congress, held in Moscow in November 1919, boldly declared that "the problem of international social revolution cannot be solved without the participation of the East as a definite social and economic unit." Keeping in view this complex situation then existing in Central Asia, Lenin immediately, after the Bolshevik Revolution, had counselled a cautious approach. He wrote that

27. Xenia Joukoff Eudin and Robert C. North, no.15, p.164.
"such peoples as the Kirghizes, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Turkmens were still under the influence of their mullahs ... Can we approach these peoples and tell them that we shall overthrow their exploiters? We cannot do this, because they are entirely subordinated to their mullahs."\(^{28}\)

We now turn to an examination of essential concepts and ideas behind a programme of action advocated by the Marxist-Leninists for combating religion and uprooting its all-embracing role as an important element of superstructure of a society.

**Towards a Programme of Action**

Marx was clearly of the opinion that the all-pervasive role of religion cannot be totally uprooted in a society ridden with class contradictions. Such measures as separation of religion from state, though important, do not lead to the creation of necessary conditions for secularisation of politics. In a passage on secularisation of politics, Marx believed that "political emancipation from religion is not thorough-going and consistent emancipation from religion, because political emancipation is not effectual and consistent human emancipation."\(^{29}\) It is in this context that one should view the characteristic onslaught of Marx and Engels on the

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role of the Church in the European politics after the rise of industrialism. 30 Likewise, agreeing with Marx and Engels, Lenin was critical of regarding separation of religion from state apparatus as an end in itself for the secularisation of politics, although he did assign considerable importance to this measure. In fact, Lenin maintained that the separation of Church from the state for combating the political role of religion could not prove effective, "because of the many and varied connections actually existing between capital and religious propaganda." 31 Indeed, one of his main criticisms of bourgeois democracy was based on the inability of the bourgeois system to completely separate itself from the influence of religion.

Thus, the founders of Marxism–Leninism believed that the programme of action for secularisation of politics would be really effective only in the conditions of social revolution when the proletariat had assumed political power. As Lenin declared:

"So far as the Party of the socialist proletariat is concerned religion is not a private affair. Our party is an association of class conscious, advanced fighter for the emancipation of working class. Such an association cannot and must not be indifferent to lack of class consciousness, ignorance and obscurantism in the shape of religious beliefs." 32

32. Ibid., Vol. 10.
However, it was clearly understood that the process of secularisation even in the conditions of social revolution is a complex process and must be accomplished in phases corresponding to its stage of development. For example, Lenin at the initial stages of Soviet power was very cautious in criticising religion and he did not go beyond suggesting that religion must be "no concern to the state". For instance, Lenin said:

"... religion must be no concern to the state and religious societies have no connection with governmental authority. Everyone must be absolutely free to profess any religion, or no religion whatever, i.e., to be an atheist, which every socialist is, as a rule, discrimination among citizens on account of their religious conviction is wholly intolerable. Even the barest mention of a citizen's religion in official document should unquestionably be eliminated."  

Likewise, the first preliminary step, he advocated, was the separation of Church from the state and "complete dis-establishment of the Church... so as to be able to combat religious fog with purely ideological means."  

Yet, he exhorted the Russian Communist Party "to completely destroy all the connections existing between exploiting classes and organised religious propaganda and really liberate the working people from religious prejudices." The fact that the secularisation of politics was regarded a complex process of change and

35. Ibid.
development to be accomplished in stages corresponding to the
development of socialist revolution was amply confirmed by
Lenin's concern for taking into account specific conditions
as in Soviet East; of which, more later.

Yet there was noticeable a continuity of approach
transcending the problems and prospects of various stages of
the process of secularisation. The essential continuity was
the use of political power deliberately and in a programmatic
way so as to accelerate the process. Here Lenin emphasised
the need of ideological struggle against religion:

"Our propaganda (against religion) necessarily
includes the propaganda of atheism, the
publication of the appropriate scientific
literature, we shall now probably have to
follow the advice Engels once gave to the
German Socialist to translate and widely
disseminate the literature of the eighteenth
century French Enlighteners and atheists."36

To accomplish this task, he viewed the role of education and
mass communication as important. He suggested that "the
school must become an instrument of the dictatorship of the
proletariat, i.e., a vehicle not merely of the general princi­
ples of communism but also of the ideological, organisational
and educational influence of the proletariat on the semi­
proletariat and non-proletarian sections of the working people
with the object of completely suppressing the resistance of
the exploiters and of building the communist system."37 Thus,

36. V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol.29, p.134; see also
Vol.11, p.666.
37. Ibid., Vol.29, p.132.
The process of cultural transformation emerges as an important aspect of the programme of action. Here it must be noted that in achieving the task Lenin laid considerable emphasis on persuasion, incentives and tactical political moves rather than on force and imposition. Time and again he stressed that "we shall meet with no few peculiar situations, we shall under no circumstances bind ourselves to uniform patterns, we shall not decide once and for all that our experience, the experience of Central Russia, must be applied in its entirety to every region."\(^38\)

At this stage it is necessary to correlate the concepts and ideas, essentials with the specifics, that went in the emergence of the programme of action launched in non-Russian regions of Soviet Russia, in general, and Soviet Central Asia, in particular. The problem of coping with the all-pervasive role of religion in Central Asia considerably pre-occupied the Soviet leadership. There was a fairly intensive debate on the problem in the Party organs and various forums organised by the Russian Communist Party and the Communist International. During the years 1918-1920, besides the central organs of the Russian Communist Party (B),\(^{39}\) it


\(^{39}\) The following main sources are used here:
(a) Xenia Joukoff Budin and Robert C. North, no. 21, pp. 162-5.
(b) Ibid., p. 165.
was debated in the two Congresses of the Muslim Communists (1918 and 1919)\textsuperscript{a}, the Congress of the Peoples of the East (1920)\textsuperscript{b}, and more importantly, in the Second Congress of the Communist International\textsuperscript{c}.

From these debates and various writings and speeches of Lenin and Stalin on the subject as well as from our earlier discussion, one can identify the main elements of the programme of action for secularisation of politics as was adopted in Central Asian conditions.

There was unanimity on essential ideas of the programme of action common both in Russia and Central Asia. The social revolution in Russia, including Russian Central Asia, and the capture of political power by the proletariat were of crucial importance; hence a planned and programeatic use of political power must remain common and uniform. Likewise, there was an equal emphasis on rapid economic transformation so as to create necessary conditions for secularisation of politics.

Lenin was, however, acutely aware of the specific problems of multi-level transformation of pre-capitalist socio-economic formation of Central Asia and it was primarily his ideas that added specific dimensions to the programme of action in Central Asia. He had particularly in mind the historical legacies of Central Asia, when he pleaded for
flexibility and adaptability and was firmly opposed to mechanical application of the programme in Central Asia. Moreover, he advised the proletariat "to apply the theory and practice to conditions in which the bulk of the population are peasants, and where the task is to wage a struggle against medieval survivals and not against capitalism, that is a difficult and specific task... you must find specific forms for this alliance of the foremost proletarians of the world with the labouring and exploiting masses of the East, whose conditions are in many cases medieval."\(^40\) He further laid down that the Soviets should "correctly modify" soviet institutions and "adapt them to national and national-state distinction."\(^41\)

Thus keeping in view the historical legacies of the past, Lenin identified here three main problem areas, namely: (a) special features of national oppression; (b) nativisation of state and party apparatus; and (c) cultural transformation vis-a-vis all-pervasive role of religion. Needless to add, that these problems were considered within the basic framework of socialist transformation of economic and social structure of Central Asian society.

We have earlier discussed the specific features of national oppression of Central Asia and various ideas for


their solution. Suffice here to point out that the role of Russians in Central Asia and that of the native religious and landed hierarchy were considered to be the main hurdle and their uprooting constituted a prerequisite for the success of the programme of secularisation of politics. Repeatedly Lenin stressed the need to grant "special concessions to the non-Russians for the lack of trust, for the suspicion and insults to which the government of the dominant nation subjected them in the past."42

On the other hand, the problem of nativisation of state and party apparatus was inherently linked with the specific dimensions of national oppression in Central Asia. This was precisely the reason that the need for adopting a special measure akin to prevalent conditions was emphasised, while caution and hesitation against ill-conceived and hasty actions emerged as the watch-word.

The role of religion in Central Asia was viewed as, crucially important in any programme of cultural transformation. Interestingly enough, the question of anti-religious propaganda among the Muslims of Russia was one of the points of debate here.

We have occasions to point out that Lenin was extremely reluctant to come heavily, at one stroke, on Islam

42. Ibid., Vol. 36, p. 608.
and Islamic beliefs in Central Asia. More or less, similar opinions were voiced by non-Russian leading Bolsheviks, the foremost among them was Sultan Galiev. Sultan Galiev, who later became Deputy Commissar in the Commissariat for Nationalities Affairs, headed by Stalin, believed that the task of anti-religious propaganda among the Muslims of Soviet Russia would be a delicate and complex one. He had no illusion about Islam, as he declared that "for us (communists), all religions are alike." Yet he insisted on evolving such methods which would be effective to carry out the tasks ahead "painlessly and successfully."

According to Sultan Galiev,43 there were a number of reasons for adopting "methods absolutely different from those used among other peoples." The reasons he suggested for adopting an absolutely different approach to anti-religious propaganda among the Muslims of Russia were: "(i) Islam is of comparatively recent origin, and therefore, it possesses particular vigour; (ii) Islam is a monolithic religion which even lays down norms of political and civil behaviour; and (iii) the Muslims are culturally backward and persecuted at the hands of the European imperialist powers."44 In view of these, Sultan Galiev opined that when "we conduct anti-religious propaganda among the Muslims, we must not forget

43. M. Sultan-Galiev, Metody anti-religioznoi propagandy sredi musulman, (Moscow, 1922), pp.3-7 (Appendix 1)
44. Ibid.
for a moment that their cultural backwardness and their position as a politically and morally down-trodden people are their main evil."\(^{45}\)

Sultan Galiev even suggested such measure as the development of modern secular education, the drawing of Muslims into economic and administrative and also political organs of the government, and the widening of party work among them.

It was generally agreed that in Central Asia the drive against religion must be integrated with the entire programme of cultural transformation, primarily based on education and mass communication.

Thus the fusion of essential concepts and ideas with specific ones brought into focus the main elements of the programme of action suited to Central Asia. The main elements identified are concrete social realities, that is to say, historical legacy and a programmatic use of political power of the Soviets. The secularisation of politics thus emerges as a complex socio-economic process to be accomplished in stages corresponding to the phases of development, what Lenin termed as 'skipping the stage of capitalism'. Secularisation of politics is therefore an integral part of the overall process, indeed both a means and an end, for making the base not over-deterministic and superstructure transient yet determinant.

\(^{45}\) Ibid.
Already by 1920, Lenin was confident of the results when he told the delegates of the Second Congress of the Comintern that the Soviet experience in Central Asia had shown that "the idea of the Soviet is a simple one and can be applied not only to proletarian conditions but also to the feudal and semi-feudal peasant relationship."  