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Making Ivan-Uzbek: War, Friendship of the Peoples, and the Creation of Soviet Uzbekistan, 1941-1945

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Making Ivan-Uzbek:  
War, Friendship of the Peoples,  
and the Creation of Soviet Uzbekistan, 1941-1945

By

Charles David Shaw

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in

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Committee in charge:

Professor Yuri Slezkine, Chair  
Professor Victoria Frede-Montemayor  
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Abstract

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This dissertation addresses the impact of World War II on Uzbek society and contends that the war era should be seen as equally transformative to the tumultuous 1920s and 1930s for Soviet Central Asia. It argues that via the processes of military service, labor mobilization, and the evacuation of Soviet elites and common citizens that Uzbeks joined the broader “Soviet people” or *sovetskii narod* and overcame the prejudices of being “formerly backward” in Marxist ideology. The dissertation argues that the army was a flexible institution that both catered to national cultural (including Islamic ritual) and linguistic difference but also offered avenues for assimilation to become Ivan-Uzbeks, part of a Russian-speaking, pan-Soviet community of victors. Yet as the war wound down the reemergence of tradition and violence against women made clear the limits of this integration. The dissertation contends that the war shaped the contours of Central Asian society that endured through 1991 and created the basis for thinking of the “Soviet people” as a nation in the 1950s and 1960s.

The first chapter addresses the experience of soldiers in the Red Army, paying special attention to the army’s policies to support Central Asian men with propaganda and agitation. The second chapter focuses on the laborers who faced high mortality in the mines and industrial sites of the Urals and Siberia. Deprived of cultural support, agitators, and segregated from Slavic workers, they offer a case study in how the Soviet war-time state could operate both as a nation and an empire at the same time. The next two chapters address the Uzbek homefront, the contributions of Uzbek women who stayed in the region, and changing gender roles. Via an “emancipation of necessity” Uzbek women continued the professional gains they made during collectivization and replaced men in mechanized agriculture and in leadership positions. I examine the wartime contributions of three noteworthy women to show how the state both respected cultural mores that prevented them from serving at the front, but also pressed them into new, public roles. The next chapter focuses the interaction between evacuated Russian and Uzbek writers. I argue that their cooperation facilitated the narrative of Friendship of the Peoples while also allowing the evacuees to assert their tutorial rights as elder brother and masters of socialist realism. The final chapter addresses the durability of the Ivan-Uzbek identity in the face of social breakdown and resurgent religious tradition after the war.

*To the memory  
of  
Pete and Mary Charney*

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## Introduction

In the heady days just after the German capitulation to the Allies in May 1945 a Red Army soldier stationed near Novograd-Volin'skii in west-central Ukraine penned a short congratulatory note to a young woman in the distant homefront on a kolkhoz outside of Andijan in Uzbekistan's Fergana valley. Apart from its first line, the letter was written in Russian although both author and addressee were Uzbek. With spelling and grammatical idiosyncrasies in tact, the letter reads:

Warmest, hot regards [Uzbek: *Alangali issik solom*]  
Hello from Novograd-Volinskii.

This day or evening I inform you with this letter, when you receive it I don't know, maybe at night or during the day, the exact time won't interest you. [...] Best wishes in your life, hot, fiery hello. Hello unknown Ogul Khan. With greetings to you from Mukhammed Ergashov. Firstly I decided to write this letter to show my great thanks [*reshil s bolshoi poklonom napisat' pis'mo*]. If you don't like this letter, you can throw it underfoot! My only desire is to meet you. If you have a friend [*znakomyi*], give an answer. I suspected you as my countrywoman [*zemliachka*] in the newspaper, *Leninskoe znamia* and decided to write these words. I'll tell a bit about myself, I am also from Andijan, from khodzhabad district serve in the ranks of the red army [...]. The other day I saw the end of the war. Maybe you and I will see one another. Ogul Khan, if I receive a response from you then I will write with more detail about myself or more precisely. If you can read Russian then I will write in Russian, or if you can't I can write in our language [*esli mozhete chitat' po ruskii to budu pisat' po ruski, libo nimozhete mogu napisat' po svoemu*]. So long I am finished writing so long with regards unknown, Mukhamed or Misha.

Write a response to this address.

[...]  
Mikhail Ergashov

I await your reply.<sup>1</sup>

The letter's recipient, Ogul Khan Kurbanova (as spelled in her documents and other publications), was one of Uzbekistan's female heroes of the homefront. The nineteen-year-old daughter of kolkhoz chairman in Izbaskent district (outside of Andijan) had harvested 18,000 kg of cotton in the 1944 season, an effort that resulted in her photo and accomplishment being published in army newspapers, such as *Leninskoe znamia*, in winter 1945. The letter was one of hundreds and perhaps thousands she received from Red Army soldiers of different nationalities stationed all

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<sup>1</sup> *Arkhiiv akademii nauk respubliky Uzbekistan* (AAN RUz) f. 54, op. 1, d. 21, l. 135, 135ob.

over the Soviet Union and the capitals of Eastern Europe who wrote in congratulations and thanks, asking for photos and letters in reply and sometimes even proposing further friendship, acquaintance, and marriage.

Ergashov's identity was less clear. He too was likely an ethnic Uzbek and a young man, based on his mastery of the Cyrillic alphabet (which had only been taught since 1939) and his intelligible if grammatically imprecise Russian. His desire to meet Ogulkhon and query about her marital status implied he was single. He seems to have been a rank-and-file soldier given that he provided none of the service details that officers often did. However, not much else is clear. If Ogulkhon had been able or willing to reply, to whom should she have addressed the letter? Was he Misha or Mukhamed Ergashov? Russian or Uzbek or perhaps both? How are we to understand this act of seeming ethnic transformation wherein an ethnic Uzbek self-identifying as a Russian wrote to another Uzbek in Russian knowing full well that very few young women in the Fergana countryside were literate much less bilingual?

This dilemma of self-presentation lies at the heart of this dissertation. It asks what sort of transformation occurred at the front to encourage Mukhamed to introduce himself as Misha, and what was the significance of this hybrid identity for both Uzbek history and Soviet history more generally. It also asks by what processes a young Uzbek woman became an unexpected pan-Soviet celebrity, how her example challenged local gender norms, and why she nonetheless did not make an analogous transformation, i.e. to Olga.

I would like to introduce another individual, one of the main characters of the first chapter, whose example provides one of the dissertation's structuring principles and whose nickname offers a response to the question of Ergashov's identity.

Turakul Toshev was an ethnic Lakai from the remote and arid southwest corner of Tajikistan near the Afghan border who was called up to the army in the first summer of war. He lacked literacy and was trained with a broomstick in place of a rifle. After being captured by the Germans and then escaping, he eventually wound up in Italy fighting the Fascists with a local partisan group. There he gained the nickname "Ivan-Tajik," though he was neither ethnically Russian nor Tajik – "Ivan" because he was a Soviet soldier and whatever communication he made was in limited Russian, and "Tajik" because of his home republic, though he did not speak that language. In an act of daring, he assassinated an Italian general near Bologna, an act that is commemorated in the local museum dedicated to the resistance movement.

The path of Ivan-Tajik was certainly exceptional, yet his life story shared its basic contours with many others from Central Asia: from distant mountains, deserts, and villages to the heart of the Russian and European conflict; from farmers and herders into soldiers. An entire generation of men from Muslim families that spoke no Russian was transformed in the trenches, to stay alive and to thrive. They modified their ritual piety and learned Russian; many – such as Misha or Mukhamed Ergashov – went by their Russian nicknames. The lucky who survived replaced their provincial worldviews with pan-Soviet possibilities. In addition to being an individual, the formulation "Ivan-Tajik" also represents an entire generation of Central Asian men who became Soviet in different ways than their fathers, not by submitting to new policies and institutions, such as collective agriculture, but by actively assimilating into the ultimate vehicle for transformation, the Red Army. In addition to Ivan-Tajik and Misha-Mukhamed there were millions of Ivan-Uzbeks, Ivan-Kyrgyz, etc.

Finally, Ivan-Uzbek can be employed as shorthand for a new Soviet identity forged in war. The army was composed of Ivans in the sense that soldiers needed to adapt to the



predominant Russian culture and language of the army, regardless of their nationality. But the Red Army also celebrated the Uzbek portion of the moniker, accepting his religion, coopting and celebrating his national culture at every turn. However, the compulsion to be both Ivan and Uzbek was inherently confusing, as evidenced by Ergashov's own indecision, and the constant refrain from Uzbek men in interviews that "we lived as brothers, as friends, nationality did not matter" – and then enumerating the nationality of every member of their platoon. I argue that this new, hyphenated identity operated like a national identity and precursor to Sovietness as a nationality that was posited during the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras as a viable addendum to the heterogeneous model of Friendship of the Peoples (*druzhba narodov*) that had served as the imagined community of the Soviet polity. However, like an atom with too many particles, it was inherently unstable. And this nationality-in-formation broke apart after the war, proving difficult to transfer outside the army into society, especially to the sphere of Central Asian gender and family relations.

Thus Ivan-Uzbek refers first, to a group of individuals and their stories; second, to an entire generation of Central Asian men who broke from their parents' examples, became Soviet in new ways; and third, to a broader identity that was forged at war but cooled and cracked during peacetime.

As a generation the path and achievements of the Ivan-Uzbeks were without parallel in Soviet and broader Eurasian history. The war changed the relationship between Central Asia and the Soviet center. Approximately 1.5 million Uzbeks, as well as many more Kyrgyz, Tajik, Turkmen, and other local nationalities, were mobilized and fought in the Soviet army all over the Eastern front and helped to liberate the Eastern European capitals from Nazi rule. Never before had so many Soviet Slavs and Central Asians shared close quarters. Under the tsarist empire Turkestanis had not been drafted in the regular army like other Muslim minorities, nor had they been significantly involved in joining the Soviet forces putting down the so-called Basmachi revolt that lasted into the early 1930s. The Central Asians' Soviet military debut only came in earnest in World War II after the installation of the universal draft in 1938 and the elimination of territorial military units. Until now no studies have shown just how Central Asians navigated the many obstacles to becoming Soviet soldiers, to begin the war in an imperial periphery and finish it in the Soviet center.

Meanwhile, parallel to the frontline experiences, over two million European Soviet citizens, such as Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Jews, evacuated to Uzbekistan and the other Central Asian republics. For common European workers and peasants as well as cultural elites, evacuation created cultural encounters and acquaintances with what they considered to be the Soviet Union's most distant, economically backward, and culturally foreign periphery and taxed the patience, resources, and hospitality of the local population. In a sense, war forced the metropole temporarily into the periphery, leaving a lasting mark on each. In some cases, this collision collapsed the distance between the two, and in other moments it reinforced cultural distinctions. Evacuation also provided an unexpected developmental opportunity and resulted in Uzbekistan gaining the final accouterments of a fully fledged Soviet republic, notably industrial production in the form of mining and machine-building, and cultural production in the form of a republican branch of the Academy of Sciences and the perfection of socialist realism in the arts. But the Soviet Union was no ordinary empire and the relations between the groups were supposed to be characterized by socialist brotherhood and the Friendship of the Peoples rather than by capitalist exploitation and metropolitan chauvinism. As I show in a chapter on war-time literature, local and evacuated writers were martialled to create the myths of bravery, friendship,

hospitality that were needed to lubricate this tremendous upheaval and strain on the local society and economy.

In the *longue durée* of Eurasian history this generation of soldiers flew farther geographically and culturally than any before them. Not since the fourteenth-century campaigns of Tamerlane had Central Asian men left the region in similar numbers on military conquests, and never to Europe. The war completed a process of geopolitical reorientation for the region that started with Russian merchants and soldiers on the Kazakh steppe and was consolidated first by the Russian conquest of Tashkent in 1865 and second by the Bolshevik delimitation of Central Asia in 1924. Like generations before them they relied on Kazakhs and Tatars, fellow Muslims and Turkic speakers, as guides, teachers, and translators to help assimilate into the Russian-speaking culture of the Soviet armed forces. The Second World War had a common meaning for all Soviet peoples involved in ensuring Victory and the further survival of the world's first socialist state. However, in Central Asia it had the additional meaning of giving Uzbeks and others the pathways into the Soviet center, to share a common culture with all the other Soviet peoples as acknowledged equals and, in a sense, eliminating the last vestiges of colonial inequality. The war was the peak of optimistic Soviet integration that either descended again on the other side or formed the start of a plateau that endured to the end of the Soviet regime, depending on one's understanding of postwar Soviet Central Asian history.

Although this project is narrowly concerned with Uzbekistan, it makes larger claims about Central Asian history and relies at times on evidence from Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan, though not Kazakhstan, which had a longer history of Russian settlement in the countryside and a closer history with the Russian language given its earlier, more gradual conquest. It was comparatively easier to create Ivan-Kazakh whereas the Central Asian Ivans hailed from the former colony of Turkestan, which was not fully conquered until the 1880s and which had far fewer Russian settlers and more of a classical civilizing mission as Russia's "overseas" colony.<sup>2</sup> This legacy was evident even in 1939 when Kazakh oblasts were as much as three-quarters Russian whereas the Central Asian republics' rural oblasts could have as little as two and three percent Russians.<sup>3</sup> This distinction between Central Asia and Kazakhstan also follows the lead of SADUM (*Dukhovnoe Upravlenie Musul'man Srednii Azii i Kazakhstana*), the state's Islamic directorate founded in 1943.

As an identity, I argue that Ivan-Uzbek was the kernel of a national identity in formation, reflecting the essence of a pan-Soviet, Russian-speaking populace at war. Definitions of nation are myriad but for our purposes Stalin's is the most pertinent because it emphasizes transformation over time. Writing in his seminal article from 1913, "Marxism and the nationality question," and borrowing from the Leninist commitment to the acceleration of historical stages, Stalin held that a nation (*natsiia*) was a "historically constituted community" sharing a common language, territory, economy, and a "common mentality."<sup>4</sup> In other words, nations were not primordial or tribal groups but historically evolving entities created through economic, political, and cultural commonality. No event in Soviet history was as powerful for creating a common

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<sup>2</sup> On Turkestan as an equivalent to an overseas colony and its civilizing mission, see Robert D. Crews, "Civilization in the City: Architecture, Urbanism, and the Colonization of Tashkent," in *Architectures of Russian Identity: 1500 to the Present*, ed. James Cracraft and Daniel Rowland (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 118-125.

<sup>3</sup> *Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleniia 1939 goda: osnovnye itogi*. Moskva: Nauka, 1992, 77.

<sup>4</sup> I. V. Stalin, "Marksizm i natsional'nyi vopros," as cited in Hirsch, 43.

language, economy, and mentality as the Second World War. The dissertation's first chapter explores how the frontline experience in particular was a forge for a common language and culture. And it should be remembered that the Soviet nationalities policy reflected this evolutionary philosophy, an approach that Francine Hirsch has called "state-sponsored evolutionism." The number of officially recognized nationalities decreased between the 1926 and the 1939 census to reflect the coming together (*sblizhenie*) of narodnosti into nationalities, suggesting the eventual consolidation of even larger national groups in the future.<sup>5</sup>

The earliest theoreticians of the nation also commented on the importance of common history for the creation of national identity, as well as the twin processes of remembering and forgetting. Ernst Renan argued that forgetting previous divisions and conflicts was just as important as the memory of a common trauma, sacrifice, and victory for creating a new national mentality.<sup>6</sup>

No event in Soviet history was as powerful for creating a common language, economy, and mentality as the Second World War. The dissertation's first chapter explores how the frontline experience in particular was a forge for a common language and culture. For Uzbeks and other Turkestanis, the Second World War helped to relegate memories of recent Russian colonialism and the traumas of the Basmachi rebellion and collectivization to a more distant past.

In his seminal study on how peasants were integrated into the modern world and official culture to become Frenchmen, Eugen Weber provides an institutional framework for how local and regional mentalities became national ones. He finds roads, railways, schools, military service, markets and commerce to have provided the "experiences [that] swept away old commitments, instilled a national view of things in regional minds, and confirmed the power of that view by offering advancements to those who adopted it."<sup>7</sup> Just like Weber's peasants and their "Frenchness," before World War II the sense of Sovietness among Central Asian peasants was largely abstract, or marked by new institutions administered by familiar, local people. Furthermore, although Soviet Uzbekistan was integrated into the larger Soviet economy it was strictly agricultural and thus inherently viewed with deprecation by Marxist ideology. And without the common experience provided by schooling (especially the Russian language, mandatory only since 1938, and the Cyrillic alphabet reform for Uzbek in 1939) and military service, the creation of a pan-Soviet identity was still an unresolved project. And importantly, the pan-Soviet mentality carried by the veterans who built the post-war order was adopted in accordance with their own personal, professional advancement, as well as the general elevation of Uzbekistan within the Marxist developmentalist framework. Like Weber's peasants, they became Soviet when it was in their best interests to do so.

Finally, among theorists who have focused on the nation as a project in visualization, Benedict Anderson has noted the importance of an "imagined community" for nations in

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<sup>5</sup> See Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: ethnographic knowledge and the making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), pp. 7-8, 329-334.

<sup>6</sup> Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?", text of address given at the Sorbonne in 1882. In Ernest Renan, *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* (Paris: Presses-Pocket, 1992).

[http://ucparis.fr/files/9313/6549/9943/What\\_is\\_a\\_Nation.pdf](http://ucparis.fr/files/9313/6549/9943/What_is_a_Nation.pdf) - last referenced July 3, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: the Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), 486.

formation, dependent especially upon a common sense of time and print culture.<sup>8</sup> For the Soviet Union the potential national community was the *sovetskii narod*, which is usually translated as “Soviet people,” but has been provocatively translated as “Soviet nation” by political scientist Sener Akturk.<sup>9</sup> The assimilationist implications of “Soviet people” ran counter to the multiplicity embedded in the predominant metaphor for the Soviet multiethnic state, Friendship of the Peoples (*druzhba narodov*).<sup>10</sup> According to the dictates of Friendship, the Russian Elder Brother had gathered a family of amicable younger brother nations, each demarcated by territory, language, and cultural traits, into an integrated, patchwork whole. However, during the war “Soviet people” was used increasingly in the rhetoric of Bolshevik leaders and ideologues to describe the unified defense of a common Motherland. The war opened up a period of semantic confusion when it seemed that “Soviet” was the most important identity – and a national one after all. This explains why so many Central Asian veterans commented on nationality’s great importance and seeming irrelevance at the same time.

To illustrate the confusion of these competing metonyms we can consider the May 9 1945 editorial in *Pravda* that reminded readers that “Victory did not come of itself, it was won by the self-sacrifice, the heroism, the military mastery of the Red Army and of the whole Soviet people. It was organized by our invincible Bolshevik Party, the party of Lenin and Stalin, it was led by our Stalin...” However, two weeks later Stalin famously toasted the “health of the Russian people” as first among equals, who had suffered the most and contributed the most to the victory.<sup>11</sup> Ultimately, although they clashed with one another, the prominent slogans of Friendship of the Peoples, the Soviet people, and the leading role of the Russians were used in various contexts to mobilize Soviet troops and society. However, after the war, alongside the Party’s anti-cosmopolitan campaign, the more narrowly nationalist or imperialist Russian vision for the Soviet polity won out. Khrushchev immediately returned to the rhetoric of “Soviet people” at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956, emphasizing a common Soviet patriotism, love of the motherland, and the further strengthening of the “moral-political unity” of the Soviet people. As Akturk demonstrates, Khrushchev elaborated more fully on the Soviet people as a nationality in his address to the Twenty-Second Party Congress in 1961, describing it as a “new, historic community of people [...] formed in our country from different ethnicities, having common characteristic traits” such as a commitment to Communism, the Marxist-Leninist worldview, and a “common spiritual character (*dukhovnyi oblik*) and [common] psychology.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

<sup>9</sup> Akturk also provides a rare and stimulating discussion of the origins and fate of “sovetskii narod” as a potential but unfulfilled nationality in Sener Akturk, *Regimes of Ethnicity and Nationhood in Germany, Russia, and Turkey* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012). See especially chapter six, “The nation that wasn’t there? *sovetskii narod* discourse, nation-building, and passport ethnicity, 1953-1983.”

<sup>10</sup> For a discussion of Friendship of the Peoples as the “imagined community” of the prewar Soviet state, see Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), especially chapter 11.

<sup>11</sup> Elena Zubkova, *Russia after the war: hopes, illusions, and disappointments, 1945-1957*. Translated and edited by Hugh Ragsdale (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1998) 28.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted and translated in Akturk, *Regimes of Ethnicity and Nationhood in Germany, Russia, and Turkey*, chapter six.

Using Stalin's own formulation of the nation, Khrushchev introduced Sovietness as a nationality into debates that would last into the 1980s. I argue that this community was formed precisely during the Second World War when the most significant cultural and especially linguistic differences were overcome through the formation of a traumatic but affirming collective experience. However, "Soviet" never replaced nationality on its citizens' internal passports for various reasons, such as the vested interests of republican elites, the concerns of ethnic Russians and, as I show in my final chapter, the cleavages of regional and local cultural differences that undercut the distillation of truly common spiritual culture.

As an unfinished promise, Ivan-Uzbek was the national kernel of the "Soviet people" that, had it been formulated institutionally, could have ensured a longer lasting Soviet core. Nonetheless, as a generation it served the slightly less lofty purpose of grounding the Soviet regime in a group of Russian-speaking, culturally Soviet Uzbek men, the veterans who ruled post-war life and viewed Uzbekistan as an integral and equal part of the Soviet polity, contributing to the regime's stability in Central Asia.

This project relies on a number of historical works from the last two decades, especially an influential group of interpretations of Soviet nationalities policy and the Soviet Union as empire. Some historians have emphasized the Soviet Union's commonality with modern European overseas empires in violently imposing a foreign economic and social program from above.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, Hirsch, Martin, and Yuri Slezkine have shown how Bolshevik culture was equally foreign to Russian peasants, and that the nationalities policy created a self-consciously anti-imperial set of policies designed to root the revolution in local cadres and ultimately to liberate the various national groups in a shared socialist and communist future.<sup>14</sup> Adeeb Khalid has offered a useful formulation for understanding the Soviet Union as a special form of mobilizational, modernizing state.<sup>15</sup> And I find common cause with scholars of early Soviet Central Asia such as Adrienne Edgar and Marianne Kamp who have shown with great detail the interplay between local concepts and Bolshevik policies to create Central Asian allies of the Bolshevik project.<sup>16</sup>

Like the literature on nations, defining what is meant by becoming Soviet has been frequently debated. I rely upon Stephen Kotkin and Jochen Hellbeck's notions of "speaking Bolshevik" and "thinking Bolshevik," respectively, to make claims about the embrace of a

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<sup>13</sup> See Douglas Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); Paula Michaels, *Curative Powers: Medicine and Empire in Stalin's Central Asia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003).

<sup>14</sup> Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*; Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*; Yuri Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (1994), pp. 414-452. For a refutation of the Soviet Union as a colonial empire, see Slezkine, "Commentary: Imperialism as the Highest State of Socialism," *Russian Review*, Vol. 59, No. 2 (Apr., 2000), pp. 227-234.

<sup>15</sup> Adeeb Khalid, "The Soviet Union as an Imperial Formation: A View from Central Asia," in eds. Ann Laura Stoler, Carole McGranahan, and Peter C. Perdue, *Imperial Formations* (2007), pp. 113-139.

<sup>16</sup> See Adrienne Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

locally-colored yet starkly Soviet subjectivity during the war.<sup>17</sup> In the patriotic and romantic language of soldiers' letters we find the deployment of Soviet categories and formulations. I hope to build upon these constructions by emphasizing the multi-ethnic perspective of both Central Asian and Slavic soldiers.

I have greatly benefited from a recent group of studies of Central Asia's wartime experience. Rebecca Manley has documented the sense of desperation, separation, and unfamiliarity of evacuated elites in Tashkent, which was of great service as I wrote my chapter on writers.<sup>18</sup> And Paul Stronski's social history of Tashkent not only depicts Moscow's travails in fashioning a modern, proletarian city, but also depicts in rich detail the mobilization of urban Uzbek society in the war effort.<sup>19</sup> My study differs from theirs in weighing the broader effects of war on Uzbek society and examining the primary site of transformation, namely the Red Army. Yet, it also focuses on the tens of thousands of mobilized laborers, as well as rural society, especially the questions of gender relations. These sources lead me to a different conclusion about the war, namely that it provided a powerful impulse for rural Uzbek men to adopt new, Soviet perspectives. The war may not have created an Uzbek proletariat, but that did not spell the failure of Sovietification or the shallow penetration of Soviet ideology into Central Asian society.

Another group of recent studies has recognized the Second World War as a watershed moment in Soviet Central Asian history. Khalid has shown how in the *longue durée* the regime's assault on Islam changed after the war to a reconciliation with Islam, allowing postwar Uzbek Communists to see no contradiction between religious and Party faiths.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, Eren Tasar has demonstrated that Kyrgyz soldiers fought with an "Islamically informed patriotism" that also allowed them to reconcile their commitments to state and Islam.<sup>21</sup> In a different vein Claus Bech Hansen has argued that the political relationship between Tashkent and Moscow became marked by "limited statehood" after the war that was enabled by the center's wartime loss of control over the periphery.<sup>22</sup> Whether imagined in religious or political terms, these perspectives have a common emphasis on Moscow's wartime compromise with Central Asian society rather than its ability to transform it. However, especially evidenced in letters and veterans' interviews but also the exploits of female laborers, I find that Uzbeks asserted a positive, Soviet identity buffeted by a heightened sense of cultural equality, quite independent of religious questions. The Ivan-Uzbek identity and the veterans' social mobility in the postwar were inextricably linked with the regime's fate, forming an important element in the state's durability in the region. Central Asian

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<sup>17</sup> Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

<sup>18</sup> Rebecca Manley, *To the Tashkent Station: Evacuation and Survival in the Soviet Union at War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

<sup>19</sup> Paul Stronski, *Tashkent: Forging a Soviet City, 1930-1966* (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 2010).

<sup>20</sup> Adeb Khalid, *Islam after Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

<sup>21</sup> Eren Murat Tasar, "Islamically informed Soviet Patriotism in Postwar Kyrgyzstan," *Cahiers du monde russe* 2011/2, Vol 52, pp 387-404.

<sup>22</sup> Claus Bech Hansen, "Ambivalent Empire: Soviet Rule in the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic, 1945-1964" (Ph.D. diss., European University Institute, 2014).

men became Soviet in new ways, and not solely because the regime called off its assault on Islam.

I hope this dissertation will join the growing scholarly conversation on Soviet nationality. Edgar's article on intermarriage helped to confirm my suspicion about the importance of inter-ethnic soldiers' letters to female Uzbek kolkhoz laborers.<sup>23</sup> And Akturk provides an important explication of Communist theories of ethnic consolidation and assimilation. He finds a similar tension between *druzhba narodov* and *sovetskii narod* and makes an important distinction between "Soviet nation" as a political and ethnic nationality.<sup>24</sup> I hope my chapter on soldiers helps to illustrate why some observers may have confusingly labeled "Soviet" as an ethnos and that my conception of Ivan-Uzbek will be found as convincing evidence to begin the origin story of Soviet nationality not at 1953, as he did, but with 1941.

The first two chapters tell the twin stories of mobilized Central Asian men, first as soldiers and second as laborers. The first traces the state's early formulation of the army as a site of Bolshevik transformation and integration of Central Asian soldiers, first in national territorial units and then courtesy of the all-Union draft. First I show the army's efforts to "take national peculiarity into account," thus catering to the Uzbek portion of the Ivan-Uzbek moniker, including Uzbek-language propaganda materials, a cadre of non-Russian agitators, facilitating correspondence with family members, Uzbek national cultural performances, and a relaxed stance towards Islamic ritual. The most important consideration of nationality was the Party's search for innate national martial skills, alongside those it had distilled for Kyrgyz, Turkmen, and Kyrgyz soldiers. The next part of the chapter describes how these soldiers assimilated as Ivans by learning and writing Russian, adopting Russian nicknames and dietary habits, and even intermarrying, and by taking part in a pan-Soviet, Russian-speaking culture of Victory. The second chapter moves in the opposite direction, offering a case study of cross-ethnic encounter without the sort of cultural support enjoyed by Uzbeks in the army. It examines the harrowing experience of older Central Asian laborers in the Urals, finding them unable to assimilate into pan-Soviet cultural streams. Instead, segregated from Slavic workers, faced with high mortality rates, and chauvinistic and even racial mistreatment, their Uzbekness was confirmed to be a mark of second-class citizenship. Ultimately their story indicates how Soviet mobilization could operate in national and imperial registers simultaneously.

The next two chapters are concerned with the Uzbek homefront and the role of Uzbek women in particular. I argue that the war served as a liberation by necessity for Uzbek women and continued their tumultuous entry into society that was begun during collectivization. Their mobilization into the fields and elevation into mechanized agriculture and leadership roles integrated them into productive work and state institutions even more than the previous decade but also lay the groundwork for their postwar retreat from social life. Despite their patriotic contributions, remaining in Central Asia deprived them of opportunities available to Central Asian Red Army men – they learned new skills, but they did not learn Russian, and they were not placed in alien setting in which they could live out their new identities. Next I examine how the war impacted Uzbek gender roles in several case studies of Uzbek women, some of whom

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<sup>23</sup> Adrienne Lynn Edgar, "Marriage, modernity, and the 'friendship of nations': interethnic intimacy in post-war Central Asia in comparative perspective," *Central Asian Survey* (December 2007) 26 (4), pp. 581-599.

<sup>24</sup> See Akturk, *Regimes of Ethnicity*.

remained at home and some of whom traveled during the war – adoptive mother Bakhri Akramova, entertainer Tamara Khanum, and kolkhoz laborer Ogulkhon Karimova. Each case shows how the state took advantage of Uzbek women’s absence on the front and manipulated Uzbek conceptions of femininity to serve the state given their absence on the front. Although these women found fame in different spheres, each of them was called in some way to play a role in facilitating the Friendship of the Peoples, leading to interesting questions about the gendered nature of this ideology.

As a case study of the cultural construction and collisions wrought by the war and evacuation, the fifth chapter studies the interaction between evacuated European and local Uzbek writers. Their cooperative projects became laboratories for living out and elaborating the doctrine of Friendship of the Peoples, demonstrating how, despite its calls for socialist brotherhood, that doctrine functioned as an imperial ideology, one that militated against integration on the more equal terms of “Soviet people.” I show how the newcomers were prone to focus on what they considered to be exotic aspects of Uzbek culture, much like the European colonial writers they criticized. Ultimately they facilitated amicable ethnic relations by reinforcing tropes of Uzbek hospitality, Soviet friendship, and brave patriotism. However, the evacuees simultaneously asserted their tutorial rights as Elder Brothers with their superior mastery of socialist realist aesthetic technology.

The final chapter finds deep divides in postwar Uzbek society despite the mobilization and integration of Uzbeks into the “Soviet people.” Although the frontline experience of Ivan-Uzbek provided a vector for assimilation, the war experience also sowed the seeds for the disaggregation of this identity. Without the stress of combat and the logic of victory and sacrifice, cultural differences reemerged, especially in family life and gender expectations. In fact, pronatalist policies and the war’s demographic changes actually fomented a return to traditional family structures that were partially responsible for the rise in violence against young women after the war. Understood as a generation of Russian-speaking Central Asians who had seen the world and defeated the Germans, with new claims as Soviet actors, Ivan-Uzbek stayed on till the end of the regime and after. Some seemed more like Ivan – retaining nicknames or marrying Slavic women. Others seemed more Uzbek, remaining in rural kolkhozes, abiding Muslim norms. But they both epitomized a people who had gone from the imperial periphery to the national center in a few short years.

The epilogue assesses the legacy of Ivan-Uzbek in modern Uzbekistan.



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This project is dedicated to the memory of my grandparents, Pete and Mary Charney, who provided the earliest push towards the Russian world and whose support and love carry me still.

## CHAPTER ONE: *Making Ivan-Uzbek*

About 1.5 million men from Uzbekistan fought in World War II and some 485,000 never returned.<sup>1</sup> These numbers grow by hundreds of thousands if we consider the entire region of Central Asia, where this was a war of firsts: first armed conflict since Tamerlane to bring men from the land between the Amu and Syr Dar'ia rivers to Europe; first total war and mobilization; and, excluding the limited engagement against the Basmachi, the first war in which Russians and Central Asians fought side by side.

Recruits trickled into Red Army service from mountain kishlaks, desert auls, and urban mahallas from all over the region where they joined Slavic peasants and Caucasian herders in the most universalizing stream of Soviet life. The Red Army was the biggest and most ethnically diverse fighting force in human history and therefore had a special onus to temper men from all corners of the Soviet Union into interchangeable fighting parts, which it did through harsh discipline, creating unity while also celebrating this diversity, and by employing a common language of command.

Military service had a profound effect on the men from Central Asia. Its relentless danger, discipline, assimilationist pressures wove the men of diverse backgrounds into several broader strands: the elite top brass; *politruki* and junior officers; and common soldiers. Yet even the army had to bend to accommodate the entrance of millions of Central Asian men, most with little knowledge of Soviet mass media, Russian language, or experience outside their native districts. As an imperial institution, the Red Army negotiated a balance between the poles of homogeneity and heterogeneity. And though this chapter finds that the war transformed men from the periphery into Soviets by any definition, it shows how the army accomplished this with a commitment to flexibility and accommodating the region's cultural peculiarities.

The first broad category of Central Asian soldier is best represented by general-major Sabir Rakhimov who, at the outbreak of the war, was already a member of the old guard. An ethnic Kazakh who was raised outside of Tashkent, he died a Hero of the Soviet Union in March 1945 while commanding the 37<sup>th</sup> guards' artillery division of the 65<sup>th</sup> army in its attack on Danzig. To local and foreign Communists, especially Muslims, Rakhimov embodied the Soviet promise of national and ethnic equality in the face of Nazi racism, which was the main trope of Uzbek playwright Kamil' Yashen's 1958 play.<sup>2</sup> Rakhimov also became the eponymous hero of a film, several monuments, and a metro station in Tashkent. Central Asia's first Soviet general and most accomplished soldier represented a small but very visible social stratum. Born in 1902 and orphaned at age eight, he threw his lot in with the Soviet state as a teenager. As one of the few early Uzbek career military men, he started the war as major and deputy commander of a motorized infantry regiment, building upon a career that began in 1922 fighting the Basmachis

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<sup>1</sup> See [unpublished pamphlet] *Ma'lumotlar kitobi. Informatsionnaia kniga*. Tashkentskoe gorodskoe otdelenie fonda "Nuronii" po sotsial'noi podderzhke veteranov Uzbekistana. 1995. Uzbek historian Khamid Ziaev estimates that 1.5 million served and that 420,000 perished. See

<sup>2</sup> In her 1944 pamphlet, "Why I'm a Friend of the Soviet Union," Turkish feminist Suat Dervish cited Rakhimov's leadership against the German general von Bug as a major inspiration for Turks. T. D. Dzhuraev, *Voiny Uzbekistana na frontakh otechestvennoi voiny* (Nauka: Tashkent, 1965), 31. For the play "General Rakhimov," see Kamil Yashen', *P'iesy* (Tashkent: Khudozhestvennaia Literatura UzSSR, 1959).

and then to Baku for training. Although the Red Army could have used more seasoned Uzbek leaders, it did not have them.

Ali Sabirovich Sabirov (b. 1926) represents the second category. Also a child of the state, he found his calling in the army a crucial generation later. Born near Urgut not far from Samarkand, he lost his parents in the hunger of 1933. He and his brother begged for food in Penzhikent, Tajikistan until, as he puts it, “the regime picked us up and put us in an orphanage.”<sup>3</sup> There they learned discipline and Russian, and when the war began his brother went off to fight while Ali Sabirovich trained as a blacksmith and worked in a mine near Leninabad with men of diverse nationalities. When he came of age in 1944 he was enrolled as a cadet for six-months in Kuibyshev, Russia before becoming a division commander tasked with training enlisted men from Central Asia. Sabirov’s abilities as translator and teacher were more valuable than his fighting skills and he only saw live action in Poland in spring 1945 as a radio-man for regiment headquarters. After the war he spent over a decade in the military as a driver, mechanic, and instructor. He met a Ukrainian woman at the dances in Tashkent and married in 1951. Sabirov was part of a wave of Central Asian soldiers who rode their political expertise and language skills into positions of authority in the army and often into society at large after the war. Many of them had learned Russian by chance, and others were wards of the state. These men were children of the revolution who, if not devoured by the war, were in position to benefit from all of its promises when it ended.

The Central Asian enlisted men were the most ill-equipped to meet the rigors of modern warfare. They usually had no military background nor exposure to the harsh Russian climate, and they could not understand the basic commands of their officers. They died in great numbers, especially in the war’s first two years. No small number fled or injured themselves. Others were taken captive and faced the stigma of association with the Nazis’ Turkestan Legion. Yet many more distinguished themselves in battle and returned to their native *mahallas* and *kolkhozes* as heroes, ready to create the post-war social order. Those who made it to the end of the war lived to march not only through Russia but through the capitals of Europe, where they were exposed to cultural horizons their fathers never dreamed of.

To put a name to these diverse experiences, we might consider Turakul Toshev. He was a member of the Kunrod-Lokai tribe, Uzbek-speaking former nomads who lived in arid southwestern Tajikistan. Because they formerly crossed the Afghan border with their herds, they regularly clashed with the early Soviet state and many became prominent Basmachi fighters, such as the infamous Ibragim Bek. His first name translates as “four lakes,” and his last is derived from the Uzbek for “stone.” Toshev’s home village was no more than a dozen clay homes on a dry plateau. He only learned of the war when in 1942 he and a few other youths were put on trucks destined for the voenkomat in Kurgan-Tiube. He trained with brooms and mock-ups and although he could not understand the language of his drill officer, he followed the movements of his comrades and learned his first Russian word, “Ura!” He first handled a gun when he picked one up from a fallen comrade. In his first live action he was injured by a mine. When he regained consciousness he was in German captivity and sent on a train to the West. In transit Toshev saw a fellow Soviet soldier breaking the floorboards of the train wagon and went to help. At a stop the two men climbed through the hole and lay on the rails. When the train departed they were in Yugoslavia, where they were picked up by the Partisans led by Tito. Toshev eventually wound up in Italy where he took the fight to the retreating Nazis and Italian

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<sup>3</sup> Interview with Ali Sabirovich Sabirov, May 18, 2013.

fascists, earning the nickname “Ivan-Tajik,” even though he was neither Russian and nor Tajik. He assassinated the German commandant of the town of Medicina in an act of derring-do that is commemorated in the Bologna museum of the resistance. He only returned to the Soviet Union in 1946 after passing through a displaced person’s camp. He had long since lost his Soviet papers but had two documents, one in English issued by the Americans, and the other in Italian, testifying to his status as a hero of the resistance. Back in Kurgan-Tiube the police could not read them and he was branded a traitor. Suspicion followed him for the rest of his life and he was shunned by his fellow villagers, who forced him to live on the arid land far above the rest of the kolkhoz and refused to give him their daughters in marriage.<sup>4</sup>

The highs and lows of Toshev’s life were truly extraordinary. However in some respects his life story shared contours with many others: from distant village to the heart of the European conflict; from war hero to traitor to outcast; and most importantly, from isolated tribesman to a hybrid Russian-Central Asian by virtue of his language, uniform, and service.

Rakhimov, Sabirov, and Toshev each exemplified the war as a unifying agent. More than just a social history of men at war, this chapter examines the nature of the transformation of Central Asian men into Soviet soldiers. It argues that the war redefined what it meant to be a Soviet man from Central Asia, which was now linked to state military service that took place in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Eastern Europe. By instilling discipline, esprit de corps, and a common language, the Red Army assimilated Central Asian men into the greater Soviet community, linking them with men from all over the Union. It involved widening horizons, making new friends, crossing boundaries, and overcoming provinciality. It changed dress, language, comportment, gender relations, and religious practice. Soviet men spoke Russian, could hold their 100g of vodka, often took Russian wives, and possessed a certain cosmopolitanism unavailable to the elderly and those left behind. Central Asian men overcame their historical backwardness with blood, as the battlefield demanded universal standards of performance.

However, at the same time, the “affirmative action” heritage of the Soviet state, its internationalist politics, and the imperative to accommodate the Central Asians’ language and customs ensured that the Ivan-Tajiks, Ivan-Uzbeks, and Ivan-Turkmen would not drop their hyphens.<sup>5</sup> They did not become Russians in any ethnic sense, though it often appeared as such. The Soviet men from Central Asia were encouraged to express their national identities through song and dance, and to read newspapers in their native language. And it was politically validating to have Uzbeks dancing to folk songs alongside Ukrainians at the Brandenburg Gates, a celebration of socialism over fascism. The formula of “Ivan-Uzbek” was not so far from how the soldiers were viewed by their own state, with Russian being the linguistic bearer of Soviet culture and a mark of its internationalism, and the “Uzbek” marking the authentic yet transformed local. The war, with all its violence and flattening logic, in its calls for sacrifice and prospects for self-actualization, offered both tragic and heroic paths for Central Asian men to realize the promise that Soviet nationalities politics seemed to offer. Equal sacrifice, equal expectation, equal reward. National in form, socialist in content. Backwardness expunged.

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with Pulat Akhmatov, June 28, 2011. As creative director for documentary films at Tajikfilm, Akhmatov wrote the screenplay for a documentary film on the life of Turakul Toshev in 1977 called “Till the Distant Horizon,” *Daleko, do samogo gorizonta* (dir. Mairam Iusupova).

<sup>5</sup> I am of course citing Terry Martin’s formulation. See Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*.

Yet the boundaries of this universalizing Soviet community were clearly marked. The pathways to a reoriented Soviet identity were not open to nor welcomed by all Central Asians, nor could they be passed through immediately. Men too old for the draft remained at home, working in kolkhozes or in evacuated military industries, yet without the perks or opportunities of military service. A much smaller number both actively and passively subverted the state's war efforts. Those drafted into labor battalions sent to the Urals and Siberia experienced a type of forced labor reserved only for untrustworthy ethnic groups like Germans and Balts. The harsh conditions they endured and the silence with which they were remembered underscored that despite the universalizing momentum of the war, Central Asian men on the homefront were not one of the Soviet Union's privileged groups. While their brothers joined a progressive, multi-national Soviet community, they were diverted into a cul-de-sac of backwardness. They did not become Ivans.

The obligation to die for one's country is not always sweet. Central Asia was the only region of the Soviet Union whose population had never been drafted into tsarist armies, so one of the Bolsheviks' revolutionary tasks was to convince Central Asians that their new country was worth dying for. In Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and the rest of former tsarist Turkestan, Soviet conscription was celebrated as an emancipatory privilege and a sign of trust in its citizens, regardless of region or ethnicity. Party and Red Army rhetoric celebrated military service as another way in which the new regime had replaced the old.

The Kazakh anti-draft revolts of 1916 were a stern warning to the early Soviet state that colonized peoples could not be expected to make military sacrifices. Thus the first Central Asian military activity was limited to small, voluntary formations. Starting during the Civil War, Central Asian volunteer forces, the Red Sticks, collaborated with the Red Army to fight the Basmachis. These forces never left the region, nor were they integrated into the rest of the army. Additionally, starting in 1918 the Red Army actively recruited among the disenfranchised local population to create separate companies made up of Uzbeks, Kazakhs, and Tajiks – the so-called “Muslim Red Army.”<sup>6</sup>

Sabir Rakhimov likely joined these units when he entered the Red Army in 1922. After his father's death in 1910, eight-year-old Rakhimov and his mother moved from southern Kazakhstan to near Tashkent where he began working as a hired laborer. He had precisely the sort of social origins to be attracted to the Red Army and quickly rose through ranks, being sent for further training at the Baku Unified Military School in 1925.

Individuals from the partisan bands and locally-composed companies joined the first ethnically integrated national units of the Red army when the Central Asian Military District – *Sredneaziatskii voennyi okrug* or SAVO – was organized in Tashkent in 1926.

Part of SAVO's message to Central Asian soldiers was to impress upon them how lucky they were to serve in the Soviet army. In a 1933 pamphlet the humiliation of ethnic and religious minorities – or *inorodtsy* – in the tsarist armed forces was a central theme. Aide of camp O.I. Gorodovikov, of Cossack origin who here presented himself as Kalmyk, took creative license in recalling his service in Turkestan. He claimed that national minorities would have “understandably” turned their guns upon tsarist officers at the first opportunity. Meanwhile

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<sup>6</sup> This label can be found in the recollections of the enigmatically-named Ma-sa-n-chen, “Za vlast' sovetov,” in *Natsional'nye chasty krasnoi gvardii i krasnoi armii v srednei azii*, ed. F. Bozhko (Tashkent: Gosizdat UzSSR, 1933), 27.

Kalmyks like him faced “humiliation... endless dirty work.” He attested that Russians promoted one another to the highest positions while forcing the non-Russians to do the degrading jobs like removing manure from the stables, cleaning latrines, and hauling garbage, not as punishment but just because they were “Kalmyks, non-Christians (*nekhristi*), non-believers (*inovertsy*).” They were also excluded from the camp holidays and days off on religious grounds. Without prospects to rise through the ranks and limited to demeaning work, flight and desertion were prevalent among the national minorities.<sup>7</sup>

Gorodovikov recalled the day a charlatan came to the barracks in the guise of a military paramedic offering a vials of a weak poison for 25 rubles that would make the men sick enough to be sent home but without endangering their lives. Thirteen of the nineteen non-Russians in the barracks took the poison and “literally dried up and became emaciated.” Each was sent home, and each died.<sup>8</sup>

But the benefits of Red Army service were more important than the horror stories under the tsar. In a region without a proletariat, the Red Army functioned as one of the major institutions for Bolshevik transformation. For the local nationalities, the “Red Army [was] more than anything a school for political training. In it they received class-revolutionary, Bolshevik education and train[ed] the will to lead a decisive battle for the liberation of toilers, for the triumph of socialism.” In particular, they “liquidated their illiteracy, raised their cultural level, dismissed age-old superstitions, and learned to be fully-fledged builders of socialism in their native *kishlaks* and *auls*.” Upon completing military service they could be found sharing their knowledge on kolkhozes, railroads, and irrigation projects.<sup>9</sup> Thus from its earliest years military leadership imagined the Red Army in Central Asia as the primary transmission belt for the key elements of Soviet political culture.

However, the state could not count on many recruits to enter this Bolshevik classroom. There was little martial tradition among Turkestan’s families since the emir’s armies had been small and largely composed of specialty troops, while the main battles against the tsar’s armies had taken place several generations ago. Sons from stable families had little incentive to join the new Red Army without conscription, which happened first in 1929. Therefore Rakhimov and commander and commissar of the Separate Uzbek Cavalry regiment Mirkamil’ Mirsharapov – both poor and fatherless – were not exceptional within the Soviet Union at large among early supporters of the state, but they formed only a fraction of the Central Asian population.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the rhetoric of national inclusion, Central Asian and Caucasian soldiers did not fight in regular army units. “Non-Russians” were placed in national units that were not integrated with the rest of the army until they were finally dissolved in 1938. They remained in their home regions, often assigned to border patrol, and usually used the most common local language for command even though most officers were Russian. These units were considered a temporary measure until more Central Asian and Caucasian men could learn Russian and the military arts.<sup>11</sup> This occurred in 1939 with a new conscription law that obligated all Soviet citizens to serve

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<sup>7</sup> Bozhko, ed., *Natsional’nye chasty krasnoi gvardii i krasnoi armii v srednei azii*, 12-13.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Qochqor Honazarov, November 27, 2013.

<sup>11</sup> For an excellent summary on “non-Russians” in the Red Army leading up to World War II, see Brandon Schechter, “The People’s Instructions”: Indigenizing The Great Patriotic War Among ‘Non-Russians,’” *Ab Imperio* 3/2012, pp.109-132, esp. pp. 111-114.

regardless of class origin and also integrated its various national groups into a common army for the first time. It is seen by many former soldiers as a signal that the state finally trusted Central Asians enough to include them in the Russian-speaking ranks of the Red Army.<sup>12</sup>

The 1939 Winter War against Finland marked the first time that Central Asian regulars fought in significant numbers in the Red Army. And when the German army launched Operation Barbarossa on June 22, 1941, several Central Asians were among the casualties at Brest fortress.

The German invasion prompted desperate measures to raise the number of Soviet citizens under arms. As in other Union republics, Party leaders in Uzbekistan presided over a military draft and coaxed volunteers to enlist, especially among the Party rank-and-file and Komsomol. By July 2 over 3,000 men had volunteered from Tashkent, primarily industrial workers.<sup>13</sup> Given the ethnic make-up of factories, these men were majority Slavs. Although Party reports to Moscow did not voice it directly, they were especially concerned with the propaganda in rural and predominantly Uzbek hinterlands. Party reports traced the comparatively slower rise of ethnic Uzbek recruits, noting that by July 17 in Namangan district of Namangan oblast' 250 men had volunteered for the war, mostly kolkhozniki. In Uch-Kurgan district 70 had volunteered, 21 of them women for medical service. And the report hastened to include the oath of service of 55-year-old Party member Mumin Nishanov who vowed that he would "fight till [his] last drop of blood, despite [his] advanced age."<sup>14</sup> Celebratory reports in newspapers and to the Politburo attested that by August 11 the number of volunteers throughout the republic had reached 14,000 men, but they always avoided publishing ethnic make-up given that volunteership among local nationalities lagged behind the Slavs.<sup>15</sup>

But these concerns became academic when the rapid loss of territory and mounting casualties forced the Soviet state to accelerate its mobilization. Expediency dictated the re-emergence of national units, but not in the sense of the 1920s and 1930s. These units were organized, financed, and outfitted by the individual republican Communist Parties rather than the military commissariat. They reflected local demographics, with enlisted men overwhelmingly pulled from local nationalities and officers who were predominantly European. For example, 99.7 percent of enlisted men in the 94<sup>th</sup> Uzbek independent infantry brigade formed in Fergana in February 1942 were Uzbek. Their commanding officer was a Russian, while Uzbeks composed a quarter of higher command. And though only 29 percent of military officers were Uzbek, 80 percent of political officers were. It was crucial that political officers speak Uzbek because only 62% of the officers or commanders spoke the language. The 95<sup>th</sup> infantry brigade from Kokand in December 1941 had similar numbers. Of its 3,307 enlisted men, only one was Russian. Commander Rachkov was joined by commissar Chikovani. Of the 377 officers only 34 percent were local nationalities. Due to Central Asia's more polarized demography – with Russians living primarily in Tashkent and other large cities – its national units were far more ethnically homogenous than those from other Soviet regions.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Qochqar Honazarov, interview.

<sup>13</sup> RGASPI, f. 17, op. 88, d. 95, l. 13, 36, 37.

<sup>14</sup> RGASPI, f. 17, op. 88, d. 95, l. 124.

<sup>15</sup> RGASPI, f. 17, op. 88, d. 96, l. 13. At least one factory apprentice postulated that volunteers entered the army to flee the rising hunger within the city of Tashkent, l. 53.

<sup>16</sup> N.V. Podpriatov, *Natsional'nye voinskie formirovaniia narodov Sovetskogo Souza v SSSR i v fashistskoi Germanii v gody Vtoroi mirovoi voiny* (Perm': PGU, 2006), 15, 31-32.



By 1943 army leadership phased out national units, though evidence suggests that in the first two years of war the more homogenous national units actually performed better than the ethnically pluralistic ones, with higher levels of fortitude, greater success, and lower levels of desertion and self-mutilation.<sup>17</sup> National units were ultimately deemed ideologically less reliable and failed to reflect the state's favored image of the military unit as ethnic menagerie with men from every region of the Soviet Union. This better reflected the Friendship of Peoples concept with the "elder brother" in command of a diverse unit, rather than portraying a colonial scenario with Russian superiority over a particular ethnic group as it would have appeared in Central Asia. In a sense, the army sought to make the platoon the primary zone of ethnic mixing. Rather than a patchwork quilt of national brigades, the army was to be a melting pot, quite different from the principles of state organization and its separate national. And so as the first generation of national units succumbed to losses, they were replenished not with men from their point of origin, but with soldiers from all over the Soviet Union. They retained their original names in deference to their origins, such as the 94<sup>th</sup> Uzbek infantry brigade, but in practice only a handful of men remained from the beginning of the war.

The universal draft law, which applied to all Soviet men from ages 18 to 50, was only two years old when German forces invaded. Central Asian Party leadership and the republican military commissariats sprung into action not only to broadcast the outbreak of war and its service obligations, but to embark on propaganda efforts to ensure all those who were called up actually reported for duty. Given the novelty of the draft, the Party relied on its cadres in all walks of life to lead the way. Komsomol and Party members were well-represented among volunteers in summer 1941. However, as in other campaigns, such as the *Hujum*, Party leaders discovered that their most trusted allies often subverted their goals.<sup>18</sup> Reports to Moscow's Central Committee in the summer of 1941 were littered with instances of local Party members finding creative ways to avoid the draft. In Tashkent region Party candidate Igramberdiev claimed seven dependents but investigations revealed they belonged to his elder brother. In Samarkand an instructor of the local agitprop department refused to serve. In Begovat the 35-year-old deputy financial director tried to bribe a doctor to declare him unfit. A Party candidate in Namangan region altered his birth year in his passport and Party ticket to avoid the call-up.<sup>19</sup> Each man was removed from the Party. While these episodes did not indicate an epidemic, they were cause for concern. The absence of Slavic names among the draft-dodgers indicated that at the beginning of the distant conflict local Communists did not all conceive of it as "their" war. Few of them had ever left the region, and even fewer had any personal ties to the war-torn regions. The Red Army's early catastrophic losses did not help to inspire men to risk their lives.

The situation was more widespread among non-Party members throughout Central Asia who used a variety of tactics to avoid the draft. In rural regions men simply fled their kolkhozes and lived off the land, or fled one kolkhoz to live with a sympathetic family member in another, away from the voenkamat's count. Writer Mas'ud Rasuli recalls his adolescence outside of

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<sup>17</sup> Podpriatov, 41-42. Podpriatov offers a story from the memoirs of Lavrenty Beria's son that Zhukov was particularly opposed to national units on the grounds that they might defect. The two agreed that a minimum of units should be retained, if purely for "decoration" and parades.

<sup>18</sup> On the unreliability of cadres during the *Hujum* – the campaign to remove the *paranji* among Uzbek women – see Northrop, *Veiled Empire*, especially chapter six.

<sup>19</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 95, l. 30, 158; d. 96, l. 37, 117, 146, 149.

Samarkand in which a group of deserters lived in the scrubby growth of a flood plain. Desperate and hungry, one day they seized the grain off the back of a boy's donkey and murdered the child who had recognized one of them from his village.<sup>20</sup> Other kolkhozniki exhibited their knowledge of the law to make themselves ineligible by engaging in petty crimes such as refusal to work, theft, hooliganism, and embezzlement. Eight members of a mechanic shop in Namangan quit their jobs. Upon learning he'd been drafted a worker at the savings bank began to break windows and started a fight with an accountant.<sup>21</sup>

Two years later the tide of the war had changed in favor of the Soviet army and the front and the rear were bound even closer by several years of mobilizations, evacuations, propaganda campaigns to indigenize the war, and drives to send clothing and food to the troops.<sup>22</sup> Despite these successes, Party officials continued to guard against draft-dodging on the home front. In Tashkent region in 1942 a total of 51 Party members were kicked out of the Party for avoiding the draft. A deputy head of the Kokand voenkomat was charged with taking bribes for finding men medically unfit for service. And in 1943 the head of Tashkent's geological institute, Mirbabaev, tried to avoid service by claiming material hardship.<sup>23</sup>

The draft was more tenuous in other Central Asian republics. In Tajikistan the mountainous geography, long border, and looser Party vigilance combined for an even larger problem. The republic was overwhelmingly rural and, outside of its capital Stalinabad, virtually uninhabited by Russians, who had almost all arrived in the republic in the 1920s and 1930s on Party-organized development projects.<sup>24</sup> Outside of Leninabad and Stalinabad, the Party had spent the 1920s and 1930s trying to wrest local control from former Basmachis and *bais* who had entered the state apparatus through tribe and kinship network after negotiating amnesties with the state to give up their arms. Even when the fighting had largely subsided by the end of the 1920s, the state feared the consolidation of "clans" within the Soviet apparatus.<sup>25</sup> Thus even at the outbreak of war Party leaders in the capital could not always be sure of the fealty of local representatives, and probably nowhere in the Soviet Union was there such difficulty in convincing local people that this was "their" war. Turakul Toshev was not aware that there was a war until he was drafted for it. In October 1941 in Ramit and Pakhtabad districts, near Toshev's homeland, two bands of deserters of 21 people each were on the run with the NKVD in pursuit.

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<sup>20</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 95, l. 85, 39, 74. Mas'ud Rasuli, *Ispoved'* (Tashkent: O'qituvchi, 2000), 82.

<sup>21</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 96, l. 39, 149.

<sup>22</sup> For the propaganda campaigns, see Schechter, "The People's Instructions."

<sup>23</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 236, l. 89.

<sup>24</sup> According to the census, Tajikistan's 1939 population was 1,484,440 people, 17% of whom lived in cities. (By comparison Uzbekistan was 23% urban). Garm (1%), Kuliab (3%), and Gorno-Badakhshan A.O (3%) had the lowest percentage of Russian residents of any regions in Soviet Central Asia. Similar numbers could only be found in Khorezm (4%) and Kara-Kalpak ASSR (5%) in Uzbekistan, Tian'-Shan, Kyrgyzstan (4%), and Tashauz, Turkmenistan (4%). Consulted in *Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleniia 1939 goda: osnovnye itogi* (Moskva: Nauka, 1992).

<sup>25</sup> See Beatrice Penati, "The reconquest of East Bukhara: the struggle against the Basmachi as a prelude to Sovietization." *Central Asian Survey*, 26 (4), 2007, pp.521-538, 527.

The raikom leaders were summarily replaced for failing to conduct any mass-political work among call-ups, within villages, and at draft points since the beginning of war.<sup>26</sup>

In the border regions of Kuliab and Gorno-Badakhshan, the temptation to flee forced the regime to take a more conciliatory approach, consistent with its border policies of the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>27</sup> Tajik Party boss Dmitri Protopopov reported to Stalin in November 1943 that 78 people had emigrated from Gorno-Badakhshan to Afghanistan in 1942 (while the number had shrunk to 15 for 1943). From March through May 1943 in Muminabad district, Kuliab oblast, 371 men had deserted during draft call-ups, resulting in the removal of the obkom secretary. Given the threat of flight across the border, instead of draconian measures the TsK sent a special brigade to the district to conduct political and mass-explanatory work among their families that allegedly resulted in the return of 261 men. Political brigades were sent to uphold morale at kolkhozes all along the border while at the same time in Kuliab oblast three basmachi bands were uncovered and liquidated upon the arrival of special forces.<sup>28</sup> A year later the Tajikistan TsK reported that 133 people had emigrated to Afghanistan or Western China and that in 1944 the “the emigration mood ha[d] taken over a larger circle of kolkhozniki.” The report made clear that administrative and punitive measures were not recommended in the border areas, but that the poor or disillusioned farmers should be won back via political work and economic aid.<sup>29</sup>

What explains the difficulty in convincing Central Asian men to report for their call-ups? First, the Red Army’s disastrous performance throughout the first year of war played a role in the calculus to risk flight rather than die in service. Second, with a draft that was only two years old, mass mobilization was a wholly new experience. Military traditions did not run in families as they did in Russia, though the fathers and grandfathers of a handful of recruits would have been able to recall their guerilla warfare against tsarist forces in 1916 and alongside the early Soviet state. World War II was the first major conflict in which Central Asian men were asked to fight alongside Russians against a common enemy. The extent to which they embraced this mission – and the war as “their own” – was a referendum on the Soviet state. No more cogent test could be found to assess popular support for the regime and, in particular, whether it had demonstrated to common people that its new order was profitable and just, and not Russian colonialism by a new name.

By and large, conscription data underscores Soviet success at achieving legitimacy after more than two decades of momentous change and violence. However, the war showed that conflict and the potential for state collapse could reinvigorate latent tensions within Central Asian society, and especially between Russians and local nationalities. This backdrop of interethnic anxiety complicated the state’s draft goals.

Uzbekistan Party reports on popular mood in the first year of war reflected these local tensions. They were the result of an extensive effort of police informants to listen to conversations throughout the republic and compile complaints from Party members. They offer a representative glimpse of popular opinion during the war’s first six months. As in other parts of the Soviet Union, the string of early defeats revealed plenty of simple defeatism. The region’s

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<sup>26</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 125, d. 85, l. 52-53.

<sup>27</sup> See Charles Shaw, “Friendship under Lock and Key: the Soviet Central Asian border, 1918-1934,” *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 30, Issue 3-4 (2011), pp. 331-348.

<sup>28</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 122, d. 37, l. 9, 26, 27.

<sup>29</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 122, d. 62, l. 3.

significant exiled population, particularly in rural Uzbekistan, voiced an array of anti-Soviet perspectives. There were toasts heralding the fall of Soviet power in the Pai-Aryk district of Fergana oblast, and a Ukrainian woman who vowed that husbands of exiles would never go to war, or would simply surrender if they did. Ethnic Germans made plans to return to Germany and a Polish worker in Tashkent voiced his skepticism of efforts to bring Uzbeks to the factory floor: “Citizen, you want to do in five years of training what you haven’t been able to do in twenty-three.”<sup>30</sup>

Meanwhile many other Russians and Uzbeks, even Party members, viewed the outbreak of war through a colonial lens, exchanging recriminations and hostility. Many men of local nationalities equated Soviet rule with Russian rule and saw a chance for deliverance in a loss to the Germans. Veteran Efim Gol’braikh claims to have recalled episodes from Tashkent in 1941 of Uzbek mothers lying on the rails to stop trains of recruits from leaving for the front and hearing cries of “Uzbekistan for the Uzbeks!”<sup>31</sup> In Fergana city on the day the war broke out the son of a mullah, Kadyrdzhan Akhmadali Madaev, interrupted a procession of new recruits and their families from the voenkomat, saying, “we’re already only barely alive, starving, you’ve destroyed all that we have, and we’ve all become women, like nursing women.” He addressed the men in particular: “if we refuse to be silent, this punishment will end soon...we need to speak all together.” Elsewhere men voiced the idea that war would vanquish the Russians and return them their rightful land and riches, praising Basmachi rule. A man at a Red Chaikhana in Iangi-Kurgan district of Namangan oblast bid the return of pre-revolutionary era, vowing that “soon we’ll be our own bosses again,” and refusing to give to the war fund. In Kokand a group of kolkhozniki gathered 5 rubles from people in order to create a religious service to pray for the end of Soviet power. Fergana Valley was especially fertile for these sorts of expressions. In the first summer of war 28 people in Namangan oblast were sentenced for counterrevolutionary activities. And anti-Russian exclamations could be heard all over the republic, for instance, from ethnic Karakalpak Davliat Muratov, student at the Samarkand Agricultural Institute, who said in an argument: “You Russians in Central Asia live off of Asian bread, so be quiet, or else we’ll get rid of you.”<sup>32</sup>

In turn, Russians feared that a war loss would mean revolt in Central Asia and violent retribution against ethnic Russians. A machinist at the Samarkand Agricultural Institute feared that “if Soviet power fails, Uzbeks will slaughter all the Russians.” The wife of a doctor from Khatyrchinsk district (Samarkand oblast) who had been called up to service warned that “if there is a revolution, the Uzbeks will whip the Russians’ backs with belts.” And in Shirabad district of Surkhandarya oblast, a Moskvitin, inspector at a grain warehouse, announced that many Russians had begun to send their wives and children to Russia, because when the war begins Uzbeks will “slaughter all the Russians.” He was sentenced to 4 years in prison.<sup>33</sup>

These fears were not entirely without basis. Confrontations turned into skirmishes between ethnic groups, some of which resulted in threats. In Tashkent, Party member Zimin fought with an Uzbek on a tram and was led away vowing, “we’ll kill all the nationals anyway, they don’t let us be.”<sup>34</sup> But Uzbeks threats towards Russians were far more numerous. A

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<sup>30</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 95, l. 31, 55, 136.

<sup>31</sup> Efim Gol’braikh, *Byloi voiny razroznennye stroki* (Rishon le-Tsion: VK-2000, 2005), 119.

<sup>32</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 95, l. 30, 54, 55, 81, 128, 169, 170, 188.

<sup>33</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 95, l. 30, 109; d. 96, l. 40.

<sup>34</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 95, l. 29.

Komsomolets and factory worker in Tashkent, Said-Akhmedov, said to a fellow worker, “If Hitler or the Germans come and take Russia, then we’ll smash you all and we’ll talk a lot differently with you.” Rail inspector Dadabaev told fellow workers: “your time has come, soon we’ll cut you all down.” Fergana valley was home to an outsized share of scuffles and threats. In a drunken conflict with a Russian, an ethnic Uighur near Fergana city threatened that “we’ll soon be making *shashlyk* out of the police.” A group of Uzbek men in an Andijan old-aged home had the Civil War era on their mind when they announced that soon Russian power would end. They beat up a Russian former anti-Basmachi partisan and declared “we used to be our own bosses (*khoziaeva*), and now Russians have started to run things (*khoziainichat*). No matter we’ll beat them all and Uzbekistan will be ours, we’ll live like *bais*.” In Kurgan-Tiube a Tashbaev, justice of the peace (*narsud’ia*) drunkenly beat a Russian, Kozlov, with a revolver. The raikom simply “imposed a penalty and removed him from work” rather than removing him from the Party. Finally, Rakhmatulla Ubaidullaev, recently removed from the Party for absenteeism and spreading rumors, created a drunken scandal and got into a fight with the same Kozlov at a beer stand, grabbed him by the throat and yelled, “Why are you pressuring us? We’ve become your colony.”<sup>35</sup>

While draft-dodgers and deserters did not leave behind accounts, episodes of ethnic tension in the summer of 1941 confirmed the regime’s greatest fears: that given a real threat to its political integrity, the Central Asian social order could crumble into allegations of colonial dominance and violent retribution. Scuffles and accusations as well as desertion from draft stations served as inchoate indicators that local men were not all convinced that the war was theirs to fight. Other voices were more finely politically honed. In Namangan oblast an exiled former landowner, Kurianov, addressed men of local nationalities who had been called up for army service with “counterrevolutionary expressions” and “uncensored, chauvinistic words,” meaning either that he asked them why they were fighting for Russians, or belittling their fighting ability. In Dzhilal-Kuduksk district, Andijan oblast, a kolkhoznik equated the Red Army with a Russian army, spreading the opinion that marshal Budyenni had targeted the whole Uzbek people would be “immediately killed” if he entered the republic because Uzbeks hated him. A brigadier from Zarbdar sel’soviet, Andijan oblast (Ogulkhon Kurbanova’s home village) spread the demoralizing claims that Uzbeks were used sacrificially in early battles, saying that the Red Army first sent out the Uzbeks, then Tatars, and only then the Russians. A Russian watchman at a power station undercut the entire premise of socialist internationalism, mentioning to an Uzbek Party member that “the German army is strong because it’s composed of one nation of pure-blooded Germans, but the Red Army is weaker because it’s multi-national, therefore there’s no unity like the Germans.”<sup>36</sup> Thus in the first months of war Central Asia’s social fiber was stretched to reveal old fractures, dating back to the earliest days of Soviet power and before.

Yet despite these strains hundreds of thousands of men were called up for training into the Red Army. Though their immediate task was to become soldiers fit for combat, in so doing they entered the primary training institution of the state, the region’s most important site of personal transformation. Soviet military training was characterized by a refinement of the mind and the body that were mutually reinforcing. To become fit; to wear the Soviet uniform; to master the care and deployment of a weapon; to gain a specialty such as artillery,

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<sup>35</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 95, l. 54, 70, 82, 137; d. 96, l. 74.

<sup>36</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 95, l. 80, 170; d. 96, l. 73, 148.

reconnaissance, or sharpshooting – all meant to gain a vocation. But by themselves these skills did not create character. According to Bolshevik gospel, labor sowed the seeds of consciousness, which needed to be honed further in study and conversation. The process was circular. Mind and body assisted one another. The right mentality accelerated training. Inspiration and resolve perfected craft.

A third element – language – was the medium that linked mind and body. A soldier had to read training manuals and respond to spoken commands. And only language provided multiplicity, coordinating the actions of the individual with his platoon, company, and battalion.

There was no other army in world history more ambitious about physical and mental transformation than the Soviet Union. Although the acute need to defend the Fatherland overshadowed the Red Army's role as school for state service, its educational role was embedded in its core. It was history's largest and likely its most diverse army, yet it had only one language of command. And after the small number of "national units" were phased out by the second year of war, men from diverse locales were distributed all over the army and expected to function as interchangeable parts.

As the SAVO booklet from the 1930s suggested, the Red Army was the most effective place to instill a "communist spirit" in Central Asian recruits. The exigencies of war mandated that military acumen and Russian language become just as important. And so military service became a Soviet school with three mutually reinforcing terrains – mind, body, and tongue.

Memoirs and veterans' recollections describe how unfamiliar most Central Asian recruits were with army life. Faizulla Narkhodzhaev, head of an Uzbekistan artillery brigade and later commander of an anti-tank artillery regiment, recalled that in 1941 and 1942 many soldiers, including officers, arrived to the front without having fired a gun and having trained only with wooden mock-ups. When evacuated industry arrived in Uzbekistan in the winter of 1942 local arms production allowed most men to train with the guns they would use in battle. Most of his men had never seen a tank before the battle for Moscow, and had to be introduced to anti-tank grenades and bottles on the spot.<sup>37</sup>

To fill the skills and language gap the army relied on young Russian-speaking Central Asian men to translate basic military drills and directives into local languages. First-generation Soviet soldiers of rank, such as Sabir Rakhimov, were valuable members of a senior officer corps that had few Central Asians. But young men who knew Russian were equally valuable and often promoted to junior officers precisely for this reason. Ali Sabirovich Sabirov learned Russian at a state orphanage in Penjikent and a new mine near Leninabad staffed largely by evacuees from other parts of the Union. As late as 1944 Russian was in such high demand that he was placed in a six-month cadet course near Kuibyshev to become a division commander whose main task was to train Central Asian enlisted men, despite his protestations to see live combat. He believes he was selected as an officer for his Russian skills and the discipline he learned at the orphanage. Near the front he taught Tajiks, Kazakhs, Uzbeks, and Karakalpak from rural locales in a three-month course of fundamentals like marching, military dress, commands, and basic comportment, before they went on to fire a gun. He recalls combining Russian lessons with marching orders – "to the left – clover, to the right – look at the straw" –

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<sup>37</sup> Faizulla Kh. Narkhodzhaev, *50 let na boevom postu (stranitsy iz zhizni)* (Tashkent: "Uzbekistan," 1980), 86, 91. Turakul Toshev had also never fired a gun before arriving at the front, interview with Akhmatov.

and how Russians and other soldiers would look on and laugh before being admonished by their superiors.<sup>38</sup>

Knowledge of Russian, along with basic math, accounted for promotions to more specialized work. Five years of primary schooling was required for artillery and machine gunners.<sup>39</sup> Khalid Alimdzhanov (b. 1925), called up in winter 1942, was made a mortar man (*minometchik*) because he spoke Russian and knew math, having grown up in a teacher's household in Tashkent's Old City.<sup>40</sup> Gulom Makkamov (b. 1926) arrived at the front before the storming of Koenigsberg in 1944 as a skinny teenage squad leader. He attributes his rapid rise through the ranks solely to his knowledge of Russian, noting that in 1944 even rural Uzbek raikom chairmen did not speak the language, much less most recruits from distant *kishlaks*. He had learned the language from Russian twins who had arrived in Kirov district, Fergana oblast, when their father had been sent to oversee local cotton production into gauze and bandages. The boys befriended him, invited him home, where he saw his first aluminum spoons, and took to calling him Grisha, a nickname he continued to use in the army.<sup>41</sup> Finally, Akhmed Dzhabbarov (b. 1925), head of the Uzbekistan Composers' Union from 1965-2003, learned Russian as a boy from his neighbors, a geologist and tsarist officer and his wife who had been exiled to Namangan and gave him piano lessons. Dzhabbarov's own father was a mullah who had fled to Kashgar and his mother died young, so he lived with his grandmother who sent him to Russian school. In 1942 as a seventeen year-old he was called to translate at the Namangan voenkamat. The next year he took a six-month course at the Kharkov Infantry Academy (evacuated to Uzbekistan) before mobilizing as part of an anti-aircraft machine-gun company and embarking on decorated military and civilian careers.<sup>42</sup> Although it was certainly no guarantee, knowledge of Russian assisted Central Asian soldiers to rapid promotions in the Red Army, knowledge often due more to chance than schooling.

However, not all the Russian speakers had special stories. Some had excelled in school and taken responsible positions in their kolkhoz in the spirited early days of mobilization when the older men were drafted. Patkhudin Mukhitdinov (b. 1926) from Tashkent oblast had eight years of school and excelled in Russian by the time he was called up in 1944. He had worked for the *sel'sovet* and became a signaler and decoder (*shifroval'shchik*) in the army.<sup>43</sup> Madamin Khasanov (b. 1924) of Andijan oblast, who eventually became the Uzbek minister of trade, recalled the excitement of volunteering with fellow Komsomoltsy in summer 1942 upon learning of the exploits of the first Uzbek Hero of the Soviet Union, Kuchkar Turdiev. Khasanov recalls being a star student, reading books in Russian, and being appointed assistant to the kolkhoz accountant. He acknowledged that the initial service in the forests near Moscow was difficult especially for his countrymen who did not speak Russian, but that his own mastery of the language accounted for his quick appointment as assistant to the commander and then as deputy

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<sup>38</sup> Interview with Sabirov, May 18, 2013.

<sup>39</sup> Narkhodzhaev, *50 let na boevom postu (stranitsy iz zhizni)*, 86.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Khalid Alimdzhanov, June 26, 2013.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Gulom Makkamov, June 26, 2013.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Akhmed Dzhabbarov, June 26, 2013. Natal'ia Spridonova. "Voennye epizody professor Djabbarova." *Norma.uz*. May 9, No. 18, 2014.

[http://egazeta.norma.uz/publish/doc/text104639\\_voennye\\_epizody\\_professora\\_djabbarova](http://egazeta.norma.uz/publish/doc/text104639_voennye_epizody_professora_djabbarova) (accessed June 5, 2014).

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Patkhudin Mukhitdinov, June 26, 2013.

political officer.<sup>44</sup> Hero of the Soviet Union Aleksandr Vasilievich Sidorov, who grew up outside of Tashkent and commanded an artillery regiment that formed in the city in December 1941, recalled that the “absolute majority” of soldiers did not speak Russian. In a 1944 interview, he recalled that his regiment was primarily Russian, Kazakh, and Tatar, with 20 nationalities in total. During their initial training the regiment experienced significant difficulty because the non-Russians “would often complain to the political officers and commanders that they “*bel’me*”, i.e. didn’t understand.”<sup>45</sup>

Regardless of how they attained it, Russian language offered Central Asian recruits the ticket to advancement, and the responsibility of training their less-educated countrymen.

The first steps of military training also provided the first chances for rural recruits to overcome their provinciality and become Soviet soldiers. For most, the travel to basic training took them outside their native districts for the first time, either to another part of their republic or to a different one entirely. Many were transported immediately to the European theater for basic training. For the Panfilovtsy who pulled from southern Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, training was in the Tian’-Shan foothills near Almaty. A veteran from Fergana oblast in Uzbekistan had two-month stints near Samarkand and in Turkmenistan before arriving in Smolensk to fight in August 1942.<sup>46</sup> A Tajik from Bukhara who became a Hero of the Soviet Union was sent to Fergana city before arriving on the Belorussian front.<sup>47</sup> The same migrations were echoed in the civilian sector by laborers moved around to labor sites in their home republics and elsewhere in the region. Movement afforded hitherto unfamiliar men with different dialects to cement a sense of common Uzbekness, Tajikness, etc. A second, regional level of identity began to form as they crossed republican boundaries and eventually arrived at the front, where they became, “*natsmen*,” Central Asians, “*aziaty*,” men of “the East,” or simply “non-Russians.”

Perhaps the most immediate transformation came on the level of the body, with the adoption of a new uniform and with it, a new way of life. We do not have a Central Asian memoir source describing this process from World War II, but the 1980 memoir of Faizulla Narkhodzhaev, the orphan-turned-general-lieutenant from near Chust, Namangan oblast who spent fifty years in the Red Army, is especially instructive. For the author, clothes marked the major changes in his life, starting in 1925 when he took up the invitation of Red Army captains at his orphanage to enroll in a military academy in Bukhara based entirely on their handsome, black overcoats. In 1927 as a fourteen-year-old cadet, he returned to his home to search for relatives and was tickled to be addressed with the formal “*vy*” on the train based on his black overcoat with red buttonholes. As he waited at his village bazar he was sure that all the villagers were envious of his uniform. When an older brother was brought before him, he could not recognize his kin behind the military colors, and when they arrived at home the eldest brother demanded of the first, “who is this Russian kid? Why did you bring him? What will he do in a *kishlak*?” After the tearful unveiling, Faizulla was given a *chalpan* and *tiubeteika* for a few days so he could transform back into a village Uzbek. Back at the academy, when he graduated to cadet-artillerist his joy found expression via the new uniform, which included French boots, shoulder and waist belts, and prompted him to stare into the mirror unable to recognize himself.

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<sup>44</sup> Interview with Khasanov.

<sup>45</sup> IRI RAN f. 2, r. 4, d. 2307, l. 6.

<sup>46</sup> AN UzSSR f. 54, op. 1, d. 18.

<sup>47</sup> IRI RAN f. 2, r. 4, d. 1202, l. 1.



In 1930 he took a final excursion back into Uzbek rural life when he and other cadets were employed against a Basmachi band by changing into *khalaty* and mingling with the local population to ascertain their enemies' movements.<sup>48</sup>

At each of these moments, Faizulla's uniform is not only signal of his transformation, but its activator. His uniform seems to wear him rather than the reverse. It creates situations for people he encounters, like the train passengers or his eldest brother, and he responds accordingly, allowing him to adapt to his new station at each step. Importantly, ten years after the revolution, a cadet's uniform in rural Uzbekistan was a personalization of the distant state, which was a rarity in this impoverished area. In his brother's eyes, the uniform – and the state associated with it – had unmistakable ethnic overtones. And Faizulla had – proudly – been able to trade in his ethnic identity while he wore it, though it could be slipped off and replaced with his Uzbek one with the right clothing. The author's fixation with uniforms dominates his text and reminds us of the mutability of identity and the importance of clothing. He moves freely from “Uzbek” to “Russian” and back again by changing clothes. Yet this ethnic movement was not open to his brothers in the *kishlak*, only to Faizulla via his rearing in the Soviet state.<sup>49</sup> The binary of Uzbek-villager vs. Russian-soldier was clear in 1927, but the question of this chapter is how much it had frayed by 1941, and again by 1945. Given the universal draft did not begin until 1939 for most Uzbeks and other Central Asians, this binary lived on through the outbreak of World War II. In this sense, the chapter traces the embrace by Central Asians of the Soviet uniform as their own.

Of course, military call-up and uniforms alone did not guarantee fitness or steadfastness. The Soviet army experienced real problems with morale and discipline in the first year of war as the German line crept closer and closer to Moscow. Stalin's famous Order #270 from November 1941 equated surrender with treason – punishable by execution – and was a firm warning to all soldiers. However, reports indicated that non-Russian soldiers, particularly from the Caucasus and Central Asia, were not getting this message, and were mutilating themselves or deserting their posts in disproportionate numbers. A report from the southwestern front from June 1942 showed that self-mutilation in the hopes of evacuation was a problem especially among new call-ups and those who did not speak Russian. In four artillery divisions, 110 of the 150 men found guilty (or 73 percent) were non-Russians, especially Kazakhs, Azeris, and Georgians. In another guards' artillery division 34 men injured themselves, 29 of whom were non-Russian, and 13 of whom were from Uzbekistan. In a different artillery division of 22 guilty, 17 were Kazakhs. Many of the guilty did not speak Russian and were unaware of the harsh punishment for desertion and self-mutilation.<sup>50</sup> Army veteran Erik Naidich, who was hospitalized on the northwestern front near Leningrad in August 1942, claims to have seen “a whole platoon of Uzbeks” in his ward with tell-tale bullet wounds in their hands and feet. An NKVD officer walked among them, shouting that if they shot themselves in the leg (pointing), they'd be shot in the head (pointing). He then approached one of the Uzbeks and shot him point blank in the head,

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<sup>48</sup> Faizulla Narkhodzhaev, *50 let na boevom postu (stranitsy iz zhizni)* (Tashkent: “Uzbekistan,” 1980), 18-20, 22, 27.

<sup>49</sup> This section of his text is full of valorizations of his Russian teachers. His favorite, Burgov, could speak Uzbek and Tajik, and was able to bring order and make a *kollektiv* out of a rowdy classroom of warring ethnicities who otherwise had “soaked up centuries of dislike for one another”. Narkhodzhaev, *50 let na boevom postu*, 25.

<sup>50</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 125, d. 85, l. 66-67.

and inflicting shock on the rest.<sup>51</sup> The callous nature of this execution may have been out of the ordinary, but the result was not.

Central Asians' and other non-Russians' reputation for cowardice and unfitness for service developed within the army, poisoning their relations with fellow soldiers. Recruits from these regions were referred to derisively as "Iuldash," "Iusup," "national," and "natsmen."<sup>52</sup> According to veteran Efim Gol'braikh, all Central Asians were lumped into the category of "Uzbek." He recalls a disproportionate number of them in military hospitals with identical bullet wounds in their left hands; those who had unwittingly "voted" to be sent with the so-called "penalty companies" (*shtrafnye roty*) to the most dangerous positions on the front as punishment.<sup>53</sup> Gol'braikh's division arrived at the front near Stalingrad in summer 1942 and sustained heavy losses until October. Most of the reinforcements came from Central Asia and spoke little Russian. He recalled the popular phrase of a company commander at the time: "I'll exchange ten Uzbeks for one Russian soldier."<sup>54</sup> Likewise on the Caucasian front general Tolbukhin requested that all of the Caucasian nationalities be replaced with Russians.<sup>55</sup> A report from May 1942 observed that among the 23 nationalities in a battalion on the southern front there was a "noticeable alienation" between Russian and non-Russian soldiers. Kabardinians and Uzbeks gathered in groups and shared tobacco with one another but if a Russian came and asked for some they refused him. The report noted that the political officers had not organized any conversations on Stalinist national politics or Friendship of the Peoples.<sup>56</sup>

Fighters from the southern republics were also thought to be inferior in winter warfare, suggesting that perhaps by nature they were unsuited to be soldiers. Gol'braikh recounted a gruesome episode in which "Uzbeks," unaccustomed to the effect of frozen metal, en masse left bits of their frozen fingertips behind on a fence they were moving.<sup>57</sup> According to artilleryman Ivan Lizhin, arriving at Stalingrad in winter 1942 was especially difficult on the Central Asian soldiers who spoke no Russian and were poorly trained and had to be pushed forward due to the cold, resulting in several cases of self-injury.<sup>58</sup>

However, it was primarily linguistic and political factors that combined to prevent non-Russian nationalities – especially those from Central Asia and the Caucasus – from receiving military instructions, from socializing with Russian soldiers, and from seeing the war as their own. Linguistic struggles were often at the root, though questions of political loyalty were

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<sup>51</sup> "Vospominaniia uchastnika 2-oi mirovoi voiny Erika Naidicha. (Otryvok iz knigi P. Platonova 'S Veroi v Boga i nadezhdoi v serdtse.')" *Rossia v Kraskakh* (Vesna 2005), No. 2.

<http://ricolor.org/journal/s2005/10/>. Last accessed July 17, 2014. For other executions of Uzbeks, see <http://www.white-guard.ru/wfor/viewtopic.php?t=206> "Vospominaniia ob uchastii v Kurskoi bitve monakha Samuila, nasei'nika Savvino-Storozhevskogo monastyria." Last accessed July 17, 2014.

<sup>52</sup> Schechter, "The People's Instructions," 113.

<sup>53</sup> Gol'braikh, *Byloi voiny*, 118-119. The "penalty companies" were created upon Stalin's Order No. 227 from July 28, 1942.

<sup>54</sup> <http://iremember.ru/pekhotintsi/golbraykh-efim-abelevich/stranitsa-3.html> - last accessed August 20, 2014.

<sup>55</sup> Podpriatov, 34.

<sup>56</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 125, d. 85, l. 60.

<sup>57</sup> Gol'braikh, *Byloi voiny*, 78.

<sup>58</sup> <http://iremember.ru/artilleristi/lizhin-ivan-timofeevich.html> - last accessed August 20, 2014.

inexorably combined. This mix could boil into frustration from commanding officers. A Kazakh guard's major in the Panfilov division, which had soldiers from all over Central Asia, recalled that non-Russian soldiers would often take offense if they did not understand something in Russian, and that Russian officers in turn would get frustrated at their inability to communicate orders.<sup>59</sup> A political officer in the 101<sup>st</sup> infantry regiment was found to have pistol-whipped a certain Dzhafarov for being the last to leave a warm dug-out during a battle in February 1942. In another episode, fresh reinforcements from "the East" were instructed by a political officer to raise their hands if they wanted to be sent to the rear. When they all did so they were berated for lacking patriotism.<sup>60</sup> A Kazakh agitator assessing political work in the first years of war held that a lack of common language led to one of two extremes: either crude yelling and scornful relations, or excessively soft treatment and lessened military expectations.<sup>61</sup>

And under the stress of a military retreat, this frustration could even lead to criminal behavior. On the southern front in May 1942 several commanders and political workers were reported to treat Georgians, Azeris, Dagestanis, and Uzbeks with "disdain." In one cavalry regiment 300 reinforcements arrived from the "eastern republics" with no prior training but were sent immediately into battle, incurring "big losses." Regimental commander Olshansky ordered a mine-laying detachment of Cossacks to guard the back of the line and shoot any who panicked and said, "Let the tanks crush them and the enemy shoot them, the sooner we'll go back to the rear for reinforcements. We need to save Cossacks and Russians, they come in handy." He was arrested.<sup>62</sup>

By summer 1942 the Red Army faced grave challenges to increase Central Asian and other non-Russians' military performance and to promote more amicable relations among nationalities. This need was compounded because a year after the initial call-up, the largely Slavic Red Army was being reinforced with troops from all over the Soviet Union as it retreated further eastward, eventually becoming bogged down at Stalingrad in August. In response the army sought to root the war among non-Russians both linguistically and culturally, relying on a legacy of political and cultural persuasion that included Nikolai Ivanovich Il'minskii's (1822-1910) native-language steppe missionaries and the Bolsheviks' *korenizatsiia* campaigns from the 1920s, and unleashing some familiar questions about the relationship between language and identity.<sup>63</sup> The idea of Friendship of the Peoples, which had circulated since the revolution and

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<sup>59</sup> IRI RAN f. 2, r. 1, op. 28, d. 33, l. 5.

<sup>60</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 125, d. 85, l. 64, 65.

<sup>61</sup> S.A. Amanzholov, *Opyt politiko-vospitatel'noi raboty v deistvuiushchei armii* (Ust-Kamenogorsk: "Reklamnyi Daidzhest," 2010), 12.

<sup>62</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 125, d. 85, l. 64. Note that commander Olshansky's orders confirm the fears voiced in Andijan oblast from July 21, 1942 that Uzbeks were being used sacrificially before other soldiers (RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 95, l. 170).

<sup>63</sup> N. I. Il'minskii developed a network of missionary schools in order to turn the *inorodtsy* of the steppe into Orthodox and loyal subjects of the tsar. His decisive contribution to missionary technology was to insist that education be in local languages rather than Russian, and thus to root belief in local language. *Korenizatsiia* refers to the broad Bolshevik efforts to promote ethnic nationals from the Union republics into positions of authority in the Party and state, upon a base of publishing and schooling in local languages. *Korenizatsiia* hiring preferences did not

re-emerged in the mid-1930s became a pillar of Central Asian soldiers' political education, and a vital part of the Red Army's as a whole.

Until summer 1942, Friendship of the Peoples played second fiddle to themes like the Great Russian people and German barbarism in military propaganda and press. The contributions of Central Asian soldiers were of peripheral concern in *Krasnaia Zvezda*. A rare early example of a non-Russian soldier lacked any specificity. In September 1941 *Krasnoarmeets*, the Red Army's literary and cultural magazine, featured a story called "Mortar man Akhmedov," written by his political officer G. Lerner. Akhmedov is "wide-shouldered, taller than average, and almost completely black from the sun. His eyes look mischievously (*lukavo*), at times mockingly (*nasmeshlivo*). He speaks Russian quickly and with a strong Eastern accent." Akhmedov was a generic Easterner without nationality and his skin color, accent, and eyes typified an emergent caricature of Caucasians and Central Asians. The article celebrated his military accomplishment and his symbolic acceptance into the ranks by his humor after shooting down German planes into wheat fields ("They wanted Ukrainian bread, let them eat it").<sup>64</sup> In the war's earliest days, dogged by poor reputations and alienation from the collective, it was incumbent to show that "Easterners" could thrive. Yet Akhmedov remained separate, marked by his skin and accent. .

Tashkent's Party organ, *Pravda Vostoka*, did not profile an Uzbek soldier until Kuchkar Turdiev, from Andijan oblast, became the republic's first Hero of the Soviet Union on March 27, 1942. Its first front-page celebration of Friendship of the Peoples in the Red Army came in an editorial on June 10 that had appeared in *Pravda* three days earlier. Till then the theme of international friendship had more often been deployed in Tashkent to describe the adoptions of children evacuated from Leningrad. Throughout the summer of 1942 there were a handful of articles profiling native sons in the army or celebrating noteworthy achievements, such as Hamid Alimdzhan's poem, *Dzhigit*, in honor of Turdiev.<sup>65</sup>

Only on September 17, 1942 did the Red Army's Main Political Administration (GlavPURKKA) first address the problem of indigenizing the war effort among Caucasian and Central Asian soldiers. In Directive #12 its head, Alexander Shcherbakov, laid the blame for their self-mutilation, desertion, treason, and unfulfilled orders on the negligence of the Army's political staff, especially the disregard for cultural distinctiveness and native language: "Commissars and political organs have not appreciated the importance of political education for soldiers of non-Russian nationality and have forgotten that each one has his own native language, his customs, and well-established national way of life. They have treated them one size fits all, not considering their national peculiarities. Moreover, many political workers have not organized explanatory work on the question of Friendship of Peoples of the USSR and the role of the great Russian people as elder brother to the other peoples of the Soviet Union." Fundamental to the problem was lack of attention to the soldiers' feelings and moods: "Soldiers of non-Russian nationalities do not feel the necessary attention and care for them from leadership. Some

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disappear but cooled considerably in the 1930s. For a discussion on the evolution of *korenizatsiia*, see Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 392-93.

<sup>64</sup> G. Lerner, "Minometchik Akhmedov," *Krasnoarmeets*, #4, 1941, 6.

<sup>65</sup> Alimdzhan's poem appeared in Russian translation on June 21. Profiles or greetings from Uzbek soldiers appeared also in the June 21, August 5, and August 9 issues of *Pravda Vostoka*. Kuchkar Turdiev's return on leave to his native kolkhoz was covered on August 23.

commanders and political workers have treated them inconsiderably and at times callously, and have ignored their needs, questions, and mood.”<sup>66</sup>

The directive created new opportunities for qualified Central Asian soldiers to join the Army and Party leadership. An entirely new type of Red Army agitator was created to work among soldiers of non-Russian nationalities, especially from the Caucasus and Central Asia. These men were to be drawn from proven Komsomol or Communist cadres and had to be fluent in Russian along with their native language. In addition, non-Russian soldiers who had distinguished themselves in battle were to be appointed into the Party more readily. Political officers were to select deputies among non-Russians who could help conduct daily conversations with their countrymen. Political officers and commissars were instructed to treat the education of non-Russians with “the utmost importance,” and instructed to display “sensitivity and care,” and not allow any “wounding of national feelings nor the slightest injustice to them.”

Though Russian remained the language of command, Directive #12 set a precedent that all political and educational work could be conducted in a soldier’s native tongue. Non-Russian agitators were to speak in their native languages at all meetings and gatherings, ensuring their message reached every soldier of a given unit. Most importantly, they were to lead the political discussions on key themes that triggered the Army’s sacred trinity of emotions: fear, love, and hate. These topics included: Stalin’s Order #270 (which considered Soviet POWs to be traitors) and 227 (“not a step back!”), and “iron discipline” (fear); brotherhood in the Red Army, what Soviet power gave the peoples of the USSR, the war as the fight for independence of all republics, non-Russian heroes like Mil’dzikhov and Kurban-Durdy, the role of the Great Russian people in the Great Patriotic War and in the independence movements of the peoples of the USSR (love); and what Hitler will mean for all the peoples of the Soviet Union (hate).

Finally, Directive #12 set high goals for non-Russian publishing. The political administration at the front and okrug level were to publish leaflets, “battle pages,” brochures, and newspapers, drawing widely from local examples of heroism. As such they had to find writers, translators, and initiate readings aloud of political and artistic literature. Shcherbakov also proposed the organization of letter exchanges between non-Russian soldiers and their native republics.

In summary, Shcherbakov wholly reorganized the political and educational training of non-Russian soldiers and honed a more specific propaganda message. If the diagnosis was a crisis of inspiration caused by linguistic confusion and the leadership’s indifference, the cure was a surge of emotions – namely love, hate, and fear – that would be intelligible to all soldiers of all republics. At one stroke, Russian was joined by at least thirty new languages as having official currency on the front – though not as languages of command.

Ironically, GlavPURKKA’s native-language publishing drive actually came after the Germans had beaten them to it. An assessment from April 1942 found that soldiers of “eastern nationalities” were not at all supported by literature or newspapers in their own language but

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<sup>66</sup> Directive 12 can be found in several places: “Russkii Arkhiv: Velikaia Otechestvennaia,” 17-6 (1-2). Moskva: Terra, 1996. Pp. 173-174. Original at: TsAMO f. 32, op. 795436, d. 6, l. 129-130. See also: [http://military-kz.ucoz.org/publ/sovetskij\\_kazakhstan/ww2/o\\_politicheskoi\\_rabote\\_sredi\\_voennosluzhashchikh\\_nerusskoi\\_nacionalnosti/6-1-0-12](http://military-kz.ucoz.org/publ/sovetskij_kazakhstan/ww2/o_politicheskoi_rabote_sredi_voennosluzhashchikh_nerusskoi_nacionalnosti/6-1-0-12) - last accessed August 4, 2014.

were being bombarded with Nazi leaflets written in their native languages, urging them to join the Germans.<sup>67</sup>

By the end of September the central committees of Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Tatar SSR were ordered to send 10 percent of all native-language artistic literature and newspapers to the frontlines. The order also mandated the translation into non-Russian languages the key agitational pamphlets, such as the “military oath,” “law on punishment for treason,” “destroy panickers and cowards on the spot,” and some vocational basics like maintaining a rifle, anti-tank defense, shooting and hand-grenades, “trophy” guns, shovels, and “how to take care of your weapon like the apple of your eye.” Additionally propaganda tracts by Russian authors like Aleksei Tolstoy, Sholokhov, Ehrenburg, and Tikhonov were to be translated.<sup>68</sup>

Autumn 1942 marked a turning point for Red Army propaganda as well. The new line to support Caucasian and Central Asian soldiers sent military correspondents and political officers rushing for episodes that would paint the Friendship of Peoples in bright colors and celebrate brown-skinned heroes. An article in *Krasnoarmeets*, “My *zemliak* Yusupov,” by Petr Pavlenko embodied the new line. The author – a Soviet writer who had taken part in the 1930 literary “shock brigade” to Turkmenistan – essentially wrote an introduction to Uzbekistan for the common soldier. Turgunbai Yusupov is the only Uzbek in a battalion that lacks even one fighter “who speaks his native language, no Azeris, Tatars, nor Kazakhs.” Because he speaks Russian poorly, he is left out of the communal life of battalion and the discussions of families and letters from home. But the author makes the first gesture: “Turgunbai-aka! It sure is nice in Fergana now. Gardens, peaches. Water singing in the *aryks*. Pile some bricks into the *aryk* and it will make a waterfall. At night put your *topchan* above the *aryk*, lie there while the water sings softly. It’s like your mother lulling you to sleep.” Yusupov is instantly heartened by Pavlenko’s knowledge of Fergana – a land of canals, peaceful sleep, and Edenic gardens. To the Uzbek’s disbelief, other soldiers have heard of Uzbek grapes and the “Fergana method,” a nickname for the mass volunteer labor used to build the Great Fergana canal, powered by spades, ingenuity, and enthusiasm. Pavlenko recalls how Khalima Nasyrova sang at the canal and Turgunbai responds by singing one of her songs. It turns out several of the soldiers have heard her on the radio, and one has seen her portrait at VDNKh, and “[they] all started to feel twice as close as [they] did before.” Pavlenko watches as his *zemliak* sleeps and thinks of Uzbekistan: “we have both seen the shady Fergana gardens and rice fields which look like pieces of heaven scattered upon the earth. We’ve seen the pomegranate trees whose fruits hang down like red lanterns. We’ve heard the soft flapping wings of the long-legged storks flying to their nests. The dry dust – light as smoke – of Fergana roads flashed before our eyes.” Pavlenko not only fills in the details of the Uzbek rural idyll but models the inclusive behavior for other Slavic soldiers. Uzbekistan emerges from the vague outlines of “Eastern” darkness to take on a distinctive form. Pavlenko is guide for this introduction and by using “*zemliak*” – countryman – he gestures at the idea that all nationalities should view this distant and bountiful land as their own.<sup>69</sup>

But Yusupov is not simply worthy of pity. The sketch ends with him showing the men how to make homemade explosives using bottles rather than wasting their mines in the soft earth. “I’m a digger (*ketmenschchik*),” he explains. “I know dirt.” And he nicknames his device the

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<sup>67</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 125, d. 85, l. 65.

<sup>68</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 125, d. 85, l. 69-77, 77ob.

<sup>69</sup> P. Pavlenko, “Moi zemlyak Yusupov,” *Krasnoarmeets*, #17, 1942.

“Fergana method.” When the bottle-bombs work to great effect, the major pays the ultimate compliment: “Well done!(*lovko*)...Cultured...I love a good trick. Really cultured!... A talented (*tolkovyi*) people.”<sup>70</sup> Yusupov’s ingenuity is unlocked by Pavlenko’s kindness. Once the commonalities are discovered, the Uzbek becomes a natural soldier, with skills honed on a Soviet construction project. Russian officers learn that the raw Central Asian recruits were “cultured” after all, a far cry from their reputations as cowards from an unknown East.

The campaign to assimilate Central Asians reached its pitch in the Peoples’ Orders – or *Nakazy Naroda* – a series of mass letters designed to put the rationale to fight in linguistically and culturally familiar terms for each national republic. The first such order – addressed to Uzbek soldiers and signed by over 2 million of their countrymen – appeared in *Pravda Vostoka* on October 22, 1942 (as well as Uzbek-language *Qizil O’zbekiston*, and in *Pravda* on October 31) before finding its equivalent in other republics in the subsequent months. The mass letters were distributed on the front for discussions led by political officers. Faizulla Narkhodzhaev recalled the letters’ great success. Soldiers passed copies from “from hand to hand,” vowing to honor their Motherland or die trying, and to uphold the tenets of Friendship of the Peoples, regardless of their nationality. The letter had so much “emotional power” that he kept the copy of *Pravda* with him the whole war to inspire soldiers when their spirits lagged.<sup>71</sup>

The letter urged Uzbek soldiers to fight heroically, warning that traitors and cowards would dishonor their families and be unwelcome at home. It reminded them of the threat Hitler posed to their republic and urged them to remember the brave examples of heroic forebears. The letter’s emotive power stemmed from two thematic strains.

First, it relied on family, especially the judgment of mothers, grandfathers, and older generations. Giving symbolic authorship to mothers and fathers allowed the letter to access wellsprings of shame and disappointment. The final lines left no doubt: “We curse cowards and deserters, for them there will be no room in our sunny Uzbekistan. The Motherland (*Rodina-mat*) will never forgive them. That type of unworthy son does not have the right to return and knock on the gates of his house...” The Central Asian reverence of the elderly was employed to remind soldiers of their ancestors: “Son of the Uzbek people! Your ancestors preferred to chew through the chains of slavery with their teeth than live in captivity.” And later, “Our grandfathers used to say, ‘If a *dzhigit* is a coward, he’s doomed to death.’”

If the Uzbek family was governed by harsh judgment, the enlarged family circle, which included Russians and other Slavs, was the province of harmony, friendship, and brotherhood. And when someone in this “friendly family” was in trouble, it was a responsibility of the heart, and the law, to take up arms: “the tears of widows in Crimea nag sharply at your heart.” With the useful dissonance between the two concepts – friendship being a relationship of choice, family one of obligation – Uzbeks were reminded of their obligations in both units. “If a bandit takes your brother’s home, return his home – this is your duty, Uzbek soldier!” There was no ambiguity about family rank. Russians were the “elder brothers” whose house was under siege,

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Narkhodzhaev, *50 let na boevom postu*, 92-93. Narkhodzhaev is unable to shed light on the letter’s authorship, but he recalls how his brigade’s head political officer, Abdulla Muratkhodzhaev, was escorted out of the warzone and to *Pravda*’s editorial offices in Moscow by the Uzbek SSR’s representative in the Council of Ministers, B. Adylov, to make “adjustments” to the text. He was apparently the only highly-placed Uzbek military leader who “knew literary Uzbek well,” and hinting at his social origins.

and this attack rewrote a new family geography. “The Soviet Union is a friendly family where each member lives in his own house, but where the courtyard and farm are common and indivisible.” Elsewhere the Soviet Union was “a fortress with one gate, in which the bandit has snuck through and is attempting to take your life.” Another image reminded soldiers that “your street starts in Belarus, and the home of a Ukrainian is in your *mahalla*.” The layers of metaphor were distinct but mutually reinforcing, the better to resonate in the heart and head of the Uzbek soldier.

The letter’s second strategy was to expound on the danger to Uzbekistan. Along with warnings of sexual violence and murder of family, Uzbek soldiers were warned that the enemy could “destroy canals, sweep flowering gardens, fields, vineyards from the face of the earth and turn Uzbekistan into scorched desert.” Even the Russian version of the letter was peppered with Uzbek terms – *dzhigit*, or warrior; *bakhshi*, or bard – to lend cultural authenticity. And it reinforced Soviet Marxist Uzbek history: “[the Germans] are trying to turn our Homeland into a slave market, to sell Uzbeks like animals. They are trying to restore power to the khans and emirs, and turn the canals we’ve built by hand from carrying water into carrying blood and the tears of innocent orphans.” It appealed to Uzbeks to protect their pre-Soviet cultural heritage: the Samarkand of Navoi and Ulug-bek, Fergana of Mukimi, and Bukhara, where Tarabi fought against the Mongol invaders. It even appealed to their regional identity, in the spirit of Central Asian heroes – such as Rustam (the tragic hero of Firdowsi’s Persian-language, *Shahnameh*), Raushanbek, Avaz-Khan (a hero of the Kerogli cycle), and Alpamysh (hero of the eponymous epic) – but excluding those who had fought against Russia, such as Tamerlane.<sup>72</sup> Most surprising, they were called upon as Muslims to aid their brothers under attack: “Hitler is the sworn enemy not only of Europeans, especially Slavic peoples, but all the peoples of the East. The tragic fate of the Muslim peoples of Crimea and the Northern Caucasus serves as a terrible warning; the Tatars, Adygeis, Karachaevtsy, Kabardino-Balkarians, and Chechens, whose peaceful villages have been sacked and burned by the Germans.” Ironically, many of these same groups would be deported to Uzbekistan and other parts of Central Asia in 1944 for their collaboration with the Nazis, and Central Asians would be called upon as Soviets – rather than as Muslims – to shun them. They were called to duty on each plane of identity – as sons, friends, Uzbeks, Central Asians, and Muslims.

At the same time Ilya Ehrenburg, correspondent for *Krasnaia Zvezda*, penned a series of character studies of various non-Russian nationalities. His popularity ensured that the sketches solidified emergent images into cultural trademarks. Although he used similar tropes about bravery, their beloveds at home, and the approval of bearded, Eastern elders, he nonetheless assigned different traits to each nationality. “Kazakhs,” the first in the series, began: “A Fritz told me: ‘there were terrifying soldiers fighting against us – they couldn’t be stopped by fire, they ran directly at us. Then they told me – these are the Kazakhs. Before I didn’t know that such a people exists....’ Many Fritzes didn’t know. They were told that Russia is a big country, but no one told them that in this big country live big people.” It continued: “On the steppes of the East, accustomed to unbearable heat and severe cold a brave people has lived since olden times,” and then drew links between folk hero Er-Targyn, Bolshevik ally Amangeldy, and a series of soldiers

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<sup>72</sup> On Friendship of the Peoples requiring the expulsion of conflict between Russia and formerly conquered peoples in official Soviet history, see David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931-1956* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), especially chapter seven.



from contemporary battles, including from the celebrated Panfilov regiment that defended Moscow.<sup>73</sup> If every nationality had to have its peculiarity, Kazakhs were fierce, preternatural fighters, mythic warriors in the present, and immune to human needs for comfort. Here Ehrenburg embraced the German trope of Russia's subhuman, Mongol, hordes, and put it on its head.

Two days later, Ehrenburg's "Uzbeks" were not self-evident fighters, and their military acumen needed more explicit enunciation. In this fable they played the role as Russians' opposite, symbolizing the Soviet Union's diversity and the veracity of its goals against Nazi racism. "It's strange to see these swarthy youths with faces burned by the Southern sun among the marshes and forests of our harsh North. But the Uzbeks tenderly (*laskovo*) say: 'our land' – as they fight for the ancient Russian city of Rzhev, and for them it's their native city." These lines removed alarm among Russians at the presence of the Southerners, and instructed Uzbeks to conceive of the new landscape as their own. Ehrenburg upholds the polarity of the groups – hot sunny South and severe boggy North – and acknowledges the unprecedented nature of this meeting – Uzbeks under arms on Russian soil, fighting a common enemy – yet he diffuses the tensions towards a unity of purpose. The last line asks what a Muscovite has learned about Uzbekistan. He answers: "that the heart of an Uzbek is the heart of a lion."<sup>74</sup> As we shall see, later depictions of Uzbeks in the Party press emphasized not their martial nature but their transformation from peaceful farmers to seasoned fighters.<sup>75</sup>

Ehrenburg's series continued with "Tatars" (October 27), "Jews" (November 1), "Kyrgyz" (November 3), and "Bashkirs" (November 20) before it ended for unclear reasons.

Meanwhile an article, "The Feat of 11 Sons of the East," from *Komsomolskaia Pravda*, appeared in *Pravda Vostoka* to fortify Uzbek soldiers' reputation. It recounted how junior lieutenant Mikhail Kabribov and nine Uzbeks, one Tatar, and one Kazakh defended a height near Stalingrad with only their bayonets, each killing up to 15 Germans. They became martyrs and the hill was renamed in their honor. The soldiers, whose names were listed at the end, were buried together with their heads pointing east, "towards the country of permanent sun" – either a symbolic gesture to the fallen heroes or a public acknowledgment that the Army was ready to bury its heroes according to Muslim rites.<sup>76</sup>

From autumn 1942 until the end of the war the twin narratives of international friendship and the achievements of native sons were mainstays in Party and military press in Central Asia. Profiles of model Uzbek soldiers were usually written by their Slavic political officers.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Ilya Ehrenburg, "Kazakhi," *Krasnaia Zvezda*, October 18, 1942.

<sup>74</sup> Ilya Ehrenburg, "Uzbeki," *Krasnaia Zvezda*, October 20, 1942. Reprinted in *Pravda Vostoka*, October 22, 1942.

<sup>75</sup> An editorial from November 29, 1942 in *Pravda Vostoka* stated "the war changes the Uzbek character" and cited a Russian commander's observation that formerly they were a people known primarily for their love of labor whereas now they showed no fear in battle. It is possible that the caricature of Uzbeks as peaceful, joyful canal-diggers was created in the 1930s precisely to offset a more threatening reputation as Basmachis. If this is so then the Party press was working to undercut a caricature of its own creation.

<sup>76</sup> A. Gutorovich, "Podvig 11 synov vostoka," *Pravda Vostoka*, October 22, 1942.

<sup>77</sup> Examples include "Syny Uzbekistana v boiakh za sovetskuiu rodinu!" *Pravda Vostoka*, October 11, 1942; "Syny Uzbekistana v boiakh za Stalingrad," Nik. Manuilovich; "Druz'ia," Andrei Tripol'skii, *Pravda Vostoka*, October 18, 1942; "Otvazhnye minometchiki," M.

Meanwhile the army increased its Central Asian-language publishing, such as *Qizil Armiia Agitatorning Bloknoti* (the Uzbek-language Red Army Agitator's Notebook), and translated the newspaper *Krasnaia Armiia* into Uzbek on the Stalingrad front.<sup>78</sup>

Winter 1943 offered the first sustained test of agitation work since Directive #12 and the renewed appearance of Central Asians in military propaganda. Kazakh linguist and Turkologist Sarsen Amanzholovich Amanzholov (1903-1956) served as lector in an army political department from 1942-1943 and spent the next two years as lector for the Political Administration of the Belarusian front and editor of the Kazakh-language *Agitator's Notebook*. His 1945 report assessing the Red Army's educational campaigns among non-Russian soldiers offered vital first-hand observations from throughout the war and suggestions for the future.<sup>79</sup>

According to Amanzholov, by the winter of 1943 GlavPURKKA created a special department to oversee its large non-Russian publishing operations of front newspapers and the *Agitator's Notebook*. This staff, composed of well-educated, politically-loyal non-Russians became a resource for agitators and common soldiers who wrote in with political questions. However, the appointment and training of new staff agitators had mixed results, often hampered by their commanders' indifference to the linguistic and ethnic composition of their units, or due to competing battlefield priorities. Agitators were supposed to be educated, charismatic "organizers," and function like the "right hand" of their commanders, but with no guidance, quality suffered and many novices were content to simply read newspapers aloud. On some fronts and in some armies, no new agitators were appointed at all, and agitation work was conducted by lecturers at the House of the Red Army who did not have time to devote to a new audience. Once in a while a commander did not know which languages were mutually intelligible, thus depriving some of his soldiers an agitator if he did not know, for instance, that Tajik was not a Turkic language, or that all Turkic peoples did not understand Tatar, Kazakh, or Uzbek. Other times commanders did not appoint appropriately educated men, sending illiterate, "incompetent, inexperienced people" who lacked any interest in agitation seminars. Others did not even understand why they were sent. For some commanders, all that mattered was that a soldier was not ethnically Russian.<sup>80</sup>

An officers' agitation manual from the Caucasus front offered countless examples of just how poisoned the relations between non-Russians and their superiors had grown before the appointment of the new agitators. Indeed, some commanders considered the arrival of Central Asian reinforcements – often simply labeled "Uzbek" or "Asian" – to be a "blow for their

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Znachkov; "Boets Sadykov," N. Palii, *Pravda Vostoka* October 25, 1942; "Sila velikoi druzhby," S. Poles'iev, *Pravda Vostoka*, October 28, 1942.

<sup>78</sup> *Pravda Vostoka*, October 24, 1942.

<sup>79</sup> Sarsen Amanzholovich Amanzholov, "Iz opyta politiko-vospitatel'noi raboty sredi boitsov nerusskoi natsional'nosti v dni velikoi otechestvennoi voiny" (Moskva: Voenizdat, 1945). A collection of Amanzholov's wartime writings, notes, and reports on agitation work, including the above booklet, can be found in S. Amanzholov, *Opyt politiko-vospitatel'noi raboty v deistvuiushchei armii* (Ust-Kamenogorsk: "Reklamnyi Daidzhest," 2010). The introduction and second chapter of the 1945 booklet are published online at

<http://orkeniet.vkgu.kz/rus/elib001.shtm>.

<sup>80</sup> <http://orkeniet.vkgu.kz/rus/elib001.shtm> - last accessed August 5, 2014.

fighting ability and torment for the officers.”<sup>81</sup> One commander was cited for allowing “scornful” relations to arise. He was indifferent to their number and their actual nationalities (it turned out there were 12 Kazakhs, 4 Uzbeks, 3 Turkmen, 2 Kyrgyz, and 1 Azeri). However, the new agitator, Buianov, made breakthroughs. He found a Kazakh soldier, Bisimbaev, sitting alone guarding a minefield. No one knew he was a famous shepherd in his republic. When asked why he did not greet his commander, he replied that no one had ever instructed him to. This was the first time in six months he’d spoken with a ranked person in his native language, and the first time anyone had asked about his personal needs. He was troubled that he could not write letters home and no one had helped him to write addresses in Russian. A month later he got his first letter from home, which “buoyed him with new strength. He transformed, became happier, more disciplined.” Elsewhere, agitator Nazarov found six men that had been on the front lines for months without killing a single German. After his conversation with them, each “opened his account” within the next two days.<sup>82</sup> While these episodes were idealized, they underscored the immediate impact of an agitator who could mediate between commander and common soldier in their native languages.

Amanzholov confirmed that Caucasian and Central Asian soldiers often resented their Russian superiors. He recounted several episodes from this transition period that suggested both the fundamental changes that non-Russian agitators made in Central Asians’ fighting spirit, and also the gravity of affairs before their appointment. In 1943 a Kyrgyz soldier approached him with the look of someone “terribly hurt.” He had served since the start of war, had no demerits, had been in many battles, and was injured five times yet he had received no encouragement, nor promotion. Amanzholov’s investigation revealed that he was owed medals for service and his record was corrected.<sup>83</sup> Assuming that this was not exceptional, it is likely that other non-Russian soldiers were discriminated against for promotion as well.

Despite its uneven execution, Shcherbakov’s directive was a pathbreaking intervention in the Army’s relations with its Caucasian and Central Asian soldiers. In creating a layer of ambitious native-language agitators, it changed the face of command, reprimand, and encouragement from a Slav (and almost as often a Jew) to, ideally, a countryman. This was a monumental task, as Amanzholov wrote with surprising candor, because even in 1945 “we still encounter people who have not overcome their old impressions of Russians.” Their “sensitivity and touchiness reaches the point of absurdity.” They see “chauvinism and injustice” behind their selection for work they find degrading, or missions they find dangerous, even if all in their unit are selected as well. He believed that only proper agitation work and the nurturing of love for one’s superior could overcome such incorrect impressions.<sup>84</sup>

In native-language agitators, Central Asian soldiers gained something like legal advocates. Amanzholov found that political crimes on the front – those which exacerbated distrust and poor reputations – were often based in linguistic misunderstanding. At the start of war a Russian lieutenant sent three non-Russian soldiers to military tribunal for allegedly deserting their posts at night and returning to their subunits. It turned out the men had been

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<sup>81</sup> <http://iremember.ru/pulemetchiki/muler-movsha-mikhail-samuilovich/stranitsa-6.html> - last accessed August 20, 2014.

<sup>82</sup> Politicheskoe Upravlenie Zakavkazskogo Fronta, *Vospitanie boitsov nerusskoi natsional'nosti* (NKO: Voenizdat pri Zakavzakom fronte, 1943), 15-18.

<sup>83</sup> Amanzholov, *Opyt politiko-vospitatel'noi raboty v deistvuiushchei armii*, 15.

<sup>84</sup> Amanzholov, *Opyt politiko-vospitatel'noi raboty v deistvuiushchei armii*, 16.

recently rushed to the front and no one had explained to them what battlefield security, sentry outposts, or secret outposts were, nor what these jobs entailed. They fled at the first sounds of mine explosions, believing themselves to be under bombardment. The tribunal found them not guilty. On another occasion a Kyrgyz and Kazakh recruit were seen to stand 10-20 meters behind their comrades at the front lines. Suspecting cowardice, their sergeant had the political officer observe them. Under investigation it was found that they had never been taught to fire a gun and were trying to learn from their comrades. The two later became excellent snipers. These episodes shed a completely different light on the origins of Central Asians' mediocre reputations and their frequent prohibition from certain jobs, such as guard duty and scouting, at the start of the war.<sup>85</sup> Amanzholov's cultural-linguistic explanation of much of Central Asians' aberrant behavior complicates the army data's simple labels of desertion, cowardice, and treason, even if it could not completely exonerate the men in the court of public opinion or battlefield remembrance.<sup>86</sup>

Native-language agitation also promised to improve safety and save the lives of Central Asian soldiers. Amanzholov offered a case in point: a communications cable and signaler were lost in battle, forcing an officer to appoint a Kyrgyz soldier to carry a message back to regiment command. Not understanding the directions, the soldier began a dangerous, 10km journey completely out of his way before being intercepted by the newly-arrived agitator, Muratbaev, who directed him quickly to base, thus saving time and likely the soldier's life.<sup>87</sup> For Amanzholov, part of the responsibility fell on the officer who had failed to take interest in the level of fluency of his soldiers.

Finally, Amanzholov believed that it was crucial for agitators to help remove the stigma of special exceptions or diminished expectations. He claimed that before the arrival of new agitators, officers relied on acts of unusual kindness to build trust which ultimately led to a culture of favors and rifts between the non-Russian soldiers and their Russian counterparts. For instance, the commander of a guards' artillery company would invite Central Asian soldiers to live with him one at a time in his dugout for five or six days. He would explain things slowly, from war goals to the operation of a rifle, and the soldier would study his comportment at close range. The officer shared his tobacco and rolling papers in order to cement the trust before inviting a new soldier.<sup>88</sup> For Amanzholov, these generous intentions were patronizing and violated regulations. Instead of being animals tamed by favors, he sought to ensure that Central Asian soldiers were subject to parallel expectations and parallel promotions of their Slavic counterparts.

By winter 1943 the Red Army had reorganized its agitation and propaganda campaigns in order to assimilate non-Russian soldiers, to naturalize the image of the Central Asian fighting man, and to remind Russians of their responsibility to preside over these changes. However, it took time for the ship to move along its new bearings.

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<sup>85</sup> Amanzholov, *Opyt politiko-vospitatel'noi raboty v deistvuiushchei armii*, 17-18.

<sup>86</sup> Although Central Asians did not have a monopoly on desertion, especially at the start of the war, they play an outsized role in the recollections of veterans. For example, see <http://iremember.ru/minometchiki/rvachev-vasiliy-mikhaylovich/stranitsa-4.html>, <http://iremember.ru/minometchiki/gorodinskiy-aron-semenovich/stranitsa-3.html> - last accessed August 20, 2014.

<sup>87</sup> Amanzholov, *Opyt politiko-vospitatel'noi raboty v deistvuiushchei armii*, 13.

<sup>88</sup> Amanzholov, *Opyt politiko-vospitatel'noi raboty v deistvuiushchei armii*, 13.

By March 1943 the Soviet army had seized momentum. It had retaken Kursk and forced the German surrender at Stalingrad, both with significant contributions made by reinforcements from the Caucasus and Central Asia. From this position of confidence, the propaganda “master plot” embraced a more dynamic message.<sup>89</sup> Instead of depicting Central Asian soldiers flatly but positively – as natural soldiers – the new message emphasized growth and change, coming to terms with the losses and tensions of the first years of war.

A signal story called “Three Meetings” appeared in *Pravda Vostoka* March 16 and traced an Uzbek soldier’s growth on the northwestern front. “In a forest glade at a shooting session a fighter with a long-tanned face of copper red was shooting a machine gun. From a distance of a hundred yard he shot three times and failed to hit the target. ‘How are you going to kill any Germans, Sattarov?’ his commander asked. A shadow of heavy meditation fell over the fighter’s dark face.” A month or so later the author returned with an Uzbek artists’ brigade and found the forest paths covered in thick snow. A sign on a tree read: “Kill Germans like Sattarov does!” They asked his lieutenant if it was the same Sattarov. Indeed, they had found a sniper’s talent in him, but more important was his persistence to improve, day and night. His rifle now shined like a mirror. Sattarov was a man transformed: “This was a completely different man than we saw in October. Sharp new lines had appeared in the folds of his dark, almost motionless face. Our arrival didn’t bother him at all. Not taking his eyes from the sight of his gun he told us” how over the last hour he had shot several Germans, while his colleague Iudin provided the spotting. When the Uzbek artists performed for the unit, Sattarov jumped up and shouted, unable to contain his joy. “We had never seen him like this before.” Sattarov explained that they sang Koferdi, which his wife used to sing. The next day he killed two Germans as thanks for the concert, and the poet Aibek immediately dedicated a tribute in verse: “And your bullet/ will never lose its way/ and the enemy/ will never escape you/ And the Uzbek people/ will salute you/ on the streets/ and squares.”<sup>90</sup>

In an official culture that celebrated transformation, Sattarov’s change from timid, quiet and inept shooter to firm, composed, and accomplished sniper was remarkable. Additionally, Sattarov thrived in the heart of a snowy winter, displaying a physiological comfort and overcoming the climactic barriers that seemed insurmountable at the start of the war. In so doing, he had mastered the Russian landscape (though no mention is made of his language skills) and eliminated the alienation so common at the beginning of the war. And whereas two years ago the unpreparedness of Uzbek soldiers was a taboo subject, the narrative now arched towards maturity. This was a hopeful message because though it took skill – as in the story of Yusupov from September 1942 – the primary element to ensure growth was persistence. The path to transformation was open to all.

Another story featured an episode of friendship in which a young novice Kyrgyz struggled with shooting until he was taught by an older Russian.<sup>91</sup> “Military friendship” illuminated the relations between the “most different nationalities” – the Russian-Uzbek binary. The older Ivan Bolotov noticed the young Sabir Saidov tiring on his first long march. He offered

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<sup>89</sup> Here I rely on Katerina Clark’s conception of the socialist-realist “master plot” as a way to understand the didactic intent of Soviet military press. See Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 5.

<sup>90</sup> M. Gol’dberg, “Tri vstrechi,” *Pravda Vostoka*, March 16, 1943.

<sup>91</sup> An. Troll’ and V. Popelov, “Boevye rezervy – frontu! Mastera svoego oruzhiia,” *Pravda Vostoka*, March 20, 1943.

to take the young man's bed roll and noticed he'd forgotten his canteen and food bag and offered to share his own provisions. When they returned, Saidov insisted on giving him his grandfather's carved knife (from Chust, by description). This sealed their close friendship which saw them both attend mortar classes and both receive corporals' stripes. Bolotov also taught his friend Russian.<sup>92</sup> Whether bad shots or weak and forgetful novices, friendship with a Russian resulted in the maturation of the greenest Central Asian recruits. The roles of the nationalities never changed but this more dynamic plot reflected success on the battlefield and the more assured integration of non-Russians into the Red Army.

Thus almost two years into the war the army settled on a formula for integrating its many nationalities. The reorganized agitation work and the coalescing body of best practices formed something of a Red Army science of agitation among non-Russians. Summer 1943 marked a high point, with several important publications and a conference in Moscow that revealed unprecedented theoretical attention of a warring state to manage diversity in its armed forces.

The primary concern of army agitation was the spirit of the soldier, his heart and soul, and a series of best practices emerged that demonstrated the Red Army's powers of persuasion were far more nuanced than GKO orders #220 and #270. On the Western Front the 49<sup>th</sup> army's political department published a sixty-page pamphlet entitled "Training Non-Russian Soldiers" (*Vospitanie boitsov nerusskoi natsional'nosti*) in which Central Asians were the overwhelming majority of examples, with Uzbeks the most cited nationality. The authors, major M. Mushkin and lieutenant-colonel A. Sopov, reminded agitators that "inculcating hatred for the enemy was and remains" their primary work. However, to achieve this aim they had to "work with the soul" and ensure that their conversations "reach the heart of [the] listener and get transformed into military feats."<sup>93</sup>

Letters became one of their primary tools because they formed the link between a soldier and his loved ones, and personalized the *Nakaz naroda*. A model Russian commander wrote a letter of praise to the mother of one of his Kazakh soldiers who had been promoted to sergeant. Although his mother may have been unable to read the Russian, the secondary audience were the men in the dug out whom he gathered to read it aloud. The brochure found that Central Asian men often lost touch with their families for periods of months. They could not always write the address of their homes in Russian nor their own addresses at the front. The authors celebrated an agitator who wrote the addresses for his men as well as enclosing pre-addressed return envelopes for their families.<sup>94</sup> A similar booklet from the Caucasian front recommended that letters from individual families could be used to inspire whole units, such as the one sent by a Kabardinian father urging his son to avenge the atrocities committed by Germans in his hometown. The manual called upon political officers to ensure that every soldier received mail and suggested that if they went without mail for an extended period, then it was the agitator's responsibility to get in touch with local Party organs for word on the family.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Kapitan V. Epifantsev, "Boievaia družba," *Pravda Vostoka*, October 20, 1943.

<sup>93</sup> *Vospitanie boitsov nerusskoi natsional'nosti* (Politotdel N-skoi armii, 1943), 19, 22. The brochure is housed at the Russian State Library or at IRI RAN f. 2, r. XIII, r. 3/7, op. 8, d. 4. The archival copy makes clear the authorship from the 49<sup>th</sup> army.

<sup>94</sup> *Vospitanie boitsov nerusskoi natsional'nosti*, 29-31.

<sup>95</sup> Politisheskoe upravlenie Zakavkazskogo Fronta, *Vospitanie boitsov nerusskoi natsional'nosti* (NKO: Voenizdat, 1943), 7-8. The booklet was edited by captain I.G. Gavrilin with co-authors

But there was no more direct path to the heart than native language. In addition to printed materials in over thirty languages there were dictionaries and phrasebooks for the major non-Russian languages.<sup>96</sup> However, the largely Slavic officer corps that had imbibed the Great Russian patriotism of the past decade had to be convinced that languages other than Russian had a place on the front. Amanzholov wrote that a year after Directive #12 the political administration ceased its vigilance in ensuring that printed matter got to its intended audience once the national make-ups of units changed. He reported seeing piles of unused Uzbek and Tatar newspapers in some places and deficits in others. He also observed a “serious problem” in the way political organs supported the non-staff agitators appointed by Directive #12. In the best cases, a political division head would equip each new agitator with a satchel and supply of notebooks, pencils, and native- and Russian-language materials and arrange monthly seminars on appropriate themes and practices. However, the agitators were still being left unsupported. In one case, staff agitator Stepanov brought a non-staff agitator Abdrakhmanov to seminars several times but used the latter as a chauffeur rather than allow him to participate.<sup>97</sup>

It helped that support for these efforts came from the highest ranks of the Party and Red Army. In July and August 1943 the army’s Main Political Administration (GlavPURKKA) called a seminar in Moscow for agitators of non-Russian soldiers. They heard from leading practitioners along with top brass Alexander Shcherbakov, Yemelian Yaroslavsky, and Mikhail Kalinin, the latter whose address, “Unified Fighting Family,” appeared in *Krasnaia Zvezda*. The speech announced that as part of the Soviet family, the war had placed the formerly backward nationalities on the verge of a new stage of history. He praised the unique abilities of non-Russian agitators as historical midwives, in a sense. They could do what Russian officers could not – inspire, prod, and challenge soldiers in their native tongue. Only a fellow countryman could harness the guilt and shame of the *Nakaz naroda* with a line such as “is it true you’d rather we not participate in the war when all the other nationalities are fighting like lions?”<sup>98</sup> However, he left no doubt about the linguistic hierarchy. Russian was of ultimate importance as language of command, military regulations, communication between the Soviet peoples, and the language of Lenin and Stalin. Without it a soldier could not get far. Still, he acknowledged the more immediate need for work in native languages, admitting that at first non-Russians had only limited comprehension and would continue to think in their native tongue. He reminded agitators that “the way to the heart of the soldiers, especially at first, is laid in his native language.”<sup>99</sup> To those assembled, Kalinin’s speech, in his typically “fatherly” manner, was a signal that Central Asians and other soldiers were ready to rise above their linguistic localism and redouble their efforts in teaching and learning Russian.<sup>100</sup> In a sense, this moment in 1943 was one of the major fulcrums of Soviet Central Asian history. However, it also left unanswered practical questions of how to balance national and all-Union, or Russian, culture.

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general-major M. Mironov and captain G. Gorov. A stamp on the cover suggests it was published June 12, 1943.

<sup>96</sup> *Vospitanie boitsov nerusskoi natsional’nosti* (Caucasus Front), 8.

<sup>97</sup> Amanzholov, 26, 28; *Vospitanie boitsov nerusskoi natsional’nosti* (Caucasus), 9.

<sup>98</sup> Mikhail Kalinin, “Edinaia boevaia sem’ia,” *Krasnaia Zvezda*, August 21, 1943.

<sup>99</sup> Mikhail Kalinin, “Edinaia boevaia sem’ia,” *Krasnaia Zvezda*, August 21, 1943.

<sup>100</sup> IRI RAN f. 2, r. 1, op. 28, d. 33, l. 3ob, 4, 4ob, 5. Interview with A. Nesupbekov, Alma-Ata, January 1947.

Kalinin's assent to native language led to his full endorsement of army practices to consider the "customs, morals, and way of life (*byt'*)" of each people. Each nationality had to be approached in its own way because each lived in different circumstances that had "left a mark on the people themselves." He recalled that the peoples of the Caucasus and North Caucasus respected their weapons and took pride in ceremonial conferment of arms, and that Uzbeks deeply respected their elders. Accordingly, respecting national traits and celebrating national heroes, epics, and literature actually cultivated both national pride and Soviet patriotism. In this way, Kalinin urged his listeners to remember the lessons of Soviet nationalities policy, that by letting nationalities flourish they simultaneously strengthened the Soviet collective.<sup>101</sup>

In a sense, Kalinin was vetting a form of ethnic profiling that was rooted both in ideology and performance. Catering to the nationalities' supposed uniqueness honored their traditions and theoretically made them more content at the front. Ensuring the correct nationality was paired with the correct job would improve military efficiency and thus reputation. Commanders were encouraged to play amateur ethnographer to ascertain the particular martial abilities of each national group because each evidently possessed one. As the Caucasian Front handbook wrote, "commanders and political officers must think about how best to use each soldier so that he gives towards victory the best attributes of the people where he was born and raised."<sup>102</sup> An informal science of national traits came into being, largely based on history, climate, environment, or apparently self-evident truths. For instance, "it is no accident that among the Army's best snipers are Yakuts, Buriats, Nanai, Tungus, and Kyrgyz...they bring to the line of fire the skills of taiga hunters, and steppe trackers, not knowing fatigue when they are in pursuit of game, firing without missing, right at the target." It also found that many Kalmyks and Kyrgyz were excellent horsemen who "know and love horses from a childhood on the saddle." In the Caucasus, "Red Army-Mountaineers" were excellent scouts and guides. "In their native element these soldiers can work real magic, displaying bravery, resourcefulness, and endless energy."<sup>103</sup>

Political workers cast the exploits of non-Russians strictly in national terms, employing the sorts of motifs Ehrenburg had used. A model "battle sheet" celebrated Zhakeev, "a steppe Kazakh," as a "man of action. He doesn't like long speeches. He has the eye of a hawk, a hard hand, and the heart of a real Bolshevik. He knows well what a hunt is. The animal cannot outthink him. Zhakeev knows what a hunt against a German beast is all about. You move, you die. Miss your mark, an empty day. He lies for hours under bullets. He tracks, waits, looks...and finds."<sup>104</sup> Even when successful individually, non-Russian soldiers were bound ever closer to their national stereotypes. They were never just Red Army soldiers but Soviet Kazakhs and Soviet Kyrgyz. Although the manual admitted that heroism was rooted in acts of individual courage, the individual could not escape being pegged to his nationality and became a modern incarnation of an epic hero or a customary hunter, routinely reminded of his hyphenated identity, tied invariably to folklore or a misty past.

Not all of the national traits were directly martial. Some were cultivated to raise the fighting spirit. The emerging Central Asian effect on the Red Army included tea and music. In a section called, "Taking National Peculiarities into Account," the 49<sup>th</sup> Army manual held that "it is well known that soldiers from the Central Asian republics love tea," which justified the

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<sup>101</sup> Kalinin, *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> *Vospitanie boitsov nerusskoi natsional'nosti* (Caucasus), 12.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>104</sup> *Vospitanie boitsov nerusskoi natsional'nosti*, 48-49.



construction of *chaikhanas* designed to host visiting Central Asian musicians and soldiers' amateur folk groups. Promoting national culture for its own sake had no place in the army, of course, and the manual warned that that *chaikhanas* needed to be stocked with newspapers and literature and that political conversations had to take place.<sup>105</sup>

Amateur folk music groups composed of soldiers were politically-sanctioned expressions of national and therefore Soviet culture, though some commanders believed they were superficial to the mission and forbade them, and some soldiers laughed at the unfamiliar melodies and sounds.<sup>106</sup> They seemed to spring up without much encouragement wherever men of one or similar nationalities served, though the examples in the literature were always Uzbek or Central Asian. For instance, an Uzbek ensemble directed by junior lieutenant Mirzaev, a former theater director, featured Karimov and his *gizhzhak* from Fergana, Turdeev on the *nai*, and Iulchiev who brought his *chirmanda*. The ensemble was justified because “native songs and native music [were] close to the hearts of soldiers.” Not only did they inspire men’s fighting spirit, but they reinforced political training with songs about new folk heroes like Kuchkar Turdiev, Soviet leaders like Voroshilov, or projects like the Great Fergana Canal. They also composed new songs mythologizing the present, such as the Uzbek singers who wrote a song called “*Ub’iu dushmena*” (“I will kill the enemy”), exemplifying the Russian-Uzbek hybridity of the front. The song asked rhetorically, “can I be considered a man if I don’t kill the enemy?”<sup>107</sup>

However, in exchange for the tea and music, Central Asian soldiers submitted themselves to more folklorization. The arrival of musicians and gifts from the rear – perfectly commonplace in the Soviet army – was described in folkloric terms. Concerts from an artistic brigade from Uzbekistan, featuring screenwriter Muzafar Mukhamedov, actress Zainab Baltusheva, writer Aibek, and soloists from the Uzbek philharmonic orchestra and the Sverdlov opera and ballet theater, were considered an appropriate outlet for the “hot, temperamental soldiers of the East – Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Tajiks, Kyrgyz – [who] enthusiastically responded to the performances.” In fact the whole interaction was described as an Eastern ritual of the gift, creating an air of timeless popular support for the war and implicating all parties involved in sanctioning a new shorthand for Central Asian culture. The Red Army man Sattarov – the same as from the March 16 *Pravda Vostoka* article – was to have greeted the performers with the formula: “our people has sent a great gift – our favorite artists. I will also send a gift. I have 18 killed Germans on my account. I promise tomorrow to add to it.” The next day he killed two, prompting Aibek’s tribute in verse. “In the East there exists an ancient noble custom – to give to your guest the gift he most wants. The representatives of the Uzbek people who arrived to the front like more than anything else the growing count of enemy kills and destruction.”<sup>108</sup> Central Asian soldiers were reminded again that the timeless Eastern past suffused their Eastern present, even as they defended Russia’s Western front – which may have been a small price to pay to receive the comforts of home.

Amanzholov, a Kazakh, also believed that national traits could be a tool for training and disciplining non-Russian troops and was often no less patronizing than Russian authors. He believed that officers could count on the “simplicity, humility, and honesty of the peoples of Kazakhstan, the Caucasus, Siberia, and Central Asia [who] never boast, never try to hide anything from commanders, and never act untruthfully.” They could also employ the “Eastern

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<sup>105</sup> *Vospitanie boitsov nerusskoi natsional’nosti*, 37.

<sup>106</sup> Amanzholov, 35.

<sup>107</sup> *Vospitanie boitsov nerusskoi natsional’nosti*, 38-39.

<sup>108</sup> *Vospitanie boitsov nerusskoi natsional’nosti*, 45-47.

tradition of politeness” which mandated greeting acquaintances and strangers alike, such as agitator Islambekov, who told sullen soldiers that in not greeting one another they were disobeying regulations and national custom simultaneously. And he proposed using the respect for elders that was a pillar of a young person’s formation in Central Asia and the Caucasus, warning of an episode from autumn 1942 in which Russian officers humiliated a 40-year-old Kazakh when he offered unsolicited advice on building a bridge. The man enjoyed great authority among Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, and Kazakhs in the formation, sharing songs and wisdom, and being called *aksakal*. It was only the arrival of an agitator who recognized the elder should himself be made an agitator that prevented alienating the entire group. National culture was indeed a weapon, but could explode in one’s face if not employed correctly. Yet underlining his treatise was a faith that attention to national culture unlocked the promise of non-Russian soldiers and allowed them to prove their worth.<sup>109</sup>

Amanzholov acknowledged national weaknesses but believed that they could be turned into strengths with appropriate agitation. Apart from their primordial abilities as steppe hunters, Central Asians were not credited with possessing relevant military traditions. A common complaint to demonstrate their unfitness for battle was the custom to stop firing to mourn or pray over an injured countrymen, which not only violated regulations but made them susceptible to greater losses because the enemy could lob a grenade at the entire group.<sup>110</sup> In Amanzholov’s view these episodes actually displayed commitment to “unity and mutual aid” – hallmarks of Russian troops.<sup>111</sup> These were the remnants of martial traditions exercised by their great grandfathers who had marched in tight formation before the advent of firearms. If one were injured the rest would rush to him and cry out “*Oi, baurym*” (Kazakh for “oh, my dear!”). But the tradition had become outmoded as recent generations had been forbidden from military service. He cited a senior lieutenant who reported that some of the heaviest losses of 1941 occurred in this manner. And interviews reveal that this custom continued even in 1945. Writing at the end of the war, Amanzholov had uncovered an area where lack of cultural familiarity and linguistic support had cost Central Asian lives and reputation. He appealed to Russian military science not to obliterate Central Asians’ outdated traditions but to update them, a rhetorical strategy that defended his countrymen and pleased the Elder Brother. However, this message did not seem to get to commanders nor soldiers in time.

The idea of “national peculiarity” did not just mean rule via stereotype or amateur ethnography. The very idea of acknowledging national difference opened the door for non-Russian cultural practices to seep upwards and infiltrate army culture. Amanzholov took a boldly ecumenical stance, stating that “if they do not contradict the common life interests of all Soviet toilers, the traditions of individual peoples can become Soviet-wide.” He admitted that before the arrival of non-Russian agitators, even promising soldiers struggled to take care of their guns because they lacked instruction in their native languages.<sup>112</sup> Soldiers like these required

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<sup>109</sup> Amanzholov, 18-19.

<sup>110</sup> See the veterans’ interviews at [iremember.ru](http://iremember.ru). For example, <http://iremember.ru/artilleristi/medvedev-efim-markovich.html>, <http://iremember.ru/snayperi/scherbakov-viktor-gavrilovich.html>, and <http://iremember.ru/pekhotintsi/dzhimbiev-andrey-manganikovich.html> - last accessed August 21, 2014.

<sup>111</sup> Amanzholov, 20.

<sup>112</sup> Amanzholov, 18, 21.

reminders of their nationality's respect for weapons, such as the ritual bestowal of a fallen hero's "holy" weapon to a worthy successor. Amanzholov was too coy to claim outright the non-Russian origins of this popular Red Army ritual but other writers did this for him. Kalinin, it is remembered, afforded both the ritual and the respect for arms to Caucasians and North Caucasians. The 49<sup>th</sup> army manual implied that both the attitude and the practice were Central Asian, maintaining that "it is important to remember that for Uzbeks, Kazakhs, and Kyrgyz, weapons are sacred property. The weapon of an old soldier after his death is ceremoniously given to his son. These folk (*narodnye*) customs are widely used in work with fighters of non-Russian nationalities."<sup>113</sup> The murkiness of its origin story only confirms the space afforded to non-Russian traditions, provided they worked.

The gun ritual was indeed widespread and may have found its first Red army incarnation in the Panfilov division, which was formed in Alma-Ata in 1941 as a model multi-national division with many Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and Uzbeks. According to one of its commissars, the division was also exemplary in the "enormous attention" it received from the Kazakh SSR TsK, which ensured that it was equipped with a printing press, literature in various languages, club, and highly-educated political workers appointed from the reserves rather than the front. Its commander, Ivan Vasilievich Panfilov, was also chosen specifically because he "knew the peculiarities" of Central Asian nationalities, having grown up in Central Asia and having worked in the Frunze voenkomat.<sup>114</sup> At its core it was a special division but designed with expectation that it would become representative.

Guards' major and agitator Akai Nesupbekov recounted that the division's multiple languages and over twenty nationalities forced him and other agitators to develop several methods of agitation that were later adapted by political workers all over the northwestern front. He used the gun ritual to greet Kazakh reinforcements in summer 1942 and later to inaugurate a sniper group before likely sharing the ritual more broadly at the agitators' conference in Moscow in 1943. According to Nesupbekov, the sniper group's first volunteer, sergeant Tleugaly Abdybekov from Semipalatinsk oblast, was given rifle #2916 which had formerly belonged to a Russian sergeant and then to a Ukrainian. Abdybekov went on to train many snipers and killed 397 Germans before his death in 1944, when it was passed to a Kyrgyz, Osman Aliev Ashir-Ali, who delivered an oath upon receiving it that Nesupbekov retained through the war. Upon Ashir-Ali's death, the rifle was sent back to Alma-Ata in commemoration. In October 1942 a visiting political director decided that standout Uzbek marksman Mamadali Madalinov from Osh oblast should be upgraded to a sniper's rifle, which he received in a ritual standing upon the grave of a recently deceased and beloved battalion commander, Soldatov. Madalinov delivered his "ceremonial oath" in a mass meeting in which an entire battalion was removed from active defense as witnesses.<sup>115</sup> These ceremonies showed significant organizational forethought and by all accounts were popular with their participants. But even if the passing of weapons had non-Russian origins, the Red Army used it to graft the loyalty and performance of Slavic peoples onto the Central Asian soldiers using the guns like holy relics. Unlike the veneration of saints,

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<sup>113</sup> *Vospitanie boitsov nerusskoi natsional'nosti*, 33.

<sup>114</sup> IRI RAN f. 2, r. 1., op. 28, d. 18, l. 1, 1ob. Interview with division commissar A.L. Mukhamed'iarov in 1947, under the aegis of the AN USSR Institute of History's Minsk Commission.

<sup>115</sup> IRI RAN f. 2, r. 1, op. 28, d. 33, l. 3ob, 4, 4ob, 5. Interview with A. Nesupbekov, Alma-Ata, January 1947.

Red Army spirituality left open questions about the true source of the guns' aura. Who deserved the credit for Madalinov's subsequent 257 German kills, the sniper, the gun, or the deceased commander? The ceremony blurred the lines of authorship among the nationalities, making it a group effort, like a sword made from different strands of steel impossible to differentiate in the final product. However, the logic of the ceremony held that the first link in the chain was undoubtedly Russian, and the Central Asians' achievements could not occur without it.

In the Panfilovs' telling it was unclear whether the army had coopted a Central Asian tradition or had invented a new one on their behalf. This is more than a semantic matter, because the notion that a Central Asian or Caucasian tradition could infiltrate upwards into the Russian-dominated Red Army would have been anathema to the politics of Russians' Elder Brother status. Everything most useful and advanced was supposed to come from them. This is why Amanzholov's ecumenical statement about tradition was actually explosive, and needed to be followed up demurely by sidestepping the question of the ceremony's precise national origins.

In other spheres, the Red Army could not simply coopt national custom but had to absorb whole its awkward intrusion into daily life or settle on a compromise. Burials exemplified the wide berth given to Muslim soldiers and demonstrated the army on the defensive in a numbers game with the many Muslim soldiers. Though usually described in national terms – “Kyrgyz” or “Uzbek” – or cultural-regional – such as the “Eastern” burial in *Pravda Vostoka* from October 22, 1942 – these were Muslim burials that included prayers, burial facing East or to Mecca (and perhaps also ritual washing and segregation from non-Muslim bodies). Friendship of the Peoples, which promised the flourishing of national cultures, provided ideological cover for these burials, but it undoubtedly encountered opposition from the Red Army's majority Slavs, either as atheists or Orthodox Christians. (After all, the Red Army did not defeat the orthodox tsarist forces simply to invite in Islam). The training manuals for non-Russian soldiers sent clear signals to the officer corps that “national” burials were allowed and used military effectiveness as their basis. Dzhansergeev, a Kyrgyz senior agitator in the 49<sup>th</sup> army was killed and another Kyrgyz, sergeant Chariev, “consulted with Kyrgyz soldiers, learned how to bury him according to their custom and asked the commanders for permission to organize his burial in this way. The burial was done according to Kyrgyz custom. At the meeting above the grave of the deceased comrade soldiers vowed to take vengeance against the Germans.” In the next ten days the soldiers in this section killed twenty-five Germans. In another case, two Uzbeks were killed and by initiative of the Party organization were buried “according to Uzbek custom.” Speeches in Uzbek and other languages – presumably battle vows – “produced huge impressions among all present.”<sup>116</sup> Skeptical commander learned that public oaths for vengeance could compensate for the appearance of Islamic ritual – a crude arithmetic that, in its way, perpetuated the disparity between Russian and Central Asian soldiers.

As usual, Amanzholov's assessment was more nuanced. He acknowledged that the faith of “believing” Muslims in the Red Army would not simply disappear. Yet he demanded that they compartmentalize their ritual obligations while on the front. He wrote that “care and attentiveness” were required in handling “non-Russian believers” – code for Muslims. A good example came from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Belorussian front from autumn 1942. Two Uzbeks were killed and immediately buried along with Russians without observing any religious ritual. Later that day the despondence of several Uzbeks aroused the interest of an agitator who beckoned one of their countrymen to inquire why. They were distraught that their friends had not received a proper

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<sup>116</sup> *Vospitanie boitsov nerusskoi natsional'nosti*, 36-37.

burial and that if they died, they too would be buried without “Muhammedan ritual.” The company commander ordered the platoon commander to arrange for reburial carried out by their friends, but not before having a political officer explain to the Uzbeks that the exigencies of battle often made it impossible to maintain the same ritual law as peacetime. Because Amanzholov used explicitly religious rather than national language, he had to back it up with a different sort of scripture. And here he used a 1945 text from Kalinin that encouraged “ceremonial” burial as a way for the army to show its “love for [all] the defenders of the Motherland.”<sup>117</sup>

As the war went on, evidence suggests that Amanzholov’s more demanding approach won out. As Central Asian soldiers rose through combat and political ranks, they could offer the “care and attentiveness” in the native language of new call-ups, the tough love that Kalinin mentioned in 1943 – but also the language of faith of co-religionists. Perhaps more important, their own ambition for equal standards and equal expectations motivated a more assimilationist tack. Qochqor Honazarov (b. 1922) of Tashkent, who arrived on the front in 1942, joined the Party at Stalingrad and rose to company commander, recalls how he and other commanders told new recruits not to attempt to bury their comrades with Islamic rituals because the army had special burial detachments. Battle exigency also explained his stance on pork. He urged the recruits to eat whatever was available in order to have the strength to fight fascism, saying “Allah will forgive you because you have good intentions.” Honazarov and others saw no contradiction between faith and Party, nor between Islam and the war-time suspension of Muslim ritual.<sup>118</sup>

If Amanzholov, the future Turkologist, was at all indulgent with his countrymen, it was not with religion but folk culture and the oral tradition. His major critique of the army’s political training was the lack of variety in native-language publications. Although Directive #12 led to the creation of newspapers and “battle sheets,” neither Voenizdat nor the republican-level Goslitizdats printed much oral literature or *bogatyr* epics. In neglecting folk literature, art, films, and posters, army publishing had “forgotten about a sharp knife of education” that could cut directly to the “consciousness and soul of a person.” For Amanzholov, “the most important weapon of the agitator is the word . . . sharp, intelligible, correct, and interesting word. A person with mastery of the word can create marvels.” He concluded with a citation from Abai on the power of the language and recounted, perhaps autobiographically, an agitator who recited by memory verses of the Kazakh epics Karasai Batyr and Makhambet for soldiers who became fiery with joy and asked where they could get a copy.<sup>119</sup> Kalinin, Shcherbakov, and Yaroslavsky had all made similar points about the power of native-language propaganda, yet Amanzholov’s statement was bolder than it first appeared, for when taken to its logical end it held that the Truth of a man’s soul could only be expressed in his native language and native epics, and not in Russian. This challenged even the army’s limit of imperial ecumenism. Inspiring men outside the canon of Lenin and Stalin, and outside the language of command was too fraught for war-time and seems to have accounted for the shortage of these materials. The military epics of Russia’s younger brothers would have had to be carefully purged of the inevitable episodes of historical fratricide. And it harkened to earlier Party debates about how best to translate the Word.

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<sup>117</sup> Amanzholov, 16-17.

<sup>118</sup> Honazarov interview.

<sup>119</sup> Amanzholov, 28-29.

Complaints like this revealed the inherent tension of language and cultural politics in the Red Army. Could the Word of the Stalin and Party hold its truth across languages? In theory yes, but in practice, not always. There was only one priestly language in the Soviet Union, and it was Russian. More importantly, there was only one language of command, promotion, and communication within the army. Celebrating the Kyrgyz military past might pierce the soul of the Kyrgyz soldier, but it brought him no closer to his Russian brother, and excluded all others who did not speak his language. Too much promotion of non-Russian language and culture created linguistic and cultural subgroups, detracting from the army's unified spirit and hence performance.

The Red Army dilemma of just how much foreign language or literature to allow also demonstrated the contradictions of the Friendship of the Peoples ideology. As in any imperial institution, the army faced both homogenizing and heterogenizing incentives. How much culture of the periphery to allow before it weakened the center? Tea and music might be fine, but burials might not. And it reveals some of the tensions of Amanzholov's own argument. How to assimilate the Central Asian soldiers into the life of the Red Army while stoking them on tales of their own distant ancestors in Uzbek? Wouldn't the army be more unified with one *bakhshi* and not fifteen? And how can common standards and expectations be promoted while accounting for difference and peculiarity at every turn? Cultural pluralism to the contrary, wasn't assimilation into the dominant Russian culture the only guaranteed path to promotion? Further, if the plan was to start agitation work in native languages and then transition to Russian, when was the transition?

Therefore learning Russian was the inevitable end goal of the Red Army's agitation program for Caucasian and Central Asian soldiers. With the centrifugal energy from burials, tea rituals, and folk heroes, Russian language promised to drive the forces inward.

Central Asian men were less educated than their Russian and even their Caucasian counterparts. According to the 1939 census 70 percent of rural Uzbek men were literate, less than general figures from the RSFSR (89 percent), Georgian SSR (89 percent), and Azeri SSR (83 percent), though we have little reason to think this meant more than the ability to sign one's name. Given Russian language only became mandatory in the same year, it is unlikely likely that most of the 47 percent of Uzbek men with secondary educations could speak Russian, given the dearth of qualified teachers and ethnic Russians in the countryside.<sup>120</sup> In fact, teachers in the Uzbek SSR were exempted from conscription because finding literate hands for evacuated industrial jobs and training Russian-speaking soldiers were such critical needs.

A year into the war and the gravity of the language barrier was readily apparent. In August 1942 the SNK USSR ordered the Central Asian Military District (SAVO) to develop Russian language courses at its Vsevobuch locations to serve both civilians and enlisted men in the five Central Asian republics. The order mandated a 90-hour course split between linguistic basics and essential military terminology for both Vsevobuch call-ups and all recruits born in 1925 or later who passed through Voenkomat.<sup>121</sup> This program could only be a partial fix because it removed quality teachers from other locations and did not affect those already at the front. Furthermore, 90 hours was hardly mastery, so even in 1945 a call-up's fluency in Russian almost guaranteed his selection as officer.

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<sup>120</sup> *Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleniia 1939 goda: osnovnye itogi* (Moskva: Nauka, 1992), 47, 53.

<sup>121</sup> TsGARUZ f. 837, op. 32, d. 3420, l. 171-174.

Thus learning Russian primarily occurred, by hook or by crook, on the front. Central Asian newcomers had ample incentive to master it, from professional success to personal safety and the 49<sup>th</sup> army manual observed a “yearning” to learn the language, which it credited first as a thirst for Pushkin and Gorky and second as “the language in which Lenin and Stalin appeal to the army and navy of our state, and the language of the military and its orders.” The Red Army did not have the organization or materials to implement special language classes so it called upon the rank and file to organize informal classes: “if every Red Army man and junior commander who knows Russian uses every free minute to teach his comrade Russian, we will accomplish a great deal... the beautiful Russian speech will become dear and understandable.”<sup>122</sup>

Memoirs, interviews, agitation manuals, and newspaper articles all confirm that the acquisition of various levels of Russian was one of the most noticeable results of the war among non-Russians. What they had no real need to learn in three or four years in a village school they had ample incentive to master on the front, embedded in a Russian-language environment. We will contend with the ramifications momentarily. For now we will ask how precisely this battlefield education took place.

The Caucasian Front manual made similar entreaties to its officers and enlisted men to spend their free minutes instructing their Younger Brothers. Many Russians and other Slavs were no doubt gracious and patient teachers, as exemplified by newspaper articles and memoirs of soldiers who recalled how Central Asian soldiers slowly but inevitably learned the basics. Russian teaching seemed to be one of the sacred duties of Friendship between the Brothers. However, Russian learners also faced an inbuilt condescension from the power dynamic insisting that they all learn Russian despite Russians never being urged to take the reciprocal step and learn their languages. It is telling that the manual’s authors selected a Mayakovsky poem to portray the nationalities’ eagerness to learn the language, “Even if I/ were an elderly African/ I would study Russian/ without dejection or laziness/ just because it/ was the language of Lenin,” confirming both the Russians’ conceit of cultural supremacy and the gulf many felt between themselves and Central Asians and Caucasians.<sup>123</sup>

Although not instructed to create special classes, some units did just that. Not surprisingly, they were organized by ambitious non-Russian agitators who understood the handicap of the language barrier. Nesupbekov, the agitator from the Panfilov division, recalled that the July 1943 GlavPURKKA conference’s major programmatic takeaway was to double down on Russian teaching. He returned to the front and convinced his skeptical commanding officer to allow language classes. Several former teachers and even methodologists were discovered among the Kazakh soldiers and one teacher was assigned to each company. A curriculum was created using small dictionaries printed in front newspapers and material pulled from Red Army life – basics such as “tree,” “shrub,” and terms related to battle orders. Nesupbekov’s example was broadcast throughout the fronts via an article in *Krasnaia Zvezda*.<sup>124</sup>

Amanzholov celebrated the teaching of a Tatar Communist and former village teacher, Yasovy Muzafarov, who strived to mix the needs for national and Russian culture. He was an engaged agitator, sharing stories and epics in Tatar and Bashkir, and organized musical performances featuring singers, *dombras*, harmonicists, dancers, and a comic, and composed of Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, Azeris, Tatars, Bashkirs, and Kumyks. After teaching several men to

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<sup>122</sup> *Vospitanie boitsov nerusskoi natsional’nosti*, 41-42.

<sup>123</sup> *Vospitanie boitsov nerusskoi natsional’nosti* (Caucasus), 11.

<sup>124</sup> IRI RAN f. 2, r.1, op. 28, d. 33, l. 5ob.

read and write in their native languages he set out to teach Russian. Their biggest problem was improper care of their weapons so the centerpiece of his curriculum was the gun. He would pronounce each part of the weapon and each man would repeat it. Then he'd ask each man, "what is this?" He repeated the answers as often as needed, but only spoke to the men in Russian during lessons. He also created a lending library of some 31 titles that were transported in the shirts of fellow agitators during marches and then reconstituted at stopping points. Among the national language titles were *Bloknot Agitatora* in all languages, translated propaganda classics like Sholokhov's *Science of Hatred* and Gorbатов's *Of Life and Death*, and contemporary Kazakh works like Dzhambul's poem "Impregnable Fortress," and Sabit Mukanov's *Baluan Sholak*, about the steppe fighter-musician. He also collected Russian-language periodicals like *Krasnoarmeets*, *Bloknot Agitatora*, and *Sputnik Agitatora*, and technical books on subjects like gun maintenance. He also had six dictionaries – Russian-Tatar, Russian-Kazakh, Russian-Kyrgyz, Russian-Uzbek, Russian-Tajik, and Russian-Turkmen – which gave soldiers the chance to supplement his basic lessons. By far his most popular works were by Mukhanov and Dzhambul, and he strived to obtain similar works for each of the nationalities. Finally, he kept a mini-library on his person at all times with "battle sheets" and the military oath in the nine languages found in his unit.<sup>125</sup>

In both cases the leading role played by Tatar and Kazakh teachers struck a historical parallel with tsarist Turkestan where Tatar merchants and Kazakh teachers functioned as emissaries for the tsarist state due to their earlier absorption into the Russian empire, superior Russian language knowledge, and common faith and language with Central Asians. World War II thus reopened cultural flows with these nationalities taking up roles as emissaries of metropolitan culture.

Learning Russian changed men, their identities and horizons. Army rhetoric celebrated transformations, how military life rendered men's physique and comportment "unrecognizable." Acquiring Russian was described in the same way. Muzafarov's pupils became "unrecognizable" within a year. Cavalryman Beksultan Rakhimov, twice awarded the medal of Glory, placed language at the center of his war story: "I'm a Kazakh, before the war was a simple kolkhoznik, did not know Russian at all. At war I learned Russian well. At first was rank and file, now a guards' petty officer. I understand conversational Russian, and they understand me; when I don't have the right word I supplement with my heart, gestures, and mimicry."<sup>126</sup> The 49<sup>th</sup> Army manual celebrated the friendship between a Russian agitator and a Kyrgyz, Turagel'diev. Despite language barriers, the latter became a successful horse messenger and eventually applied for the Komsomol but was denied due to his weak Russian. After "stubborn" practice, he learned to read and write and was finally invited into the Party. After several months "from a backward (*otstalyi*), shy soldier Turagel'diev became an active, developed fighter." The password into Party and Komsomol were set in Russian.<sup>127</sup>

In this way, Central Asian men from distant *kishlaks* as well as cities did in a few months what their fathers had never done, and what the state had never achieved. They learned Russian, and the gates to Soviet power were open to them. The war accelerated the acquisition of languages, the Friendship of Peoples, and even the march of history.

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<sup>125</sup> Amanzholov, 25-27.

<sup>126</sup> Amanzholov, 25, 11.

<sup>127</sup> *Vospitanie boitsov nerusskoi natsional'nosti*, 20-21.



Kalinin expanded upon this transformation in his concluding speech at the 1943 conference. He pronounced the formerly backward peoples to have finally grown up. Central Asians and Azeris had not formerly been trusted with guns but Soviet nationalities policy had “opened a road to all talented people in our country.” And although all of the Soviet peoples had grown during the war, he singled out the Uzbeks especially. “Now you cannot just ask an Uzbek about cotton, but also have to ask about industry.” He elaborated on war as a historical accelerator: “War demands victims and sacrifices but it also develops civil feelings, widens horizons, peoples grow by a whole head and, you could say, enter the world stage. When you return home you will be new people, people with a world wide name, people with direct awareness of their direct participation in the creation of world history.”<sup>128</sup> The formula of blending national custom and Russian language had proved successful on the battlefield and in historical development. Put another way “national pride and Soviet patriotism” were mutually reinforcing, as long as “the Soviet peoples hold – and correctly believe – that the Russian people is their older brother.” Historical acceleration was only possible in the Soviet family, aided by the Elder Russian Brothers, and via his language. Like the Uzbek sniper awarded a new rifle or the Kyrgyz horse messenger turned Party member, somewhere credit was owed a Russian. It was a necessary bylaw of Friendship, a fee incurred when rising to the top.

The laws of Friendship created inevitable ethnic ambiguities. A. Sukhambaev, a Kazakh Hero of the Soviet Union who did not know Russian before 1939 told his commander: “Don’t worry, comrade senior lieutenant, Russian is my second native language.”<sup>129</sup> Ivan-Tajik was given two ethnic labels, though neither fit. Both men present Soviet koans for how could a man have two ethnicities? But Red Army service demanded this logical impossibility of its successful Central Asians. Professional ascendancy required knowledge of the metropolitan language like a native speaker, but to constantly represent the periphery. The more flawless the Russian speech, the more ascended he was. A strong accent limited one’s heights. To imbibe Russian-speaking Soviet culture so fully that it became like an ethnicity, but to retain one’s Uzbekness as well – this characteristic Soviet position first arose in significant numbers during the war.

By autumn 1943 the Friendship of the Peoples “master plot” had largely replaced the solitary spotlight on Uzbeks or Kazakhs in the press. Instead of the politically-conscious Party-member and the raw, spontaneous worker from the early 1930s, it was the Russian who by age and historical path was bound to guide his Central Asian brother. And displays of one nationality’s culture were now usually embedded in multivocal ethnic choruses led by the Russian director.

The story “Battle Friendship,” (*Pravda Vostoka*, October 19, 1943) by Captain V. Epifantsev spoke of a green Uzbek recruit and an experienced Russian soldier. The young man is practically cowardly upon his arrival, but malleable to the encouragement of the older, wiser Russian.<sup>130</sup> Other iterations of the “friendship plot” were less patronizing. In “Friendship Born in Battle,” captain F. Shevnikov wrote about an Uzbek and a Russian who shared everything from tobacco and kasha to awards for courage. In “Valor” an Uzbek soldier writes home that they are drinking “Samarkand” brand tea on the front, packaged in his hometown by his father. He introduces his hometown to his platoon and learns that the canned food comes from someone’s

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<sup>128</sup> Kalinin, “Edinaia boevaia sem’ia,” *Krasnaia Zvezda*, August 21, 1943.

<sup>129</sup> Amanzholov, 11.

<sup>130</sup> For a similar article, see A. Antonov, “Russkii drug,” *Pravda Vostoka*, November 27, 1943.

sister in Kuban, and the bullets from another's hometown in Siberia.<sup>131</sup> Uzbekistan is not introduced of its own accord but as a flower in the multi-national bouquet.

On the front, rituals explicitly celebrating Friendship of the Peoples were performed to ensure that effervescent national pride was always subsumed into the collective. One popular agitational activity was the pre-battle “meeting of combat friendship” in which soldiers from various republics took turns giving speeches, singing revolutionary and folk songs, and pronouncing battle vows in their native languages before concluding in Russian.<sup>132</sup> Here the inability to understand the words of each comrade had emotive effect to rally against Fascism.

Uzbekistan's maturity was celebrated, too. Its sons left their marks on the Russian landscape and invited their Slavic allies home with them. “Hero of the Soviet Union Shukurov at the *chaikhana* of the elderly” described how his heroics resulted in a small village near Orel being renamed in his honor. He is surrounded by approving elders, including a teacher and architectural restorer, in the classic venue of Central Asian tradition, accompanied by his guests, a Russian and Ukrainian soldier. Vasin, the Russian, thanks “the old men whose beards compete in whiteness with their snow-white turbans” for sending their bravest sons, for adopting evacuated children, and supporting war funds. The achievements of its soldiers were matched on the homefront, where even the most rural provinces were transforming with industry, such as Syr Dar'ia in “Guest from the front.”<sup>133</sup>

Uzbek heroes also lent their authority to re-write history. The war coincided with a great historical pivot away from Tamerlane as the Uzbek progenitor to his grandson, the proto-atheist and astronomer-emir Ulugbek. More and more the city of Samarkand was described as the city of Ulugbek's observatory rather than the tomb of the “iron cripple.” In an otherwise typical editorial in *Pravda* about how Friendship of the Peoples was the guarantor of victory, Uzbekistan's first Hero of the Soviet Union Kuchkar Turdiev offered an unprompted order to the Uzbek people to forget Timur – and remember Stalin, commenting: “I remember a folk legend about how cruel Timur hid the book of human happiness from his people. He went into the mountains, climbed onto a high cliff, and cut it up with an axe and hid its remnants in the cracks. Centuries passed. A great man was born. His name was Stalin. He went searching for the book in the mountains. He destroyed the *bais*, irrigated the desert, created kolkhozes, built schools, liberated wives from centuries of oppression. He gave a joyful and happy life to the Uzbek people.”<sup>134</sup>

By winter 1944 state and Party rhetoric held that Uzbekistan's accelerated development was complete. The bodies of male kolkhozniks had turned into soldiers, their minds forged with hate and equipped with literacy. Smokestacks had accompanied the cotton, apricots, and pomegranates. Women who had veiled were now brigadiers. Uzbek history was pegged to a new figure and reoriented to the present. And the end of the war promised its peaceful transition into a new relation with its family members, backward no longer.

However, taking a step back from Party rhetoric, we find that the difficulties of the first half of the war were never fully expunged – interethnic mistrust, lethal misunderstandings, and

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<sup>131</sup> *Pravda Vostoka*, April 2, 1944; February 23, 1944.

<sup>132</sup> *Vospitanie boitsov nerusskoi natsional'nosti*, 32.

<sup>133</sup> *Pravda Vostoka*, December 3, 1943; January 26, 1944. According to Makkamov, a Belarusian village named Topivaldievka is named in honor of a soldier from Andijan. Makkamov interview.

<sup>134</sup> *Pravda*, December 22, 1943. Also published in *Pravda Vostoka*, December 25, 1943.

Central Asians' difficult adaptation to the northern climate. Yet the effects of specialized agitation work set in. Many arrived at the front better prepared, with better Russian, and clearer expectations about the duress and sacrifices that awaited them, along with the consequences for breaking the military oath. This section asks how Central Asian soldiers fared on balance after the major political interventions of 1943. Though arriving at something like a final tally is impossible, especially given the inaccessibility military archives, interview and memoir sources allow us to reach a general picture as well as to assess the equally important question of how the war was remembered.

The literary and historical records are full of examples of Central Asian heroism. Either as individuals or as whole divisions, such as the Panfilovtsy, plenty of loyal and accomplished service justified the classic state narrative that the war was won by virtue of international friendship and sacrifice from all the republics. The Panfilov division alone accounted for 34 Heroes of the Soviet Union.<sup>135</sup>

In the final two years of war instances of interethnic tension declined noticeably. None of the soldiers interviewed for this study recollected experiencing national discrimination and they arrived at the front primarily in 1944 and 1945.

The poor reputations of Central Asian soldiers had already saturated the army, however, making the issue a common speaking point for interviews conducted during and just after the war by researchers at the Academy of Sciences' Institute of History in Moscow. Pyotr Molchanov, deputy political commander of the 73<sup>rd</sup> guards' infantry division that had formed in Alma-Ata in 1941 joined the division at Stalingrad where he offered the following assessment in 1943: "For some reason there was an opinion that Kazakhs fight poorly. In this division we've become convinced they don't fight poorly at all. The Kazakhs had many heroes. True, not many remain. Most of them left with casualties – injuries or death. But the reinforcements we received from Kazakhstan are very good." However, it is worth noting that in the book of the division's exploits, of the 20 Heroes of the Soviet Union, only two were Kazakhs.<sup>136</sup>

Ethnic Russian, Tashkent native, and Hero of the Soviet Union Alexander Sidorov, who before the war served as a military cartographer in the Pamirs and Iran, agreed. He was commissar of the 120<sup>th</sup> infantry regiment that formed in Tashkent December 1941 and was made up of 20 nationalities, primarily Kazakh and Russian. The young Kazakhs did not speak Russian and evinced great frustration with their commanders over linguistic issues but by the time they arrived in Tula in March 1942 they had learned enough to get by. "I have to note the exceptional surge displayed by these young Kazakh soldiers in the first offensives. Every commander was happy with their performance. And they fought well defensively too. They fought well in special operations. They learned their equipment and how to speak Russian. When I had to send people for classes to become political workers for the company, the commanders would try not to give them up: 'take whomever you want, but don't touch the Kazakhs.'"<sup>137</sup>

Many Central Asians confirmed the same. Hero of the Soviet Union Azim Rakhimov, an ethnic Tajik from Kagan, the railroad city near Bukhara, offered tersely: "My unit was all Russian. Mutual relations were good, all friendly." Born in 1925, with eight years of school, and having a brother leave for the front in 1941, Rakhimov worked for two years in a silk factory before being called up. That he earned his medal swimming across the Oder river at night was

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<sup>135</sup> IRI RAN f. 2, r. 1, op. 28, d. 33, l. 12.

<sup>136</sup> IRI RAN f. 2, r. 1, op. 58, d. 2, li 2ob, 8.

<sup>137</sup> IRI RAN, f. 2, r. 4, d. 2307, l. 6, 6ob. Interview conducted January 12, 1944.

in direct contradiction of the drowning stereotype. Upon his return to Kagan, the young hero's star rose quickly. He was elected to the Party in 1947 and secretary of the Kagan gorkom in 1948.<sup>138</sup>

If we look at the number of Heroes of the Soviet Union, however, we find that Central Asians indeed suffered from discrimination of perception. Of the Uzbek SSR's 278 Heroes, only 75 were ethnic Uzbeks. The Tajik SSR only produced 34, and the Turkmen SSR 97.<sup>139</sup> In other words, the Slavs of Central Asia were about 3.5 times more likely to be recognized for this highest honor than the local nationalities. An unpublished study of military awards by nationality conducted in 1947 found even more striking disparities. Of the over 7 million medals under review, 68 percent were won by Russians, followed by Ukrainians (17.8 percent) and Belarusians (2.9 percent). Uzbeks (.84 percent), Turkmen (.16 percent), Tajiks (.15 percent), and Kyrgyz (.15) were awarded far below their numbers in the Red Army. The Kazakhs (1.03 percent), Tatars (1.89 percent) and Jews (1.93 percent) as the only nationalities to account for over 1 percent.<sup>140</sup> Amanzholov's cautionary tale about the Kyrgyz soldier who had been wounded but never received a medal is instructive.<sup>141</sup> It seems that soldiers who did not share a common language with their commanders could not advocate for their own performance.

Veterans' interviews from decades later verify negative stereotypes but also the importance of timing. For those who witnessed the early calamities or tensions, first impressions tended to stick. Only the highest ranking and politically most literate soldiers emphasized Central Asians' growth and change. Alternatively, many who arrived at the front in later years stated that "nationality did not matter."<sup>142</sup> Others emphasized poor performance and cultural divisions, even after 1943. And others countered negative stereotypes with positive ones, emphasizing the prowess of Central Asian soldiers.<sup>143</sup> What was common to all was the currency of ethnic or national categories, reflecting the Red Army's fixation on national categories. The ambiguity of whether Uzbeks were good soldiers and whether nationality mattered at the front indicates a situation in flux. Some men were entering broader streams of Soviet life, and becoming ethnically ambiguous while others remained marked by linguistic and cultural differences.

Ivan Tarasov arrived at the front in 1943 and remembered Uzbeks and Central Asians – "babai" as he called them – as unreliable fighters who gave themselves up easily and fell to

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<sup>138</sup> IRI RAN, f. 2, r. 4, d. 1202, l. 1-2. Interview conducted July 26, 1945.

<sup>139</sup> I. Pulatov, *Iz istorii uchastiia narodov Srednei Azii v velikoi otechestvennoi voiny* (Tashkent: FAN, 1966), 153.

<sup>140</sup> Gatagova, L.S. et al. red. *TsK VKP(b) i natsional'nyi vopros. Kniga 2, 1933-1945* (Moskva: ROSSPEN, 2009), 1006-1008. The original can be found at GARF f. 7523, op. 17, d. 353, l. 11, 12.

<sup>141</sup> Amanzholov, *Opyt politiko-vospitatel'noi raboty v deistvuiushchei armii*, 15.

<sup>142</sup> See for example <http://iremember.ru/pekhotintsi/zaydel-ivan-prokopevich.html> and <http://iremember.ru/zenitchiki/borisenko-ivan-fedorovich/stranitsa-3.html> - last accessed August 20, 2014.

<sup>143</sup> Some held Kazakhs and Kyrgyz to be the best fighters of the Central Asian republics. One said on the Caucasian front that all the Central Asian fighters were more reliable than the local nationalities. See <http://iremember.ru/saperi/budnitskiy-aleksandr-naumovich/stranitsa-4.html>, <http://iremember.ru/pulemetchiki/nikandrov-ivan-vasilevich/stranitsa-4.html>, <http://iremember.ru/pulemetchiki/muler-movsha-mikhail-samuilovich/stranitsa-6.html> - last accessed August 20, 2014.

prayer when under attack. His commander, Demkin, made up a ditty about drinking the “babais” allotment of vodka, underscoring the social estrangement in his platoon: *babai kopai, babai streliai, a Demkin vodku vypivai* (babai dig, babai shoot, but Demkin gets to drink). Tarasov believed that Caucasians and Kazakhs were “a lot more serious” fighters.<sup>144</sup>

Others recounted how linguistic and cultural difficulties persisted even into 1945. Gunner Vasily Molodin recalled how his commanding officers turned away half of the reinforcements they received in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan as being unfit for fighting, not wanting them to get killed immediately. Artillerist Efim Medvedev remembered in 1944 how six new Uzbeks arrived in his battery wearing *tiubeteikas* and *khalaty*. They spoke no Russian and possessed no military skills but worked hard. Their biggest problem was that if one became hurt they would all come running to him in prayer. And according to sniper Viktor Shcherbakov, in 1945 an Uzbek failed to understand the order to march in step behind a tank in order to cross a minefield. He walked to the side of it and was blown up, prompting his countrymen to rush to his side, when several more of them were subsequently killed.<sup>145</sup>

Central Asians’ reputations for desertion and treason did not disappear and interviews indicate that the layer of effective non-Russian agitators was spread very thinly among the army’s many divisions. An artillerist remembered how a group of five Uzbeks on the Western front in 1943 ate soap to get diarrhea and eventually fled into the woods when their lieutenant went missing. A mortarman recalled a gruesome episode from May 1943 from near Orel. He said that the Germans knew they were going to be attacked because two “Uzbeks” or “*natsmen*” ran across the front lines to surrender. But they did not know Russian and were of no use to the Germans, who drove them back to the Soviet lines. They were taken to the military tribunal and found guilty of treason. They were hanged from a tree in a forest crossroads with a sign warning “traitors of the motherland” to all who marched by.<sup>146</sup>

And Central Asian men did not shed reputations as poor swimmers. Infantrymen drowned in the Dnepr in 1943. And even Nesupbekov, the Kazakh agitator from the Panfilov division, admitted that crossing the river border to liberate Riga was difficult for “us steppe-Kazakhs.”<sup>147</sup>

And yet army service had an overwhelmingly unifying affect on soldiers from Central Asia, the Caucasus, Siberia, and European Russia. This section relies primarily on interviews conducted in Uzbekistan in 2013 and 2014 to reconstruct the effects of war on daily life,

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<sup>144</sup> <http://iremember.ru/razvedchiki/tarasov-ivan-alekseevich.html> - last accessed August 20, 2014.

<sup>145</sup> <http://iremember.ru/pulemetchiki/molodin-vasiliy-stepanovich/stranitsa-4.html>,  
<http://iremember.ru/artilleristi/medvedev-efim-markovich/stranitsa-5.html>,  
<http://iremember.ru/snayperi/scherbakov-viktor-gavrilovich/stranitsa-3.html> - last accessed August 20, 2014. For another episode of group mourning, see  
<http://iremember.ru/minometchiki/estekhin-petr-trofimovich/stranitsa-3.html>.

<sup>146</sup> <http://iremember.ru/artilleristi/chub-petr-romanovich/stranitsa-5.html>,  
<http://iremember.ru/minometchiki/gorodinskiy-aron-semenovich/stranitsa-3.html>. See also  
<http://iremember.ru/minometchiki/rvachev-vasiliy-mikhaylovich/stranitsa-4.html> - last accessed August 20, 2014.

<sup>147</sup> Catherine Merridale, *Ivan’s War: Life and Death in the Red Army, 1939-1945* (New York: Picador, 2006), 232; IRI RAN f. 2, r. 1, op. 28, d. 33, l. 9ob.

particularly the way it facilitated cultural exchange. Men from each corner of the Union shared their stories and cultural practices. Friendships across nationalities were not merely a fiction of Party newspapers. Soviet culture was enriched by the service of all the nationalities. Russians learned about Samarkand's tea, Uzbek *plov*, and the stories of Khodzha Nasreddin. Central Asians ate black bread, drank vodka, and learned Russian. Pan-Soviet culture became enriched. Inevitably, many of the most distinctive national anomalies dissipated at the front. Religious burials or group mourning became flattened away in the name of military efficiency. And because there was one dominant language and culture, even with all this sharing the mix inevitably had a Russian flavor.

Cuisine, like folk music, became a sanctioned arena for Central Asians to celebrate and share their national cultures. They received green tea and ceremonial teahouses in the name of "national custom." War provided an introduction to prized Uzbek dried fruits – figs, prunes, apricots, raisins – which were a ubiquitous part of food shipments gathered throughout Uzbekistan and sent to the fronts.<sup>148</sup> Arkady Vesterman recalled a beloved soldier in his unit, a 46-year-old Uzbek who had come to the front to avenge the lives of his sons. His commander graciously kept him out of live combat so that he could cook *plov* for the men.<sup>149</sup> Even at war Central Asians used culinary hospitality to break down boundaries between groups. Vladimir Sarmakeshev remembers how the arrival of Central Asian reinforcements near Ponyra in summer 1943 triggered doubts due to their poor Russian and low fighting acumen. However, the arrivals threw themselves selflessly into training and "their chefs" fed everyone with Uzbek dishes – *plov*, *shashlyk*, sausage with rice – all made from rations. "Gradually Uzbek words entered our vocabularies. We became friends."<sup>150</sup>

Cuisine and invitations home also allowed Central Asians to cement friendships and express gratitude. Tajik Khazratkul Faiziev recalled how a village-mate, upon regaining consciousness after being injured, invited his commander to Tajikistan, promising the first handful of *plov* at the *dastarkhan*.<sup>151</sup> Regiment commander Faizulla Narkhodzhaev recalled asking Central Asian reinforcements in Ukraine in spring 1943 where they were from, who was left at home, and whether they were afraid to fight. Even though he spoke Kyrgyz, Tajik, and Uzbek, he asked in Russian, which was greeted by silence. When he repeated in Uzbek, they all chimed in with various invitations, one for *plov*, another for *beshbarmak* and *samsa*, and a third for *kok-choi*.<sup>152</sup> The behavior of both parties was instructive. The commander's choice of Russian tested the recruits and emphasized his superiority, and their offers of food both honored him and broke down their social distance.

However, *plov* and *beshbarmak* served primarily as cultural introductions and were not daily fare. On balance, black bread replaced *lepeshkas* (*tondyr non*) and Central Asians adapted

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<sup>148</sup> Rafik Nishanov, *Derev'ia zeleneiut do metelei: rasskazyvaet Marine Zavade I Iuriiu Kulikovu* (Moskva: "Molodaia Gvardiia," 2012), 27, 36.

<sup>149</sup> <http://iremember.ru/tankisti/vesterman-arkadiy-grigorevich/stranitsa-6.html> - last accessed August 20, 2014.

<sup>150</sup> Boris Bokser, ed., *Dorogi frontovye: vospominaniia veteranov* (Tashkent: "Gafur Guliam," 1987, 19-20.

<sup>151</sup> Khazratkul Faiziev, *Ognennye versty* (Dushanbe: "Irfon," 1980), 51.

<sup>152</sup> Narkhodzhaev, 116-117. The soldiers also asked him whether they'd soon be in Berlin because at a soldiers' meeting Uzbek Party boss Yusupov had bade them to bring back Hitler to Uzbekistan.

to Russian cuisine, not the other way around. This was an experience shared by men of many nationalities. For instance, Gulom Makkamov recalls being in a trench with a Moldovan soldier and each pining for his native cuisine, one for corn porridge, the other for *plov*. However, for Muslim soldiers, food and drink became questions of religious practice, specifically whether to protest, refrain, or consume pork and vodka. And it seems most decided sustenance outweighed ritual obligation, especially if it resulted in victory. Nishanov's father volunteered as a 43-year-old infantryman in 1941 and advised the younger soldiers that "Allah knows that a great misfortune has arrived and sees how people are suffering. He will forgive us if we eat this food and it gives us strength to defeat the enemy." Honazarov, who arrived at the front no later than 1942, used the same explanation with junior recruits. Makkamov arrived at the front in Koenigsburg in winter 1945 as a thin 18-year-old squad captain and simply decided to eat all that was given to him.<sup>153</sup>

Alcohol was a bit trickier. Instead of being an issue of sustenance, the ritualized 100 grams before battles and at major celebrations was a symbolic choice: whether to fully embrace camaraderie. To refuse meant drawing a line between oneself and the rest of one's unit. None of the soldiers interviewed recalled being forced to drink, though they were certainly encouraged. For career military men like Narkhodzhaev, greeting the New Year of 1945 with a decorated tree and vodka shots was obligatory.<sup>154</sup> Others like Ali Sabirov also drank during the war and continued afterward. Khalid Alimdzhanov, the mortar man and teacher's son from Tashkent's Old City called up in January 1942, describes himself as a "pureblooded Muslim" now and during the war. He refused vodka, cigarettes, and pork, saying simply, "I can't" (*mne nel'zia*). He also refused to "mess around with women" on Soviet territory and when his division continued through Budapest. In a unit with Russians, Ukrainians, Tajiks, and Kazakhs he recalls being the only one to refuse these earthly pleasures and speculated he was the only in the regiment and even division to do so. However, this is not to say that he felt pressure to assimilate. Like all the interviewees from Tashkent, he recalls the "uniformly friendly" relations among nationalities, and believes that "nationality had no importance."<sup>155</sup> A soldier's military performance was by far the most important measure of his reputation in the group. The choice of whether to drink drew finer lines between men.

Gulom Makkamov took a different tack. On the whole he refused vodka before or after battles but submitted to the pressure from friends and commanders on celebrations and holidays. In later years his only drink came during anniversaries of Victory Day, but never more than 100 grams. And like others who refused cigarettes, he recalls receiving an additional two hunks of sugar in his tea. He also recalls that only a few from religious families categorically refused pork, vodka, and cigarettes. Most of the Uzbeks with whom he was called up eagerly took the vodka before battles.<sup>156</sup>

Thus it seems that vodka was not a high-pressure decision, but it was nonetheless symbolic as an avenue of assimilation into the collective of the Red Army. Over the course of the war many small decisions added up and as a result, drinking vodka became one of the war's significant results for the social and religious practices of Central Asian Muslims. Frontoviki returned home with familiarity of the practice, which was especially novel for those from rural

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<sup>153</sup> Nishanov, 23-24. Honazarov interview. Makkamov interview.

<sup>154</sup> Narkhodzhaev, 140.

<sup>155</sup> Sabirov interview; Alimdzhanov interview.

<sup>156</sup> Makkamov interview.

enclaves who had not previously lived side by side with men of other nationalities and faiths. Upon demobilization, veterans functioned as a conveyor of Russian cultural traditions deep into rural Central Asia.

The fighting path – “*boevoi put*” – expanded soldiers’ horizons. Thousands of Central Asians, including Turakul Turiev (Ivan-Tajik) and all of the veterans interviewed for this study, started the war in Russia and greeted its end in Berlin, Italy, Eastern Europe, or China. In so doing they shared in one of the Soviet army’s most formative experiences: seeing life abroad for the first time. Central Asians experienced the military path in their own distinctive ways because theirs was a double journey. Called up to Moscow, they were soldiers mobilized to the metropole of an imperial formation. Yet on the boulevards of Vienna the son of Namangan and Riazan’ were equally in awe. In Europe they were “Rus” like all the others. This semantic slippage was momentous and freighted with meaning. Like Kalinin’s speech, it signaled historical progress made with disorienting speed.

Moscow was the “elder brother’s” cultural center and the center of the Soviet Union. Akhmed Dzhabbarov, the future chairman of the Uzbek SSR Composers’ Union, recalled making a cultural pilgrimage near Moscow that became irresistibly mined for agitation purposes by his commanding officer. Mobilized in 1943 he found himself near Klin and recalled the bust of the composer Tchaikovsky which had sat on the piano of his neighbor and music teacher in Namangan, the wife of an exiled tsarist army colonel and geologist. As a child she had told him to visit the composer’s house if he had the opportunity and so Dzhabbarov, a commander of a machine gun squadron, asked his company commander for permission to take three Uzbek friends to visit the home. He replied gruffly, “What are you, a musician? How do you know Tchaikovsky?” Permitted two hours’ leave, the men took four because they found the composer’s home in shambles. Germans had used the bottom floor for stables and the top floor for their living quarters and had ransacked the place before retreating. Animal waste littered the whole house. Dzhabbarov wept. They returned to camp only after helping clean up. The enraged commander relented when he heard the story and insisted that Dzhabbarov address the entire company about the shared cultural patrimony they were defending and the depraved nature of the enemy. He sheepishly tried to remember all he’d learned about the composer.<sup>157</sup> Dzhabbarov was called to speak as a Soviet soldier and as an Uzbek. Even in an army where nationality “had no importance,” his emotional reaction to the desecration of Tchaikovsky’s house fit hand and glove with agitation about Friendship of the Peoples, demonstrating the civilization of the Soviet soldier, the bankruptcy of Nazi racism, and the Uzbek reverence for Russian culture.

Dzhabbarov came before his company a second time in 1943 when the Soviet anthem was issued. Army units were ordered to learn it by heart and the text and music were published in army newspapers. However, no one in his brigade knew how to read the notes. Dzhabbarov requested a piano to be found and began to teach the lyrics and melody. In two days everyone knew the song and he was issued a 500 ruble prize for his efforts which he sent to his

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<sup>157</sup> Dzhabbarov interview. Due to his teachers’ influence the young Dzhabbarov vowed to see three places in his life: Klin on the advice of his music teacher; Port Arthur due to her husband’s military service there; and Carthage based on the lectures of his teacher. He fulfilled the second wish after being transferred to the Pacific theater in 1945. There he deposited a book about Port Arthur in a local library that had been a gift from the colonel. The third he fulfilled while part of a Composers’ Union delegation.



grandmother in Namangan.<sup>158</sup> El Registan and Mikhalkov could not have dreamed up a more fitting way to introduce the “unbreakable Union.”

After taking Berlin, Gulom Makkamov, the 18-year-old squad commander, rested in Bratislava for a few weeks where he witnessed the marvels of urban life with other peasants’ sons. He recalls seeing a “train in the middle of a street” for the first time, which equally new for his Siberian companion. Both wound up missing their train to Vienna after taking several tours around the city in the tram car. When he heard their explanation, their angry commander burst out laughing. Makkamov then went to Vienna where he served at Soviet army headquarters with representatives from France, Great Britain, and the United States, even touring the city in an entourage with generals Eisenhower and Montgomery. One weekend a mixed group of them decided to visit a tavern and proposed beer, or “*pivo*.” He accepted, thinking they had said “*piova*,” a humble dish eaten in Namangan during hard times made from boiling water, oil, onion, and bread. He sipped it and spit it out, saying, “you promised me *piova* but this is just bitter water!” This was his introduction to beer. Although he never took a liking to it, he spent two years in Austria, getting acquainted with other aspects of city life and learning German.<sup>159</sup> In this setting, the phrase “nationality did not matter” rang true. Though Tashkent and Omsk had long had trams, neither Makkamov nor his friend had ever seen one. And in mixed international company he represented the Soviet Union, not Uzbekistan, as was so often the case before crossing the border.

The conditions of occupied Europe facilitated this temporary ethnic transformation whereby the Soviet Union’s numerous nationalities were rolled into one. Called “Soviet” or “Russian” by their allies and foes, they rarely had reason to point out this technicality. For the enemy they were just Ivan as in the common German refrain hurled across no man’s land, “*Rus, sdavaisya v plen!*,” or “Russian, give yourself up!”<sup>160</sup> And it was in Partisan Italy where “Ivan-Tajik” was given two ethnic shorthands, neither of which were correct. Makkamov recalls meeting his first ever American soldiers at the Oder, uniformly tall, jocular African-Americans. They engaged in the “Russian tradition of fraternization” (*ruskoe traditsiia po bratanie*) and exchanged stars and pins from their uniforms. Though the meeting of Central Asians and American blacks in the heart of Hitler’s Germany could have driven a final stake into the racist ideology, Makkamov is sure that none of them knew he was Central Asian, and on he went to represent the Soviet army in Vienna, viewed as a Russian though one from the deep provinces.<sup>161</sup>

Another way the men became so many Ivan-Tajiks, -Uzbeks, and -Turkmens was by literally being renamed. Though the phrase “battle christening” is used to describe a man’s first live combat, it might as well refer to his reception of a military nickname from his comrades. Akhmad became Arkashka, Ali became Alik, Biset became Boris, and Gulom became Grisha.<sup>162</sup> At the same time these names were both Russian and international. Men embraced them as badges of acceptance and markers of their Russian-speaking selves. Receiving a name that was comprehensible to all in the unit allowed them to overcome provincialism and estrangement. As they aged, they signaled the signature achievement of their lives – the defeat of fascism – and

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<sup>158</sup> <http://www.gazeta.norma.uz/publish/doc/text104639.html> - last accessed September 16, 2014.

<sup>159</sup> Makkamov interview.

<sup>160</sup> IRI RAN f. 2, r. 1, op. 28, d. 18, l. 2.

<sup>161</sup> Makkamov interview.

<sup>162</sup> *Dorogi frontovye*, 290, 371; Makkamov interview;

<http://iremember.ru/pulemetchiki/mazhagulov-biset-utenovich/stranitsa-2.html>.

veterans continued to use them in mixed or Russian company for their whole lives. Some even changed their names legally so, for example, their children's patronymic became not Yakupovna, but Yurievna.<sup>163</sup>

Others were renamed without their consent. The “*kho'zha*,” or Hajji, was removed from Agzamkho'zha Askarov's father name by the voenkomat in 1941, breaking with multiple generations, and turning him simply into “soldier” or Askarov (*askar* in Uzbek is “soldier”).<sup>164</sup> Even if he did not become more Russian, the Islamic referent was cut.

Finally, mastery of the language was the most critical step in a man's military transformation. Of course, speaking with an accent was inevitable for most and the personage of the dark-skinned, accented Easterner gave the internationalism of army units an authentic flair in propaganda stories and recollections. But strong accents marked Central Asians as imperfect masters of pan-Soviet culture and in a sense, not fully transformed. The ideal was perfect bilingualism.<sup>165</sup>

Soldiers' letters provide another rich source to study the influence of army service on the lives of Central Asian men. A series of correspondences to a pair of Uzbek girls deep in the Andijan countryside reveal how Russian became a language of aspiration and courtship and form this chapter's denouement. Inobad Kholdarova and Ogulkhon Kurbanova were teenage *Komsomolkas* when their photographs appeared in soldiers' magazines and newspapers in 1944 and 1945 for their selfless feats of labor, Inobad, an ethnic Uighur, for routinely overfulfilling the grape harvest by 3 or 4 times, and Ogulkhon, an ethnic Uzbek, for pulling in over 18,000 kg of cotton in one season. They were both photographed against verdant backgrounds, in the colorful *tiubeteikas* and loose blouses of Uzbek “national dress,” and both had multiple braids to mark them as unwed. Shortly after publication, both girls began receiving literally thousands of letters from army installations all over the Soviet Union, from the Russian Far East, Georgia, Chkalov, and Saratov, to battlefronts in Latvia, Eastern Prussia, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Vienna. Of the almost 300 letters held in the Uzbek Academy of Sciences archive, about half are in Russian, half in Uzbek, and a handful in Tatar, Bashkir, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Tajik. And although each letter bears the stamp of the military censor, they represent a rare collection of unedited originals, allowing the voices of young men to be heard in the original, either as patriots offering stock phrases of good will, or as lonely 20-somethings hoping to strike a correspondence or more.

On balance the letters are exceedingly similar and reflect the leveling effects of military service. Regardless of language, they demonstrate the conventions of Soviet letter writing and the ideological language of the army. The authors thank the girls profoundly and speak of defeating the enemy, the unity between front and rear, and often salute “comrade Stalin.” Each soldier learned his field address. Most of them folded their paper into the characteristic triangle that found its way home. Others used army postcards with stylized battle scenes, pictures of the Kremlin, Russian cultural figures like Lev Tolstoy, and the Suvorov quote that “Russians have always beaten Prussians.” And many more used whatever scraps of paper they had at hand

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<sup>163</sup> Interview with Ilvina Shaikhutdinova, December 10, 2012. This story refers to Ilvina's grandfather, an ethnic Tatar from Namangan.

<sup>164</sup> Interview with Agzamkho'zha Ismailovich Askarov, September 13, 2014.

<sup>165</sup> Bilingualism was even a goal for cavalry horses, as in the mare Galiia – named for the Kazakh folk hero - who responded to both Russian and Kazakh commands. Mark Zinger, “On zashchishchal Moskvu,” *Krasnoarmeets*, 23-24 (1941), 18.

including German and Finnish stationary. Both Uzbeks and Russians wrote group letters with classic Soviet verbosity, and a few even included both nationalities. These similarities of expression and material condition remind us of the Red Army's immense success in shaping the worldviews and behavior of its thousands of moving parts.

Nevertheless cultural differences between Uzbeks and Russians were evident. Almost all soldiers asked for a return letter, though primarily the Russians requested a photo because among the Uzbeks this would have been a more provocative request. Uzbeks wrote more group letters than Russians – likely due to their lower literacy. However, only among the officers – usually Slavs – do we encounter the explicit terms “Friendship of the Peoples” and nationalities fighting together “shoulder to shoulder,” taken from the *Nakaz naroda*. We also find several examples of officers writing about the exploits of Uzbek men serving under them, presumably because the men were unable to write themselves, indicating the extent of the 1943 campaigns to integrate non-Russian soldiers. Uzbek authors were more likely to express excitement and pride that the achievement of an Uzbek girl had found its way all the way to the front. And they enumerated lists of greetings and questions about the health of relatives that typify Uzbek greetings. Several wrote or requested poems. And overall the letters showed a boisterousness of phrase including multiple exclamation marks or repetitions of words of praise that were not found among the Russians. The letters reflect the transitional state of Uzbek written culture and the introduction of Cyrillic script in 1938. About 60 percent were written in Cyrillic, 35 percent in Latin, and a small fraction in Arabic script. Many switched freely from Cyrillic to Latin in the same letter, even within the same word, and several wrote in the more familiar Latin yet signed their names in the official Cyrillic. Furthermore, almost all the Uzbek letters bore titles such as *vatanga maktub; kurbylyq qabar; furundan. Dikatlik salam; Sag'inchilik salam hat! Frontdan!; Salomnoma; urtaqliq salam khat*, the diversity of titles demonstrating the novelty of letter-writing for most of the young men on the front.

More than just charming manifestations of Uzbek culture, the variety of this expression showed how war changed the dynamic of Uzbek gender relations. Very few of these men would have written a letter before, and still fewer to a young woman. In an army without pin-up culture, the photos of Inobat and Ogulkhon fulfilled some of the same roles. For the first time young men had the reason and the cultural sanction to correspond openly with young girls they'd never met. Thus the many variations in Uzbek spelling, formulation, titles, and approaches indicated a new cultural practice in formation. The young men were trying on new behaviors modeled by their colleagues at the front, but filtered through their own sensibility and literary abilities.

Among the most surprising habit of the Russian authors was the assumption that the young girls inhabited the same cultural and linguistic world as they did. Although a few wondered about the weather and the fauna of Uzbekistan, most assumed that the relevant features were the same as their own hometowns – girls working on kolkhozes to defeat the enemy. Thus once naturalized in the soldiers' newspapers, it does not occur to most that the girls might not be able to read Russian (and they almost certainly could not). More importantly, most do not realize they are violating strict rural Uzbek cultural norms about relations between the sexes, and especially between Russian men and Muslim women, a cultural taboo that has lasted to the present. Even the standard conventions of most Russian letters – the request for photos and the parting words to “squeeze [the girl's] hand” – would have been scandalous if actually acted out on a village street in Uzbekistan. However, rather than demonstrating the insensitivity of Russian soldiers, they represent the power of the war-time Soviet state to bring its different corners into an “imagined community” of language, values, and goals.

These assumptions demonstrated the power of Russian as *lingua franca* within the army, but also its symbolic status as bearer of progressive and Soviet culture. Like their colleagues in the army, Ogulkhon and Inobad were wrapped up in Russian. Inobad's name proved to be a challenge for many, but along with many misspellings were no shortage of Russifications – “Inobada”, “Ina,” and even “Inochka.” Only once did a Russian author mention being warned by his Uzbek colleagues that his overtures of love might have crossed a cultural boundary. Most acknowledge their letters were likely a surprise, but assume it was a pleasant one. Several mentioned the possibility that the girls could not read Russian, but in these cases they were asked to find a translator. Only a few said they would be okay with a reply in the native Uzbek, mentioning that they had colleagues who could translate. And only once did a Russian letter actually attempt a few words in the girls' native language – granted it was in Bashkir – wishing a good harvest (*o o'zen bolzyn u'rem*).

Finally, the use of Russian by Uzbek authors provides some of the most salient examples of the inescapable Russification of military service. Only Russian was the language of combat and the key to rising in the ranks, so soldiers expressed pride in its acquisition as something akin to mastering their weapon. Uzbek soldiers repeatedly added symbolic Russian phrases such as “goodbye,” “farewell,” and “I'm waiting for your reply” in the spirit of their surroundings. Several other Central Asian authors wrote in Russian with no clear explanation, one even writing an entire group letter in Uzbek, with signatures of his compatriots, and including a carbon copy in Russian on the reverse side. Whether this was because soldiers were only literate in Russian or because of delays for non-Russian mail due to a lack of military censors, in either case the Russifying result remained. In a separate string of correspondences to his family, the young Uzbek writer Abdullakhon Khudzhonov described being “transformed unrecognizably” – standard military rhetoric about physique and demeanor – but clearly also meant his Russian acquisition, which was “going well.”

And by the time most of the mail arrived for Inobad and Ogulkhon, Russian meant internationalism and the fusion of Soviet nationalities. It was the language of the defeat of fascism. Freighted with such meaning, it became a language of aspiration. Men wrote what they could, even if it was not a lot or barely literate. A case in point was the letter of senior sergeant Abduvakhab Iraliev and two colleagues. One begins in Uzbek, another concludes in Uzbek, and yet the third writes in the middle in very broken Russian: “I want through this letter to know you how you live write an answer” (*ia khachuv chiriz eto pismo vas uznat kak vii zhiivotii pishet otvet*)?<sup>166</sup> The author had friends to help him compose his thoughts in his native language if he had desired.

Russian easily became a language of prestige and, perhaps inevitably, love. Men sought to outdo one another in courtship, to evince their cultural progress and success. And Russian was an explicit tactic in their attempts. Mukhamed Ergashov wrote to Ogulkhon in very idiosyncratic Russian, starting his letter “*alangali issik solom*,” an Uzbek translation of the standard Russian greeting of “fiery hello.” He continued ponderously, and flirtatiously, wondering whether it was day or night when she would be receiving his letter. Ergashov introduced himself as a fellow “*Andijanenets*” and expressed his desire to meet his “*zemliachka*” after seeing her photo in the newspaper. He offered to write in more detail in his next letter, “either in Russian if you can read it, or in our language” (*esli mozhete chitat' po ruskii to budu pisat' poruski, libo nimozhete mogu napisat' po svoemu* – sp.). He concluded, from “unknown Mukhamed or Misha” and wrote

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<sup>166</sup> AANRUz f. 54, op. 1, d. 21, l. 89.

“Mikhail” on his return address.<sup>167</sup> Thus in his language and name Ergashov signaled to Ogulkhon that he was a man transformed. He had clearly embraced a new identity and was broadcasting it back to his native Andijan.

And of all the love letters, the most overt was to Ogulkhon from a native of the Molotov district of Fergana oblast. It began: “Hello unknown girl Ogul’khon! Greetings from unknown-to-you young man Kurbanov Takhsibai.” He had been in the army since 1939 but claimed he had not received a letter since 1940. “I don’t even receive anything from my parents and can’t determine why that’s happened, as if I’m not needed by anyone. And I have dreams to see my girl and tell her a few words about why you don’t write me letters...” Then he transitioned to Ogulkhon: “And suddenly I received the newspaper and saw your photo where you were photographed with a good haul of cotton. And I had the idea to write you a letter. I don’t know, maybe you’re married. Then I’ll be unhappy, but if you live alone I will be satisfied (*vy vozmozhno nakhodites’ v zamuzhom. To ia budu ochen’ nedovolen, a esli zhivete odna to ia budu udovletvoren*). Ogulkhon! You might not believe that I’m writing in Russian but I ought to say that having arrived in the army I couldn’t speak Russian and now as you see I’ve already learned to write. And already I mostly speak in Russian. Ogulkhon! I think that receiving my letter and reading it you might not be interested but I beg you to give me a reply.” Further, “I would like to have a written connection with you or friendship at the end of the war. We will meet and then we’ll be lawful friends (*my budem zakonnymi druz’iami*). He requests a photo, and bids her goodbye: “I firmly squeeze your hand and kiss you several times. I am impatiently waiting for your answer.” Next to the return address he includes a few lines in shaky Uzbek that is barely discernible, perhaps to prove his Uzbek credentials.<sup>168</sup> Takhsibai Kurbanov filled his letter with standard Russian formulations, from the request for photos, to the greetings, and the parting wish. His candidacy as a mate seemed to hinge entirely on his mastery of Russian, which he took great pains to describe. Though strewn with errors, his letter embraced not only the grammar and idioms of Russian, but the values and cultural practices associated with it. *Lingua francas* are not neutral, after all, and his example encourages us to think about the Russifying effects of Red Army service on Uzbek male-female interaction. Not only were Uzbek men witness to what has been described as the promiscuous male-female culture of the front, but absorbing the Russian language allowed the men to access a more direct form of address to young women from their own home regions. In a way, they could wear the language like they wore their nicknames; they could take on identity and act accordingly.

Even the less solicitous letters demonstrated a revolution in Uzbek gender relations. At this time rural Uzbek marriages were mostly arranged by parents. Thus few of the Uzbek soldiers had ever had prior reason to compose a letter to a woman, much less one they had never met. And the ogling of women in photos – much like on stage – was a provocative act. Usman Murzayev’s letter to Ogulkhon represents a softer outcome than the plaintive cases above, yet it was still transformative. He wrote in Uzbek (Latin) but nonetheless began with “hello from Germany unknown girl” (*prevyet iz germaniya neznakomim devechka* – sp.) in Russian. He congratulated her on her 18,000kg harvest and photos in the newspaper, which made him and others “very happy.” He referred to her with Uzbek honorifics – “our dear sister” (*qimmatli*

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<sup>167</sup> AANRUz f. 54, op. 1, d. 21, l. 135, 135ob.

<sup>168</sup> AANRUz f. 54, op. 1, d. 21, l. 248. The final lines are first in poorly-spelled Russian and then Uzbek: “*poka dusvidaniya/ ...agai o’zpakskii/ ...uzka qaulxan/ ... zemu/ Курбанов/ Kurbanib.*” The deciphering is made even more difficult by coming in the fold of the page.

*apamiz*), “sister-Ogulkhon” (*Ogulkhan-apa*) – yet his text was suffused with Russianisms, from his title as “frontovik” to his half-Russian explanation that he was located near Berlin (*Germaniyada patstupi Berlinida*). Yet to get closer to her he explained that he was also an “Uzbek child” (*Uzbek bolasi*) and also harvested cotton, which served as his transition to request a return letter.<sup>169</sup> Even if Murazyev’s Russian was less than fluent, it nonetheless crept into the text. And the logic of the front-line letter – the response to photos, the request for correspondence that might lead into acquaintance – transformed his methods of interacting with women back home in Uzbekistan.

Although it is difficult to trace how army service and its culture of photos and correspondence actually translated into gender relations once soldiers returned from the front, the rise of mixed-ethnic marriages was one visible effect of the war. Among the interviewees, Sabirov married a Ukrainian woman he met at a dance in Tashkent in 1951. Abdulaziz Dzhurabaev (b. 1924) wistfully recalled his first “secret wife,” a Ukrainian *svyazistka* he met in the service.<sup>170</sup> Patkhudin Mukhitdinov recalled that many Central Asian men took Russian wives after the war because so many wounded soldiers wed the nurses who looked after them, the majority of whom were Slavs. Even Turakul Toshev had a child with the Italian woman in whose home he found refuge in Bologna. The phenomenon was so widespread that a common fear among the mothers in rural Uzbekistan was that army service would result in their sons marrying non-Muslims and bringing them home. Many of these marriages were successful, others resulted in divorce, and still others resulted in women converting to Islam.<sup>171</sup>

The Central Asian men who survived the war returned fundamentally shaped by the experience. They had a complicated path, marked by differences in language, religion, custom, diet, and climate that resulted in estrangement from their units and disproportionate losses. As a formerly colonized people that had not been mobilized in several generations, history determined that the Central Asians were the least prepared. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Soviet nationalities policy had granted gentler timelines to the “formerly backward” republics, but the war destroyed that calculus. War demanded that Uzbeks and the rest be subject to the same rules and expectations as the other nationalities and the war generation paid in blood but ultimately attained a status in the family of republics and along the Marxist development of history that in theory erased that distance.

But it was not just the Central Asian soldiers who adapted to military service. In order to absorb the several million soldiers, the Red Army displayed surprising flexibility to accommodate their religious beliefs, customs, and language differences, as testified by the propaganda campaigns, agitators, musical troops, language classes, and laxity with burials that were deployed especially for them. Their presence was visible and well-known across the fronts and especially starting at Stalingrad where they began the difficult task of overcoming the negative reputations incurred at the start of the war, a burden that was only partially lifted.

For Uzbeks there was no factor more important than language to determine their fate and military role. The army was indeed a training school for many but it could not keep pace with the

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<sup>169</sup> AANRUz f. 54, op. 1, d. 21, l. 79.

<sup>170</sup> Interview with Abdulaziz Dzhurabaev, September 20, 2014.

<sup>171</sup> Sabirov interview; Makhutdinov interview; Akhmatov interview. The insight about non-Muslim women converting to Islam comes from a conversation with Tashkent-based historian of Uzbek women, Gulnora Ganieva, September 10, 2014.

thousands of villagers who did not speak a word of Russian. Thus historical patterns and emerging Soviet social formations became even more visible in its ranks as Kazakhs and Tatars became frequent agitators and officers, and those who knew Russian – wards of the state but also the educated sons of religious families – rose to become officers. In this way the army was simultaneously a democratizing vector in society, but it also reflected old hierarchies.

On balance though, Red Army service was an inexorable force for uniformity. Central Asians numbered among the heroes, the traitors, and everyone in between. Some used the war to redeem themselves, others wound up unlucky victims of imprisonment and stigma. True, Central Asians were underrepresented in the officer corps due to matters of history and in the distribution of awards. Yet on the level of the platoon, the experience of all soldiers was the same. Even if accent and skin color were constantly commented upon in the press, nationality did not matter in the sense that only bravery and skill did. Men from different republics ate the same food and drink, even if some did so reluctantly. They wore the same uniforms even if for some it was foreign at first. They wrote the same letters on the same paper to the same girls, even though for some it was an everyday affair while for others it was provocatively new. And the marvels of urban Europe were novel for all, but none were so surprising as being called “Rus” for the men from Namangan.

This seemingly ethnic transformation was at the heart of the Central Asian war experience, and was quite different than anything experienced by Russian soldiers. Ivan-Tajik, Ivan-Uzbek, and Misha, Grisha, and Yuri who were actually Mukhamed, Gulom, and Iusup, exemplified this identity shift that seemed in some registers to be simple Russification. Double ethnicity was a logical impossibility yet the most common outcome for the Central Asian men at war. The answer to the puzzle lies in the multiplicity of the Russian half.

Russian language and culture were not just the patrimony of the Elder Brother in the Soviet family, nor simply the language of Lenin, the revolution, and the Party. Nor was it just the bearer of a pan-Soviet identity or the *lingua franca* of command. It was all of these and also the language of victory and a resurgent internationalism that reigned over Europe expunged of Nazi racism. And for the Central Asian soldier, learning the language allowed him to leap into the center of the world stage and take equal part in it all. When he was labeled “Rus” or “Ivan,” he had plenty of reason to wear it like a badge, one that he often wore of his own volition and was eager to share with friends, family, and even a future beloved back home.

But for all of its international character, Russian was not value neutral, and was a language tied to a very specific group in time and place. And this created the confusion, making internationalization also look like Russification. In parts of Central Asia, to learn Russian was still rife with connotations of the former colonial master or the Elder Brother, depending on location. And the language was not just an inert conveyor of information but a constellation of gender and social values which could disrupt local society. And if a soldier returned from war with a Russian wife and as a drinker, adding the “Ivan” seemed not only an addition, but an amendment or disfigurement of the “Uzbek” or the “Tajik.” For at least one soldier, the Islamic honorific was even removed.

But despite the tension and even the violence embedded in the double-ethnic formula, it was embraced by its wearers without great torment and worn so naturally that it resembled a nationality of its own. This was precisely the “Soviet people” (*Sovietskii narod*) that Party leadership began referring to during the war. The term referred to the multi-national Soviet polity, but used the language of the nation because it seemed that the various peoples were in fact

fusing into one. It is important to remember that Stalin, as far back as his 1913 treatise on nationalities, had defined a nation not ethnically, but as a “historically constituted” community, sharing language, territory, and economic life, whose members shared a “common mentality” as a result of their shared experience. Since the 1920s the number of officially recognized nationalities had declined to reflect this historical evolution. And this chapter has shown there was nothing more powerful than a war to meld the many peoples by language and mentality.



## CHAPTER 2: *An underclass among the innocent: Central Asian trudarmeitsy in the Urals*

Unlike the men drafted to serve in the military, tens of thousands of Uzbek men mobilized in the “labor army,” or *trudarmiia*, were deprived a path towards Soviet assimilation. At least 95,000 men from Central Asia and Kazakhstan – the majority of them Uzbeks – toiled in mines, defense factories, and construction sites in the Urals and Siberia, encountering exceedingly high levels of illness and mortality, exacerbated by the indifference and nationalist insults from management and fellow workers. Their experiences paralleled only those of Soviet POWs and “unreliable” nationalities in severity, revealing how in the pressure-cooker of the Soviet homefront, where social hierarchies became starker, that older, rural, non-Russian-speaking Central Asian men were some of the most woeful victims and the least capable of advocating for themselves. When central Party organs finally determined the situation to be intolerable, they responded with accommodations to national difference and segregation, ensuring that those who survived might eventually gain an industrial specialization but could not become Ivan-Tajiks.

Such mistreatment was only possible in an atmosphere of material and personnel shortages, haste, and stress. The Urals provided 40 percent of all military production during the war and was already simmering with tension and dissatisfaction in autumn 1941. Almost 1.5 million evacuees from European Russia worked in local and newly constructed factories and struggled to find lodgings, bearing no small amount of resentment from local people for taking up spare rooms and earning greater wages and rations. A Kirov factory worker attested that “Kharkov workers complete 100 percent of the plan and receive 1000g of bread whereas I complete 150 percent and get 700g.” Locals complained that newcomers from Western cities dressed and acted with a sense of “superiority,” while some locals looked at the evacuees “like arrivals from a foreign government.”<sup>172</sup> Thus real and perceived differences in government treatment heightened tension between evacuated and local populations.

And still the state’s enterprises operated with labor deficits. Urban populations in the Urals were mobilized for seasonal work in the fields, and *kolkhozniki* from various oblasts were marshaled for temporary work in transport and construction. In response the GKO and SNK obligated the Commissariat of Defense to mobilize draft-eligible men (below age 50) to work in industry, construction, and transportation. And in January and February 1942 more than 290,000 so-called *trudarmeitsy* of various nationalities and points of origin labored in the Urals, as construction battalions (*stroibaty*), and labor columns (*rabochie kolonny*). These included draft-age men who for reasons of health or age were unfit for front-line service, and a significant percentage who came from politically or socially “unreliable” people: labor settlers, former convicts, people from newly conquered territories (Finns, Latvians, Estonians, Poles, Belarusians, Moldovans, western Ukrainians, Soviet and other Germans). Party leadership in Chkalov oblast was well aware of the low work discipline, unhealthy mood, desertions, unsanitary living conditions, and illness that were rampant among these labor columns, and decided to remove them from army authority and place them instead under local enterprise leadership, but the situation improved little. By the end of 1942 most of labor columns deemed

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<sup>172</sup> Vera Valer’ievna Solov’ieva, “Bytovye usloviia personala promyshlennykh predpriatii Urala v 1941-1945 g.g: gosudarstvennaia politika i strategii adaptatsii” (diss. UFU im. Iel’tsina, Ekaterinburg, 2011), 239, 241.

politically trustworthy were called to active service or dissolved due to illness. They were replaced by at least 95,000 men drafted from the Central Asia Military District, though this precise mobilization order and its official rationale has not been discovered.<sup>173</sup>

According to one recent study, by mid-1943 61.7 percent of mobilized labor columns in the Urals were composed of enemy nationals, with 35 percent from Central Asia and Kazakhstan, and 3.3 percent special settlers (former kulaks, Polish lords, etc.).<sup>174</sup> Central Asian laborers were not placed under the same surveillance as Soviet Germans and other untrustworthy nationalities, and could mix with the local population in cities and markets, but the state's disregard for their wellbeing was apparent. They were not just an available labor input in a time of shortage, but one the state knew would not cause much trouble. By the middle of the war, the term *trudarmeits* had purely negative associations with enemy nationalities, and revealed something of the state's estimation of these workers.<sup>175</sup> In turning to Central Asian labor, Urals and central Party-state leadership knew full well the difficult fates they were consigning the men to. Thus it was also because of signals they received from the Party-state that enterprise administrators treated Central Asian laborers as the underclass among the innocent. And the Urals industrial sites featured no shortage of hungry, frustrated, and transplanted Russians, many who sought to assert their status superiority over at least one other group of people.

Most Central Asian workers arrived in the Urals between autumn 1942 and spring 1943. The highest numbers were in Sverdlovsk (36,000) and Cheliabinsk (20,000) oblasts.<sup>176</sup> By one count there were 32,620 Uzbeks in the entire Urals economic region in April 1943, while in November the active number of Central Asian and Kazakh workers was at least 59,000.<sup>177</sup>

Central Asian voenkوماتs worked with tremendous haste and urgency to fulfill these labor obligations and failed to equip the men with supplies, warm clothing, or shoes on the false assumption that these would be awaiting them in the Urals. Although recruits were supposed to come from the elder portion of draft-eligible men who passed screening, they often sent whomever they could find, resulting in many being sent back immediately upon arrival. Party authorities in the Urals informed Moscow that the Tashkent oblvoenkomat had gathered together 1,700 workers for the Ufa locomotive factory in just three days, pulling some from the deep provinces, some from prisons, and others, "directly from the streets." The men arrived in late

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<sup>173</sup> N.P. Paletskikh, *Sotsial'naiia politika na Urale v period Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny* (Cheliabinsk: ChGAU, 1995), 15-17. Paletskikh cites the data of Ekaterinburg (Sverdlovsk)-based historian, B.P. Dement'iev.

<sup>174</sup> See <http://hasid.livejournal.com/359217.html?thread=3996465&mode=reply>, last accessed July 12, 2015. The author references data from "Liudi 'vtorogo sorta' v usloviakh voennogo vremeni: Iz povsednevnoi zhizni 'trudarmeysev' Urala v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny." *Vestnik Rossiiskogo universiteta Druzhby narodov*, No. 2, 2003.

<sup>175</sup> I thank Valeriy Khan for this observation. Khan's own work sheds light on the participation of Koreans – another suspect people – in the *trudarmia*, who were sent to Komi ASSR. See V.S. Khan, "Uzbekistani Koreans in the labor army during World War II (historiography of the problem)", *International Journal of Central Asian Studies*, Vol. 11, Seoul, 2006, pp. 59-71.

<sup>176</sup> A. A. Antuf'iev, *Ural'skaia promyshlennost' nakanune i v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine* (Ekaterinburg: UrO RAN, 1992), 266.

<sup>177</sup> Aleksei Starostin, "Eto byla obshchaia Pobeda. Kak rabochie iz Tsentral'noi Azii kovali Pobedu v Ural'skom tylu." At <http://dipkurier.narod.ru/dip93/istoriya.htm> (accessed October 10, 2012). This figure reflects my own data compiled from RGASPI f.17, op. 122, d. 50, l. 1-35.

1942 without warm clothes or shoes, and without undergoing medical checks. More than half were immediately sent home. They complained that the majority of workers mobilized from Uzbekistan were elderly, sick, weak, without any industrial skill, and without knowledge of Russian.<sup>178</sup> The system's inefficiency was apparent with so many men turned away immediately and sent back home. Of 773 workers who arrived at building trust #51 in Izhevsk in March 1943, 222 were sent back home due to illness. At the Urals Turbzavod 100 out of 500 were immediately returned. Similar numbers occurred at the Kirov factory in Cheliabinsk.<sup>179</sup>

Tajik voenkomats were no better. A fact-finding mission sent by the Tajik TsK VKP(b) in July 1943 found that health and age had not been considered among call-ups, accounting for why 59, 62, and 65-year-olds worked at heavy labor in the Urals. Of one group of 950 mobilized to Sverdlovsk oblast, 300 men were immediately returned home. And of 4,000 sent to Novosibirsk oblast, 695 were deemed unfit and sent back.<sup>180</sup>

Those who stayed were given the most rudimentary tasks at mines, construction sites, and factories given their lack of Russian language and unfamiliarity with industrial work. Nor could they become effective laborers because living conditions were so horrendous. Those who arrived in autumn or winter with nothing but a khalat and sandals were consigned to almost certain sickness or death. While they often faced the same unhygienic living arrangements and meager rations as Russian evacuees and the mobilized Red Army soldiers that they replaced, they were worse equipped from the start. In the best scenarios they lived in overcrowded barracks, but often had to settle for dugouts or factory floors. Rations were paltry and varied by enterprise but were always tied to production amounts, which made Central Asian men particularly vulnerable. But it was the ethnic enmity directed at them that compounded these problems for Central Asian men.

As on the front, their supervisors grew frustrated over their lack of Russian knowledge. A Chkalov obkom report found that although one could find an occasional Uzbek who spoke Russian, almost no Turkmen or Tajiks did.<sup>181</sup> Without a robust agitprop program, and with a work culture that stressed output above all else and the knowledge that menial laborers could be replaced, Russian bosses could take out their frustrations without restraint, making cultural differences seem unbridgeable. Ia. Ie. Gol'dshtein, a head metallurgist at the Kirov factory in Cheliabinsk, recalled the plight of Uzbeks in the foundry: "they understood their orders poorly, carried them out even worse, and often kneeled down, spread their arms and started to pray. The head of heat treatment removal (*termoobrubnoi ochistki*), under whose watch they fell, treated them worse than the Spanish treated their slaves in America. For not completing work he would often beat them, deprive them their meager lunch, bread rations. Uzbeks melted under our eyes, many died right here on the factory floor."<sup>182</sup>

One of the first notes of alarm sent by the laborers themselves found its way to the TsK VKP(b) Organizational-Instructional department in January 1943 via the Kyrgyz TsK VKP(b). A group of 150 laborers mobilized from Dzhalalabad oblast in Kyrgyzstan (comprised of mostly

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<sup>178</sup> Paletskikh, 18.

<sup>179</sup> Paletskikh, 18; Solov'ieva, 244-245.

<sup>180</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 122, d. 50, l. 33, 33ob.

<sup>181</sup> K.A. Morgunov, "Rabochie iz respublik Srednei Azii na predpriatiiakh i stroikakh iuzhnogo Urala v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny," *Etnopanorama* (2008), pp. 59-62, 59.

<sup>182</sup> Ia. Ie. Gol'dshtein, *Otkrovenno govoria... vospominaniia, razmyshleniia* (Cheliabinsk: "Rifei," 1995), 161-162, as cited in Solov'ieva, 246.

Uzbeks and Kyrgyz) wrote a group appeal for aid, permission to return home, or NKO investigation. They had arrived at the Kuibyshev mine of Stalinugol' trust in Molotov oblast in May 1942 and had been set to work removing coal scraps. Now in October as winter storms began to hit the Urals, they filed grievances testifying to miserable living conditions emanating from mistreatment from their fellow workers and Russian bosses, who had refused their proposal to send a group back to Kyrgyzstan for supplies and warm clothing.<sup>183</sup>

The letter's success (it was read by Malenkov and forwarded to Shamberg) lay in its fidelity to Soviet letter-writing norms and socialist terms. Even though most of the men could barely form signatures, at least one was fluent not only in Russian but official correspondence, emphasizing that many of the signees were Stakhanovites from kolkhozes in "sunny Kyrgyzstan." The grisly details also ensured it would be forwarded to the Party's highest offices, and may have instigated the Party's overhaul of Central Asian laborer treatment in the Urals in spring 1943. It began: "since our arrival to our place of work the mine administration has looked upon us as if we were the lowest form of life and relations towards us have been as if in a feudal society." Further on the author describes the administration's treatment as "the most blatant chauvinism," and that foremen shove them, calling them "Basmachis" and "beasts." They were subject to overcrowding, lack of hygiene, no access to medicine, no warm clothing, and not enough food – "nightmarish living conditions." Fatalities occurred regularly and dead bodies were not removed from barracks for several days, exacerbating illness.<sup>184</sup>

And behind all of these tribulations lay the mine's separate but unequal treatment. They wrote how at first they shared a common cafeteria with the Russian workers but were then split off into an "Uzbek cafeteria, as they call it," where the food quality worsened, consisting of scraps left over from the Russians. Elsewhere it was known that Uzbeks refused to eat pork for religious reasons and that Central Asians often abstained from fish, sausage, mushrooms, and sour cabbage.<sup>185</sup> However, even if the administration created a cafeteria out of cultural considerations, it was interpreted as a punitive, exclusionary act by the Dzhahalabad laborers. They also lacked outerwear, hats, and shoes since they had arrived in May, as well as changes of underwear, bed linens, and soap. However, they reported being unable to purchase these times because the mine store was strictly for Russian workers. Nor would they have been able to afford purchases. They earned a maximum of 2 rubles and 80 kopecks each day, even though daily meals cost a minimum of 3 rubles. They could not perform hauling minimums because management had not provided them with wagons, forcing them to stand idle for 5-6 hours per day in the elements. And despite being prone to illness, the Russian medical staff refused to assist them, leaving them "doomed to die from sickness," wallowing on the planks of the barracks.

An even grimmer picture of ethnic relations came from a propagandist Usubaliev, a Kyrgyz Party member (and likely the future Kyrgyz First Party Secretary Turdakun Usubaliev (b.1919)), sent to conduct agitation work at the Kopeisk mines in Cheliabinsk oblast in September 1943. In a letter to the Kyrgyz TsK he revealed that of an initial group of 1,468 laborers that had arrived the previous year, 300 had died and 600 had been removed for illness or fled. Although the situation had improved in 1943, his summary of the previous year was damning:

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<sup>183</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 122, d. 50, l. 1-3.

<sup>184</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 122, d. 50, l. 2-2ob.

<sup>185</sup> This anecdote came from Sverdlovsk obkom sources. See Solov'ieva, 245.

Here in Kopeisk Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, and Kazakhs are not considered people, but are called ‘*babai*’, ‘sheep’, ‘dog.’ If nationals walked on the street Russian guys would throw rocks at them and insult them in all ways. In 1942, starting from children to old people, women and men, all Russians displayed nationalism (great-power chauvinism), they violated the Stalinist constitution, mocked the *natsmeny*, created inhumane conditions. For instance, last year (at night) one *natsmen* was beaten to death by Russians on the street without any reason.

He also recalled how a bootmaker Abdukarimov was beaten nearly to death in a cafeteria while bystanders watched and laughed and how in September 1943 an Uzbek was beaten with sticks by two men at the bazar who demanded, “who let you walk around the bazar?!” Usubaliev contended that mine administrators knew of all the offenses but took no actions. The high mortality rate was also connected to interethnic mistreatment. Laborers recalled that in the winter of 1942-43 they buried up to eight men a day, who were often left to rot in place by foremen. But just as in the Kuibyshev mines, laborers held that Russian doctors refused to offer them any help. Usubaliev wrote that “doctors do not allow sick workers-*natsmen* close to their doors, chasing them away with the words, ‘leave *babai*, work!’” Spring 1943 brought measures of improvement – for instance the arrival of Usubaliev, a translator, agitator, and advocate – and the arrangement of a group sent to Kyrgyzstan to collect warm clothing.<sup>186</sup> But the group faced a threatening winter without shoes, hats, and jackets, and the relations with Russian workers and administrators continued to be lethal.

Although the Central Asian workers’ unfamiliarity with the northern climate was often cited as a reason for higher rates of illness and death, it is clear that enterprise management was complicit, as were voenkomats in their home republics who rushed them off without preparation or warning, in some cases well aware of the conditions that would greet them. Central Asian *trudarmeitsy* clearly fared worse than other worker populations in the Urals. In February 1943 Central Asian laborers at Magnitogorsk metallurgical combine underwent medical exams that found that 23 percent had dystrophy and 8 percent were pre-dystrophic. At the Urals Turb Zavod, those who were not sent immediately home were “completely unequipped with clothes and shoes and wore only robes and slippers. No underwear.” Sverdlovsk obkom noted that the majority were older people with chronic illnesses that would soon be unable to work.<sup>187</sup> In May 1943 it was estimated that 40 percent of Ivanovo oblast’s 1,111 Uzbek laborers were suffering from tropical malaria, which had killed 16 of them.<sup>188</sup> Central Asian men protested in a variety of ways, most notably through flight. In Chkalov oblast for instance, at OSMCh (*osobo stroitel’no-montazhnyi chast’*) No. 23, 200 Uzbeks fled in a season, at construction site #112 the number reached 340. And at Dombarovka 205 of 300 escaped.<sup>189</sup> Others engaged in behavior that might get management in trouble, refusing to leave their barracks for work, going on hunger strikes, or abstained from learning an industrial specialty. Others mutilated themselves or drank salt water

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<sup>186</sup> L.S. Gatagova, L.P. Kosheleva, L.A. Rogovaia, Dzh. Kadio, eds. *TsK VKP(b) i natsional’nyi vopros, kn. 2, 1933-1945* (Moskva: “ROSSPEN,” 2009), pp.776-778. Document from RGASPI f. 17, op. 117, d. 371, l. 97-98. The report from Usubaliev was discussed at the Secretariat TsK VKP(b) on November 6, 1943 and sent to Cheliabinsk obkom for appropriate action.

<sup>187</sup> Solov’ieva, 244-245.

<sup>188</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 122, d. 50, l. 11.

<sup>189</sup> Morgunov, 60.

in order to receive medical attention or get sent home.<sup>190</sup> However, the most common opposition was the entreaty to be sent home.

The local population and fellow workers were aware of the Central Asians' plight but often responded with callous resignation to conditions and segregation that they did not feel empowered to change. A case in point came from the Urals Factory for Heavy Machinery (*Ural'skii Zavod Tiazhelogo Mashinostroeniia*, or UZTM) in Nizhnii Tagil, where Tamara Khanum gave her concert in 1943. According to Iosif Mikhailovich Tsukernik (1912-2003), the head power engineer, the factory's acronym was given a sinister double meaning – Uzbek This is Your Grave (*Uzbek Zdes' Tvoia Mogila*) – in reflection of the high mortality. Tsukernik remembered seeing Uzbek men bare-chested in robes working in driving rain, unable to adapt to unfamiliar cuisine. He recalled how once winter hit it became difficult to bury the bodies so the factory dug out a long, shallow, temporary grave that would be opened during the spring thaw for proper reburial. With dark humor, people would ask about a certain missing Uzbek worker and be told that he was in “Lozovoskii's warehouse,” the nickname for the mass grave named for the elderly man charged with watching over it. But the spring thaw happened in fits and starts, causing the bodies to freeze together. He recalls watching men hack apart the bodies with axes to bury them separately, causing appendages to end up separate from their torsos.<sup>191</sup>

These examples of discrimination, segregation, and violence reveal how frayed the social fabric in the Soviet home front became. It is not so much that most citizens of the Urals and other evacuated Russians held negative views of Central Asians (although some clearly did). Rather, in an atmosphere of stress, shortage, and competition for scant resources, people drew lines of identity in the sand versus outsiders, whether they were evacuated Leningraders or farmers from rural Uzbekistan. Unfortunately, by throwing previously unknown populations together in these circumstances without a requisite amount of agitation and political education, the Party-state created a combustible mix that actually created new prejudices and resentments. Evacuated Russian workers or hungry Russian kolhozniki mobilized for seasonal work at a mine had reason to lash out and find some other, lower group on whom to take out their frustration. As Gol'dshtein, the metallurgist in Cheliabinsk, reminded, “the life of factory workers in the war years was fully defined by what rungs in the hierarchy of responsibilities, levels, and respect that one had. In the Soviet Union it was always this way, but the war defined these rungs even more starkly.”<sup>192</sup> The rural Central Asian men came to learn that no one ranked lower than them, whether in the eyes of their fellow workers or men at various levels of state or Party authority. They were among the least capable of advocating on their own behalf, and were the underclass of the innocent in the Urals.

When the Soviet Army recognized its own nationalities problems within its units in autumn 1942 it rolled out a series of major structural and agitprop reforms, none so important as the appointment of native-language agitators, nationality-specific cultural support, and Russian language learning. However, a large portion of their success lay in the nature of the army itself. After 1942 army units were entirely integrated, with a common language of command, uniform, goals, and roles for all nationalities. Despite the army's catering to national difference, it created

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<sup>190</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 122, d. 50, l. 31.

<sup>191</sup> Tsukernik's memoirs were recorded by his grandson and transcribed at <http://goloptic.livejournal.com/207372.html>, accessed April 3, 2014.

<sup>192</sup> Gol'dshtein, 161. As cited in Solov'ieva, 251-252.

ample avenues for Central Asians and other non-Russians to rise through the ranks and assimilate into pan-Soviet cultural streams. Although the Party-state made similar concessions for Central Asian laborers in the Urals, the vastly different circumstances ensured that they only reinforced segregation and national difference rather than leading to cultural integration. Whereas an Uzbek on the front might not always think about national identity, or claim that it made no difference, such a sentiment was impossible in the Urals.

Although self-injury and flight were more extreme measures, most Central Asian laborers tried to accommodate themselves to local conditions. Many asked why they had been sent to the Urals at all, the high mortality and sickness rates seeming especially tragic given the labor shortages in their native republics.<sup>193</sup> Others made calculations for their own best interest rather than the benefit of the enterprises. For instance, instead of eating unfamiliar or profane food, some sold their meals and even ration cards for cash in the hopes they might be sent home from exhaustion or at least save up for capital improvements at home, not unlike Central Asian workers in Russian cities today. Former workers recalled that upon the deaths of Uzbek workers they would find large packs of money crammed into their pockets or under mattresses.<sup>194</sup>

And rather than forming vertical bonds with management and Party representatives, Central Asian men's horizontal ties of group solidarity were strengthened. They lived in segregated dorms and barracks, worked together, and often ate at separate tables and cafeterias, thus depriving them of the key venues for integration that occurred in the army, where common meals often formed the first step to break down cultural distances. And unlike multi-national army units, the segregation usually experienced in the Urals was bipolar between Russians and Slavs on one side, and Central Asians on the other, leading to the observations of how it resembled feudal society. Islamic faith also reinforced the Central Asians' supra-national identity, as well as providing avenues for socialization with local Tatar and Bashkir Muslims, who were often employed as translators and agitators for their fluency in Turkic languages and Persian. Workers got into more than one conflict with administrators who forbid them to bury their dead according to Islamic tradition (which required clean sheets), whereas on the front religious burials were permitted. The son of a local Uralmashzavod metalworker who was Muslim recalled how his father was able to socialize for the first time with Muslims from Central Asia. They invited a man home who cooked plov, treated them to dried fruit, prayed with them and talked about common beliefs.<sup>195</sup>

By the time the Party-state responded to the problems of Central Asian laborers, they were already leading separate lives and perceived as a strange, unsuitable, and outside presence by many Slavs in the Urals. Soviet state leadership finally revisited the issue in spring 1943 when military victories in the West caused the re-evacuation of much of the Urals workforce, thus making the efficiency of Central Asian labor newly relevant. The state response was squarely rooted in its national politics, treating the laborers as nationalities with specific national needs. The People's Commissariat for Trade issued directive #323 in July 1943, "On measures to improve the supply of food and industrial products to Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Tajiks, and Kyrgyz mobilized to work at industrial enterprises and construction sites."<sup>196</sup> This measure stipulated the

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<sup>193</sup> Morgunov, 59; Paletskikh, 19.

<sup>194</sup> Solov'ieva, 246-247; TsGA RUz f. 837, op. 32, d. 4283, l. 41ob.

<sup>195</sup> Solov'ieva, 246; Starostin. The recollection came from the Chairman of the Council of Muslim elders of Sverdlov oblast, Rais Gliumovich Nurimanov.

<sup>196</sup> Solov'ieva, 248.

creation of special cafeterias and chaikhanas, with directives to serve rice, dried fruits, green tea (300g per man per month), and “national dishes.” It also authorized enterprises to send laborers back home to collect clothing and food. The administration at OSMU No. 2 in Omsk even made sure its Uzbek emissaries brought back spices to use in Uzbek dishes.<sup>197</sup>

In practice, most of the organization for these measures came from Central Asian Party leadership rather than the enterprises themselves, inspired to act by the petitions they had received from the laborers themselves.<sup>198</sup> They diverted some of the collections from soldiers’ food and gift drives to the Urals. To the largest enterprises they sent Russian-speaking translators and agitators who would help to oversee agitational work among mobilized Central Asians. And they organized the distribution of Central Asian-language newspapers, musical instruments, gramophones and records, and concerts by groups like Tamara Khanum, the Uzbek State Philharmonic orchestra, and a Leninabad theater.<sup>199</sup> The Uzbek TsK was keen to facilitate correspondence between the laborers and their family, and a GOKO emissary in charge of factories in Molotov even suggested to Usman Iusupov that he write a rousing letter of support on the example of one he’d sent to Uzbek troops.<sup>200</sup> The Tajik TsK ensured that the families of its approximately 25,000 mobilized laborers received material support on par with those called to Red Army service.<sup>201</sup> That summer the city of Orsk (Chkalov oblast) gained all the trappings to reflect its temporary, 7,000-person Uzbek diaspora: ten chaikhanas, a factory club in “Eastern style” with rugs and green tea; a library of Uzbek books; film showings with parallel translations into Uzbek; an appearance from the “Tashkent Uzbek” theater; and the construction of *topchany* (sleeping platforms). And at the Chkalov locomotive repair factory Uzbeks in the Red Army stationed nearby visited to give speeches with such titles as “Soviet Friendship of the Peoples in the days of the Great Patriotic War – the guarantee of our victory.”<sup>202</sup>

Through summer and autumn 1943 Central Asian Party leaderships sent representatives to Urals worksites on fact-finding missions, encouraging local enterprise leadership to abide by new directives, and appealing to local obkoms when they did not. Results were mixed. In some instances factories had set up chaikhanas but they stood empty, waiting for the Uzbek TsK to send Russian-speaking Uzbek agitators, and Uzbek books and newspapers.<sup>203</sup> A series of factory and mine administrators were found guilty of abuses and removed from the Party. New fatalities, and desertions were discovered. In September the Molotov obkom met to discuss “living conditions, production, and the cultural situation of workers of Eastern nationalities at oblast enterprises,” finding several managers still guilty of “naked repression,” and a case of “mass

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<sup>197</sup> TsGA RUz f. 837, op. 32, d. 4283, l. 27.

<sup>198</sup> Paletskikh, 20.

<sup>199</sup> Solov’ieva, 248; TsGA RUz f. 837, op. 32, d. 4283, l. 28.

<sup>200</sup> TsGA RUz f. 837, op. 32, d. 4283, l. 28, 29, 36, 36ob.

<sup>201</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 122, d. 50, l. 34. In July 1945 Tajik TsK First Secretary Protopopov appealed to Malenkov to return all remaining Tajik laborers from the Urals due to “extreme labor needs” in their native republic. He estimated that 25,000 out of 49,973 Tajiks mobilized had been returned to the Tajik SSR due to illness or unfitnes. See RGASPI f. 17, op. 121, d. 373, l. 25, as cited in Gatagova et al., *TsK VKP(b) i natsional’nyi vopros, kn. 2, 1933-1945*, 966.

<sup>202</sup> Morgunov, 61.

<sup>203</sup> TsGA RUz f. 837, op. 32, d. 4283, l. 36.



convictions of Uzbek workers” at one factory.<sup>204</sup> Meanwhile correspondences crossed the Soviet Union ensuring that laborers were outfitted with green tea, *nas* chewing tobacco, lamb, and musical instruments, in keeping with the “national-lifestyle peculiarities (*national’no-bytovskie osobennosti*)” of men from Central Asia.<sup>205</sup> The kitchen at OSMCh #52, one of the worst destinations for Uzbek workers, was equipped with a tandoor oven to make non-leavened “Uzbek bread.” And the Turkmen TsK arranged for the shipment of 20 medics who knew Turkmen well, along with 3,800 pairs of *charyk* and *chokoi* (traditional Turkmen slippers and felt boot, respectively).<sup>206</sup>

But in addition to sparkling reports of fresh bedding, reorganized catering, and chaikhanas bedecked with Uzbek-language slogans, oblast organs had to admit that living conditions and professional outcomes for Central Asian laborers lagged behind other workers. New cultural support and translators allowed some *trudarmeitsy* particularly at smaller enterprises to acquire industrial specializations. For instance, at Factory #18 in Kuibyshev oblast 121 people worked according to new specialties as metal workers, scaffold-builders, drillers, and riveters. At Factory #207 60 percent of Uzbek, Kazakh, and Turkmen workers overfulfilled norms and 30 percent were named Stakhanovites.<sup>207</sup> And most enterprises boasted at least a handful of Uzbek Stakhanovites who exceeded norms.<sup>208</sup> However, the majority of *trudarmeitsy* continued to labor in auxiliary work, such as delivery, stacking, hauling, and clearing transport lines. And despite legislation on food and lodgings, *trudarmeitsy* living and dining conditions only marginally improved, colliding with harsh material realities and uneven political will.

Ethnic relations remained contentious. In July 1943 the People’s Commissar for Forest Industry M. Saltykov notified Malenkov of the “extreme need” for the Uzbek TsK to send a group of Uzbek Party members to Sverdlovsk oblast, where no political work had taken place among the 2,500 Uzbeks mobilized because no one knew the language, leading to desertion, speculation, robbery, and violence. Several factories in Kuibyshev oblast were also still characterized by “disdainful” treatment of Uzbeks, whose living conditions were administered with “criminal inaction,” flouting obkom orders to consider the “national peculiarities and customs of the Uzbeks.” At OSMCh #52, where 700 Uzbeks performed various grunt tasks, separate cafeterias were not set up, rations and industrial good cards were not distributed to Uzbek workers, and they were known to eat grass, grain residues, and potato peels, resulting in gastrointestinal sickness and at least 25 deaths in the last few months. Factory leadership was found to “look past the blatantly malicious actions of certain workers who, using the total lack of control for Soviet goals, tried to sew panic among the Uzbeks, unhappiness, and to evoke resentment against the efforts to inspire Uzbeks to work in industry.” The Kuibyshev obkom biuro believed that similar treatment of Uzbeks was occurring at Kashpirrudnik, Factory #15,

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<sup>204</sup> At the Verkhne-Tavdin leskombinat, Sverdlovsk obkom biuro determined in January 1944 that of 3,116 Uzbeks who arrived in May 1943, only 600 remained. The rest had been sent home immediately, died, or fled. The families of the deceased were often not notified without great delay, causing anger among fellow workers. The administrator was removed from his post and the Party and convicted. See Paletskikh, 19.

<sup>205</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 122, d. 50, l. 6, 7.

<sup>206</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 122, d. 50, l. 29, 40.

<sup>207</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 122, d. 50, l. 28.

<sup>208</sup> See for example, TsGA RUz f. 837, op. 32, d. 4283, l. 36, 38, 41.

and elsewhere.<sup>209</sup> Thus the introduction of national-cultural programming was hardly a cure-all, and was sometimes willfully ignored. The case from Kuibyshev demonstrated resentment against what may have been perceived as special, favorable treatment for Uzbeks, and an effort to enforce national divides between Slavic industrial workers and the non-trained rural Central Asians. The vitriol encountered by the Uzbek laborers only reinforced Party logic to separate the two populations where needed. Unfortunately, although many construction sites and factories made fundamental changes in the cultural support of the Uzbek workforce, these interventions were spotty, of limited effect, and often too late. Central Asian laborers in the Urals discovered that even separate facilities were not necessarily equal.

For the most part Central Asian laborers were finally demobilized at the end of 1943 and early 1944 by order of the SNK SSSR.<sup>210</sup> This was in effect an admission by central authorities that their labor was too ineffective and local conditions too divisive. The task of organizing the safe return of thousands of laborers fell to the same local enterprises charged with allotting them improved resources. Therefore although some adequately organized food, water, and medical personnel to make the journey, other enterprises took the quickest, cheapest way out. For instance, the People's Commissariat of Communication Lines in Sverdlovsk oblast was found guilty of "criminal negligence" in sending *trudarmeitsy* deemed unfit for work back to Central Asia in 1943, causing the deaths of many men en route. In other cases demobilized men died waiting for travel documents and medical care, unable to board waiting trains.<sup>211</sup>

Despite the suffering, death, and humiliation of thousands of men in the Urals, conditions improved for some Central Asian laborers at the end of their terms. By some estimates 4,500 men attained industrial specialties that in theory should have provided them steady employment upon their return to their native republics.<sup>212</sup> And local Urals newspapers and Party reports celebrated these comparatively rare cases. For instance, *Ural'skii rabochii* ran a series of articles on Uzbek workers in the Urals in April and May 1945, focusing on the training of young Uzbek men, calling special attention to their elaborate welcomes and cultural support offered by factory leadership, including theatrical performances, Russian lessons, and artistic circles. However, although some of these lucky few had been mobilized, young *trudarmeitsy* who had stayed, the bulk were a much smaller contingent of young industrial workers who had been sent in small, well-organized groups for specific training upgrades.<sup>213</sup> The press conflated the two populations to tell a wholly different narrative of the Uzbek war-time experience in the Urals.

In fact, silence about the Central Asian *trudarmeitsy* in the republican and Party press, as well as in the burgeoning postwar mythification of the Uzbek war effort offer tacit proof of the experiment's incontrovertible failure and account for its relatively unknown legacy. There is no mention of Central Asian laborers in the Urals in otherwise comprehensive and classic Uzbek war histories written by Voskoboinnikov (1947), Zhitov (1956), Dzhuraev (1963, 1966), Pulatov

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<sup>209</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 122, d. 50, l. 17, 20-22. In response the Kuibyshev obkom biuro replaced, removed from the Party, and convicted a series of factory leaders.

<sup>210</sup> Paletskikh, 20.

<sup>211</sup> Paletskikh, 20.

<sup>212</sup> Solov'ieva, 249.

<sup>213</sup> See for example, D. Giorg'ieva, "Ucheba molodykh uzbekov," *Ural'skii rabochii*, April 17, 1945; Evgenii Lebedev, "Uzbeki na Urale," *Ural'skii rabochii*, May 25, 1945.

(1966), Shishkin (1968), and Inoiatov (1975), placing it in company of other forbidden subjects like the deportation of Crimean Tatars, Koreans, and other “unreliable” nationalities.<sup>214</sup>

An enigmatic exception to this silence came from the pen of an actual *trudarmeits*, Sodyk Kalandar from Uzbekistan, whose story “We’re in the Urals” (*My na Urale*) was published in installments in the Tashkent literary magazine *Zvezda Vostoka* in 1946 and by the Uzbek state publishing house in 1948.<sup>215</sup> On the story’s first page a large asterisk referred to an editor’s note explaining that the author was a “highly observant” eyewitness and first-time author who sought to record his “rich personal impressions” of the reconstruction of defense industry factories in the Urals – a “new and interesting theme.” However, his “lack of literary skills did not allow [him] to reach artistic consolidation, and the story demanded a full reworking and serious literary editing,” which was conducted by the writer A. Udalov.<sup>216</sup> This was not a ringing endorsement.

It appears that Kalandar was granted permission to include only the barest of factual details and that Udalov should have been acknowledged as co-author. On the whole the story reads like a timeless love affair, without specific time or place, the sort of melodramatic fantasy mixed with socialist realism that evacuated writers had criticized in Central Asian literature during the war. The story follows the young rural couple, Botyr-Ali and Tufakhon, who are engaged to marry. He is from modest means and is called up to the army and she, a Stakhanovite in her kolkhoz, vows to follow. To his disappointment, Botyr-Ali is first diverted to Sverdlovsk to build homes and factories for evacuated workers from Leningrad. While he’s away, his romantic rival Kodyr-Ali, a brigadier and self-described son of a wealthy family, intercepts Tufakhon’s mail in effort to convince her that her love has forgotten her. Soon Tufakhon implausibly boards a train with other Uzbek women bound for Sverdlovsk to learn factory trades and search for her love, who has by this time been transferred to the front. But she decides to stay and learn her trade, and is aided by the friendship and hospitality of a Russian woman, who cooks for her and helps her with her Russian. She becomes proud of her accomplishments and believes they are worthy of sharing in letters to Botyr-Ali, who has remained faithful to her until the end of the war.

The story has patently unbelievable elements, none more so than the group of Uzbek girls heading to the Urals on behalf of their FZO training. Yet it refracts a few important truisms. Even set in the socialist Uzbek countryside it echoes the class dynamic of traditional stories like *Bai i Batrak* about the love of two poor people that is challenged by the self-assured, entitled local elite. It is also suggestive that the wealthy brigadier has evaded mobilization while Botyr-

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<sup>214</sup> E. A. Voskoboinikov, *Uzbekskii narod v gody velikoi otechestvennoi voiny* (Tashkent: Gosizdat UzSSR, 1947); K.E. Zhitov, ed., *Iz istorii Sovetskogo Uzbekistana: sbornik statei* (Tashkent: AN UzSSR, 1956); T.Dzh. Dzhuraev, *Uzbekistan v dni velikoi bitvy na Volge, 1942-nachalo 1943 goda* (Tashkent: Gos. Izd-vo Uzbekskoi SSR, 1963); R.Kh. Aminova, T.Dzh. Dzhuraev, *Uzbekistan v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny, 1941-1945* (Tashkent: FAN, 1966); I. Pulatov, *Iz istorii uchastiia narodov Srednei Azii v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine* (Tashkent: FAN, 1966); V.A. Shishkin, ed., *Istoriia Uzbekskoi SSR, v 4x tomakh, tom chetvertyi: period zaversheniia stroitel'stva sotsializma i perekhod k kommunizmu (1938-1965 g.g.)* (Tashkent: FAN, 1968); Kh. Sh. Inoiatov ed., *Vklad trudiashchikhsia Uzbekistana v pobedu v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine* (Tashkent: FAN, 1975).

<sup>215</sup> Sodyk Kalandar, *My na Urale* (Tashkent: Gosizdat UzSSR, 1948).

<sup>216</sup> Sodyk Kalandar, “My na Urale,” *Zvezda vostoka*, No. 10-11 (1946), pp. 3-35, 3. See also *Zvezda Vostoka*, No. 12 (1946), and No. 1 (1947), pp. 22-43.

Ali must prove his love and solubility on the labor and military fronts. And it reflects new social realities. One of the villain's fatal flaws is his inability to read the Russian mail he intercepts, while knowledge of the language allows Tufakhon and Botyr-Ali's careers to advance. Thus although the text is purged of almost all details of the *trudarmeits* experience in the Urals, it reflects other, unexpected truths about romantic expectations in rural Uzbekistan and the revelatory importance of Russian language for Uzbeks of the era.

The first socialist realist treatment of the *trudarmeits* experience in a fuller sense came from Tajik writer Fatekh Niiazi (b.1914), who wrote the novel *Soldiers without Weapons (Soldaty bez oruzhiia)* between 1978-1982 though it was not published until after Perestroika in 1988.<sup>217</sup> Niiazi reported to have collected material for the novel in Sverdlovsk, but is unlikely to have had access to local archives. His novel reveals many of the unpleasant aspects of the *trudarmiia* experience, including desertion, self-mutilation, frostbite, and death due to the elements. But on balance it is an effort to resurrect this chapter of Soviet Central Asian history for the laborers themselves, who work earnestly and patriotically. As the title suggests, his purpose is to equate their sacrifices to those made on the front, and to sternly judge the Party-state's failed organizational errors that results in some of the fatalities as the collateral damage of war or the poor decisions of a few deficient individuals. One of the key internal conflicts for the main character is raikom secretary Orif Olimov's struggle to reconcile himself to the news that his district will not receive an evacuated factory, nor will he serve on the front lines, and that his fate instead lies in the Urals. He becomes a leading laborer and agitator, ultimately become injured himself, but returning home healthy around the time of the Soviet victory at Stalingrad.

But due to source limitation or perhaps the author's loyalty to the narrative of Soviet war-time unity, the one problem sphere he does not address is interethnic relations in the Urals. In fact, he depicts the experience for most fifty-something Tajik men as a bracing, invigorating challenge. Although his characters comment on the harsh weather and succumb to frostbite, they constantly entertain themselves with song and Central Asian instruments, dried fruits and nuts. They encounter a group of Uzbek laborers, prompting shared meals and declarations that their cultures and languages are much closer than the "nationalists and panturkists" would have them believe.<sup>218</sup> They have nothing but cordial relations with Leningrad evacuees and their local Russian hosts, and Orif even as an extramarital affair with a local Russian teacher, forming one of the story's central dramas, which is resolved by the mutual understanding of wife and mistress, which actually aligns with widespread social forgiveness of soldiers' marital indiscretions after the war.

Despite Fiiazi's late efforts to bring Central Asian *trudarmeitsy* into the pantheon of Soviet war heroes, decades of official silence has ensured that they remain the lonely bearers of a tragic mantle.

To contextualize the experience of the Central Asian labor battalions in the Urals against other forms of mobilized homefront labor, one must remember that many able-bodied men were drafted to mines, construction sites, and factories all over Uzbekistan and Central Asia, usually as part of kolkhoz labor levies and faced work conditions and labor law similar to other home front workers. As in the Urals and other industrial regions, enterprises struggled to prevent

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<sup>217</sup> Fatekh Niiazi, trans. V. Turbina, *Soldaty bez oruzhiia. Roman. Rasskazy.* (Moskva: Khudozhestvennaia Literatura, 1998).

<sup>218</sup> Niiazi, 135.

laborers from fleeing in search of better working or living conditions, or to return to labor at their home kolkhozes.<sup>219</sup> In addition, voenkomats drafted labor armies composed of older, draft-eligible men unfit for the front for service not in the Urals, but around their native republic. As in the Urals, these units were subject to military discipline. Although they did not face the challenges of an unfamiliar climate nor the lethal manifestations of ethnic segregation, they were still beholden to the crude machinations of state labor organization. Though more desirable than the Urals, these assignments were difficult enough to yield pervasive problems with desertion.

As an example, the glass-mullite factory at the Begovat metallurgical plant relied on *trudarmeits* labor. As in all enterprises, laborers were at the whim of their supervisors to ensure they had adequate shelter and food. At Begovat two labor column leaders were fired for the “collapse” of labor productivity, arising from their “crude treatment” of the *trudarmeitsy*, including inadequate distribution of bread cards and manufactured goods that had led to significant desertion. In three episodes in July 1943, 267 out of 284 mobilized Kara-kalpaks fled the worksite and presumably went home. This resulted in a tightening of military-style discipline among the remaining laborers, forcing detachment leaders to be with their men around the clock, including morning and evening role calls, and making them personally accountable for any laborers given the right for temporary leave.<sup>220</sup> This episode demonstrates both that Uzbekistan’s laborers could face callous treatment by industrial managers in their home republic, but that desertion as a method of self-preservation was much more accessible option, giving them a safety valve that was a more dangerous gamble in the Urals.

Still, *trudarmeitsy* could experience high mortality rates even in their home republics. Demobilized laborers from the Urals learned first hand that organizational tasks for vulnerable population were not a strength of the Uzbek war-time state. In winter 1944 170 men died in transit from the Chardzhou (Turkmenistan) rail depot to their homes in lower stretches of the Amu-Dar’ia river in Khorezm oblast and the Kara-kalpak ASSR. This tragedy resulted in a comprehensive reorganization led by a SNK UzSSR resolution passed in March 1944. Investigators found that the elderly, often sick men had been housed in the derisively nicknamed “evacuees’ town” (*gorodok evakuirovannykh*), a collection of unsanitary and unequipped hovels located outside the city and 4km from its train station that had taken its name during the evacuations of late 1941. On their rail journey north they were outfitted with bread and little else. New regulations appointed a chain of reception points between Chardzhou and Khorezm with drinking water, food (including rice, meat, fish, sweets, and tea), medical, and rest facilities built in. Once the scandal emerged, Uzbek leadership’s new plan embodied the generosity of contrition. It obliged Khorezm and Kara-kalpak ASSR leadership to meet the demobilized workers and see them directly to their homes, provide material and food assistance to the men and their families, assist in the formulation of work documents allowing them to begin kolkhoz work, and provide “the widest and comprehensive” medical assistance to all in need.<sup>221</sup> In this

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<sup>219</sup> TsGA RUz f. 837, op. 32, d. 3617, l. 39. For instance, the SNK UzSSR was ordered to mobilize 1,500 able-bodied kolkhoz men for work in Kyrgyz mines in July 1942, though SNK UzSSR Chairman Abdurakhmanov begged off, citing the republic’s own kolkhoz labor shortages exacerbated by the construction of three hydroelectric stations and the Begovat metallurgical factory.

<sup>220</sup> Tashoblgosarkhiv f. 657, op. 1, d. 7, l. 4, 5, 8. I am grateful to Uzbek colleagues for access to these documents.

<sup>221</sup> TsGA RUz f. 837, op. 32, d. 4278, l. 199-203.

way regional authorities would greet the next wave of demobilized laborers with something of the care and pomp of returning soldiers, though only after the previous disaster.

Thus desertions and even spikes of mortality occurred among Central Asian laborers even in their home republics. However, what separated the Urals experience from other *trudarmii* mobilizations was its exceedingly high level of suffering and death, and the poisonous relations with ethnic Russians that Central Asian men characterized as not only violent and humiliating, but feudal. And there was certainly something colonial in the state's reliance on this most vulnerable group after it had exhausted its supply of "unreliable" peoples, the haste of their call-up and the disregard for their material needs. Although the underlying spark to the interethnic enmity encountered by laborers in the Urals was the stresses and shortages of war, it is important to note how easily relations devolved in the absence of effective agitation and political work, led by administrators and common Russian workers, but who took their cues from signals they received from above. In these circumstances the state tried to extinguish the conflicts by relying on the logic of its national politics than to force the parties to embrace a common, pan-Soviet identity. Unofficially, in the actions and words of workers and administrators, and in official policy that catered to Muslim dietary practices, inscribed national cultural habits, and enforced segregation, the state emphasized the insolubility of national identity and enforced the cultural boundaries between member nationalities.

Thus the fate of men stood in the balance at Central Asian voenkomats, who were the gatekeepers for different outcomes. If young and fit enough, men sent to the front joined ethnically-mixed units and faced untold dangers, but also joined paths towards promotion enabled by a comprehensive agitation program that eased their interactions with other soldiers. If deemed too old or infirm they could be sent to a region hungry for more bodies, without political support in place, segregated from other workers by language, religion, and profession. On the front national identity could both appear and dissolve. In the Urals (and at construction sites in Siberia and the Far East) it was reinforced. In one setting men joined broader streams of Soviet identity, and in the other they were diverted into jetties of backwardness.

### CHAPTER THREE: *The Uzbek Homefront: an Emancipation of Necessity*

Although removed from the fighting by thousands of kilometers the Second World War convulsed the Uzbek homefront. The departure of nearly 1.5 million men to the Red Army not only meant that each household was touched by the war, but that almost half of the republic's working population departed during a time in which cotton, silk, grain, and other foodstuffs were in urgent need. Furthermore, the evacuation of defense factories and acute need for energy and raw materials meant the mobilization of thousands of former kolkhozniki into factories, building sites, mines, and canal projects. Agricultural output plummeted due to labor shortages and the loss of farming experts, technology, fertilizer, and draft animals. The republic's food supply was subject to strict rationing and shortages – even leading to instances of starvation – creating conditions for black market speculation throughout the war era. Although many of the nearly one million evacuees helped fill labor needs, about 200,000 were children or the elderly who required aid rather than a place to labor. Hundreds of thousands of Uzbek men shuffled between factories and construction sites in their own republic or were drafted to enterprises in Siberia and the Urals to offset labor shortages. Urban life and factory work was characterized by material shortages and disease and exhaustion, resulting in constant turnover and worksite desertion, despite stiff labor laws. Kolkhoz life was characterized by tremendous deprivation, great sacrifice, and even violence, however proximity to food sources and extended family networks provided rural Uzbeks marginally better opportunities to weather the shortages and demands.

The secondary literature on the Uzbek homefront has understandably focused on failure, sacrifice, and suffering. Though Rebecca Manley reveals the hardships of city dwellers her primary focus is the process of evacuation itself and the mental lives of evacuees rather than that of Uzbeks and other local residents.<sup>222</sup> Paul Stronski's history of Tashkent depicts the war years as a missed opportunity for the Party-state's perennial efforts to create an ethnic Uzbek proletariat and a well-planned socialist city. The exodus of Uzbek male and female workers from factories was perceived by the Party as a failure of Sovietification rooted in local cultural preferences and war-time challenges. However, local Party reports that focused on culture overlooked the material hardship that drove Uzbeks from factories and towards kolkhoz land, regardless of Party loyalty or proletarian inclination.<sup>223</sup> A focus on Party perception alone cannot fully contend with the war's effects on local society. And given that the majority of Uzbekistan's citizens experienced the war on kolkhozes and sovkhozes, a more representative assessment would contend with rural society.

The work of Claus Bech Hansen diagnoses an important struggle for the Uzbek SSR leadership to negotiate the centralizing, mobilizational demands of Moscow's war-time dictatorship and the decline of Party control in the Uzbek provinces. In his view the war was a chaotic and tragic birth environment for the "limited statehood" that would characterize the relationship between the Uzbek leadership and the Party state in the post-war period, in which Moscow pulled back from goals for social transformation but gained stability, even if it meant the relative cultural and social autonomy of the Uzbek countryside. Although this dynamic is undoubtedly important for explaining regime longevity in Uzbekistan, it replicates a state-society binary that precludes rural Uzbek integration into state campaigns and broad rural patriotism, despite aberrant practices like crime, corruption, and speculation.

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<sup>222</sup> Manley, *To the Tashkent Station*.

<sup>223</sup> Hansen, "The Ambivalent Empire."

This chapter tells a social history of the Uzbek homefront that recoups for Uzbek society its earnest, patriotic mobilization in the face of great sacrifice. It considers rural crime, speculation, and evasion less a manifestation of rural Uzbek opposition to the Soviet regime, and more as calculated behaviors for survival, certainly no more oppositional than in other regions of the Soviet Union. Its predominantly rural lens allows us to make arguments about how the majority of Uzbeks encountered the war, and invariably leads to the terrain of gender given that women outnumbered men on kolkhozes. I argue that amidst strains and even violence, the war caused Uzbek women to exit the home, enter the workforce, and take positions of authority, continuing longstanding Party goals that were first notably achieved during collectivization. The discussion of rural labor mobilization provides a nuanced account of how World War II was so transformative for Uzbek women, finding it was not so much the contact with European women that advanced progressive goals, as some have suggested, but that the answer lies in strenuous, patriotic mobilization in the fields.<sup>224</sup> And understanding the strain and trauma of this experience also helps to explain why many women returned to the home, re-veiled, or otherwise backtracked in the eyes of the Party after the war ended.

Arguing for rural patriotism requires assessing the mentalities of undereducated, rural men and women in relation to the state, Party, and war effort – an elusive task given the dearth of materials like diaries that been used so effectively to study subjectivity. But evidence suggests that even illiterate kolkhoz women could be profoundly transformed and empowered by the roles they were called to play in the face of profound hardships, an achievement for which the extant historiography does not give them credit. And though a truly comprehensive picture will only emerge with reliable access to Uzbek archives, a rich social history is still possible and important so as not to view the era from the top down, or solely from the perspective of city elites.

To tell this story I rely on Party and state archival sources in Moscow and Tashkent. Although some sources are new others come from *fondy* long-known to researchers which I read sometimes more charitably and other times more skeptically than others. The stories of conscientious and patriotic self-sacrifice deserve more generous reading, while too strict a reliance on the Party's agitated reports replicates the paranoia of authors whose incentive lay in identifying problems but ignore many successes. I also employ a few interviews, literature and film to help round out the picture of daily life in the Uzbek homefront.

After the first section, this chapter splits along gender lines to reflect the actual separation of Uzbek men and Women on the homefront. It follows the mobilized men who performed dangerous and menial tasks at mines and construction sites around Uzbekistan as well as the Urals and Siberia. In stark contrast to the soldiers who left the region and transformed into so many Ivan-Uzbeks and Ivan-Tajiks, these men were segregated from other laborers by language, task, and living quarters. They suffered high morality rates and were relegated to *cul de sacs* of backwardness, largely denied the channels of transformation of Central Asian soldiers who marched through Europe.

The history of Uzbek kolkhozes and Uzbek women are largely intertwined. Against a backdrop of a breakdown of Party control, onerous labor expectations, material shortages, and violence, kolkhozes were the terrains for women to vie for greater responsibility and pay as tractor drivers, brigade leaders, and even kolkhoz chairwomen. Many swelled the ranks of Party and Komsomol while others simply labored conscientiously. Though undereducated and rural, they *acted* Soviet in their work and material donations even if they could not *speak* it or *write*

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<sup>224</sup> Northrop, *Veiled Empire*.



it.<sup>225</sup> This was an arduous and imperfect integration into the labor force, but one that the Party had been working to achieve for two decades. The proof of this significance lay in its persistent and even violent opposition after the war amidst a return to a more familiar, patriarchal order.

The last section of the chapter examines Uzbek gender more explicitly. True, their presence on the front, in heavy industry, and on the factory floors was minimal in comparison to Slavic women. However they too took on jobs perceived as male, though primarily in the countryside and away from the eye of most evacuated or Party observers. By contrast, Uzbek women's most visible and public contributions celebrated their femininity. The Uzbek and Soviet Party-states mobilized Uzbek femininity to serve the war goals, which I demonstrate through the examples of some of the war-era's most famous Uzbek women: Bakhri Akramova (Shamakhmudova), an adoptive mother of fourteen children; Tamara Khanum, a singer and dancer for Soviet troops; and Ogulkhon Kurbanova, a teenaged kolkhoz laborer whose harvest achievements – and face – launched a thousand letters.

This is not to say that the state mobilized *traditional* femininity. These women balanced Soviet patriotism with maternity and even sexuality. The public nature of their achievements aligned with broader Soviet goals to emancipate Uzbek women from the supposed ignominy of the home. And even the mobilization of thousands of women in agricultural and construction work – some to positions of authority – was without precedent, though largely hidden from view. That the most prominent Uzbek women were not factory workers, soldiers, or nurses but mothers, dancers, and pen-pals may have been deemed a compromise with local cultural norms by some orthodox Party observers, however in local contexts it wrought significant changes.

By any indicator the war fundamentally transformed the economy of the Uzbek SSR. In four years industrial capacity almost doubled. Heavy industry grew by a factor of four. Gas extraction, metallurgy, machine-building, coal, and electroenergy sectors each grew by leaps. 280 new industrial enterprises opened during the war, including the evacuation of 90 factories such as giants like the Chkalov Aviation, Red Motor, Rostsel'mash, and the Dnepropetrovsk carborundum factories.<sup>226</sup> Plants such as the Margelan silk enterprise, Kokand superphosphate factory, Fergana hydrolytic factory, and Kuvasai chemical factory transformed other cities. And several new cities emerged entirely with the construction of new enterprises such as the Uzbek Metallurgical Factory in Bekabad and the Angren coal mines, or expanded greatly like Chirchik, whose chemical facility added four new factories and the Chirchik-Bozsui hydroelectric station. Uzbek factories produced airplanes, tanks, bombs, mortars, and mines, as well as cotton for clothing and bandages and silk for parachutes. Powering many of these enterprises required plentiful new inputs, including from coal and nine new hydroelectric stations that accounted for over 100,000 kilowatts. The largest of these, Farkhadstroi on the Syr Dar'ia river at Bekabad, took almost four years to complete and enlisted at least 70,000 mobilized kolkhozniki at a time.

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<sup>225</sup> I am of course referencing the groundbreaking work of Stephen Kotkin and Jochen Hellbeck, which emphasize speech and subjectivity as spheres that instantiated Soviet legitimacy. I am suggesting that the Soviet state was similarly embedded in rural Uzbek society, even among subjects whose voices remain unrecorded and lacked the literacy to keep journals. See Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Hellbeck, *Revolution on my Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

<sup>226</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 122, d. 37, li. 67-68.

Although power-station construction and canal-building pulled agricultural workers from kolkhozes, the permanent industrial workforce grew from 121,000 workers in 1940 to 197,000 in 1945, many of them evacuees.<sup>227</sup> A comprehensive assessment of Uzbekistan's industrial transformation lies outside the realm of the present study, but it is important to remember the contemporaneous mobilization of thousands of kolkhoz men and the expansion of the Uzbek proletariat.

Meanwhile the destruction and occupation of Soviet grain growing regions meant that Uzbek agriculture had to become self-sufficient with grain and other foodstuffs while the state expected it to maintain cotton yields.<sup>228</sup> Although cotton remained the primary agricultural output, its acreage and harvests fell precipitously as the republic diversified its products to include sugar beets and potatoes, and expanded its arable land in order to feed the Uzbek countryside, the urban population, and also send foodstuffs like fresh and dried fruit, canned meat, grains, and tea to Soviet troops. As we shall see, this involved inordinate sacrifice and draconian grain requisition measures, as well as the mobilization of children and students for the harvest and thousands of laborers for several major new irrigation canals.<sup>229</sup>

The Soviet state shifted to a strict, mobilized labor regime on the home front in the very first days of the war. On June 22, 1941 all able-bodied men between 18-45 and women from 18-40 who were not already employed were ordered to work on defense construction. By September 1942 labor shortages and high turnover resulted in the draconian labor law that treated all employees of state enterprises who left their jobs as deserters. Still, high turnover and absenteeism characterized homefront production given harsh material conditions and intense labor shortages.<sup>230</sup> A recent study has emphasized the coercive character of this "mobilizational dictatorship" in Uzbekistan and emphasizing the failures of the Party to assert control in the countryside. It calls attention to the state's repressive measures to assert control over industrial and agricultural production, and people's efforts to subvert state policy in order to better survive.<sup>231</sup> As Barber and Harrison make clear, this dynamic existed in all republics and regions on the home front. It remains to be seen whether the Uzbek Party-state was any more or less capable of mobilizing and controlling its workforce than other republics. Emphasizing deprivation, mobilization, and procurement alone cannot bring us closer to the mindset of common people during the war. It seems clear that patriotic mobilization existed as well; that people were inspired to produce not only for salary or fear of punishment. A kolkhoz worker

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<sup>227</sup> See E. A. Voskoboinikov, *Uzbekskii narod v gody velikoi otechestvennoi voiny* (Tashkent: Gosizdat UzSSR, 1947), pp. 14-17; *Istoriia uzbekskoi SSR. T. 4*. Red. R. Kh. Aminova. Tashkent: "FAN," 1968, pp. 90-99; Kasymova, M.Sh., *Internatsional'noe edinstvo trudiashchikhsia uzbekistana i bratskikh respublik SSSR v gody velikoi otechestvennoi voiny (1941-1945)*. Institut Istorii AN UzSSR, Tashkent. Doktorskaia dissertatsiia, 1990, pp. 91-97.

<sup>228</sup> Before the war Uzbekistan received two thirds of its wheat from other republics. RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 236, li. 75.

<sup>229</sup> See Voskoboinikov, *Uzbekskii narod v gody velikoi otechestvennoi voiny*, pp. 16-21; *Istoriia uzbekskoi SSR. T. 4*, pp. 99-113.

<sup>230</sup> John Barber and Mark Harrison, *The Soviet Home Front, 1941-1945: a social and economic history of the USSR in World War II* (London: Longman Group, 1991), pp. 164. See especially chapters 4-6 on mobilization, labor shortages, subsistence, and productivity.

<sup>231</sup> Hansen, *Ambivalent Empire*.

might subvert grain requisition for purposes of self-preservation but still be an impassioned patriot, laboring to support the war that might be fought by his or her son.

In the first six months the Party paid assiduous attention to questions of Uzbek loyalty to the war cause, and had no difficulty finding episodes of tension between Uzbeks and Russians as well as Uzbeks versus the state.<sup>232</sup> However, it also traced the patriotic response of rural society to its campaigns for war bonds and war funds, as well as donations of horses and automobiles. Party reports sent to Moscow from the war's first year reveal satisfaction with the popular transition to the war effort and rural production. By the same token, however, agitation efforts were mixed and Party organization was teetering with the departure of so many young Communists. Early signs emerged that kolkhoz workers would dig in for self-preservation in the face of requisitioning measures.

One measure of Uzbek kolkhoz-level patriotism lay in monetary contributions to the war effort. In the summer of 1941 kolkhozes routinely surpassed expected purchasing of war bonds, such as the kolkhozes of Za-amin district, Samarkand oblast.<sup>233</sup> And in response to agitation campaigns kolkhoz workers made bond payments immediately rather than in installments. Half of all early bond-payers in Bukhara oblast were from kolkhozes, with similar successes reported in Namangan oblast.<sup>234</sup> Even in the less prosperous Kara-kalpak ASSR several districts reported up to 95% of all bonds immediately purchased while Surkhan Dar'ia oblast had the lowest rate at 66%.<sup>235</sup> The Party was also satisfied with the overall donation amounts. In the first two months of war almost seven million rubles had been donated to the defense fund and over thirteen million rubles of war bonds were purchased. The most generous donations came from Tashkent, Bukhara, and Samarkand oblasts, while Namangan, Kara-kalpak ASSR, and Khorezm oblasts gave the least. A month later those sums had grown by five million and twelve million rubles, respectively.<sup>236</sup>

Two years later, the Party remained pleased by kolkhoz donations to build tanks and planes. After extensive agitprop work conducted by raikom, village soviet, and kolkhoz leaders, 260 million rubles was donated in six days in January 1943, surpassing the initial goal of 200 million. A separate 47 million rubles was raised in response to Iusupov's letter to Stalin on behalf of the Uzbek people promising redoubled efforts. At agitational meetings kolkhoz leaders and Party members gave patriotic speeches along with gigantic ruble amounts – such as the kolkhoz chairman from Baisun district (Surkhan-Dar'ia oblast) who gave 270,000 rubles and the kolkhoznik from Karasui district (Tashkent oblast) who gave 160,000 rubles. The donations were the personal savings of rural elites, demonstrating the Uzbek Party's ability to mobilize its rural base into acts of fealty on behalf of their kolkhozes, without concern for the origins of such

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<sup>232</sup> See Chapter One. These reports also paid attention to numbers of volunteers to the Red Army but I haven't included these figures since they are never differentiated by nationality and are almost all European nationalities. Reports often emphasized the religious or class backgrounds of those who made "defeatist" or "anti-Soviet" or "provocative" statements.

<sup>233</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 95, li. 14.

<sup>234</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 95, li. 25.

<sup>235</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 95, li. 79, 129.

<sup>236</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 96, li. 77, 78. In the first half-year reports mention only one instance of a kolkhoz workers refusing to financially support the war effort. *Ibid*, li. 55.

princely sums.<sup>237</sup> Although large donations were primarily but not exclusively made by Party members, these campaigns were conducted with pomp and publicity that pervaded rural villages. They extended through kolkhoz ranks and demonstrate the Party's success, albeit sporadic, to rally the rural population into a spirit of patriotic giving.

In a separate, gendered campaign, Uzbek women were encouraged to donate their jewelry to the defense fund. Similarly, the donations of jewelry by Turkmen women to the defense fund made such a large impression on Iurii Olesha that he made it a centerpiece of his address to the Turkmen Writers' Union in December 1942.<sup>238</sup>

Throughout the republic many kolkhozes greeted the war with increased production, especially in Fergana valley. In October several Namangan oblast kolkhozes were saluted for overfulfilling cotton harvests by 200 and 300%. They employed school children in the harvest, who received gifts from the kolkhoz.<sup>239</sup> Uzbek kolkhozes and working people were also celebrated for gathering warm coats, socks, and other clothing for the troops. In December 1941 fifty-two train wagons of rice, meat, fruit, wine and other presents from Uzbek kolkhozes were sent to the front.<sup>240</sup> These are best considered examples of ideal mobilization from the first period of the war, when prosperous kolkhozes subject to steady agitation efforts were able to direct the efforts of kolkhozniki. However, the absence of Party leadership or a less firm material base meant that other kolkhozes met the war with economic contraction and panicked measures.

Other reports mentioned a lack of labor discipline and falling productivity, especially in Khorezm oblast. One found an astonishing 30% of Khiva kolkhozniki not working in the fields.<sup>241</sup> This seems to have been due to a combination of fear of rationing and supply problems in the republic's poorer regions. These fears were certainly justified, as bread shortages were detected as early as July in Tashkent and Andijan, along with speculation and black markets.<sup>242</sup>

The Red Army's campaign for horses was more problematic since agricultural workers immediately recognized its threat to their livelihoods. A common response was to offer old or unfit specimens. In Tashkent oblast of 58 horses requested by district Party officials, initially only five were deemed healthy before agitators interceded to convince kolkhoz workers of the need to fulfill the plan. Similar problems were reported all across the oblast and the republic. In Shirabad district (Surkhan Dar'ia oblast) only 48 of 305 horses were fit for service.<sup>243</sup> In the village of Pakhta-Abad, Andijan district, a kolkhoznik spoke out against the horse levy: "they mobilized all the youth, drive them to death, now they're taking horses and want to starve us."<sup>244</sup> In Andijan and Surkhan Dar'ia oblasts, kolkhoz chairmen were sacked for refusing to give up

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<sup>237</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 236, li. 1-2ob. A more representative donation amount for kolkhoz chairmen was between 10 and 16 thousand rubles. Interestingly, some of the largest donations came from ethnic Koreans – such as the one million rubles donated by Sergei Georgievich Tsoi, chairman of a Korean kolkhoz in Sredne-Chirchik district (Tashkent oblast) – who had been deported to the region in 1938 and sought to prove their loyalty to the state that forbade them from doing so via military service.

<sup>238</sup> RGALI f. 358, op. 2, d. 502, li. 11ob, 12.

<sup>239</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 95, li. 101; d. 96, li. 140.

<sup>240</sup> IRI RAN f. 2, r. 7, op. 8, d. 2, li. 11. See also RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 96, li. 91.

<sup>241</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 95, li. 185; d. 96, li. 19.

<sup>242</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 95, li. 98, 136, 151.

<sup>243</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 95, li. 13, 24, 38; d. 96, li. 38, 118.

<sup>244</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 95, li. 137.

horses or sending sick ones to the Red Army.<sup>245</sup> The state encountered similar difficulties in its levy of automobiles from enterprises, MTS stations, and kolkhozes throughout the republic.<sup>246</sup> However, it would be incorrect to consider this behavior solely as oppositional or foot-dragging. Rather, they represent an impossible balancing act on the part of kolhozники between their fears for self-preservation and the needs to meet state obligations.

The Fifth Party Plenum of the TsK KP(b) Uz in December 1941 laid down a serious challenge to rural Uzbekistan. The 1942 plan was to expand agricultural land by 521,800 hectares (347,200 irrigated), to increase the per-hectare productivity of cotton harvest, triple the grain harvest, introduce sugar beets, and make significant gains in animal-rearing, silk, and other areas of agriculture, all while losing able-bodied men and technical specialists to the Red Army, construction sites, and evacuated factories.<sup>247</sup> Being asked to produce more with fewer resources, Uzbekistan's war-time agricultural expectations sounded a fateful knell for kolkhozes and sovkhozes. Balancing output with sheer survival was a harsh challenge that required all available hands, including the very young and very old. The profound shortages in the rural labor force in many ways made Party concerns to draw Uzbek women into factories moot: they were plenty needed in the countryside.

### *Rural Uzbek Party structure*

The Party structures charged with leading the ambitious agricultural plan were profoundly changed. The Party presence in the regions was not historically deep so when rural Communists and Party candidates left for the front, their Party cells often dissolved. Thus between January 1941 and 1943 the number of Uzbek and other local nationalities in the Uzbek Communist party fell from 43,394 to 33,065, and from 60 to 42 percent proportionally. In cities the evacuation of Russian proletarians caused overall numbers of Russian and European nationalities to stay numerically steady.<sup>248</sup> The departure of so many rural Communists meant that by 1943 an astonishing 69% of all kolkhozes in Uzbekistan were without a Party organization.<sup>249</sup> Furthermore, the stress of war-time production hampered efforts to train and replace those who had departed, thus the Party made due with unprepared and often illiterate replacements, very few of whom were versed in Party statutes and texts. Party control documents also found that Party organizations had stopped meeting regularly, had ceased their concerns for quality control, and allowed Party candidates to remain in place for several years without advancing their qualifications, thus leading to concerns about the presence of politically untrustworthy and class-alien individuals in the Party.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 95, li. 168; d. 96, li. 118.

<sup>246</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 95, li. 24, 32, 137; d. 96, 54, 116.

<sup>247</sup> *Istoriia uzbekskoi SSR, t. 4*, pp. 100–101.

<sup>248</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 236, li. 79-82. In 1942 1,477 primary Party organizations were created, primarily in cities, new factories, and industrial enterprises while 860 dissolved, primarily in the countryside.

<sup>249</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 236, li. 74, 81ob. Uzbekistan had 6,897 kolkhozes on January 1, 1943. The Party presence varied by oblast. It was highest in Tashkent oblast, where 77% (551 out of 743) of kolkhozes had Party cells, and lowest in Bukhara oblast, with only 7.8% (120 out of 1522).

<sup>250</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 236, li. 84-86ob. In 1942 the Party found that only 3.8 to 6.8 percent of applicants were denied admission as candidates or members, which it considered to be a

As the war progressed rural Uzbek Party ranks were eventually bolstered by new cadres. In 1947 it was found that two thirds of all Party members in Uzbekistan had joined during the war, and 1,500 of these candidates or members were illiterate, primarily in the rural areas of Andijan, Tashkent, and Khorezm oblasts and Kara-kalpak ASSR.<sup>251</sup> Given that the Uzbeks who joined at the front had greater access to agitators, political officers, and language courses, these under-credentialed Party members were overwhelmingly among the rural cadres, and less likely to abide by the orthodox Party ideals of Russian Communists such as the value of female labor, education, and leadership, though not necessarily any less committed to the war effort.

Furthermore, Uzbek Party leadership fretted that the average kolkhoz was isolated from both current events and its propaganda messages. Most kolkhozes were without Party representation entirely, and those with it were not necessarily any better served. Party reports noted the almost utter absence of agitation materials, newspapers, radios, telephones, and film screening equipment in rural Uzbekistan.<sup>252</sup> Kolkhozniki often went months without updates on cities ceded or retaken and speeches from key leaders. In 1943 it estimated that one third of all kolkhozes had received no updated war news for up to six months of this pivotal year.<sup>253</sup> Furthermore, raikom officials shirked duties to make agitprop visits across their districts and many of its best agitators spent long months at Farkhadstroi and other herculean projects that required elaborate cultural support.<sup>254</sup> In the absence of a literate, informed Party presence or newspapers, the countryside was prone to outbreaks of rumors that threatened the pace of labor.<sup>255</sup> Likely the Party's most successful messages, repeated in a range of publications at home and on the front, were the *Nakazy naroda* and similar messages that emphasized the German threat to Uzbekistan, its cultural traditions, and way of life.<sup>256</sup> These provided a dualistic and even traditional understanding of the world at war without great emphasis of battlefield specifics, alliances, or Party program, but more than an adequate convey threat, urgency, and need.

In this time of crisis and fraying of Party organization, kolkhoz leaders and selsoviet chairmen assumed even more importance. Sergei Abashin has identified these rural Central Asian leaders as "little Stalins" for their ability to assert near total control over kolkhozes and villages. Their most important powers included tax and bond collection, the ability to decide citizens' legal status (such as able-bodied or not), and to determine – by threat or convincing –

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decline in standards that would allow the politically untrustworthy to join its ranks. It also found too few cases of purging members. And of the 1,562 motions to remove Party cards in 1942, 722 were overturned. At a silk-rolling factory in Bukhara it was found that fifteen candidates had not advanced to full membership since as early 1934. Fourteen of them were illiterate or semi-literate. In Balykchi district (Andijan oblast) 83.5 percent of candidates had "overdue service" and had not advanced to Party membership.

<sup>251</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 708, l. 113-115.

<sup>252</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 236, l. 14, 42-55; d. 238, l. 69-72.

<sup>253</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 238, l. 80.

<sup>254</sup> In Fergana oblast agitation work was in shambles because its obkom secretary for agitprop had been at Farkhadstroi for over nine months. See RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 238, l. 81.

<sup>255</sup> For example at a kolkhoz near Andijan almost all work ceased for a day when rumor spread that the city would be receiving war wounded. A similar case occurred in Fergana oblast. See RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 95, l. 168; d. 96, l. 117.

<sup>256</sup> See Chapter One; Schechter, "The People's Instruction."

which villagers would be mobilized for labor projects and the army. For Abashin, these figures demonstrated the “intimate interweaving” of state and peasant society, given the myriad roles played by multiple people, who could express both state interest and local principles depending on the situation, a balancing act that was especially vital during the war.<sup>257</sup> The local leader also decided how best to mobilize kolkhoz labor, including women. He could be both a force of female elevation or tradition, depending on how he understood his task, his constituents’ toleration, and the Party’s signals.

The decline of rural Communists, their replacement with politically untrained cadres, and the overwhelming harvest demands led to a devolution of Party discipline and protocols and a more frenetic, less controlled rural order. However, decentralization should not be confused with a lack of patriotism. Although raikom and kolkhoz chairmen – the “little Stalins” – may have ceased regular meetings and even failed certain Party demands, they were challenged to balance the demands of the center with local needs, such as the livelihood and lives of their constituents. For instance, the selsoviet chairman of Oshoba, an ethnic Uzbek village in the Fergana valley region of Tajikistan, was known to falsify the ages of young men to avoid the draft if they were the only sons of a family. In another instance he protected a group of document-less villagers from mass call-up by an aggressive local policeman. However, there is no reason to think that on balance Oshoba failed to meet its draft quotas.<sup>258</sup> Similarly, in Tashkent oblast in 1943 Moscow Party investigators criticized local leaders’ efforts to refashion labor incentives away from the all-Union war effort and towards local projects. A series of kolkhozes came together in a “social competition” stipulating that the most productive kolkhozes would receive new clubs, schools, and other public buildings to be built by the entire group.<sup>259</sup> This is a stark example of how Uzbek Communists and kolkhoz leaders could operate technically the outside the control of Moscow and Tashkent while simultaneously operating as patriots, strengthening Soviet institutions, while in the Soviet center patriotism was often defined more narrowly with the wishes of the GKO and its economic plan. Certainly other cases of transgressive leadership had less commendable goals, such as failing to mobilize kolkhozniki for agricultural work or covering up the labor or military desertion of family members.<sup>260</sup> Still, when bad behavior was widespread it often reflected local efforts to subsist and retain labor rather than towards any more nefarious ends.

#### *Uzbek women: a contested emancipation*

Regardless of his views on women and liberation, the kolkhoz leader’s most important labor resource were women. In the first year of war alone, kolkhozes lost 32 percent of their able-bodied men, and the gender imbalance only grew from there.<sup>261</sup> In July 1942 at a kolkhoz in Fergana district 63 percent of able-bodied workers were women.<sup>262</sup> And by an Uzbek TsK KP(b) estimate between 70 to 75 percent of all field laborers were women in Fergana oblast in 1945,

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<sup>257</sup> Sergei Abashin, *Sovetskii kishlak: Mezhdru kolonializmom i modernizatsiei* (Moskva: “Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie,” 2015), 249. An elaboration of the selsoviet chairman’s powers can be found at pp. 255-263.

<sup>258</sup> Abashin, 242, 262.

<sup>259</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 628, l. 149.

<sup>260</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 628, l. 151.

<sup>261</sup> *Istoriia uzbekskoi SSR, t. 4*, pp. 100–101, 109.

<sup>262</sup> TsGA RUz f. 837, op. 32, d. 3616, li. 25.

including 75,000 out of the 78,000 in the cotton harvest.<sup>263</sup> The change in rural demographics was starkly evident to common people, whose questions found their way to the Party's popular mood assessments, asking why women had never been requested to work like this before, and why teenagers younger than 18 were also forced to work.<sup>264</sup> In rural corners of Uzbekistan the traditional gender ideal for women was still to be in the home.

There is not a lot of scholarship on the place of Uzbek women in rural Uzbek society in the 1930s, and even less consensus. Much attention has been directed to the Party's *Hujum* (Uzbek: "assault"), the 1927 campaign against the *paranja* and *chachvon* to emancipate women along Soviet models. Marianne Kamp has argued that through the 1930s Uzbek women veiled less and less due to the traumas of dekulakization and collectivization, which shattered patterns of rural social organization and brought the Soviet state into the countryside in the form of schools, stores, and mandatory labor.<sup>265</sup> On the other hand, Douglas Northrop has argued that Party fixation on the veil actually increased its importance in local eyes, especially among poor and rural women, making it "a basic component of Uzbek Muslim identity" on the eve of the war, and emblematic of the state's limited cultural successes in the Uzbek countryside.<sup>266</sup> These conflicting assessments on the extent of veiling and Sovietification actually reflect the muddled picture on the ground. For even if veiling declined, reflecting the conscientious choices of "new Uzbek women," to use Kamp's term, other gender norms and cultural ideals changed more slowly.

Party representatives worried about the durability of their victories. To some it seemed that too much attention on the *paranji* had allowed other "crimes of culture" to flourish. A Council of Nationalities report to the TsIK SSSR in October 1935 celebrated the gains of collectivization, citing the growth of Uzbek women in agriculture. "If in the past Uzbek women participated only in the harvest of cotton, now they are actively involved in all processes of labor-intensive cotton production. [They] have won for themselves a solid place in the kolkhoz aktiv." Women accounted for 83 kolkhoz chairs or their deputies and 3,000 brigadiers or their assistants yet they could just as easily disappear from positions of authority. In 1931 they accounted for 27.1 percent of elected selsoviet staff but just 23.3 percent in 1934. In the same year law enforcement officials counted 92 "active speeches against women's liberation," 47 cases of *kalym*, 54 "tortures" (*istiazaniia*), and 12 marriages of minors.<sup>267</sup>

On the eve of war Moscow Party representatives and newspaper observers were particularly concerned by violence against young women who seemed to have accepted Party

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<sup>263</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 786, li. 2. Ministry of Agriculture UzSSR figures are lower. It gives the percentage of kolkhoz laborers who were women from 16-55 years of age as part of the kolkhoz workforce as 47.2% in 1941, rising to a peak of 65.3% in 1943, and dropping to 59.6% in 1945. Cited in Ibragimova, pp. 136.

<sup>264</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 236, li. 14ob.

<sup>265</sup> Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 222.

<sup>266</sup> Douglas Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 125.

<sup>267</sup> Gatagova et al., *TsK VKP(b) i natsional'nyi vopros, kniga 2, 1933-1945*, 150-152. The relevant study is at RGASPI f. 78, op. 6, d. 86, l. 71-83. Assuming the number of Uzbek kolkhozes did not change appreciably from 1935 to 1943, women accounted for about 1 percent of kolkhoz leaders in Uzbekistan and were brigadiers in under half of them.



calls to reject local traditions and paid steep prices. In 1939 in the Turkmen SSR 19 women were murdered by their husbands. In one case a sixteen-year-old Komsomolka was murdered by her fiancé, a Komsomolets who took a shovel to her head after she refused to marry him despite his parents having paid *kalym*, which had become harder to monitor as cash replaced the traditional livestock in transactions. In some locations young women who greeted unmarried on the street were considered promiscuous and shameful. In autumn 1940 Pravda articles such as “Fergana compromisers” and “Feudal-bai survivals in Uzbekistan” depicted a patriarchal rural order in which Party members and courts were complicit with mullas in removing girls from school for marriage, forcing daughters and wives to veil, enacting lenient punishments on men, and “preventing the formation of socialist consciousness among the population of Uzbek kishlaks.” In 1939-40 four women were murdered by their husbands in the Stalin district of Fergana oblast. Chust district was rife with a “whole series” of murders and abuse. And a kolkhoznik in Namangan oblast murdered his wife, a member of the kolkhoz aktiv, for her insistence in taking part in social work and refusing to veil.<sup>268</sup> Thus rural Central Asia remained a battleground between competing visions for a woman’s role in society more than a decade beyond the first *Hujum*. Young women who had attended Soviet schools could call upon principles emphasizing emancipation and gender equality that could place them at dangerous odds with rural conservatives who insisted on a traditional order of female seclusion and obedience. Even if justified by acute labor need rather than pure Party ideology, women’s war-time entry into Party, social, and productive life was an often dangerous gambit made on terrain still being defined, and which would be reassessed anew when the war ended.

Still, the sheer absence of so many men, the size of the workload, and greater social unity in the face of an external enemy ensured that, more likely than not, the war did not just perpetuate the Party’s emancipatory gains from collectivization, but actually outpaced them. On the other hand, the war’s special stresses also increased women’s vulnerability as they took on new roles. As Party and state control frayed, kolkhoz chairmen and local officials were left alone to meet agricultural targets by practically whatever means necessary, thereby leaving women especially subject to administrative excesses. Furthermore, the state’s reconciliation with religion in 1943 gave renewed sanction to conservative religious voices to reassert the sanctity of the traditional social order, which accompanied an immediate spike in mosque construction and re-openings. Thus women’s war-time mobilization may have been victorious in meeting long term Party goals, but it was destined to be violent and contested, making it difficult to consolidate these social gains.

Much of Uzbek women’s labor contributions took place against a backdrop of agricultural mobilization that was frenetic and poorly organized, revealing the strains experienced by the war-time state. This mobilization had a number of competing results, reinforcing certain longstanding social and ethnic divides while also bringing new people and perspectives to the countryside.

Although the Party’s difficulty to attract Uzbeks to war-time factory work is better known, their struggle to convince urban, European evacuees to take to the fields was just as pronounced.<sup>269</sup> In June 1942 Tashkent city mustered only 11,126 of the 25,000 able-bodied adults it was obligated to muster for agricultural work, with particularly poor mobilization from

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<sup>268</sup> GARF f. 8131, op. 17, d. 9, l. 76, 78, 80, 85. Quotations from *Pravda*, October 8, 1940.

<sup>269</sup> See Stronski, 82, 120, 131.

the Stalin, Kirov, and Lenin districts, which were predominantly populated by the city's European population. In late July the agricultural mobilization around Tashkent was still delayed, prompting one oblast employee to inquire why, despite receiving special approval, the evacuated Russian population had not been signed up for fieldwork given their large numbers and the fact that so many were peasants themselves, from Leningrad, Voronezh, and Rostov regions.<sup>270</sup> At the same time the republic's sovkhoz trust was in danger of losing the republic's fruit harvest unless it received an additional 2,130 harvest workers. It contended that the Tashkent oblast ispolkom had refused its request for workers because it would have meant removing them from cotton fields and industry. By September the Uzbek sovnrakom agreed to pressure Tashkent city government into meeting the sovkhozes' extra need by mobilizing children and teenagers.<sup>271</sup> Thus industry and cotton's all-Union importance took precedence over fruit and grain sectors that accounted for the Uzbekistan food supply. In this way the war actually helped to cement stereotypes that an Uzbek's place was in the field and a Russian's was at the factory.

Elsewhere evacuees and deportees joined field work, especially those who were settled in small cities and villages. These exogenous groups brought new diversity to the Uzbek countryside. While residing in Samarkand, students and professors from Moscow's Surikov art institute assisted in the cotton and grain harvests for several seasons in a row.<sup>272</sup> Kolkhozes of all oblasts were pressed to make room for evacuated Slavic and Jewish families. These arrangements could result in solidarity and friendship, as well as rarer instances of enmity, competition, and suffering. An Uzbek family in Bukhara ended up hosting a Jewish man from Poland who married a local Tatar woman and stayed six years. They kept in correspondence with "uncle Iarik" for many years after the war.<sup>273</sup> But there were also instances of neglect where newcomers suffered. For instance, the wife, parents, and daughter of a Soviet army commander Gorbylev perished of unknown illnesses while living with other soldiers' families in dugouts and storerooms in a sovkhoz in the Post-Dargom district near Samarkand, despite his more than a dozen pleas for assistance.<sup>274</sup> Deported Crimean Tatars, Meskhetian Turks, and other nationalities arrived in 1944. Certainly many Uzbeks took state categories of "traitor nationalities" seriously. But as deportees themselves attest, linguistic and religious similarities ensured that most local people treated them generously, knitting clothes for them and sharing what little food they had.<sup>275</sup> Koreans were also newcomers to rural Uzbekistan, though they had been deported in 1937 and tended to set up their own autonomous kolkhozes. Each deported group brought its own handicraft, construction, and especially agricultural traditions that enriched local practices. For instance, in addition to sharing new irrigation techniques, Koreans introduced a form of illegal renting of kolkhoz lands known as *kobondi*, which used market

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<sup>270</sup> TsGA RUz f. 837, op. 32, d. 3618, l. 8, 44.

<sup>271</sup> TsGA RUz f. 837, op. 32, d. 3618, l. 46-47, 66.

<sup>272</sup> IRI RAN f. 2, r. 8, op. 4, d. 3, l. 51

<sup>273</sup> Interview with Ibragim Rizvanovich Rasulov, June 28, 2013.

<sup>274</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 628, l. 150.

<sup>275</sup> On treating Crimean Tatars with enmity, see Stronski, 132. Perspective on Uzbek generosity to Crimean Tatars comes from an interview with Reshat Kazakov (b.1939), May 24, 2013. Kazakov's family was settled in a mixed Uzbek and Kazakh kolkhoz near Andijan.

principles and ensured kolkhozes high yields and the Korean brigades high profits.<sup>276</sup> The war made the Uzbek countryside more cosmopolitan than ever before, with requisite opportunities for cultural encounter and mutual adoption of technology that could not help but broaden local worldviews.

Uzbek children and students joined women as the primary field laborers, essentially putting school on hold for the war years. In June 1942 Fergana oblast mobilized 27,107 people for agricultural work, 70 percent of whom were students and school children.<sup>277</sup> Rural schools closed and students in cities simply moved back home to work alongside their parents. In 1942-43 attendance at Uzbek- and other local-language primary schools dropped by 27 percent. In the older grades it was especially hard to find a child of local nationality. The number of students in grades 8-10 at Uzbek-language schools dropped in half between 1941-42 and 1942-43 and fell off even more precipitously at the start of the 1943-44 school year in proportion to steep declines in living conditions.<sup>278</sup> The only secondary (*sredniaia*) school in Kokand was entirely without 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders. And throughout the rural areas of Fergana valley there were only eight 10<sup>th</sup> graders in 1943. Although the TsK KP(b) Uz mandated that each district should maintain at least one school, most rural classrooms were drained of students and those that remained began only in late November, after the harvest season.<sup>279</sup> Meanwhile Russian school attendance actually increased 12 percent due to the evacuation of schoolchildren to cities and the lesser mobilization expectations for urban children. Party authorities attributed some of this disparity to the relative difficulty of finding productive labor for urban children, again underscoring the ethnic division of labor.<sup>280</sup> Thus Kornei Chukovskii's journal entry expressing delight that in Tashkent he heard the laughter of children attending school is doubly telling.<sup>281</sup> First, it demonstrated just how far removed the city was from Moscow, Leningrad, and other frontline cities where education was put on hold. Second, it neatly expresses the divide between the lives of evacuated elites in the capital and Uzbek children in the countryside who worked as adults.

Children did not just replace field laborers, however. The exit of educated men to the front created a literacy gap for accountants and clerks that could be filled by students in older grades.<sup>282</sup> These students brought the perspective of Soviet schooling into kolkhoz

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<sup>276</sup> For further explanation and discussion of *kobondi*, see Valeriy Sergeevich Khan, *Kore saram: kto my? Ocherki istorii koreitsev* (Bishkek: ARKHI, 2009), 107-126.

<sup>277</sup> TsGA RUz f. 837, op. 32, d. 3616, li. 20. And of Fergana oblast's 8,005 urban residents sent to temporary agricultural work, only 2,345 were males between the ages of 14 and 55, or 29 percent.

<sup>278</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 628, l. 133.

<sup>279</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 238, l. 125-127. The overall number of Uzbek students declined between 1939-40 and 1942-43 from 837,927 to 635,337. The TsK KP(b) Uz ruled on July 2, 1943 that each district had to maintain at least one Uzbek- or local-language school.

<sup>280</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 238, l. 125.

<sup>281</sup> Chukovskii wrote that "the strangest, most unexpected thing about [Tashkent] is the laughing children... schoolchildren hurrying off to school, something I haven't seen this year in Moscow." See Kornei Chukovsky, ed. Victor Erlich, transl. Michael Henry Heim, *Diary, 1901-1969* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), pp. 344.

<sup>282</sup> Madamin Khasanov (b.1924), the future chairman of the Uzbek Consumers' Union (*Uzbekpotrebsoiuz*), worked as an accountant's assistant as a ninth-grader in 1941 at his native kolkhoz in Voroshilov district, Andijan oblast. Interview with Khasanov, June 26, 2013.

administration, creating other venues for ideological conflict. The Samarkandi writer Ma'sud Rasuli took up work as a kolkhoz accountant to support his solitary mother in the city. He recalls being a youth without "tact" (Uzbek: *andisha*) before kolkhoz elders, correcting them that God did not exist when they invoked divine aid and labeling the traditional method of steeping tea with three pours a silly superstition. Of course, such encounters were not unidirectional. He was grateful for their patience and for introducing various folk traditions otherwise inaccessible for an urban youth. For instance, he recalls that traditional sporting festivals, like *kupkari* (a Central Asian sport in which horse-riders battle for a sheep carcass) were reintroduced to raise people's labor enthusiasm.<sup>283</sup> Thus war-time kolkhozes were subject to a variety of influences, bolstered by renewed religious practice and traditional customs but simultaneously exposed to new people with more progressive, or materialist worldviews.

Especially during harvest seasons Uzbek kolkhozes were inundated with new labor, from cities and circulated among rural regions. But the help arrived reluctantly, was distributed unevenly and inefficiently, and added to conflicts between urban residents and kolkhoz hosts. In summer 1942 newly-formed departments of mobilization at oblast and city levels struggled to coordinate with district Party leaders and kolkhoz chairmen. Some city and district ispolkoms failed to round up enough able-bodied students and adults for agricultural work, resulting in "crude administrative measures" that were "completely unacceptable" in the eyes of the SNK UzSSR. In June 5,620 residents of Bukhara were supposed to be sent to the surrounding fields but only 675 made it. In Fergana oblast the entire campaign had a "mass, unhealthy character that [was] only getting worse." Elsewhere mobilization resulted in surpluses. 4,477 people were sent from Tashkent to Iangi-Iul district despite a stated need of only 1,200. The Tashkent oblast ispolkom had to admit that it could not account for the whereabouts of the workers. In Pai-Aryk district a whole contingent from Samarkand disappeared in transit.<sup>284</sup> In effort to reassert control over absentee laborers a new law required kolkhoz chairmen to notify peoples' courts no less than a day after discovering the disappearance of mobilized workers.<sup>285</sup>

The problem was not simply people shirking labor obligations. Panicked kolkhoz chairmen, sensing a lifeline, made inordinate labor requests that often exceeded actual need. Oblast and district employees created "unnecessary nervous haste" and sent groups of laborers seemingly based on whim. City residents were sent to the fields from work directly, without warning, unable to return home for clothing and supplies. As a result some kolkhozes received more laborers than they could feed or shelter.<sup>286</sup> This situation was exacerbated by the breakdown of the rural transport network and the loss of automobiles and horses to army levies. Laborers accumulated at kolkhozes within walking distance of towns while the more remote kolkhozes – often the ones in greatest need – went without assistance. One report's authors admitted that they lacked the means to visit the most remote kolkhozes, leaving their fates unknown. Struggling kolkhozes could not always manage the sudden appearance of new mouths to feed. In one village in Fergana oblast 50 people fled because they were not given rice or meat. At another kolkhoz the laborers were given only 2.5 kg of flour and 3 liters of milk each day, to which the chairman responded, "Don't like it? You can leave. Others will come." Elsewhere students complained that they were given only flour but had nowhere to bake it since they slept

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<sup>283</sup> Ma'sud Rasuli, *Ispoved'* (Tashkent: O'qituvchi, 2000), 85-87.

<sup>284</sup> TsGA RUz f. 837, op. 32, d. 3613, li. 16-17; d. 3616, li. 1ob, 6, 44.

<sup>285</sup> TsGA RUz f. 837, op. 32, d. 3613, li. 23.

<sup>286</sup> TsGA RUz f. 837, op. 32, d. 3616, li. 23-24, 27.

in the fields.<sup>287</sup> Other laborers were made to stay far longer than their original obligations if fieldwork remained. Outside of Bukhara, where oblast officials estimated labor shortages of almost 10,000 people, white-collar workers lived at kolkhozes for twenty days while students had to stay longer than a month. All were mobilized without knowing how long they would be gone.<sup>288</sup>

The frenetic nature of mobilization meant that kolkhozes failed to organize and train new laborers properly. Children and teenagers, though more nimble and resilient, did not always work effectively. In a cotton brigade in Fergana oblast mobilized teenagers were sent to weed by hand because only three out of ninety-five of them could wield a *ketmen*. Instead of 800 square meters per day of work they were completing 200. At a kolkhoz near Bukhara 28 children worked for twenty days in July and as a group completed only 37 *trudodni*. There was simply not enough oversight once the workers arrived in the countryside, and in some kolkhozes in Fergana oblast many of the assigned laborers were deemed to be “shirkers” who did not make honest efforts, discouraging the kolkhoz leaders from making further labor requests.<sup>289</sup>

Perhaps of greatest concern to the state, kolkhoz bookkeeping broke down amidst all the movement and the loss of accountants and clerks. Kolkhozes lost count of *trudodni*, the vital assessment tool of agricultural work that determined wages. SNK UzSSR chairman Abdurakhmanov called these breakdowns a “crude violation” of Party directives and mobilized hundreds of accountants from cities to kolkhozes.<sup>290</sup> Oblast mobilization department officials worried that in some kolkhozes able-bodied adults refrained from work while the mobilized arrivals labored with no idea how much compensation they were owed, resulting in an “unhealthy mood” if the arrivals sensed they were working on behalf of the permanent labor force.<sup>291</sup> In a kolkhoz outside of Bukhara, eight wives of Red Army servicemen arrived of their own will, not by mobilization, and lived in the kolkhoz garden. None of the women knew how many *trudodni* she had completed.<sup>292</sup> It is impossible to determine whether there was malicious intent in these actions, though they served as another basis for the tension between urban and rural populations.

The mobilization of city dwellers could also reinforce class boundaries. Cases of shirking field mobilizations came primarily from Russian and Uzbek wives of white-collar workers. For instance, the Russian wife of a Karshi movie theater director who had become a pharmacy cashier was taken to court, as was an army wife who tried to replace her labor obligation with nursing courses. Elsewhere Uzbek and Russian housewives were sentenced to one-year jail terms for refusing to work. Complaints also arrived that, once at kolkhozes, mobilized housewives refused to show up for field work, or grossly underperformed.<sup>293</sup> The conditions of shortage were taking their toll on the social fabric. Kolkhozniki had grounds to resent the city people for whom they had to sacrifice their grain, fruit, and vegetable harvests. And city workers had little

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<sup>287</sup> TsGA RUz f. 837, op. 32, d. 3616, li. 1ob-3, 24-26.

<sup>288</sup> TsGA RUz f. 837, op. 32, d. 3616, li. 4.

<sup>289</sup> TsGA RUz f. 837, op. 32, d. 3616, li. 2, 23, 26.

<sup>290</sup> TsGA RUz f. 837, op. 32, d. 3613, li. 1; d. 3415, li. 138. In September 1942 SNK UzSSR chairman Abdurakhmanov ordered 500 accountants and bookkeepers from Tashkent to the outlying kolkhozes for the impending harvest. This order was met with typical delays.

<sup>291</sup> TsGA RUz f. 837, op. 32, d. 3613, li. 16.

<sup>292</sup> TsGA RUz f. 837, op. 32, d. 3616, li. 5.

<sup>293</sup> TsGA RUz f. 837, op. 32, d. 316, li. 6-7.

sympathy for kolkhoz employees who could not provide food or shelter and who seemed to be the very same ones who enriched themselves by selling produce on black markets surrounding the cities.

By 1943 agricultural production dragged dangerously behind the government plan and theft, speculation, and the illegal slaughter of animals increased. Grain mills met only half of the flour plan. Uzbekistan's vegetable oil production reached only 62 percent and meat conserves 64 percent. A TsK USSR representative found that "thousands of tons of sugar beets were subject to spoilage and theft in kolkhozes" and that over half of sugar beets harvested failed to reach the sugar processing plants. TsK KP(b) Uz and SNK UzSSR plenipotentiaries put workers on a "barracks regime" till the end of beet processing, and arranged for the emergency "storming" and transport of limestone (for fertilizer), but none of these measures resolved the shortfalls.<sup>294</sup> Meat production was in steady decline, from 26,673 tons in 1940 to an eventual 15,348 tons in 1945 due to rationing and requisitions that led kolkhozniki to slaughter livestock or to sell it on the black market. In February 1943 Uzbekistan's TsK, SNK, and NKVD sent an "emergency commission" to the provinces in order to save flocks but they failed to stem the losses.<sup>295</sup>

Poverty and hunger drove people to desperation and willingness to violate state directives. Since the start of war Tashkent and other cities experienced bread shortages, leaving the evacuee community particularly susceptible and causing one city resident to speculate that people volunteered for war only to avoid going hungry.<sup>296</sup> But life in the countryside was not necessarily any better. Selling and slaughtering livestock rose to such a degree that 86 kolkhozes in Fergana oblast were without cows.<sup>297</sup> After the war it was estimated that 44.5 percent of Andijan oblast households were without livestock of any kind, with only slightly better numbers in Fergana, Tashkent, and Namangan oblasts.<sup>298</sup> Rural residents began using cotton seed to make bread or went without bread, relying on stone fruits, mulberries, and scavenging....<sup>299</sup> And while famine was not widespread, there were instances of starvation and grizzly desperation. Young children and the very old among the kolkhoz and evacuee populations struggled to survive the winter of 1944.<sup>300</sup> In a small kolkhoz in Surkhandar'ia oblast 25 out of 200 members had died by March 1944. The same year human flesh was discovered for sale at a Samarkand market.<sup>301</sup>

In this context rural residents looked upon procurement agents as the enemy. They were met with resistance and in turn relied upon extra-legal means. Kolhozniki were found guilty of agitating against procurement or stealing from grain funds. When faced with opposition, procurement agents became unduly severe. At one meeting of a kolkhoz aktiv agent Muminov promised to "break locks and pull back the roofs" of kolkhozniki and conducted night raids,

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<sup>294</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 628, li. 143-144; d. 236, li. 73ob.

<sup>295</sup> Hansen, pp. 61; RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 628, li. 147.

<sup>296</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 95, li. 33. For urban bread shortages, see li. 98, 174-175.

<sup>297</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 239, li. 11.

<sup>298</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 122, d. 141, li. 18. A similar report for Tajikistan estimated that 13 percent of kolkhozniki were without any personal livestock. See d. 62, li. 2.

<sup>299</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 236, li. 17ob.

<sup>300</sup> The writer Ma'sud Rasuli recalled seeing the bodies of dead evacuees being carted through the streets of Samarkand and children and the elderly dying of hunger and the elements in the countryside. Rasuli, 80, 84.

<sup>301</sup> Hansen, 68-69.

seizing property, oil, and meat even from those who owed nothing.<sup>302</sup> In 1943 the Fergana obkom sacked a raikom secretary for overseeing a procurement campaign that included “search and seizure” operations for property and animals, leading to “anti-Soviet agitation.”<sup>303</sup> In Khaldy-Vanbek district (Andijan oblast) the raikom secretary organized a “storm brigade” of forty people to conduct a five-day procurement campaign. It operated at night, searching all 54 households at one kolkhoz, seizing food and clothing.<sup>304</sup>

However, it was the cotton harvest’s shocking lows that forced the TsK USSR and the GKO to take notice and call Uzbek First Secretary Usman Iusupov to Moscow to take personal account. The cotton harvest fell by a factor of three, from 1,600,000 tons in 1941, to 850,000 in 1942, and was estimated to be less than 500,000 for 1943. Soil productivity fell below pre-revolutionary levels as cotton fields produced 7 tsentners per hectare, compared with an average of 12 ts/h in 1913 and 15-17 ts/h before the war.<sup>305</sup> Andijan oblast was particularly hard hit. Its cotton acreage shrank 19 percent, from 1941 to 1943 and average productivity shrank from 23.5 ts/h to 8.2 ts/h.<sup>306</sup> Low cotton yields in turn affected the whole textile production line, causing shortfalls at cotton cleaning factories that fed clothing and bandage production. Cotton factories fulfilled just 49 percent of the 1942 plan, while an estimated 500,000 tons of cotton – almost the entire 1943 harvest – remained unprocessed, testament to that industry’s own labor shortages.<sup>307</sup>

A variety of factors conspired to wreak havoc on the harvest. Most significant were the loss of tractors and absence of qualified mechanics. Often tractors were left in disrepair while the bulk of plowing and sewing was done manually with ketmen. Although draft animals could have helped to replace machines, many horses and cows were requisitioned by the army, sold at bazars, or slaughtered for food. Furthermore, most kolkhozes were completely cut off from the mineral and chemical fertilizers that they had relied on for high soil productivity, as these materials were siphoned into the defense industry. In addition, the war left the republic’s irrigation network in disarray. Despite the recent construction of several large canals (the Great Fergana Canal, North Fergana Canal, Tashkent Canal, etc.), kolkhozes were unable to dredge their irrigation canals, which required regular maintenance. Here too the loss of mechanical excavators (to disrepair or to other republican building projects) could not be compensated by manual labor. This led to significant swamping in some districts and salinization in others, such as Khorezm, Bukhara, and Fergana oblasts and the Kara-Kalpak ASSR where 25-30 percent of agricultural land was estimated to be unusable. TsK observers estimated that no significant canal maintenance had been undertaken in the republic since the war began. Some of the water problems also emerged due to the reorientation of Uzbek agriculture during the war. Rice was blamed for being a particularly water-demanding crop and kolkhozes had difficulty enforcing “water discipline” because so many of their irrigation experts – *miraby* – had departed for the front. Finally, Iusupov explained to the TsK USSR that malaria had become a “mass” phenomenon throughout the republic, which pulled “significant numbers” of kolkhoz workers

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<sup>302</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 96, li. 149.

<sup>303</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 236, li. 88.

<sup>304</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 629, li. 29-30.

<sup>305</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 628, li. 119. In 1940-41 average productivity of cotton was 15-17 tsentners per hectare.

<sup>306</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 629, li. 1.

<sup>307</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 628, li. 130, 132.

from the fields during the “heat of harvest work.”<sup>308</sup> Thus the war sapped kolkhozes of manpower and expertise, but also reprioritized other spheres of the economy for machine, mineral, and human resources. The women and children who made up the majority of kolkhoz workers struggled to make do in the face of disease and food shortages.

Interestingly, TsK USSR investigators noted that Uzbek kolkhozes had lost financial incentive to plant cotton. Given rising food prices on the black market, grain requisitioning, and set prices for cotton, kolkhozes made more profit from melon and watermelon than from the state’s primary crop. For Uzbek kolkhozniki, this was something like confronting NEP and War Communism simultaneously, with strict state requisitioning combined with incentive to produce for market in order to survive. Many kolkhoz leaders calculated that sewing melons and other food crops was a safer choice for survival given the state’s disorderly bread distribution which seemed to take place at the whim of oblast authorities. In October 1943 Andijan oblast obkom and oblispolkom officials oversaw distribution that skipped four districts entirely while two districts received three and five times more than they were due.<sup>309</sup>

The TsK USSR responded harshly, ruling that Uzbek leadership had lost control in the countryside, citing the rise of misappropriation and theft, inefficient irrigation and labor mobilization, and irregularities in kolkhoz payments. It blamed state and Party workers for the decline in livestock, citing illegal or excessive procurements.<sup>310</sup> In order to reassert control and demonstrate obedience, Iusupov unleashed a wave of coercive measures and sacked a series of obkom and raikom leaders for improper procurement and payments to kolkhozniki. By September 1944 Uzbek prosecutors had convicted an additional 42,470 labor mobilization deserters. In Andijan oblast the entire Party elite was laid off for being incapable of mobilizing workers for industrial projects. Kashkadar’ia and southern Surkhandar’ia oblasts and the Kara-Kalpak ASSR were also problem areas subject to Party purges.<sup>311</sup> From raikom officials to kolkhoz chairmen, rural leaders experienced these measures as a further tightening of already tight screws yet were under stern warning to avoid excessive measures. As those in higher leadership were replaced, those on kolkhoz fields and plant floors experienced even greater stress, threats, and violence to meet state goals. This atmosphere left Uzbek women in particularly vulnerable positions

Desperate to find leadership who could execute state plans – and equally desperate to find scapegoats – obkom and raikom officials mercilessly shuffled through local leaders. TsK USSR investigators found that Uzbek officials relied on threats, intimidation, and “mass exclusions from the Party” throughout the countryside. In Parkent district (Tashkent oblast) in 1941 four out of six selsoviet chairmen were replaced, as well as 13 of 19 kolkhoz chairmen, 9 out of 12 harvest council chairmen, and 15 of 25 farm managers. Moscow Party officials pointed out that some of these firings were unsubstantiated, offering cover for “class-enemy elements” to foment the “decomposition” of kolkhozes and that firings immediately resulted in the loss of

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<sup>308</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 628, li. 86, 92, 120-123.

<sup>309</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 628, li. 122-123. Assuming that obkom and oblispolkom officials were not punishing whole districts or taking bribes, they may have been engaging in their own calculus based on the relative need of the districts.

<sup>310</sup> Hansen, 66. Hansen cites data from RGASPI f. 17, op. 116, d. 148, li. 1-7. Iusupov’s summoning to Moscow took place late 1943 or early 1944.

<sup>311</sup> Hansen, 67.



livestock.<sup>312</sup> These tactics continued throughout the war. For instance in Andijan oblast 129 out of 517 kolkhoz chairmen were sacked in 1944.<sup>313</sup> The sackings may have brought newer, younger voices to administrative positions, however they also increased panic and stress. Such turnover likely only made kolkhozes leaders even more prone to repressive behavior.

Violence flowed downwards directly from the top, eventually making its way to Uzbek kolkhozes. Although Moscow's Party investigators shunned such behavior, they provided no alternatives nor recognized their culpability. TsK investigators noted that the TsK KP(b) Uz biuro's tendency for punitive decisions "push[ed] local Party and Soviet organs towards a path of naked administrative rule and the beating of cadres."<sup>314</sup> In addition to administrative punishments, Party officials – even at the raikom level – beat their inferiors, such as the Kirov raikom secretary (Fergana oblast) who delivered blows upon a harvest council chairmen, and his predecessor, who beat up kolhozники.<sup>315</sup> Raikom secretaries also resorted to threats and provocations of rural Party members, such as the secretary of the Chinabad raikom (Andijan oblast) who arrested kolkhoz chairmen and brigadiers at public rallies throughout his district in advance of the cotton campaign. These lower level officials were accused of knowing only one language when it came to their inferiors: "shouts, abuse, and firing."<sup>316</sup>

And the most precarious position was occupied by simple kolhozники. Moscow Party officials found that "beating and humiliation of kolhozники [was] a frequent occurrence" in Andijan kolkhozes. In Izbaskent district a selsoviet chairman organized an extralegal holding cell for people accused of various misdemeanors. In Balykchi district a kolkhoz chairman beat a brigadier unconscious. And in Chinabad district the chairman of a harvest council beat up one man and three women.<sup>317</sup> The beating of kolhozники and low-ranking kolkhoz officials was also deemed a "mass phenomenon" in Parkent district (Tashkent oblast).<sup>318</sup>

Harvest failures, requisitions, and the exit of the rural male workforce led to deprivation and violence that pulled apart the rural social fabric. Evacuation, deportation, and mobilization brought new cultural encounters and new perspectives but also ratcheted up tensions. This atmosphere of desperation and need also provided the conditions for new people, including women, to take more active social roles. Yet these same conditions ensured that the social elevation of women would be fraught and potentially dangerous.

### *Uzbek women and emancipation by necessity*

Thus it was against a tumultuous and violent backdrop that Uzbek women exited their homes and took up socially vital roles in large numbers. As the war dragged on and the state's production and labor shortfalls became clearer the state ramped up its attention to rural women. By all accounts the mobilization of necessity convinced even conservative men and women to allow women to become conscientious, public, and patriotic workers in a number of new capacities. Especially young women were inspired to decisively transcend gender boundaries, sometimes facing violent reprisals. Ultimately the war's push of thousands of women into the

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<sup>312</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 236, li. 73.

<sup>313</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 629, li. 6.

<sup>314</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 628, li. 147.

<sup>315</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 238, li. 83.

<sup>316</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 629, li. 5-6.

<sup>317</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 629, li. 29-30.

<sup>318</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 236, li. 73.

fields and onto tractors was an arduous and oftentimes tragic expansion of rural Uzbek gender norms. The traumatic nature of this mobilization was also partially responsible for making so many Uzbek women return to their homes and gave up their purported gains after the war.

Kolkhozes were doubly dangerous places for women. First, as the last link in a chain of abuse emanating from the state's agricultural plans and Party leaders, they bore the burden for planting and harvesting directly in the fields. And second, as they met the Party-state's calls to replace the departed men, young women were punished violently for outstepping their traditional gender roles. In July 1941 an "activist kolkhoznitsa" in Tashkent oblast was attacked with a knife by her husband for joining tractor-driving courses at the MTS. In a separate incident, another husband tried to kill his wife for doing the same. And a female brigadier ran away from her kolkhoz after her husband forbid her from working. In the same district Party reports found a female Communist harboring an itinerant mulla from Khodzhent, leading to continued "feudal-bai survivals."<sup>319</sup> Although Party logic insisted on the link between conservative local gender norms and the influence of rogue religious elements, social traditions ran deeply and broadly, even in Tashkent oblast, a region close to the capital and with comparatively more Communists.

Men also used their positions of authority to suppress the demands of newly empowered women. Although Uzbek women were only a minor presence in heavy industry, they formed a significant portion of the workforce at silk-weaving plants in places like Margelan. Even here, with a closer Party and government presence, their actions were bound by norms of deference that may have been more copiously enforced due to the stress of war. At one such plant five women – Stakhanovites and wives of Red Army soldiers – were sent to prison for three months for criticizing the plant director's failures to organize a cafeteria and, in general, to support the well-being of the largely female workforce. Moscow Party investigators discovered that this "crude perversion" of the law was enabled by the raikom and prosecutor's office who manipulated the case on behalf of the plant director.<sup>320</sup> Moscow Party officials were especially worried because the women with the most social capital and progressive pedigrees were punished for overstepping gender norms by their purported allies, men in Party, government, and industrial leadership. The wives of Red Army soldiers were deemed to be new candidates for social emancipation because through their husbands they were personally invested in world events and the success of the Soviet state and could help reinforce their husbands' broadened worldviews upon their returns.<sup>321</sup> But they could be blocked when a stubborn group of men controlled the levers of power.

On kolkhozes male opposition to women's assertiveness could be cruder. At kolkhoz "Communism" in Bekil'-Bazar district in Turkmenistan women mobilized to work in a silk-spinning artel were not paid for nine months and were discovered to be exhausted and ill. The woman who notified Party authorities, herself a deputy in the Turkmen Supreme Soviet, was harassed and threatened by the raikom secretary almost until suicide.<sup>322</sup>

Despite threats and violence, many rural Uzbek women answered the state's universal calls to Soviet women to replace their husbands, brothers, and fathers in their workplace for the

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<sup>319</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 95, li. 160-162.

<sup>320</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 628, li. 148. The location of this case is missing from the report.

<sup>321</sup> In her dissertation, Ibragimova cites Uzbek state archive data holding that 65 percent of women promoted to leadership roles in primary Party organizations were wives of active servicemen. However, this data is not broken down by nationality. See Ibragimova, 142.

<sup>322</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 121, d. 455, l. 12-19.

overall good of the country. Summer 1941 witnessed large rallies for women in Tashkent, but also cities like Namangan, Bukhara, and filtered down the agitational chain to districts and kolkhozes.<sup>323</sup> Despite violent setbacks, that summer the Party kept assiduous tabs on the hundreds of rural women from across the republic who signed up for two-month tractor-driving courses at Machine Tractors Stations (MTS). In Tashkent oblast 38 women from two kolkhozes requested a return to tractor work, indicating that they had previously been trained but had for some reason exited the profession before he war.<sup>324</sup> By the war's end 12,500 Uzbek women had studied at the MTS courses as drivers, mechanics, and combine-operators, more than quadrupling their numbers before the war.<sup>325</sup> The mechanization of agriculture was fundamental to the Bolsheviks' developmental promise to rural Central Asians but it was especially symbolic for women, for whom it represented the pinnacle of rural emancipation. As such these numbers represented unimaginable gains from pre-war levels, demonstrating that the Bolshevik vision of a country landscape with women atop tractors owed more to the exigencies of war than mere ideological exhortation.

And if they did not respond to Party agitators, Central Asian women also received calls to support the front from religious authorities once the Soviet state reconciled with Islam. The appeal to Central Asian Muslims crafted at the Great Kurultai in Tashkent from October 15-20, 1943 was pointedly addressed to "brothers and sisters, Muslim men and Muslim women," and sanctioned "in the name of Allah the merciful and charitable." Tashkent's mufti Ishan Babakhan Abdumadzhitkhanov and nine other Islamic leaders labeled the fight against Germany a "just war," emphasizing Nazi murder and rape of fellow Muslims in Crimea and the Caucasus, and racial theory that purportedly considered "Eastern-Muslim peoples to be monkeys." Like the *Nakaz naroda* of the previous year, the message emphasized the destruction of Uzbek traditional culture, its households, "family hearths," and the honor of women, yet it used explicitly religious rationale of the Koran and hadiths. In the face of threats to Muslim cultural integrity, women were urged to consider their religious obligations on par with men's. The address celebrated female soldiers Zibakhri Ganieva and Mar'iam Iusupova alongside "Turkestan's" other heroes, such as Kuchkar Turdyev. It also appealed to Muslim mothers and wives to pray: to "ask the great Lord for a worthy victory for Soviet soldiers, victory for Your brothers and sons." But mostly it urged women to "assist with all your soul and all your possessions in the strengthening and elevation of our government, which has given us peace and safety." It continued: "and to strengthen these prayers with action, it is incumbent to give Red Army soldiers as many provision and raw materials, weapons and ammunition as possible, to honestly and selflessly work in kolkhozes and sovkhozes, plants and factories." The address even quoted an unnamed hadith that was a perfect fit for the Soviet homefront: "Helping armed soldiers going to the front is the equivalent of participation in battle. Even the peaceful labor of men and women, taking the place of those gone to the front is equal to participation in combat."<sup>326</sup>

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<sup>323</sup> Meetings in July in the October district (Old City) of Tashkent in honor of Stalin's address to the Soviet people drew 15,000 women. See RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 95, li. 57.

<sup>324</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 95, li. 13. See also li. 23, 25, 42, 95, 61, 101.

<sup>325</sup> RGASPI f. 574, op. 1, d. 2, li. 9. An estimated 3,000 women drove tractors before the war. See Ibragimova, 139. Citing Uzbek archival sources, Ibragimova holds that 21,000 out of 26,000 tractor-drivers trained during the war were women, an increase by a factor of seven.

<sup>326</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 125, d. 188, l. 39-42ob.

The reconciliation with religion allowed the state another vector into the language of tradition to legitimize the extraordinary demands of the war effort. The mufti's address threatened that Muslim women were targets of despoiling and appealed to them to voice prayers on behalf of their sons, brothers, husbands, and the state. But at the same time, using examples from the life of Muhammad it sanctioned the breaking of tradition in the examples of female soldiers and the appeals for material and physical exertion in worksites all over the homefront, to make sacrifices on par with soldiers at the front.

Whatever form of agitation they found most convincing, rural Uzbek women responded heroically. As has been discussed, the Party-state's agricultural plan called for kolkhozes to produce more with less; fewer able-bodied men, agricultural specialists, tractors and less fertilizer and land under plow. Although there is no completely satisfactory measurement for their labor, we can consider *trudodni*, a measure of work norms completed. Party sources found that the average Uzbek kolkhoz woman fulfilled 198 *trudodni* in 1940 compared with 243 in 1943 – a 23 percent increase all the more astonishing considering technological limitations.<sup>327</sup> But this number only gestures at the sacrifices that common women endured. One kolkhoz in Samarkand oblast boasted that 103 elderly women worked in the fields. Some of these gains were made with extra attention to technique. A female brigadier in Namangan oblast taught her brigade to rationally use its time and to retain its strength by refraining from extra movements. However, the more common experience was to extend the workday in the fields. Komsomol brigades and “frontline brigades” were noted for spending days and nights in the fields, but this practice was not only limited to special campaigns and the politically active.<sup>328</sup> Due to the physical strain of kolkhoz labor, much of Uzbek Party work among women after the war centered around questions of women's and children's health, and decreasing infant mortality by providing obstetricians and pediatricians to the provinces.<sup>329</sup> Field labor took its toll on women's bodies.

Making such demands, the Party began to tailor its propaganda message by considering women's particular needs. It dangled the carrots of improved rations and childcare to induce heroic labor output, however in reality carrots were scarce while sticks were plentiful. In advance of the 1943 autumn cotton harvest the TsK KP(b) Uz issued a “closed letter” to oblast secretaries proposing measures to stimulate high productivity, including giving cotton pickers preferential access to food and manufactured goods and organizing hot meals in the fields at least twice a day, including better rations for Stakhanovites who picked two or three times the norms. It also required kolkhozes to organize a set of children's nurseries and kindergartens with “proven” teachers, “without concern” for the costs. Each child was to receive daily white bread, meat, milk, eggs, fruits and vegetables as well as medical services. And kolkhozes would be equipped with a full suite of agitation activities like radio, movies, and newspaper readings. Most of the program was wildly unattainable for most kolkhozes, but leaders of Party organizations could not have failed to read the final reminder: their work would be judged only in relation to the amount of cotton harvested and grain procured.<sup>330</sup> Thus the Uzbek Communist leadership recognized that

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<sup>327</sup> RGASPI f. 574, op. 1, d. 2, li. 7.

<sup>328</sup> See Ibragimova, 122-124. Spending the nights in field was also a common practice among women in Ogulkhon Karimova's kolkhoz.

<sup>329</sup> RGASPI f. 574, op. 1, d. 2, li. 19.

<sup>330</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 628, li. 136-138.

harvests were directly reliant on the work of women, whose well-being as mothers was directly gestured at. However, most kolkhozes could not afford such outlays of material and human resources. More essential was the last paragraph, which essentially gave them mandate to pull in the cotton by whatever means possible.

As a result the heroic outlays of labor were frequently the result of compulsion. In places local Party leaders raised *trudoden*' minimums to unrealistic levels and punished those who could not comply. For instance, in July 1943 as part of a "frontline month" (*frontovoi mesiachnik*) the Tashkent obkom and ispolkom stipulated that each male and female kolkhoz worker complete at least two *trudodnia* per day. Those who failed to keep pace would not receive monetary advances, nor the right to work their own garden plots, which were critical for subsistence. Further failing to meet these minimums in the first five days would result in compulsion to complete thirteen *trudodni* over the next five days.<sup>331</sup> In March 1943 the TsK KP(b) Uz orchestrated an appeal to Uzbek kolkhozes from the "leading builders" of the Farkhad hydroelectric station proposing increased *trudodni* minimums, to 250 per year for men and women and between 100 and 120 a year for teens from 12 to 15 years of age, up from 50. The address proposed that kolkhozniki who failed to keep pace be fined for the first offense, have their private plots reduced for the second, and have them removed entirely on the third offense, plus be taken to court. Such measures were widely adopted, leading to prosecutions. In places local leaders set the work minimums even higher.<sup>332</sup> Thus although the state made formal considerations for maternal health and wellbeing that were all but impossible to carry out, it also carried out brutal work regimes, irrespective of gender, age, or physical condition.<sup>333</sup> Where the rubber hit the road, the state often treated Uzbek kolkhoz women just like men, a fact which truly characterized the emancipation by necessity.

Women made physical sacrifices not only in kolkhoz fields but also on various rural building projects, alongside men. Although Uzbek women were largely absent from factory floors, they formed a significant presence on canal-digging sites. This is largely because such projects were likely viewed as extensions of traditional irrigation tasks (Uzbek: *khashar*), and because they were surrounded almost exclusively by other Uzbeks, rather than crossing the culture thresholds at factories. Finding laborers to construct canals and power stations was the responsibility of kolkhoz chairmen who could assign workers with impunity but tended not to assign their family members, allies, or those who could buy their way out, much like village elders in pre-revolutionary Russia.<sup>334</sup> Common people inquired why kolkhoz leaders refrained from sending their own sons, daughter, and relatives, yet labor mobilization continued to fall on the shoulders of the least privileged members of the kolkhozes.<sup>335</sup> In this way necessity and shortage conspired to force the least privileged Uzbek women out of traditional gender roles, outside their home districts, and far from the gaze of husbands or other male family members.

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<sup>331</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 628, li. 49-50.

<sup>332</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 628, li. 149.

<sup>333</sup> An assessment of popular mood found that Uzbek people were mystified by the Farkhad builders' appeals, especially as it pertained to work requirements for the elderly. See RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 236, li. 13ob.

<sup>334</sup> For an explanation of kolkhoz chairmen's responsibilities and the Bolshevik utilization of the *khashar* tradition, see Abashin, *Sovetskii kishlak*, 255-263.

<sup>335</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 236, li. 13ob.

Canal-digging was a tremendously arduous assignment traditionally performed without compensation, often made worse by poor rations and sanitation facilities. Living quarters were often hastily-equipped barracks, tents, or nothing at all. These projects were traditionally male spheres and they required a concerted party agitation effort to keep up motivation and spirits. For instance, Farkhad hydroelectric station sucked the Party's best agitation workers away from the other oblasts, leaving kolkhozes underserved.<sup>336</sup> The presence of female labor on the Tashkent canal left an impression on the evacuated poet Boris Lugovskoi, who saluted their efforts to dig trenches "day and night" in his poem in honor of International Women's Day.<sup>337</sup>

If the construction of the Nizhne-Bozsui hydroelectric station in Tashkent oblast is any indication, women of local nationalities made up a sizeable minority in this male-dominated world. The People's Commissariat for Electric Stations awarded diplomas and badges for "active participation" in its construction that provide an estimate of the class, gender, and nationality breakdown of the project. Of the 519 award-winners mobilized from kolkhozes in the oblast's eighteen districts, 89 were women of local nationalities, or about 17 percent. Each of these women was classified as a kolhoznitsa, with the exception of one teacher and one kolkhoz secretary. Although making up a sizeable minority of the rank-and-file workers on the project, Uzbek women were virtually absent from the list of 209 specialists, clerks, and other white-collar workers. There were only two: Zukhra Iusupova, a technical accounting clerk, and Khalima Nasyrova, the People's Artist of the USSR who had performed agitation work there. The ten chairmen of kolkhozes and selsoviets were all men and almost all of local nationalities, as were the forty raikom and raiispolkom chairmen, secretaries, and other cadres.<sup>338</sup> These women were not the trained factory proletarians that the Party so desperately sought. The temporary and arduous nature of this labor was unsustainable and unhealthy. Yet in significant numbers these mostly young, underprivileged Uzbek kolkhoz women answered the state's call of emancipation to travel long distance to toil and live alongside men.

Two years into the war the Party determined that it needed to provide more organized support of Uzbek women entering the labor force and to assist their elevation among the ranks of local leaders. In January 1943 the TsK KP(b) Uz introduced sections for women's work in Party organs (*otdely o rabote sredi zhenshchin partiinykh organov Uzbekistana*), which were reminiscent of the *zhenotdels* that had overseen the Party's unveiling campaigns in the 1920s but had been dismantled in 1930. Created under the auspices of a general Party initiative to assist families of military servicemen and the guidance of a 1938 TsK KP(b) Uz resolution on women's advocacy, they were tasked with conducting ideological and agitational work among women to eliminate "survivals" from the past, "cultivate a sense of patriotic obligation for the Motherland," draw them into industrial and agricultural work, raise their labor qualifications to learn complex professions, improve their living conditions, and elevate them into leadership roles in organizing material help to families of soldiers and war widows. Thus the measure was highly ambitious, hoping to eliminate traditional *byt'*, appealing to gendered war roles as organizers of aid, but also replacing men in agricultural and industrial posts. A women's section

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<sup>336</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 238, li. 72, 81. A 1944 Moscow Party report found that agitation work at the Fergana obkom had all but disappeared because its agitprop secretary had been engaged at Farkhadstroi for over nine months.

<sup>337</sup> *Pravda Vostoka*, March 8, 1942.

<sup>338</sup> TsGA RUz f. 837, op. 32, d. 3746, li. 375-385, 388-392.

leader was to be appointed at obkom, gorkom, and raikom levels, though their effectiveness is difficult to gauge. Like the earlier *zhenotdels*, their work was primarily agitational, limited to lectures and conversations with women in their homes, as well as larger rallies and meetings, where they delivered speeches with titles such as “Soviet women are a powerful force,” “bravery and heroism of Soviet women on the labor front,” and “the moral appearance of Soviet women.”<sup>339</sup> Section leaders were frequently the only women within local Party structures, meaning their access to resources were reliant on support from the men around them.

Meanwhile a separate Party initiative added another new office for women on kolkhozes as deputy chairmen for work among women. This office was created to offer ground-level assistance to encourage the mobilization of women for fieldwork and other productive capacities.<sup>340</sup> As the wife of a soldier, Khabiba Mukimova was selected for this new position at an MTS near Samarkand. Her path as war wife to rural leader was something of an archetype, which brought her new responsibilities and dangers: “All the weight of our large family fell on my shoulders. They trusted me with work among women... We had to ride on horseback and carts around kolkhozes, supporting the families of frontoviki with food and clothes. At the same time we supported frontoviki with warm clothes, packages, knitted socks, hats, gloves, and mittens. At that time we did not even know how much or how long we worked, we had no weekends, no free time for personal lives.” Her duties as an “aktivistka” brought her into conflict with rural leaders. She recalled a particular brutal winter when children and old people died “right under our eyes.” In the very same kolkhoz she found a well-hidden pit full of hoarded grain, stolen by kolkhoz leaders. She and other women reported the men and distributed the grain among the hungry and were nearly murdered themselves by the guilty men but for the actions of selsoviet leaders.<sup>341</sup>

These two Party directives led to a pointed campaign to elevate rural Uzbek women into leadership positions. In Samarkand oblast alone, the measure created roles for 1,262 women as deputy chairmen in kolkhozes and 207 as brigadiers. In Bukhara oblast 247 women worked as farm leaders for animal-rearing.<sup>342</sup> In the entire republic 3,458 women worked as deputy kolkhoz chairmen, meaning approximately half the republic’s kolkhozes were served. Women also accounted for 11,950 brigadiers – four times their number in 1935 – and 48,772 field-team leaders throughout the republic, many of whom received additional training to do so.<sup>343</sup>

Women were also elevated to kolkhoz chairmen in several noteworthy cases. Without the overall numbers it is hard to know how significant these promotions were on the republican level. However, the role of kolkhoz chairman had been incontrovertibly male, thus even rare

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<sup>339</sup> RGASPI f. 574, op. 1, d. 2, li. 17-18; f. 17, op. 88, d. 786, li. 1.

<sup>340</sup> Ibragimova, 141.

<sup>341</sup> Khabiba Mukimova’s memoirs appeared in the Uzbek magazine *Zarafshon*, November 1, 1990. As quoted in Rasuli, *Ispoved’*, 84.

<sup>342</sup> Ibragimova, pp. 141-142. Ibragimova’s data comes from Uzbek Communist Party records in f.58 at the Presidential Archive currently closed to foreign researchers. She also includes women’s Party membership figures, but they are they are not broken down by nationality. She found that in the war years 158 women worked as obkom and gorkom secretaries; 215 young women worked as secretaries of TsK, obkom, and gorkom of the komsomol; and that in 1943, of 5,571 primary Party secretaries in the republic, 1,284 were women.

<sup>343</sup> *Istoriia uzbekskoi SSR*. T. 4. Red. R. Kh. Aminova. Tashkent: “FAN,” 1968, pp. 110; Gatagova et al., *TsK VKP(b) i natsional’nyi vopros, kniga 2, 1933-1945*, 150.

instances had great resonance. A favorite figure in the press and Party-approved histories was Tursun-oi Karimova who as a twenty-four year-old in 1945 became chairman of – symbolically – the Stalin kolkhoz in the Lenin district of Andijan oblast. She finished school in 1941 but her hopes for higher education were dashed by the war. She began as a simple laborer using a ketmen and routinely overfulfilled norms on the under-performing kolkhoz. Soon she became a field-team leader and a brigadier. In 1945 she joined the Party and her kolkhoz produced 35 ts/h of cotton – essentially doubling pre-war norms. In 1946 the year’s earnings for each kolkhoznik was between 16 and 18 thousand rubles and she was elected a deputy to the Supreme Soviet SSSR.<sup>344</sup> Likely her ability to turn around the lagging kolkhoz was enabled by Party efforts to ensure she had tractors and fertilizer, and that the profit figures were widely distributed to emphasize that an Uzbek woman could be just as able a provider as a male *khozain*.

Similar successes were reported in Tajikistan. In 1941 women of local nationalities accounted for 18 percent of all female recruits into the Party. Those numbers rose to 36 percent in 1943 and 38.4 percent in 1944. And in 1943 and 1944 women of local nationalities were promoted to 549 new Party leadership positions.<sup>345</sup>

Regardless of professional station, Uzbek women performed heroic labor feats in response to the Party-state’s calls to mobilize. The vast majority were neither literate nor members of any Party or state organizations, however they became integrated into the war effort, and thus into the life of the state, reaching long-term Communist Party goals, even if most never set foot in a munitions factory. The state used a number of ideological devices to convince women that their extraordinary efforts were sanctioned by tradition, calling upon the sanctity of family, Party, and Allah. However, the Party’s most important lever was the presence of brothers, sons, and husbands on the front, inspiring the women of Uzbekistan to take up new social roles that inevitably challenged rural gender norms. Meanwhile in rural Uzbekistan Party leaders tried to craft kolkhoz policies that would pay homage to the notion of women’s traditional sphere as mothers, but was unable to do so. Ultimately Uzbek women did the work of and met the expectations for Soviet men.

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<sup>344</sup> Ibragimova, 143; Voskoboinikov, 25; RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 786, li. 5. Other female kolkhoz chairmen cited included Mustambibi Madrazimova, Atykaxan Dusmatova, Kh. Khalmatova (Isbaskent district, Andijan oblast).

<sup>345</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 117, d. 473, l. 57, 75, 76, 80.



## CHAPTER FOUR: *Crafting the female face of the Uzbek war effort*

The previous chapter demonstrated that Soviet and Party leaders wrapped their exhortations for women's emancipation in the language of need, tradition, and religiously sanctioned gender roles even if in actual fact most kolkhoz women simply labored like men. Of course, Uzbek women's mass exit into society was a path-breaking step that broke old gender models and taboos. In response, the state worked to fashion a number of new gender ideals in order to smooth the way for the emancipation by need. These role models were celebrated for being New Soviet Women each in their own way, but for preserving some kernel of authentic Uzbek tradition as well.

Although a handful of women of local nationalities made it to the front as soldiers and nurses, going from veiling to military service in one generation was too radical for most women and their families. To inculcate broad female participation in the war effort – especially in the republic's cities – the state encouraged women to become adoptive mothers, nurses, organizers of food drives and other roles that overlapped with traditional Uzbek domestic and gender norms.<sup>346</sup> These jobs must not be understood as mere compromises between the Soviet state and conservative local society. The war-time state was remarkably successful at mobilizing and integrating Central Asian women into the war effort. In many respects the war allowed the state to reach long-term goals for Central Asian women, extending society's boundaries of the permissible. Uzbek women entered the life of the Soviet state in new, public ways and helped to define a Soviet Uzbek femininity that endured long term. This section focuses on three of the most celebrated Uzbek women – an adoptive mother, an entertainer, and a kolkhoz laborer – and calls attention in each case to the way in which feminine ideals changed during the war. Each of these earnest achievements and self-sacrifice display an equal amount of fabrication on the part of the state to shape the contours of these women's contributions. Strikingly, each was called to facilitate the Friendship of the Peoples, which became a new specialty for Central Asian women.

Although certainly the exceptions, some Uzbek women traveled to the front as nurses, and a few even fought. Party records hold that about 6,000 women from Uzbekistan fought in the war, but do not break these down by nationality.<sup>347</sup> On the whole these young women came from progressive families who had already enrolled their daughters in state institutions. For instance, Zibakhri Ganieva (1923-2010), who became a decorated sniper, had studied at the Uzbek philharmonic orchestra before being sent to Moscow to study theater and dance at the State Institute for Theater Arts (GITIS) in 1940. She was a sports enthusiast and Komsomolka who enrolled in the army along with other Moscow students at the outbreak of war.<sup>348</sup> An Uzbek nurse who worked at the front also shared a progressive, elite background. Inobat Iunusova (b. 1923) was born and raised in Tashkent and spent several years in Urumqi, China while her father served as Soviet consul. She studied at a Russian school and had many Russian and Ukrainian friends. In 1943 while one of the few Uzbek female students at Tashkent Medical Institute, she and her class was recruited in its entirety to the front as nurses. She served in Moscow, Belarus,

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<sup>346</sup> Stronski, 77.

<sup>347</sup> RGASPI f. 574, op. 1, d. 2, l. 1. See also, Rakhimbabaeva, 50.

<sup>348</sup> IRI RAN f. 2, r. 7, op. 8, d. 1, li. 5. Ganieva's precise biography is elusive. According to this interview conducted by her mother with the evacuated historian in a Tashkent hospital while her daughter convalesced, Ganieva was born in Mirzachul', Uzbekistan, with no mention of her father.

and Moldova and never encountered another Central Asian nurse. She was lauded for her command of Russian and was soon given the additional job as censor for Uzbek letters, which included the unpleasant task of writing “black letters” to the families of deceased soldiers, attesting that their sons were still living and recovering, in order to “prevent pain” at home.<sup>349</sup>

The images of progressive Uzbek women like Ganieva that was broadcast among Red Army soldiers was vastly different from those projected back home. The military press used images of Ganieva and other soldiers to propagate a femininity that was bold, patriotic, and often sexualized. For instance, Ganieva appeared in an article in *Krasnoarmeets* entitled “Volunteer girls (*devushki-dobrovol'tsy*)” with two Slavic women, explaining each young woman’s path from a Moscow institute to the front lines. Although each was a soldier in her own right, the three were posed coquettishly, guns pointed out, emphasizing sexuality over battle prowess.<sup>350</sup> Images like these likely helped to create male expectations of promiscuity among the young women in their ranks that was not projected back home.

An even more suggestive depiction of an Uzbek girl in the same publication came from the evacuated writer Valentin Kataev, doubly striking for its seeming irrelevance to military life. His poem “On the Syr-Dar’ia” describes retreating from the midday Uzbek heat into the courtyard of the poet Gafur Guliam, who dozes nearby. The poem concludes with the author studying his host’s daughter: “[she] resembles her father/ but with a less swarthy nose/ more tender skin tone/ and her fifteen braids/ describe her fifteen years./ In the garden she burns like a poppy,/ and smells like thyme./ Knocks on the carved door so that/ her father cannot hear.”<sup>351</sup> Kataev’s focus on the skin and scent of a fifteen-year-old becomes erotic by occurring without her father’s knowledge. His attention to her age – on the brink of womanhood – actually hints at local marriage customs of underage brides that the Soviet state constantly battled. Thus the army publications promoted the possibilities of interethnic romantic encounter even if the opportunities to enact such behavior for soldiers were rare, and in this way elevating certain Uzbek women into a pan-Soviet sisterhood of available romantic matches.

The Party and republican press instead provided Uzbek women with new role models, especially nurses like Iunusova, who cultivated their maternal skills and served the state while retaining their dignity in the mixed company of Russian men. Articles like “Friendship,” by L. Samoilova in *Pravda Vostoka*, offered a young nurse as an exemplar of platonic relations with Russian soldiers. Salima, a girl from a distant *aul*, is a nurse near Leningrad who volunteered for service while at one of the city’s institutes. A bombing raid interrupts her burgeoning friendship with a wounded lieutenant, Aleksei Samokhin, whom she is forced to carry out of the building on her back, along with six other men. Later the soldier comes to Tashkent for rest and finds Salima’s mother in order to give her news of her daughter. They overcome her initial hesitation and linguistic barriers and “[sit] together for a long time, like old friends,” allowing the old woman to visualize both Leningrad and her daughter’s accomplishments in it.<sup>352</sup> The war and her profession have forced Salima into intimate, physical contact with Russian men, but instead of causing indignity have brought acclaim and respect. The young woman’s heroism has also facilitated interethnic, intergenerational mixing on the homefront, as the old woman experiences literal Friendship of the Peoples for perhaps the first time. Collegial ties between young Uzbek

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<sup>349</sup> Interview with Inobat Iunusova, September 16, 2014.

<sup>350</sup> *Krasnoarmeets* (16), 1942, “Devushki-dobrovol'tsy.”

<sup>351</sup> *Krasnoarmeets* (21-22), 1944, 22.

<sup>352</sup> *Pravda Vostoka*, June 7, 1942, “Druzhba,” L. Samoilova.

women and (largely) Slavic troops were also encouraged through the example of group letters, for instance, from sailors in the Baltic fleet to Uzbek girls from August 1942.<sup>353</sup>

However, given how few ethnic Uzbek women actually served as soldiers and nurses, other models of interethnic interaction came from different sources.

The adoptions of evacuated children by local Uzbek and Slavic families was one of the most celebrated contributions of the Uzbek home front, which Rebecca Manley has called the “most powerful symbol of the much acclaimed Friendship of Peoples.”<sup>354</sup> Evacuated Soviet elites like Kornei Chukovskii and Aleksei Tolstoi hailed it, and Gafur Guliam’s celebrated poem “You are not an orphan” was dedicated to it. In total it was estimated that 200,000 children were evacuated to Uzbekistan and that 4,500 were legally adopted by local families.<sup>355</sup> It is difficult to pinpoint one author of the adoption movement. It likely emerged from evacuated and local female elites who assisted the relief effort for orphanages, collected children from train stations, and realized there were more children than the state’s agencies could handle. Uzbek Party boss Usman Iusupov and his wife famously adopted a four-year-old Russian girl from Leningrad in December 1941 that inspired others to come forward.<sup>356</sup> And on January 2 Tashkent women’s Party *aktiv* called upon all women of Uzbekistan to display motherly care for evacuated children, giving the campaign an early gendered overtone, even though many of the earliest adoptive parents were men.<sup>357</sup> By January 11, 1942 over a thousand children were estimated to have found refuge with local parents and newspapers encouraged people to step forward to help the state, celebrating Uzbeks for their patriotism. As time passed and children found temporary homes all over the republic, adoptions were described as the domain of women, along with drives for clothing, blankets, and toys in which children also participated.<sup>358</sup> Although other women were celebrated for adopting multiple children, Bakhri Akramova (Shamakhmudova) became the face of this movement, likely because her brood of various nationalities fit so snugly with state ideological aims.<sup>359</sup>

The adoption campaign was one of the most successful efforts to reconcile Party-state priorities with the values of the traditional Uzbek household, which had traditionally clashed.<sup>360</sup>

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<sup>353</sup> *Pravda Vostoka*, August 7, 1942, “Pis’mo s fronta: devushkam Uzbekistana ot moriakov Baltiki.”

<sup>354</sup> Manley, 223.

<sup>355</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 786, li. 4.

<sup>356</sup> Konstantin Simonov considered his meeting with Iusupov, in which they discussed adoptions, as the “strongest impression of my days in Tashkent.” Cited in Manley, 224-225.

<sup>357</sup> *Pravda Vostoka*, January 11, 1942, A. Mavlianov, “Po stalinski zabit’ sia ob evakuirovannykh detiakh.”

<sup>358</sup> *Pravda Vostoka*, January 17, 1942, “Zabota ob evakuirovannykh detiakh.” This article described Russian and Uzbek host families responding to the call of Tashkent’s women in Kokand, Fergana, and Margelan, and surrounding kolkhozes. Similar articles appeared January 20, January 30, February 6, February 11, March 1 and others.

<sup>359</sup> For instance, Bakhrykhon Ashirkhodzhaeva took in eight children of various nationalities. See Voskoboinikov, pp. 34.

<sup>360</sup> As Stronski puts it, “in the past, Soviet ideology struggled against traditional Central Asian culture and the extended Uzbek family structure. Now, it aimed to use that family structure and

The Party used similar logic in its Peoples' Instructions and other propaganda documents that celebrated the war as a defense of national traditions.<sup>361</sup> Here the Party did not merely celebrate these traditions; it intensified them towards its own ends. First, multiple-child homes experienced large financial burdens, causing these families to “enter the state” via a reliance on subsidies given to Mother-Heroines starting in 1944. Second, these campaigns were highly publicized, furthering long term goals of encouraging Uzbek women to “exit the home” via their notoriety while actually letting them stay at home. Third, the campaigns helped to cement selfless hospitality and Friendship of the Peoples as Uzbek traits that the Party could rely upon during the war and beyond, especially as the republic became the chosen destination for a range of political emigres.

Like other cases of Soviet celebrity, Bakhri's story was constructed to meet ideological needs. Many Party sources and official histories celebrated her as a blacksmith in her own right and the “initiator” of the entire movement, however it is hard to imagine she acted alone.<sup>362</sup> Gafur Guliam's poem was written from the point of view of the adoptive father. And one of the earliest depictions of the family, a 1943 article in *Izvestiia*, depicted the initial decision to adopt as clearly her husband's, as well as subsequent additions to add more kids.<sup>363</sup> This would not have been surprising since he was thirteen years her senior and thus enjoyed seniority within the marriage.

In most articles her husband Shaakhmed did most of the speaking. A rare approximation of her own voice comes from an unpublished interview with an evacuated historian – via a local translator – who sought out Uzbek war-time heroines, thus giving Bakhri every chance to show her progressive credentials.<sup>364</sup> She was born in 1903 and married in 1918. The couple lived in an Uzbek-style home in Tashkent's Old City but had no children of their own. Initially she helped her husband at work, and in 1933 became a harness-maker in his same artel. With no mention of education, Party membership, or political background, the interviewer described her as being moved by patriotism in order to contribute to the war fund, war bond, and collections of warm clothing – all decisions made “in full agreement with her husband.” The couple's decision to adopt is described as a joint desire to do even more. Bakhri herself demurred before the interviewer, who may have found her descriptions too reticent or not adequately politicized. The only personal details provided about Bakhri are highly complimentary – a “lively, energetic woman with a pleasant, young face and tenderly shining, radiant dark-brown eyes” – but observational and physical, hinting at the distance in their conversation. However, Bakhri was forthcoming about at least one episode that demonstrated her initiative and gumption. She recalled visiting the orphanage and “begging” to bring home a sickly two-year old boy against the advice of doctors, who believed he was on the verge of death. She took him home and fed him with sweetened milk and he began to recover, in violation of the doctor's professional

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the sense of responsibility to one's relatives to pull local women out of the home and into Soviet wartime activity,” 77.

<sup>361</sup> See Schecter, “The People's Instruction.”

<sup>362</sup> See for instance RGASPI f. 574, op. 1, d. 2, li. 2; and T. Dzhuraev, *Uzbekistan v dni velikoi bitvy na volge (1942- nachalo 1943 goda)* (Tashkent: Gosizdat. UzSSR, 1963), pp. 80.

<sup>363</sup> *Izvestiia*, May 26, 1943, N. Stokovskii, “Bol'shaia sem'ia.”

<sup>364</sup> The historian, B. Likhter, was evacuated from the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences USSR and also interviewed singer Khalima Nasyrova, parachutist and railroad engineer Basharat Mirbabaeva, and the mother of dancer and soldier Zibakhry Ganieva.

opinion.<sup>365</sup> This episode's unpracticed and naïve patriotism illustrated the state's success in harnessing passion and even maternal instinct towards its broader aims.

Public portrayals of the family obeyed certain orthodoxies in order to fit Party needs and the European family norms it hoped to promote in Uzbekistan. The couple's age difference never appeared, nor that she was married as a fifteen-year-old, since these practices were the target of Party campaigns against "feudal-bai survivals." Furthermore, outside of Party documents it was only in the credits for the 1962 film, *You Are Not an Orphan*, that it was revealed that Bakhri's legal surname was Akramova, and that she had not taken her husband's Shamakhmudov, an idiosyncrasy that would have mottled the image of an ideal couple.<sup>366</sup> And although Bakhri and Shaakhmed gave each of the children Uzbek names, as she reported to her interviewer, this fact was never shared in public.<sup>367</sup> Instead, the children's original names were always given as signposts to readers who could glean their various ethnicities, and who wrote with words of thanks from across the Soviet Union. Furthermore, those children whose parents might still be living would not be shocked by the suggestive symbolism of renaming. Finally, it remained a mystery as to how the blacksmith and his wife – of all the republic's adoptive parents – had decided to take in children of almost all the major Soviet nationalities, including Russian, Belarusian, Ukrainian, Jewish, Tatar, Moldovan, Armenian, Kazakh, and Uzbek. Such a representative sample of children seemed too perfect to have been made without outside help.

The family's own actions and the Soviet media combined to create an emblematic, living image of Friendship of the Peoples. The children wore Uzbek clothing and *tiubiteikas* and learned the language of their parents but also used Russian as a common language of communication. Visitors loved to observe the genuine care the family members had for each other, how each child pitched in to perform chores, just like the Soviet economy in miniature, and how the Uzbek gardens nourished them all in safety, far from the front. This was symbolic of Uzbekistan's larger role as caretaker of the children of the Soviet Union while their parents were away. They were shaped and nourished by the local culture, but it did not erase their national origins.

When the war ended the Shamakhmudov family did not fade away. In 1955 Shaakhmed and Bakhri received the Badge of Honor, and Soviet readers got updates on the growth of the children, who grew to symbolize the post-war generation. Rafik graduated from mining technical school and worked at the Angren coal basin. Khamidulla served in the Soviet army. Khalida worked at a sewing workshop. Fedia was following his eldest brother into mining, and the younger kids were still in school. Two grandkids had emerged. And the family had built a new, large house courtesy of the "large help" it received from the Soviet government and a generous monthly pension.<sup>368</sup>

Two years later the family continued to serve as an example to Soviet readers, and it received gifts and letters from people as far away as North Korea, Bulgaria, and Canada, illustrating the ease with which Soviet Friendship of the Peoples transitioned into a useful ideological plank in the Cold War. Shaakhmed was selected to compose a small essay in *Pravda*

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<sup>365</sup> IRI RAN f. 2, r. 7, op. 8, d. 1, li. 4.

<sup>366</sup> See RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 786, li. 5 for

<sup>367</sup> IRI RAN f. 2, r. 7, op. 8, d. 1, li. 4ob. As of June 1943 they had four girls (Minavar, Khalida, Khalima, Khasima) and six boys (Iuldash, Rofek, Khamidula, Rakhmattula, Michmattulin, Nikmadula), with plans to adopt two more.

<sup>368</sup> *Pravda Vostoka*, August 25, 1955, Ie. Sorokin, "Patrioticheskii podvig."

*Vostoka* in honor of the fortieth anniversary of the October Revolution in which he recounted their story and the letters that celebrated their “large multinational family.”<sup>369</sup> And in 1958 the pair traveled to Moscow to visit a Russian couple who had adopted eight children during the war.<sup>370</sup>

The family became irrefutably pan-Soviet celebrities with the release of the award-winning film *You Are Not an Orphan* in 1962. Based on a screenplay by Rakhmat Faizi and directed by Shukhrat Abbasov for Uzbekfilm, the film focused primarily on the growth and struggles of the children within the family rather than the adoption process. It followed closely to established representations, such as the children’s Uzbek clothing and original birth names. But it also reflected the needs of a new era. The parents are roughly the same age and fluent Russian speakers, in keeping with the assumed maturation of the Uzbek Soviet family. Most striking, in the film they have an older son at the front who brings home a German child into the family which challenges and expands the bounds of multinational hospitality in keeping with new Cold War political realities.

And in 1982 the couple and their fourteen children were memorialized in a bronze statue at the center of Friendship of the Peoples square in Tashkent and a street was renamed in their honor.

As exemplary participants in the war-time adoption campaign, Bakhri Akramova and Shaakhmed Shamakhmudov embodied the Soviet war-time state’s greatest success in aligning perceived Uzbek national gifts with its war needs. Generosity and hospitality were further cemented as traits of the Soviet Uzbek family.

If adoptions exemplified how traditional and widespread Uzbek maternal values could serve the state, Uzbekistan’s most famous war-time women provided a much more uncompromising vision of Soviet liberation. Entertainers like the singer and dancer Tamara Khanum (1906 – 1991), opera singer Khalima Nasyrova (1913 – 2003), and others performed thousands of concerts in front of male soldiers on all fronts and for mixed crowds all over the Soviet Union. They were the emblematic “new women of Uzbekistan,” raised in politically progressive families, cared for in state institutions, and the embodiment of a Soviet Central Asian femininity that was bold, sexualized, and conscientiously political.<sup>371</sup>

Tamara Khanum was the first and most visible of this group of “Eastern” women on stage, a diva whose career spanned virtually the entire Soviet era. She was born Tamara Petrosian into an Armenian family which had only been exiled to the region for her father’s part in anti-tsarist protests at a Baku oil factory in 1905. Raised in a largely Uzbek village outside of Margelan, she became fluent in the language, songs, and dance of her surroundings, but being non-Muslim allowed her to take the stage without facing violent taboos directly. Her language and appearance enabled her to play the role of cultural intermediary between the Soviet center

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<sup>369</sup> *Pravda Vostoka*, September 27, 1957, A. Iegorov, “Semeinyi portret”; October 13, Shaakhmed Shamakhmudov, “V prostykh slovakh – glubokie chuvstva.”

<sup>370</sup> *Pravda Vostoka*, April 5, 1959, N. Solovieva, “Bratstvo serdets.”

<sup>371</sup> I use this term from Marianne Kamp to describe the first generation of female champions for women’s liberation in Central Asia. See Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman of Uzbekistan*. Nasyrova’s mother was a Communist and the first in Kokand to publicly remove her paranja. She placed her daughter in a state orphanage, after which she studied in Tashkent and the Baku Theatrical Tekhnikum.

and the periphery before a new generation of ethnic Uzbeks was ready to perform in large numbers. In Moscow she represented authentic Eastern female liberation and the veracity of its social politics on the periphery, and in Uzbekistan she was socialist realism in the flesh, a living glimpse into the imminent socialist future.

Despite the boldness of performing unveiled on stage, Tamara Khanum's early career was marked by compromises before local strictures against female public performance. The first woman to dance unveiled in Fergana valley was murdered. And throughout the 1920s her troupe sought its first ethnic Uzbek woman, but their first recruit was murdered by her brother in 1929. Tamara's life was spared because around the Fergana valley she was always known as "Artyem's daughter," among those who knew she was Armenian. And before going to Moscow to study at the Lunacharskii Choreography Tekhnikum she was married to the "Uzbek Chaliapin," singer and bandleader, Mukhitdin Kari-Iakubov (1896-1957), who went to study at GITIS, which was evidently a decision made for her safety under the advice of Faizulla Khodzhaev, chairman of the Uzbek SSR, lest she be accused of being a single woman on stage. Thus while performing Soviet liberation she worked under the watchful eye of her husband as the product of an arranged marriage to a man ten years her senior. Outside of local contexts, however, her nationality and marital status were not well known, and in 1924 after a performance at the Communist University for the Laborers of the East she permanently adopted her stage name, Tamara Khanum, reflecting the Uzbek honorific for "woman."<sup>372</sup>

Although she and Kari-Iakubov performed Uzbek songs and dances in a self-described "ethnographic" troupe through the 1920s, Tamara Khanum actually developed a new performance genre in keeping with long term Soviet goals of reconciling tradition and modernity. In Tashkent she had already begun ballet training and in Moscow studied with the choreographer Vera Mai, took art history classes, and conversed with Stanislavskii, Meierkhold, and visitors like Rabindranat Tagore and the Chinese dancer Mei Lan-Fan. Her innovation lay in taking the delicate movements of *iallachi* – female dancers who performed strictly for other women in the female sections of Uzbek homes, known as *ichkari* – and giving them a streamlined, more modern sensibility, linking elements together with classical and balletic movements that would allow her to cover the large spaces of a stage. According to her friend and editor, Tamara Khanum understood her work as transforming the shy movements of the *ichkari* and making them more confident and masculine in order to grant women a broader vocabulary of physical movement. Her dances on contemporary themes often mimed physical labor and she expected members of her troupe to practice ballet and classical dance to build strength and regularize their form.<sup>373</sup>

While the troupe performed around Uzbekistan and Central Asia, promoting women's liberation through dance and political discussions, Tamara Khanum "collected" new songs and dances in the various regions, constantly adding to her repertoire. The troupe used this formula to great success in 1925 in Paris at the International Exhibition of Decorative Arts, the 1935 London International Folk Dancing Festival and in 1937 at the First *Dekada* of Uzbek Art and Literature in Moscow.

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<sup>372</sup> Tamara Khanum, avt.-sost. L. Avdeeva, *Moia zhizn': vospominaniia o sebe i vydaiushchikhsia deiateliakh iskusstv Uzbekistana* (Tashkent: Izd-vo Natsional'noi biblioteki Uzbekistana im. A. Navoi, 2009), pp. 48-50, 67.

<sup>373</sup> Avdeeva, pp. 120-121.

In 1938 she began to tour on her own and her signature style coalesced. Instead of performing strictly within the Central Asian idiom she began performing national songs and dances in costumes from the Soviet Union's many republics and autonomous territories, mixing her voice, dance training, and amazing knack for acting and mimicry. Some observers called it a "magic trick" when they learned it was not fifteen girls performing successively but one. In her words, she sought to "create a character condensed into a symbol of the best, most important, unrepeatable character traits of a people in its entirety, and at the same time, to not lose individuality, concreteness, uniqueness."<sup>374</sup> Tamara Khanum's certainty of each people's "unrepeatable trait" gave her a confidence that these traits could be sought, identified, practiced, and polished. As such she took authenticity seriously. She refused to perform a song without its national costume and she once called director Solomon Mikhoels on the phone to check her pronunciation and ask the song's subject before performing in Yiddish.

Tamara Khanum's "genre" received great public acclaim for its artistic innovation and because her dances served as cultural gateways. But it received state and Party support for aligning regional goals of women's liberation with the all-Union ideology of Friendship of the Peoples. It is not exactly clear why a young woman from Fergana valley chose to stand at the forefront of Stalinist cultural politics, however her memoirs make clear that she understood Friendship of Peoples not as a Moscow-orchestrated schema for the Russian Elder Brother to mediate the relations of his younger siblings, but as an implicit tolerance and celebration of diversity that reflected the environment of her upbringing. In her eighties she recalled a sort of innate internationalism that was indigenous to the Fergana valley, where she grew up with children of various nationalities and faiths. It was likely this ability to see in high politics an element of home that allowed her to celebrate other features of Communist Politics, and she became a tireless promoter of state projects.

The Second World War provided unprecedented new audiences for Tamara Khanum and afforded a more concrete mission for her genre, which transitioned from domestic to international service. She became a public figure of all-Union proportions, performing before thousands of troops and exemplifying a brand of Central Asian femininity that was attractive and brave. She won the Stalin Prize in 1941 and donated all of her earnings to construct a tank and an airplane that bore her name. In 1943 she was named a captain of the Soviet Far Eastern Fleet for both her performances and her agitation work, especially among the Central Asian and Caucasian soldiers.<sup>375</sup> She also wrote propaganda tracts that were printed in both Russian and Uzbek in which she referred to the Uzbeks as "my people," reminding Uzbek soldiers that they were fighting to preserve their artistic legacy, and that she would sooner die than be unable to return to her native Fergana.<sup>376</sup> She spent the war in an endless string of concerts and public speaking appearances, from stages and military hospitals to bases and frontlines, including the Caucasus, the Russian Far East, Iran, and Mongolia. In the immediate post-war she performed in Vienna, Budapest, and Warsaw, collecting local songs, as well as in Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania in order to aid in the introductions of the newly extended Soviet family. Each performance was a venue to promote inter-ethnic contact and infatuation.

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<sup>374</sup> Avdeeva, pp. 167.

<sup>375</sup> GARF f. 5508, op. 3, d. 59, li. 100.

<sup>376</sup> *Krasnoarmeets*, 16, 1944, pp. 17; *Qizil armii agitatorning bloknoti*, 2, 1944, Tamara Khonum, "Vatan haqida qu'shiqlar," pp. 26-28.



Wherever they performed, Tamara Khanum, Khalima Nasyrova, and other Soviet artists were mobilized for their femininity, usually appearing alone or set apart from a back-up band, providing venues for infatuation and suggesting inter-ethnic contact. Tuti Gafarova, People's Artist of Tajikistan and actress in the Tajik artists' brigade, recalled receiving ample love letters from soldiers, many of them Russian.<sup>377</sup> Tamara Khanum remembered another sort of gendered labor during the construction of the Great Fergana Canal, performing from dawn to dusk but also serving tea and cooking plov and shurpa.<sup>378</sup> Nasyrova's charms were well known. Her title character in the 1941 film *Asal* ("sweet," an Uzbek girl's name) had a Russian love interest, indicating her association with progressive if not promiscuous values.<sup>379</sup> And commenters often fixated on her cheerful demeanor, how she found a "tender, cheerful word and a pleasant, friendly smile" for all visitors. Nasyrova was an "outstanding agitator" who gave 145 concerts in 147 days at the Great Fergana Canal and visited each major war-time Uzbek construction site, especially the lagging sectors, which immediately turned themselves around, according to her interviewer. She described her agitational formula simply: perform and then urge her audience to work even harder, "just like me when I perform my songs and dances."<sup>380</sup> For agitational and operatic performances, Nasyrova was also given a Stalin Prize in 1943. Thus Central Asian celebrities joined other Soviet women who employed their femininity to inspire men to greater physical exertion.

But Tamara Khanum's specific genre gave her an even more important role. Although she was presented as the face of Uzbekistan and her troupe often performed before Uzbek national divisions, she served mixed audiences as the embodiment of Soviet internationalism and the antidote of Nazi racism. Before shows *politruks* would provide a list of the nationalities in their units so that she could perform a song for each group. She offered a sunny reminder of the diversity of the Soviet people that could lubricate ethnic relations within the Soviet army.<sup>381</sup> As Ukrainian men listened to songs in Armenian and Kazakh and watched their comrades' faces light up with approval, their inability to understand the words only added to the spectacle. She taught men of varying nationalities the ease and import of learning the national traditions and even the languages of one another. And although she changed costumes, language, and dance with ease, she presented herself as an Uzbek first and foremost, reminding her audiences that national and Soviet identities coexisted and even reinforced one another.

Evacuation and mobilization were also boons for Tamara Khanum's repertoire, making it more international. She wrote that she "needed new songs and new peoples for [her] concerts like air." She learned Yiddish songs through the evacuated Moscow Jewish theater in Tashkent; a Belarusian doctor taught her a new song in Andijan; and Spanish songs came from medics in Tashkent.<sup>382</sup>

The visits to Soviet units in Iran and Mongolia formed a segue into the final stage of Tamara Khanum's career as one of the state's chosen representatives of Soviet culture to the peoples of Asia, which brought her to China, Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, and Indonesia.

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<sup>377</sup> Interview with Gafarova's daughter, Dilorum Sadulaevna Dzhurabaeva, May 18, 2011.

<sup>378</sup> Avdeeva, 172.

<sup>379</sup> Like Tamara Khanum, she was married to a member of the Uzbek artistic elite, the playwright Kamil Iashen.

<sup>380</sup> IRI RAN f. 2, r. 7, op. 8, d. 1, li. 2.

<sup>381</sup> Avdeeva, 204.

<sup>382</sup> Avdeeva, 204.

Against the backdrop of Cold War competition she employed her common faith (as a purported Muslim), language, culture, history and skin-color to lay the groundwork of trust and friendship between these countries and the Soviet Union. She was aware of her political role and used her charms to her advantage. She induced the shah of Iran into preparing forty different types of plov so that she could test the best, while also chortling him for the donkeys she saw on an Iranian construction site given that they had long disappeared from Uzbek projects, she said misleadingly. In Mongolia she took the podium alongside the Soviet ambassador and military leader, Marshal Choibalsan, speaking in Uzbek rather than her more comfortable Russian, aware of her role as woman of the Soviet East.

But Tamara Khanum's wartime efforts were not all conducted in the public eye. She used her political clout to advocate for Soviet society's less fortunate. She recalled a long day of performing before injured soldiers at a Tashkent hospital when, just before leaving for the night, she was summoned to perform for soldiers who had lost their arms and legs and who had been unable to see her before. Near Andijan she and Usman Iusupov were on a train when she encountered a group of homeless children on the platform led by an Uzbek-speaking Russian named Khakimka. She cooked them plov and invited them to spend the journey back to Tashkent in her train car and arranged for them to join an orphanage.<sup>383</sup> And she wielded her charms on behalf of her home republic. In 1943 she performed at munitions factories in the Urals as part of the Party's effort to ameliorate living conditions for Central Asian laborers. But here too she performed for mixed audiences akin to her role before multinational troops. According to the recollections of Iosif Mikhailovich Tsukernik (1912-2003), a power energy specialist, the chief of the Cheliabinsk Tractor Factory had a weakness for women and after her performance he invited her to his office to wine and dine her and promise her whatever she wanted. From her purse she pulled out a letter from the TsK KP(b) UzSSR asking the factory to complete a series of tractors that had been delayed since the start of the war. Unable to refuse her and backed into a corner, he saw that the tractors were made and sent to Uzbekistan.<sup>384</sup>

With a dancer's grace Tamara Khanum balanced femininity and art, ideology and economics, and high politics and humor. She and other performers demonstrated a model of Soviet Central Asian femininity that was unapologetically political, industrious, effeminate, and even sexualized, building on a performing arts tradition that had been developing the previous decade, but never before such large audience, ensuring that she and Khalima Nasyrova likely became the Soviet Union's most famous Uzbeks of any gender. The war also elevated her genre to special poignancy and fame, equally important to smooth ethnic relations within army units as among the Soviet Union's new allies. And for Tamara Khanum her comfort in embracing the role as a living example of Soviet internationalism was rooted in her understanding of its local, Central Asian roots. The Friendship of the Peoples statue that was erected at Moscow's VDNKh in 1954 – of 15 Soviet women in national costumes – might well have been in her honor. Yet even her unequivocally Communist, public femininity projected traditional roots. Even today she – and the genre of female Uzbek dance troupes she spawned – is conceived as elevating Uzbek ethnographic tradition but not innovating it, a sleight of hand that mirrored the Party's best successes at masking its presence.

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<sup>383</sup> Avdeeva, 205.

<sup>384</sup> <http://golosptic.livejournal.com/207372.html>. Last accessed April 3, 2014.

For the vast majority of Uzbek women who worked on kolkhozes, the state's model femininity was to replace men as brigadiers, field-team leaders, and tractor drivers, in keeping with Bolshevik orthodoxy that emphasized women's liberation through labor. This vision emphasized gender equality and even androgyny that could not but effect rural gender relations. However even in rural Uzbek kolkhozes the state called certain women to bear a unique double burden, as both workers and love interests for soldiers. Ogulkhon Kurbanova was a nineteen-year-old Komsomolka sprung into fame and the pages of Russian- and Uzbek-language frontline newspapers for drastically overfulfilling the 1944 agricultural plan at the Zarbdar (Uzbek: "shock worker") kolkhoz in Izbasket district of Andijan oblast. Her achievement demonstrates the resonance of Party calls to replace absent men among rural young women. Meanwhile, the thousands of letters she and other such girls received from Soviet soldiers of various nationalities reflect how they were perceived by young men, as eligible pen pals and friends, and sometimes even romantic partners. Yet although facilitating progressive epistolary romantic culture in the abstract, the Soviet state was less capable of actuating these promises, which foundered on the rocks of culture and gender taboos in the Uzbek countryside, and ultimately providing a case study in the war's simultaneous power to bring the Soviet people together, yet also define more clearly their differences.

After the TsK KP(b) Uz decision to introduce women's departments in Party organizations across the republic in 1943, the number of female kolkhoz female labor heroes increased. By 1944 a movement emerged challenging young people to collect 5,000 kg of cotton in a single season.<sup>385</sup> Ogulkhon was credited with more than tripling these figures to 18,000 kg, an improvement of such staggering proportions that it must have been Stakhanovite in its advanced preparation and political intent. Her elderly father, the kolkhoz chairman, may have come up with the plan. He was said to be friends with Akhunbabaev and had turned down several invitations for promotion in Tashkent. His influence could have ensured access to the fertilizer and tractors that were in short supply.

But Ogulkhon's tremendous harvest was not a cynical trick. She and her family represented an important substratum of rural patriots who lacked orthodox Party credentials and progressive social views. Although a local elite, her father was not a Party member. Ogulkhon was in the Komsomol but neither she nor her younger sister was literate. The family adhered to traditional gender preferences, choosing the name Ogulkhon (meaning literally "son-daughter"), a name given in the hope that the next child would be a son. Ogulkhon's younger sister Mukhom recalls an atmosphere of common sacrifice and labor during the war years. Ogulkhon was practically possessed with these efforts, rousing her siblings and other children to work early in the morning, and often spending the nights in the fields.<sup>386</sup>

The example of another kolkhoz heroine makes this point even clearer. Inobad Kholdarova of the Uighur kolkhoz near Andijan was a seventeen-year-old komsomolka when her photo appeared in the August 1944 issue of *Krasnoarmeets* for regularly exceeding the daily cotton and grape harvest plans by three to four times. The outpouring of soldiers' letters she received attracted a historian from the Institute of History AN UzSSR who learned that she was the daughter of two elderly ethnic Uighur parents who could no longer work and that her only brother had been at the front since the start of the war. Her small kolkhoz lost 67 of 210 adult males to the army, and some of their families left the kolkhoz entirely. Of the remaining working

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<sup>385</sup> Voskoboinikov, 24.

<sup>386</sup> Interview with Mukhom Madrakhimova (b. 1930), September 21, 2014.

adults 108 were men and 113 were women. Even as a thirteen year old she began to devote herself to patriotic labor and exceeded daily norms. In 1944 she was awarded a sheep, which she donated back to the kolkhoz, and vowed to lead a brigade to harvest 40 tsentners of cotton per hectare rather than the pre-war norm of 21. The combination of her elderly parents, the war-time harvest burden, and a brother in the army impelled her patriotism, resulting in a kolkhoz leadership position for the teenager without an elite or Party pedigree.<sup>387</sup> Ogulkhon and Inobad represented the most extreme and visible edge of a wave of patriotic, female mobilization in Uzbek kolkhozes – and integration into the state – created in conditions of urgency, unity and a gender dynamic unthinkable without the war.

Although on kolkhoz fields their worth lay solely in their labor, Ogulkhon, Inobad, and other Central Asian teenagers also served the state with their femininity.<sup>388</sup> However, unlike Tamara Khanum and Khalima Nasyrova, it is not clear that they were conscious of their roles as correspondence partners until each received hundreds of letters from lonely soldiers. In the state's gendered epistolary culture the women at home were used to fire the imaginations of men at the front. The popular soldiers' magazine *Krasnoarmeets* featured a regular photo spread entitled "Around our land," that showed young women at work along with short summaries of their achievements, many of which were repeated in other military publications of various languages. In a prudish military print culture, this was the closest the soldiers had to pinup girls.

Young Central Asian women played an unusually prominent role in these correspondences for several reasons. While the precise addresses and cities of evacuated factories where Slavic women usually worked were rarely included, the Central Asian girls' home districts, villages, and kolkhozes were not military secrets and were listed along with their photos, providing more than enough information to receive mail. In addition, while the Slavic women were invariably depicted androgynously in workers' overalls having literally taken the place of men, Central Asian women were posed as keepers of hearth and femininity in dresses, against verdant backdrops. In this imagery they seemed to be waiting faithfully for soldiers at home rather than transforming into men at the job. Of course these photos belied the arduous kolkhoz labor they performed whereas the Russian women were routinely posed at their work stations in the middle of tasks. Inobad and Ogulkhon wore the dresses, *tiubiteikas*, and multiple braids of unwed women, signaling to male soldiers their romantic availability and youth. Their clothing added to the assumptions of romance because they resembled the costumes of Khanum, Nasyrova, and other sensuous performers who were the only Central Asian women that most soldiers had have ever seen. Yet they retained a purity and innocence because they were away

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<sup>387</sup> AANRUz f. 54, op. 1, d. 3, li. 161-162, 166. It is likely that Inobad's family also possessed traditional gender beliefs. According to Sabirzhan Ibragimov, the visiting historian, she was unable to meet with him in November 1945 due to illness, compelling him to speak instead with the kolkhoz vice chairman. Three months later his plan to publish several of the soldiers' letters was delayed by his inability to acquire another photo of Inobad, which prompted him to appeal to the Andijan Komsomol's raikom.

<sup>388</sup> Other Central Asian girls appeared in *Krasnoarmeets* (1942) #20, 22; (1944) #15. Ibragimov collected letters in smaller quantities addressed to several other young women, including Kumushkhon Sadikova (Kalinin kolkhoz, Oltinkul district, Andijan oblast) and Tadzhiikhon Shakhbiddinova (Leninskii selsoviet, Karasuv district, Tashkent). See AANRUz f. 54, op. 1, d. 3, li. 69, 174.

from the front, which witnessed a promiscuous new sexual culture.<sup>389</sup> In this way the military media heightened their femininity and brought them unwittingly into an imagined liberation, free from the constraints of rural Uzbek tradition and into pan-Soviet courtship rites.

Russians, Central Asians, and men of other nationalities responded eagerly to these cues. In late 1944 and early 1945 the young women received hundreds of letters per month. Although there were plenty of formal, ideologically-charged thank you notes, almost all of the letters requested long-term correspondence, as many lonely men sought comfort and companionship amidst the gruesome and mundane aspects of soldierly life. Many Uzbeks, and a great deal more Russians, asked the young women for personal photos. And a significant number wrote various forms of romantic overtures, from complimenting the girls' appearances, to asking permission to visit them, to at least one explicit marriage proposal to Ogulkhon.<sup>390</sup> Several soldiers even asked the girls if they could also find companions for their platoon-mates among their kolkhoz girlfriends.<sup>391</sup>

One of the most striking aspects of the letters is the writers' assumption of a common Soviet culture with the girls that included language and courtship norms. As such, Russian authors gave them Russified diminutive versions of their names to break down the formality. Inobad's name was especially susceptible, becoming Inobada, Ina, and Inochka to some. This was due in part to the soldiers' low level of cultural education and assumption that all Komsomolkas on Soviet kolkhozes shared certain basic traits. However, their comfort to approach young Uzbek women also sprung out of the integrated culture of multinational units and the ideology of Friendship of the Peoples that peppered their agitation materials. Thus although the vast majority wrote in Russian unapologetically, the few who acknowledged the girls' potential preference to correspond in Uzbek mentioned the ease of finding a translator among his Uzbek colleagues. One writer reported being scolded by his Uzbek colleagues for writing too crudely about killing Germans.<sup>392</sup> Officers explicitly used the language of Friendship of the Peoples in their letters, reporting on the successes of Uzbek soldiers in their ranks and describing how men of multiple nationalities fought "shoulder to shoulder" in the Soviet army. Thus Uzbek kolkhoz girls, just like dancers and singers, facilitated Friendship of the Peoples within army units by prompting the sharing of newspapers, common discussions, and even group letters among people with no previous attachments to Andijan oblast or Uzbekistan.

Furthermore, as I have argued in Chapter 1, plenty of Uzbek men wrote in Russian to the young women, testament to the ways in which the army offered them platforms to integrate themselves into a pan-Soviet culture. Not only did they use their Russian nicknames in their letters, they employed their newly-won Russian language skills to woo their potential mates. Russian language also allowed them to access a more direct and frank romantic culture, explaining why the most impudent invitations came from Russian-language Uzbeks, and

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<sup>389</sup> On promiscuity and gender relations at the front, see Oleg Budnitskii, "Muzhchiny i zhenshchiny v krasnoi armii, 1941-1945," *Cahiers du monde russe*, 2011/2 Vol 52, p. 405-422; and Mie Nakachi, "A post-war sexual liberation? The gendered experience of the Soviet Union's Great Patriotic War," *Cahiers du monde russe*, 2011/2, Vol 52, pp. 423-440.

<sup>390</sup> Many entitled their letters to a "future acquaintance" and mentioned a desire to meet. At least five made explicit offers to visit Inobad. The marriage proposal can be found at AANRUz f. 54, op. 1, d. 21, li. 248.

<sup>391</sup> AANRUz f. 54, op. 1, d. 3, li. 141; d. 21, li. 122.

<sup>392</sup> AANRUz f. 54, op. 1, d. 3, li. 137.

signaling the way in which frontline gender relations could be brought back to Uzbekistan's cities and kolkhozes after the war. Although Soviet propaganda had been promoting so-called "love" relations between Uzbek young people rather than the arranged marriages of tradition for several decades already, few rural Uzbek men would have had the practice to do so, much less write a letter to an unknown love interest.<sup>393</sup> In this way the young women unwittingly perpetuated new norms in gender relations, even if none of their correspondents was ever able to follow through on their stated promises to visit them.

The letters also elevated the worldviews of Ogulkhon and Inobat themselves. They received mail from men of diverse Soviet nationalities from all corners of the Soviet Union as well as the major cities of Eastern and Central Europe. Some writers used "trophy" paper due to material shortages, allowing German and Finnish stationery to wind up on the kolkhozes of Andijan oblast. The girls' integration into a Russian-speaking cultural world was no less significant and novel. They received army-produced postcards with images of battle scenes and equipment, the Moscow kremlin in winter, "Happy New Year 1945," Lev Tolstoy, and general Aleksandr Suvorov. Even letters from fellow Central Asians and Tatars were mediated by the imagery of Moscow. In this way the girls were reminded in powerful, visual ways of the size and diversity of the Soviet Union, the unifying nature of the war effort, and their unexpectedly central roles in the drama. At war's end their lives on their native kolkhozes would have seemed more provincial than they could have ever imagined, leaving behind indelible but unquantifiable marks on their personalities.

Despite the integrative power of the war to create a common Soviet culture the war letters revealed the deep fissures and imaginary roots of this construction. First, the girls and the soldiers did not in fact share a common language. Not only did Ogulkhon speak no Russian, but she was illiterate. Her sister recalls that apart from their father only a kolkhoz clerk was literate, who read some of the letters to Ogulkhon. The younger Inobat, who began the war as a thirteen-year-old, was even less likely to have these skills. Most Russian-speaking soldiers were oblivious to the low levels of education in rural Uzbekistan and among women in particular. Second, they were equally unaware of the taboos against intermarriage, which were even more strictly observed for Central Asian women. Although some Central Asian soldiers married their nurses or other Slavic women as a result of their war experiences, this option was never available to the region's women, a truism that held in place for the duration of the Soviet period, as Adrienne Edgar has shown. It should be remembered that even the most liberated Uzbek women had Uzbek husbands, and that their marriages often continued to be arranged in a sense.<sup>394</sup> In a countryside where veiling and other traditional gender practices may have increased as a result of the war, the girls' reception of letters from hundreds of unmarried men, their invitations to acquaintance, and even some of their benign conventions – such as requests for photos, wishes to shake their hands, and compliments on their dresses – would have been scandalous had they been enacted on a village street. Furthermore, despite the newspapers' depiction of her as an eligible young woman, Ogulkhon was actually married at the time of writing to a husband who had been called up for the war.

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<sup>393</sup> On Uzbek love marriages, see Marianne Kamp, "The Wedding Feast: Living the New Uzbek Life in the 1930s" in eds. Jeff Sahadeo and Russell Zanca, *Everyday Life in Central Asia: Past and Present* (Bloomington: IU Press, 2007).

<sup>394</sup> Inobat Inusova, the nurse from above, was married to a cousin after the war precisely in her family's interest in finding a husband with suitable political and social pedigree.

These gaps in the story emphasize how the façade of a common war-time Soviet culture actually collapsed upon close scrutiny. Although fleeting, this war-time unity was nonetheless real. It simply depended on the insurmountable distance separating the girls and the front, the men's limited access to information, and the girls' silence – a truism that explains much belief in the Soviet system. Ultimately Inobad and Ogulkhon were more important as images than as individuals for the soldiers of diverse nationalities. They helped unite and inspire the troops in the name of patriotism. Uzbek men in particular used their correspondences to shape themselves into Soviet soldiers at war, thereby contributing to fundamental changes in gender relations at home. And Russian soldiers were so inspired by promises of Friendship of the Peoples that they did not think twice before writing. But despite making equally patriotic contributions as the soldiers on the front, the transformations available to Uzbek men were not open to Uzbek kolkhoz women. They could organize cotton brigades and run kolkhozes, but they did not learn Russian nor intermarry, nor represent the Soviet Union in Budapest and Berlin. Mukhamed became Misha, but Inobad could not actually become Inochka.

The scant details of Ogulkhon's life allow us to understand what sort of prospects the letters opened for her. Ogulkhon's younger sister remembers the pride with which Ogulkhon received the letters from the front, enjoying having them read to her by the kolkhoz clerk. Despite challenging established courtship norms, Ogulkhon's father wrote replies to thank several of them. Ogulkhon was aware of the romantic intent and marriage proposals in many of them but laughed them off, perhaps recognizing the unlikeliness that any of the men would actually come calling. Despite a virtual army of suitors, Ogulkhon was soon remarried to a man in the same village, though she quickly quarreled with her mother-in-law and left. Some time later she married for a third time, this time to an uncle, and had a daughter. She continued working on the kolkhoz all her adult life, receiving several commendations and awards, often taking trips to Tashkent. Her sister describes her as having a difficult character, holding herself to high standards and expecting the same of others, and being attentive to propriety. While in Tashkent she confronted a man on a bus for putting his hand on her, saying it did not befit a lady. Her sister recalled with regret that Ogulkhon never found real happiness in family life.

Although her stubbornness and independence allowed Ogulkhon to achieve local notoriety, these same traits made her a difficult match for the men of Izbaskent district and their mothers, placing her at odds with the expectations of a submissive daughter in law.<sup>395</sup> In her immediate milieu traditional courtship practices and gender norms abounded, as evidenced by the marriages that were arranged for her. Each of the four women of her generation who took part in our conversation had arranged marriages to relatives, a practice that they viewed as strengthened because of the shortage of men after the war. Ogulkhon's post-war life was more reminiscent of another public figure and the fourth interview subject for the evacuated historian at the Institute of History AN USSR: Basharat Mirbabaeva (1916-2010), who became the first Uzbek female parachutist in 1935 and locomotive driver in 1937. Unlike Inobad and Ogulkhon, Mirbabaeva was born and raised in Tashkent and had an activist mother who insisted that she receive an education. She visited the front along with Iuldash Akhunbabaev in 1941, created a six-woman locomotive brigade, and did a lot of agitation work. Her stated interests – film,

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<sup>395</sup> Ogulkhon was mentioned in a book celebrating the wartime achievements of Uzbek women and had already remarried, with the surname Nurmatova. See Z. Rakhimbabaeva, *Zhenshchina Uzbekistana na puti k kommunizmu* (Tashkent: Gosizdat UzSSR, 1949), 48.

theater, literature, especially Tolstoy – were befitting of her Party membership.<sup>396</sup> In other words, she adopted a progressive lifestyle that many Uzbeks would have associated with progressive Russian women. Her niece reports that, like Ogulkhon, she was stern and unable to find familial happiness. She never married and had no children.<sup>397</sup> And whereas in modern Uzbekistan Nasyrova and Khanum have been cautiously retained in the pantheon of national heroes from the Soviet era, Mirbabaeva has been essentially forgotten, largely because her brand of femininity is perceived as a purely Soviet imposition.<sup>398</sup>

Inobad's post-war fate is less certain. A "young voter" Inobatkhon Khodzhaeva from Namangan oblast is mentioned in 1946 Party documents asserting the high participation rate of Uzbek women in elections for the Supreme Soviet, having been reported to express her thanks to the "great Stalin and Communist party for the honor and equal rights of women in our country."<sup>399</sup> Attempts to find her or any family members at her native kolkhoz in September 2014 were fruitless. Given the age of her parents and the uncertain fate of her only brother at the front, it is possible that she moved away upon getting married, however this remains speculation.

Assessing the war's legacy on Uzbek gender norms is challenging without more complete data on post-war intermarriage and courtship practices. As I have stated, the war provided avenues for intermarriage that were open almost exclusively to Uzbek men. Yet, as the correspondences to Ogulkhon and Inobad made clear, the state nonetheless facilitated inter-ethnic contacts and promoted the idea that such opportunities were open to women as well. The Muslim character is a man in the popular pre-war musical comedy *Svinarka i pastukh* (1941, typically translated as "They met in Moscow"), which showed the romance between a Dagestani shepherd and a Russian pig-raiser, enabled by their meeting at Moscow's VDNKh park. After the war a film of the same genre, *Dalekaia nevesta* (1948, "Far away bride"), showed a lighthearted romance between a Ukrainian Cossack soldier and a Turkmen kolkhoz girl who meet when the soldier follows his Turkmen friend home on leave from the war. Although the film presented the state's best goals for the war's integrative effects, it is more likely a corrective to the rise of traditional gender practices widespread in post-war Central Asia rather than a reflection of the times.

A later cultural product provides a more convincing examination of a Central Asian woman's experiences in a wartime kolkhoz and its effect on gender relations. Chingiz Aitmatov's novella "Dzhamilia" (1957) portrays a plucky young woman in a Kyrgyz kolkhoz who is called to take up the traditionally male job of carting grain by horse from the fields to a railway depot a half-day's drive away. She is already married to the narrator's eldest brother, who is away at the front and had "stolen" her in traditional Kyrgyz fashion, and lives in her in-laws' home. The countryside is primarily peopled with women and children who do the bulk of the heavy labor. Because she is deemed in need of male protection during this daily journey, she is joined by the child narrator and Daniyar, a loner and war invalid who lacks a family and has only distant ties to the village. Dzhamilia becomes enchanted by Daniyar's singing voice and, in time, falls in love. War-time correspondence also plays a role, as Dzhamilia is continuously injured by her husband's peremptory letters home which enumerate concern for family elders but

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<sup>396</sup> IRI RAN f. 2, r. 7, op. 8, d. 1, l. 3, 3ob.

<sup>397</sup> Conversation with Saida Sauleevna Rasulova, May 15, 2013.

<sup>398</sup> A representative perspective on Mirbabaeva's post-Soviet ignominy can be found in her obituaries. See for example <http://www.proza.ru/2010/04/13/980> - last accessed June 3, 2015.

<sup>399</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 786, l. 7.



practically ignore her. The pair ultimately flees the village while their love and risk-taking inspire the narrator to become a painter, despite his loyalty to his brother. Dzhamilia is already self-assured and confident by nature, and even she is reluctant to take up the perceived man's vocation, but the war emboldens her to challenge village tradition. And though she begins the war dutifully in an unhappy marriage, the war forces her into an unimaginable position of daily intimacy with a strange man. With her husband gone she boldly chooses love and flight over family duty and tradition, a decision that ultimately aligns with long-term state goals of promoting "love marriages" and breaking the sway of "feudal-bai" traditions in the Central Asian countryside.<sup>400</sup>

The war broke up traditional gender dynamics by removing men from villages and emboldening young women to take up positions of authority. In Dzhamilia's case, the war practically plucked her from her village and in-laws and into broader Soviet society. And it provided young women like Ogulkhon and Inobad with similar decisions to make. They became brigadiers and *komsomolkas* – and even Dzhamilias – but not Inochkas.

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<sup>400</sup> On love marriages in Uzbekistan see Kamp, "The Wedding Feast."

CHAPTER FIVE: *Writing Friendship in Wartime Central Asia, or why dzhigits could not slay dragons*

One of the unforeseen results of the German invasion of European Russia was an intensification of Central Asia's cultural and economic development. In evacuation, the Soviet Union's most prominent scientists and scholars, writers, actors, painters, architects, and filmmakers made Central Asian cities their homes, with Tashkent as the cultural capital. Technical intelligentsia – engineers, factory specialists and foremen – also flooded the region to reconstitute the weapons, tank, and airplane factories that eventually toppled the Nazi forces and resulted in a dramatic expansion of local industry and the proletariat. For an imperial or multinational state it was an unparalleled cultural migration of a metropolitan elite to its provincial capitals. However, the driving force compelling this cultural decampment was not curiosity, nor the development of the relatively unknown periphery, but the war that had demolished cultural centers in Minsk and Kiev and was threatening Leningrad and Moscow. Thus the development of the Central Asian republics occurred primarily because it reinforced the state's primary objective, the mobilization of economic and cultural cadres to defeat the Germans.

Since the revolution's earliest days the Soviet state sought to harness Turkestan's rich literary tradition to popularize the regime's goals, a process which largely culminated in the war effort. After the removal of a first generation of Turkestani men of letters, the Union of Soviet Writers (*Soiuz Sovetskikh Pisatelei*, or SSP) created its Nationality Commission in 1933 and sent out "writers' brigades" to develop the various national literatures and to unify them along common Soviet aesthetic and organizational principles. By the outbreak of war a new generation of Soviet-educated writers and poets had emerged in Central Asia that could be mobilized to inspire their countrymen to military heroism. They were committed to depicting the "socialist construction" of Central Asia yet often struggled to meet the aesthetic conventions of socialist realism. In 1941 the unexpected evacuation of leading Soviet writers from Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, as well as foreign socialist authors brought Soviet Central Asian authors exposure and the chance for collaboration on wartime anthologies, patriotic songs, and articles for pan Soviet audiences. The authors' stays in Central Asian cities represented a chance for local writers to make a final leap towards creative maturity but also greater scrutiny. Ultimately evacuated writers reinforced their superiority and cultural capital by enforcing what we might call "orthodox socialist realism," in line with the hierarchies embedded in Friendship of the Peoples.

This chapter addresses evacuation and creative collaboration in the broader context of the Soviet literary development of Central Asia, analyzing the creative output as well as the personal and professional tensions between the two groups of writers. It shows how evacuation brought Central Asia and its literatures closer to the writers from the center and how local writers used the war to enter new, pan-Soviet stages. Evacuated writers were invigorated by their new surroundings and celebrated the achievements of their hosts. Yet at the heart of these interactions was a delicate and complex relationship between the writers of the center and periphery. Central Asian writers challenged the old hierarchical framework while the Muscovites sought ways to justify their continued role as tutors and guides. The terrain on which the two groups bargained was the question of how to measure literary and political progress. In order to keep the old framework of center and periphery from collapsing, I find that SSP writers increasingly wielded socialist realism as their guarantor of artistic and organizational supremacy.

In Tashkent, Ashkhabad, and Stalinabad the evacuees all but took over the local writers' unions for upwards of two years and set organizational and creative agendas. As adepts of socialist realism and figures with pan-Soviet fame, such as Aleksei Tolstoi, Anna Akhmatova, Kornei Chukovskii, and Iurii Olesha, they were often revered for their guidance and sponsorship. However, this embrace was not universal or immediate and could instead result in tension, hostility, or mutual incomprehension. Although the evacuees continued the work of the 1930s writers' brigades, war-time conditions created a more complicated dynamic with locals.

On one hand cultural production during the war was marked by its unifying, leveling qualities. All writers were devoted to the common task of producing inspirational texts, whether about the siege of Leningrad or the mobilization of Uzbek kolkhoz labor. Both evacuees and locals were connected to the war in deeply personal ways. Many had family members in the army; others believed they themselves should be fighting; and many visited the front as part of cultural delegations. In the same cities, at the same meetings, and in the same newspapers and almanacs, the two groups pulled in one direction. And like at the front, where talent ensured a soldier's rise in the ranks, the war created opportunities for obscure, republican writers to emerge on new, pan-Soviet registers, like the poets Gafur Guliam (1903-1966) and Khamid Alimdzhan (1909-1944), and novelist Aibek (1904-1968).

On the other hand evacuation produced challenges for both hosts and guests. Unlike the writers' brigades of the 1930s, which mobilized a handful of writers for short intervals, many with documented interests in the region, evacuation was sudden, indefinite, and compulsory. For some writers the novelty of the region's peoples, cultures, and climate opened new creative terrain that allowed them to look past material hardships. For others unfamiliarity and distance from home, loved ones, and the front only exacerbated these difficulties. Meanwhile their hosts in local writers' unions, government, and society were forced to accommodate their needs for housing and food and the sudden and vocal presence in the working life of their unions. As at the front, evacuation put together groups of people who had hardly interacted before the war.

Odes to the Friendship of the Peoples were as important to calm relations at home as they were to the men at arms and evacuation-era Tashkent became virtually synonymous with Friendship. Uzbek and evacuated authors hoped that life and art would imitate one another as they endeavored to be deferential hosts or patient guides, all while creating their own renditions of something we might call the "Friendship plot." As Katerina Clark has observed about the socialist realist novel, these authors sought to illustrate the abstract ideal of Friendship in concrete form, which resulted in a surprising amount of "room for play" and diverse results.<sup>401</sup> This section finds divergences in the forms and imagery of Friendship in war poetry and journalism, reflecting the epistemological flux of the Soviet Union's "imagined community" at war. Frequently it was Uzbek poets whose imagery emphasized the transformation of all nationalities into a unified "Soviet people," and thereby unsettling the hierarchies of the Friendship of the Peoples. Meanwhile, Russians from the center reinforced this order by emphasizing vertical and lateral collaboration between well-defined "brother nationalities." In the same vein, the polishing of national traits into well-known clichés was also instrumental in fixing Friendship in place.

Friendship also developed into a set of professional practices and behaviors that both groups adapted to. Evacuees became guides to their hosts, the Central Asian writers. The

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<sup>401</sup> Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel, History as Ritual*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), p. 13.

European newcomers shared their organizational practices and mastery of proper aesthetics. War-era compilations gave the evacuees prominence alongside their protégés, recognizing their deep new local connections. In their own work, visiting writers were urged to overcome their temptations to focus on the ethnographic and the “exotic.” Meanwhile Central Asian writers became acutely aware of the need to bend their creative output to accord with prescriptions from Moscow, and that only the “friendship plot” was an avenue towards pan-Soviet notoriety. “Friendship” also had academic and institutional results. Both groups gained new interest in literary translation, acquiring second languages, and the dilemma of how to translate Central Asian life into Russian without losing its characteristic local “coloring.”

This section begins by providing an excursus of early Soviet Uzbek literature and the writers’ brigades of the 1930s before arriving at the war years and the debates on Central Asian literary progress.

### *Pre-war Soviet Central Asian Literature*

The literary intervention of World War II was marked by rhetoric of growth and maturation that downplayed the region’s literary heritage. Nonetheless Soviet Central Asian literature did not start from scratch. Rather, if its ranks were thin it was because many of Turkestan’s leading writers had been silenced or repressed in the 1920s and 1930s.

The last decades of the tsarist Turkestan were witness to the rise of the Jadid movement of Islamic reformers who sought to modernize society through European-style education and print culture. The Jadids opened “new method” schools that emphasized functional literacy, introduced the region’s first Muslim newspapers as part of a larger program to revolutionize access to knowledge, and exhorted their contemporaries to realize a secular Muslim national political consciousness. Authors such as Fitrat, Cholpan, and Abdulla Qodiri introduced Western literary genres such as playwriting and novels to the region. Some of the most significant works include Fitrat’s “A Debate between a Bukharan Professor and a European in India on the subject of New Schools” (1910).<sup>402</sup>

As both critics of conservative Islam and the tsarist state, the Jadids became the logical first local allies of the Bolsheviks in revolutionary Turkestan. The cultural life of Turkestan ASSR, the Bukharan People’s Republic, and the Khorezm People’s Republic was contentious and rich, pitting the conservative ulema against the progressive Jadids and Bolsheviks. The jockeying for influence and the enunciation of different social visions was reflected in newspapers, satirical journals, poetry, and novels, resulting in a “golden age” of Uzbek literature, something akin to the freewheeling and diverse expression of NEP-era Russian letters.<sup>403</sup> However, this tense alliance was fated to end because Moscow could not long tolerate a revolution predicated on national or religious liberation. By 1924 the Communist Party liquidated the old political order and created the Uzbek SSR. Although local national Communists joined Russians in the political organs, Jadids found temporary refuge in the educational and the cultural establishments. However, the Soviet tolerance towards Islam ended in 1927 with the elimination of religious courts and *waqf* properties, and the *hujum* (assault) on

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<sup>402</sup> For more on the Jadids, see Adeeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

<sup>403</sup> Adeeb Khalid, *Islam after Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 59.

the *paranji* (veil).<sup>404</sup> Thus began a steady weeding out of Jadids from government positions, culminating in widespread repressions in 1937, their works not rehabilitated or widely read until after 1991.

The Soviet Central Asian literary histories from the 1930s describe a distorted and empty landscape, one that excludes the very creators of modern Uzbek prose. In an introduction to the anthology, *Literatura Uzbekistana*, the capstone of the 1933 Uzbek writers' brigade and the fullest introduction of Uzbek prose to the rest of the Soviet Union, the secretary of the newly-formed Uzbek Writers' Union (SSP Uz) R. Madzhidi, offered a short course of Uzbek literary history that only hinted at the tumultuous politics of the 1920s. If in European Russia the literary bogeymen were avant-garde "formalists," in Uzbekistan they were "nationalists," the euphemism for Jadids. Madzhidi described a succession of deviant literary organizations starting with the Chaghatai Group – named for the region's common Turkic language – whose linguistic nationalism was not long tolerated. It was succeeded by the Bolshevik-inspired *Krasnoe Pero* (Red Quill) group, which Madzhidi also accused of nationalism. Uz APP, an equivalent to RAPP, was replaced in 1932 by Uzbekistan's branch of the SSP.

The only major Jadid writer to transition into the new Soviet age was Khamza (Khamza Khakimzada Niiazi) (1889-1929), whose early mastery of realist aesthetics and assassination at the hands of religious conservatives turned him into an early Soviet Uzbek martyr. Khamza received a traditional medressa education but was trained by Jadid writers like Mukimi and Fitrat. He joined the Communist Party in 1920 and led the Koshchi organization of poor peasants. He collected stories and folksongs, played several instruments, and wrote plays such as, *Boi ila Khizmatchi* (in Russian, *Bai i Batrak*, or *Lord and Laborer*) (1918), *Prodelki Maisary* (*The Tricking of Maisara*) (1926), and *Tainy Parandzhi* (*Secrets of the Parandzhi*) (1927), which addressed the most pressing social issues of early Soviet Central Asia.<sup>405</sup>

In the absence of popular literacy and a native proletariat, the Soviet state sought a new popular cultural basis in folklore and song and the region's early literary anthologies reflect this interest in compilations of folk wisdom, expressions, and stories, especially those that emphasized indigenous concerns for social equality or denounced the mendacity of the clergy, which demonstrated a native sympathy to Bolshevik goals.<sup>406</sup> Poetry was the most deeply rooted form of Central Asian literary culture, but was historically concerned with religious or courtly

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<sup>404</sup> For competing discussions of the meaning of this campaign, see Douglas Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004) and Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006).

<sup>405</sup> According to official sources Khamza was murdered by Islamic forces. However, this version is up for some doubt given his seeming unwillingness to renounce the ideas of Jadidism. It is revelatory that he is completely ignored in the R. Madzhidi's article on the history of Uzbek literature in the 1935 almanac of Uzbek literature. See V. Ermilov, R. Madzhidi, eds., *Literatura Uzbekistana* (Moskva: "Khudozhestvennaia Literatura," 1935, especially pp. 9-40).

<sup>406</sup> Many were fictitious; see Katharine M. Holt, "The Rise of Insider Iconography: Visions of Soviet Turkmenia in Russian-Language Literature and Film, 1921-1935" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2013), 170. At least one of these folklore anthologies, compiled by novelist Leonid Soloviev and purportedly a reflection of Lenin in the songs and folktales of Uzbeks in the Fergana valley, has been subsequently revealed to be a work of fiction. See, Leonid Soloviev, *Lenin v Tvorchestve Narodov Vostoka* (Moskva: "Moskovskii Rabochii," 1930).

themes. Accordingly, poets in the 1920s were encouraged to take up social concerns – such as redemption of *batraks* (day laborers) and deliverance for the *bais* (lords, or elites), the victory of light over darkness, the promise of cotton wealth, and odes to Lenin – and were permitted to employ traditional poetic language, imagery, and versification, such as *qasida*, a form of ode traditionally composed by a poet for his patron, and *ghazal*, a poetic form used widely in Sufi love poetry.

As the heterodox 1920s gave way to the cultural centralization of the 1930s, Central Asian writers were expected to depict the revolution and the Soviet project in the orthodox language of class, within the uniform Soviet genres including prose, playwriting, and children’s literature, using the prescribed aesthetic of socialist realism. These were all foreign cultural imports to all but the thin band of Jadid intellectuals who had negotiated the complex politics of the era. Simply transposing a realist novel or a Bolshevik agitational poem into the local context was not easy. The maxim of “national in form, socialist in content” did not provide clear answers on whether traditional forms, especially in poetry, were still acceptable.

It was clear that Uzbek and other Central Asian authors were not only economically “backward,” or “formerly backward” – according to Marxist labels – but culturally backward as well. Instruction and training in Russian aesthetics and Soviet politics took time.

#### *Writers’ Brigades: Socialist Literary Development*

Literary development in the non-Russian republics was built into the mission of the newly-formed SSP in 1932. By the time it held its inaugural All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934, it had already set up a Nationalities Commission, charged with sending writers to the peripheries to teach locals how to view their native landscapes through socialist realist lenses and depict socialist transformation in the appropriate genres.

The first literary “shock brigade” were more representational than pedagogical, focused on depicting the unknown landscapes and people of Central Asia to a Russian-speaking audience. Created on invitation from the Turkmen SSR’s People’s Commissariat for Education (Narkompros) in 1930, it was commissioned to “depict the ‘face of the new Turkmenia as it builds socialism.’”<sup>407</sup> The brigade was led by Petr Pavlenko and composed of six authors including poets Nikolai Tikhonov and Vladimir Lugovskoi, each of whom went on to become “Eastern” specialists. Presumably because Turkmenia lacked the writers to properly capture socialist themes, Russian authors were invited to teach by doing. In Turkmenia they delivered lectures on Soviet literature, gave readings, and traveled to the key sites of the republic’s First Five Year Plan to gather material for their primary output, an almanac of poetry and fiction, *Turkmenistan Vesnoi (Turkmenistan in the Spring)* (1932). This volume performed a double role for Soviet prose: to capture the Sovietification of the republic, especially the themes of desert irrigation, kolkhoz organization, and the liberation of women, and second, to fill in a gap of imagination for Russian writers. Central Asia was the Soviet Union’s least known literary corner, in contrast to the Caucasus, which had been an inspiration of Russian writers like Pushkin, Lermontov, and Tolstoi. The 1930 brigade ensured that the landscape’s literary introduction to Russian-speaking audiences would be inseparable from Soviet transformation, and was formed without local voices.

Despite the brigade’s consciously anti-imperialist stance, it bore tensions that existed in all subsequent literary development efforts and is worth a quick detour. The visitors’ focus on the

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<sup>407</sup> Holt, 114.

novel and exotic elements of the desert and its peoples belied the official rhetoric of Marxist, brotherly aide, which was celebrated in the press.<sup>408</sup>

The arrival of the Moscow writers' brigade, composed of the greatest masters of the artistic word, eloquently refutes all the bourgeois fables about "literary imperialism." The comrades arrived in Turkmenistan as envoys of Russian literature, to establish an even stronger, inextricable connection among the cultures of all the peoples inhabiting the great Union and to become acquainted with our construction and with our indisputable successes. [...]

Sometimes guests visiting us from Moscow seek the "eastern exotic" in Central Asia, bowing before the "wisdom of the grey-haired East," celebrating the old "grandfatherly customs" and all the stuff of the past that the republics of the Soviet East threw in the trash pit of history. In pursuit of the "exotic" of yesteryear, guests from far away do not notice the astonishing intensity of the cultural and creative dawn that is present in contemporary Central Asia. They do not see all the socialist leaps forward in their exceptional historical importance.<sup>409</sup>

The article makes clear the purported duality between socialist transformation and imperialist exotic. If earlier visitors from Moscow had committed the sins of colonial-style exotification, the new brigade was supposed to create a new, socialist form of "Eastern" literature. However, as literary scholar Katherine Holt demonstrates, the members of the brigade were not immune from the urge to inscribe themselves into the unfamiliar landscape as romantic adventurers. Tikhonov and Lugovskoi reveled in the travel, choosing to stay after the other members had returned to Moscow, and exploring the Kushka and Kopet-Dag regions on horseback. Tikhonov recalled trying to "be a Turkmen" as he wrote, and "climbed into his robe from the Khiva bazar" in order to get into character. Lugovskoi celebrated what he saw as a "wild mix of Sovietization and feudalism." And although this exotic excess remained largely off the page, the almanac contained an imperial dimension, evident in poems that celebrated the replacement of outmoded Asian methods with European technology.<sup>410</sup>

*Turkmenistan Vesnoi* was a transitional cultural product between the less constrained 1920s and the more organized Stalinist works of the mid-1930s. It portrayed the ambivalence that brigade members felt about the efficacy of their mission. Vsevelod Ivanov's story "Ostrozubets" ("Sharptooth") was a parody of the literary relationship between the Russian center and the Central Asian periphery. It follows a Russian literary brigadier to a Turkmen kolkhoz where the beautiful but untrained Russian daughter of the kolkhoz chair tries to teach a local poet, Aba-On-Begi, about Russian poetics. He is unable to understand the difference between iambs, trochees, and hexameters and remarks with indifference, "we Turkmen compose verses avoiding wherever possible both rhymes and European meters."<sup>411</sup> The scene ends when the brigade-member abandons his duties to tutor the poet and instead tries to seduce the kolkhoz chair's daughter. As Holt argues, the sketch makes the construction of national poets seem absurd and parodies the hierarchical relationships between the untrained Russian girl and the

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<sup>408</sup> See Holt, especially pp. 112-127.

<sup>409</sup> Holt, 121. As cited from "Goriachii, tovarishcheskii privet masteram slova, priekhavshim izuchat' Sovetskii Vostok," undated and unsourced newspaper clipping, RGALI f. 631, op. 6, d. 27, l. 49.

<sup>410</sup> Holt, 123-126.

<sup>411</sup> Holt, 150.

experienced Turkmen poet, as well as questioning the intentions of the brigade members. It also demonstrates the clearly Russificatory nature of the mission, and the light-hearted if clear resistance of the Turkmen poet to adopting Russian poetic forms.

The newly-chartered SSP adopted socialist realism as the official Soviet aesthetic and sought greater standardization of the diverse cultural output in the Soviet republics. In the build-up to the 1934 First All-Union Writers' Conference, the SSP's National Commission was formed to "study the state of literature of the brother republics and the peoples of the RSFSR."<sup>412</sup> It appointed a bureau for each Soviet republic and sent writers' brigades to republics and autonomous regions that were charged with acquainting themselves with the literature of the periphery and introducing it to the center in collected volumes that would be ready for the 1934 Conference. The brigades were instructed to collect and study the literary work of the republics; "strengthen the live connection" with local writers and "provide concrete assistance" to local writers' unions; organize translations into Russian and publication of the best local works; translate leading writers from Russian into local languages; and help popularize the local authors in the republican press. The brigades were designed to help the local populations speak more freely to the rest of the Soviet Union and "to prepare the national soils for literary development."<sup>413</sup>

The 1932 brigades were envisioned more as organizers to allow the various Soviet republics to speak for themselves, unlike the 1930 Turkmen brigade which encouraged Russian writers to insert themselves as characters and distinct voices in local settings. Holt has argued convincingly that the goals of the Writers' Conference created a shift in representational strategies for cultural output, from foregrounding the subjectivity of "outsider-facilitators" of Soviet transformation to "insider iconography," in which visiting artists portrayed the Soviet periphery from the perspective of the locals themselves.<sup>414</sup> A well known example of this strategy is Dziga Vertov's film *Tri Pesni o Lenine (Three Songs About Lenin)* (1934), which is shot from the point of view of liberated "Eastern" women.

The various anthologies created by the literary brigades reflected this change in iconography and priorities. Visiting writers were supposed to facilitate local literary production through translation and publicization and to obey the new dictates of "insider iconography." Archival records reveal that the heads of the republican writers' unions welcomed the assistance, though with a few caveats. R. Madzhidi from Uzbekistan emphasized the need for literary tutorials but urged the new brigades to not merely engage in amateur ethnography at teahouses: "such a depiction of Uzbekistan, a depiction of laborers sitting in a teahouse drinking *kokchai* (green tea) is a clear example of great-power chauvinism, which cannot be tolerated."<sup>415</sup> Chariev of Turkmenistan expressed similar concerns, indicating how the 1930 Turkmen brigade and other literary visitors from Moscow were remembered in the region.

The new Turkmen brigade was one of the most prolific, perhaps because three of its members - Vsevolod Ivanov, Sannikov, and Lugovskoi – had taken part several years before. They seem to have been less inhibited to write about the Turkmen landscape – and adopt the requisite "insider iconography" – than writers in Uzbekistan. And their final product, *Aiding-giunler (Radiant days)* (1934), featured primarily Russian-authored prose, poetry, illustrations,

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<sup>412</sup> Holt, 176. For more on the National Commissions, see pgs. 176-220.

<sup>413</sup> Holt, 180. The brigades' instructions can be found at RGALI f. 631, op. 1, d. 33, l. 25-26.

<sup>414</sup> Holt, 173.

<sup>415</sup> Holt, 177, citing RGALI f. 631, op. 1, d. 6, l. 96.97.



and photos, with only a few translated Turkmen poems.<sup>416</sup> The lack of Turkmen authors in their anthology reflected the shortage of Turkmen writers, the brigade's inability to forge productive links with the republic's poets, bards, and folk singers, and the license that "insider iconography" gave them to essentially write *for* the Turkmen.

The SSP's Uzbek Commission was headed by V. Iermilov, who was joined by Leonov, a veteran of the 1930 Turkmen brigade, Ivan Kataev, and Nikulin. Unlike the Turkmen volume, the Uzbek commission limited its role to consultation, selection, and translation, a perfect embodiment of "insider iconography," letting the Uzbek writers speak for themselves. Its final product – an anthology called *Literatura Uzbekistana* – was edited by V. Iermilov and R. Madzhidi, exemplifying the project's cooperative spirit.<sup>417</sup> It comprised over 300 pages of folklore, poetry, prose, and playwriting that had all been composed between 1930 and 1933, plus an 8-page glossary of Uzbek terms and historical figures. Line drawings of Uzbek figures – a drummer in a robe and tiubeteika; a soldier on a camel; a man on a donkey; and a woman with a basket of cotton – divided the genres and helped fix in place emergent Soviet clichés of the republic. And each writer's pen-and-ink portrait – including of the lone woman writer, Aidyn – was included before their work by way of introduction. In the opening pages Iermilov was portrayed as the arbiter of quality, promising the reader an introduction to "real, great talent and the precious shoots of authentic great national art, and the prospect of its great blooming," despite the presence of "youth and immaturity."<sup>418</sup>

And unlike the Turkmen volume, Iermilov outlined the translation process, detailing the jobs performed by Russian writers. First, someone created the *podstrochnik* (a literal, line-by-line translation) from Uzbek into Russian. This was followed by a "poetic" reworking of the *podstrochnik* into vivid language, usually by a different person.<sup>419</sup> The irony of this school of translation is that those responsible for the finished product did not necessarily speak the original language, nor know its literature. Apart from Leonid Leonov, it is not clear that P. Antokol'skii, B. Lapin, A. Mitrofanov, and at least thirteen other literary figures had any previous experience with Central Asian literature. Iermilov maintained that this ignorance was overcome by the "living connection" between the Uzbek poets and the brigade, who "gave us the chance for a real feeling of the peculiarities of Uzbek poetry, its rhythm, etc. These peculiarities we strived to pass on to the reader of the almanac."<sup>420</sup> In the finished product the poems were printed with the name of their "translator," and not the composer of the *podstrochnik*, while the folklore entries were "worked out" (*otrabotan*) by Russian "literators," emphasizing their chronological and cultural

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<sup>416</sup> *Aiding-Giunler: al'manakh k desiatiletiiu Turkmenistana, 1924-1934* (Ashkhabad: Izdanie iubilennoi komissii TsIK TSSR, 1934). First conceived while on the brigade though not completed until years later, Andrei Platonov's novella *Dzhan* became the most well-known literary output of the brigade. For the almanac Platonov contributed the story "Takyr." For more on the implications of *podstrochnik* translation, see Susanna Witt, "The Shorthand of Empire: *Podstrochnik* Practices and the Making of Soviet Literature," *Ab Imperio* 3 (2013): 155-190.

<sup>417</sup> Eds. V. Iermilov, R. Madzhidi, *Literatura Uzbekistana. Sbornik*. (Moskva: "Khudozhestvennaia Literatura," 1935).

<sup>418</sup> Eds. V. Iermilov, R. Madzhidi, *Literatura Uzbekistana. Sbornik*, 7.

<sup>419</sup> The *podstrochniks* were created by prof. E. Polivanov, S. Palastrov, Z. Tadzhiev, and Amalia Khanum.

<sup>420</sup> Eds. V. Iermilov, R. Madzhidi, 7.

distance. However, the outtakes of novels and plays did not cite the translators' names, as if to emphasize that these more advanced Soviet genres needed no translation.

In his own introductory essay, R. Madzhidi, the first secretary of the SSP Uz, was far less celebratory. His critique of young writers provides a valuable overview of Uzbek literature and criticism a decade before the war, foregrounding the central question of early Soviet Uzbek literature: could Uzbek writers employ historical literary devices to celebrate socialist construction, or were they bound to forget them and learn the new creative language of socialist realism? He alleged that (Jadid) nationalists "hid under the slogan of using literary heritage, under the slogan of studying history" to promote their agendas – both political and aesthetic. Unfortunately, younger, proletarian writers were not yet capable of capturing socialist construction in sufficient observed detail. First, their language was too elite, cut off linguistically from the masses, and unable to "show the proletariat." Second, depictions were "superficial," not "rooted in life" but rather pulled from newspaper descriptions, and failed to show the "concrete locations of socialist construction." Even gifted poets, such as Aibek, did not make their poems politically legible enough, not showing stark class relations and a clear divide before and after 1917.<sup>421</sup> Socialist realism was clearly already the aesthetic measure, yet Madzhidi did not belabor this term, focusing instead on the need for "concrete" depictions "rooted in life."

Madzhidi found that despite earnest efforts to master Soviet politics and aesthetics the results were often lackluster. Poetry about cotton routinely referred to it as "'white gold,' 'flower,' 'joy,' 'delight' and other similar words, turning it into some sort of fetish." And prose and playwriting, the newest and "most backward" genres, were beset by "superficiality" in their politics and characterization:

In many works we can say there is a complete lack of individuals, character, and they often have images that are schematic, limited. They don't resemble real people. The main characters often seem completely ideal people, they don't make any mistakes, don't have any faults. Rather, they aren't people, but speaking puppets. ... the people express ideas of a certain group, class, society, but they're like posters.<sup>422</sup>

In other words, authors were struggling with the double burden of mastering a new aesthetic and political language. Oftentimes characters were little more than political "posters" or "puppets" rather than the complex individuals that the best realism demanded.

Playwrights especially employed didactic styles to present the new political order, hinting that concern for audience legibility was also to blame for their own creative deficiencies. The plays in the almanac included scenarios with prerevolutionary peasants discussing philosophy like modern Bolsheviks, teenagers expressing themselves like old people, and main characters who were completely "idealized people," with no personal wishes or needs. The playwrights were likely adapting to audience expectations formed out of the region's rich history of folkloric, didactic troupes with clear good guys and bad guys. Hence the villains who were "depicted in unbelievable, distorted ways [...] absurdly stupid, drunk, debauched." He cited the kulak in Fatkhullin's play, *Istiklal (Independence)*, whose villainy was exaggerated by clothing, make-up, and staging.

In Madzhidi's eyes, these aesthetics were not merely flawed because they violated Moscow's dictates, but because they failed to assist audiences to navigate real life. Yes, they

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<sup>421</sup> Ibid, 17, 29-30.

<sup>422</sup> Ibid, 30, 31, 34.

encouraged audiences to despise *kulaks* and celebrate Lenin. However, such stagings “do not show how class enemies are hidden [in our midst], hiding their social roots.”<sup>423</sup> In other words, the “real life” that Madzhidi has accused the writers of not studying, was not a didactic landscape of good versus evil, but a treacherous world of complexity, with contradictory qualities competing within the same people and with enemies able to hide in broad daylight, and thus requiring more developed practices of vision than those required by Central Asian folklore and legends. For this reason socialist realism was not just an aesthetic genre but a lens through which to view the world. Aesthetic and political vigilance naturally reinforced one another.

Madzhidi was also sympathetic to Uzbek writers because he understood the difficulty of importing wholesale genres and aesthetic sensibilities. Even with Soviet literature’s unified standards, he sought to carve out a permissible space for Uzbek traditional poetic modes. He did this by proposing the creation of a new section in the SSP to study “theoretical questions of culture” under the imperative of “national in form, socialist in content.” Certain question demanded “deep theoretical analysis,” like whether “[old] forms of versification fit to illustrate or reflect modern times?”<sup>424</sup> Thus although he abided the Party line in his harsh scrutiny of Uzbek writers, he signaled to Moscow that its genres and aesthetics were foreign imports in Central Asia that would take time to master and might require more complex study. If local poets were instead allowed to employ traditional forms, they would instantly be capable of more sophisticated artistic creations.

Given that Uzbek literature was viewed on a developmental timeline, the 1935 almanac itself is a valuable benchmark to compare with a similar volume from World War II. It was organized to reflect Soviet-led growth, starting with a folklore section to demonstrate the raw material of Uzbek Soviet literature, before moving to poetry, prose, and concluding with playwriting.

The small folklore section is noteworthy for revealing some of the pitfalls of “insider iconography.” “We will not forget the name Lenin” is an ode purportedly recorded in the Ak-Mechet’ kishlak in the Fergana valley in 1925 by the novelist Leonid Soloviev that gives the father of October biblical or supernatural attributes as the “liberator of the world” and “the greatest among people.” Hyperbolic, it invites mass destruction – “let the earth become equal to the peaks of the Pamirs/ let the ocean inundate this space” – so long as people do not forget his name. It continues: “[let] people forget the name of the country where their ancestors used to/ live,/ [let] people forget the language of their ancestors,/ but never forget the name ‘Lenin.’”<sup>425</sup> In a way, some of these warnings had happily materialized, given the redrawing of boundaries and the injunction to learn Russian. Yet the authenticity of the ode is questionable because Soloviev later admitted to fabricating folktales. Rather, the poem is the author’s own rendition of millennial change through the eyes and imagery of rural Uzbeks. The hyperbole is Soloviev’s own exotic gloss on local poetics, revealing the way in which “insider iconography” was often written by Russians who knew what their Russian audience wanted or expected to hear. Authorship was not fully in the hands of Uzbek poets, playwrights, and prose writers, who always relied on translators and editors.

Naturally, Soloviev’s hoax calls into question the veracity of the next entry, “Proverbs” (*Poslovitsy*), which demonstrated the local roots of Communist social justice via sayings like “A

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<sup>423</sup> Ibid, 36-38.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid, 39-40.

<sup>425</sup> Ibid, 45-46.

fat sheep's life is short," "If a *bai* is dressed up, people say: 'congratulations.' If a poor man (*bedniak*) is dressed up they ask: 'Where'd you get those?'" and "You can't carry two watermelons under your arm."<sup>426</sup>

The poetry and prose sections provide the most important measures because these genres became the most debated areas of growth in subsequent years. They included Gafur Guliam, Alimdzhan, and Sheikhzade, who became prominent during the war years, as well as many who faded away, like Gairati, or were repressed, like Abdulla Qodirii. Two of these poems exemplified successful political and aesthetic decisions and the imaginative geography of the poets of the early 1930s. Guliam's poem "Uzbekistan," the first of the section, is a semi-autobiographical rendering of his birth as poet in his native landscape, as if taken from the romantic tradition. It begins: "I remember the billow, the seething howl,/ Snorting of the volcanoes, happiness of the winds,/ Salty hail of frost,/ Amusing music of the gale,/ Blizzards of twisted horror,/ Playful lightning of folly. // I lived, grieved, and didn't sleep at night,/ And this is called life. / But all this is nothing for an orphan..." The poet's parents had died when he was six, and he was raised in an orphanage. In the poem he wanders an unidentified steppe landscape, works a series of odd jobs, and becomes infatuated by a girl. Then comes his birth as a poet, as if sprung by the revolution: "I don't remember about the past/ today I awoke easily/ as a poet. /And with a clear voice I sing the spaces,/ The green youth of our country,/ The green youth of the world, in which/ We build, sing, and live newly born." He references great construction sites, the fall of the oppressor class, new cities and mines, and walks around the land guarding his country with a rifle in hand. At the end of the poem the girl – Uzbekistan – is all grown up. "She spread her free wings/ for all the oppressed of the East."<sup>427</sup> The orphan-poet sprung forth in the wilds by the revolution, called to guard the feminized Uzbekistan transcended mere romanticism by its political acuity, class vigilance and his willingness to kill enemies. The final line refers to Uzbekistan's rise as lifting up the whole East, but the international dimension of the poem is fleeting. Its primary imaginative geography includes the simultaneous birth of the poetic voice and the national republic.

Khamid Alimdzhan's "*Moguchestvo*" ("Power") is a directly political first-person ode to Stalin, though with emphasis on the transformed Uzbek land rather than the poet's own subjectivity. It begins with the familiar "you" (*ty*): "You led us/ through the shadow of ruin/ on a new path./ The road to a new world/ has been cut – / to the land of miracles [*v stranu chudes*], / You gave us/ the power of *politotdels* [political departments]/ the power of MTS [Machine Tractor Stations]. / And thus we go/ amicably with those,/ with your ranks,/ which build/ by your system/ a happy construction [*schastlivyi stroi*]." Although Alimdzhan's landscape is littered with the Soviet neologisms of the First Five Year Plan, the poem combines realist with heroic registers, describing the Soviet project as a "land of miracles," and later that "lightning tires/ at our fantastic [*skazochnyi*] record./ History will/ reward us." Uzbekistan is not mentioned by name, but is integrated organically into the broad Soviet landscape through its cotton bounty. Stalin is "our greatest/ cotton-grower/ scientist-leader." And "Here the earth flowers/ with a carpet/ of the softest, most snow-white/ blossoms."<sup>428</sup> He embraces the heady rhetoric of the age, challenged to reconcile the heroic achievements of the First Five Year plan with a realist framework, just as Russian poets were required to do. Although this poem does not seem

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<sup>426</sup> Ibid. 69.

<sup>427</sup> Ibid, 73-76.

<sup>428</sup> Ibid, 117-120.

particularly “Central Asian,” poets from the region would later be criticized for heroic tendencies that were thought to be embedded in their culture.

The almanac’s prose section contained outtakes from a series of historical novels, all of which centered around social justice and national liberation, and most of which took place during Russian rule of Turkestan. These included Sadreddin Aini, *Raby (Slaves)*, Gafur Guliam, *Schast’ e riaboi zhenishchiny (Happiness of the Pockmarked Woman)*, and Shakir Suleiman, *Parazity (Parasites)* and *Gul’-Asal’*. According to Madzhidi this was still the “most backward” genre of Uzbek literature, characterized by a lack of “technical mastery,” linguistic distance from the people, and prone to “superficial” depictions of character and politics that reflected its inability to outgrow its national bourgeois (Jadid) roots. Furthermore, prose writers had avoided explicitly Soviet subjects – the creation of kolkhozes and “new people,” the elimination of illiteracy, the battle for cotton independence, etc. – which should have been easy sources of inspiration, and thus indicated lingering bourgeois tendencies.<sup>429</sup> In the case of Abdulla Qodiri’s chapter from *Skorpion iz altaria (Scorpion from the Altar)*, this allegation was prophetic, as he was repressed in 1938.

The playwriting section included outtakes from five plays whose authors had faced the most strident criticism from Madzhidi, including Iashin – who later went by the name Kamil Iashen – who became Soviet Uzbekistan’s most prominent playwright.

In 1935 Soviet Uzbek literature was marked by flux. Poets adapted most easily to the political and aesthetic dictates of socialist realism, while prose writers and playwrights struggled to master the new genres and aesthetics after a generation had been erased for bourgeois nationalist tendencies. Soviet kishlaks, “boiling with free, socialist labor,” were still awaiting their representation in Uzbek Soviet prose. And the SSP Uz leadership sought the guidance from Russian writers as well as political cover for Central Asian poetic traditions.

Through the 1930s, Uzbek Soviet literature gained new outlets and visibility. In 1934 the SSP Uz launched its literary journal, the Russian-language *Zvezda Vostoka (Star of the East)*. And the SSP’s Uzbek National Commission continued its work as “outsider-facilitator” for the Uzbek writers’ literary growth, translation, publication, and connection with Moscow. A high point came in 1937 with the *Dekada* of Uzbek art in Moscow, a ten-day series of cultural events, including theater, painting, and literary readings in the Soviet capital.

However, apart from the occasional translation of an Uzbek writer in a central journal, Central Asian writers remained largely unknown outside the region. There continued to be a need for “insider iconography” to represent Central Asia to Soviet audiences. Apart from senior Central Asian hands like Skosyrev and Tikhonov, new Russian voices emerged who had moved to the region for various reasons, such as Amir Sargidzhan (Sergei Petrovich Borodin) (1902-1974), Aziz Niallo (Andrei Vladimirovich Stanishevskii) and Vasily Ian (Ianevetskii) (1874-1954), each of whom employed pseudonyms to emphasize their “insider” credentials.

The Party’s resurrection of national history – beginning with the 1937 jubilee of Pushkin’s death and Aleksei Tolstoi’s novel, *Petr Pervyi (Peter the First)* – changed the rules for Soviet literary production and inaugurated a cultural paradigm that David Brandenberger has labeled “national Bolshevism.”<sup>430</sup> For an intelligentsia that had been suspected of nationalist

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<sup>429</sup> Ibid, 33.

<sup>430</sup> David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931-1956* (Cambridge: HUP, 2002).

tendencies throughout the 1930s, it meant new permission to engage historical themes, culminating in the Alisher Navoi archeological expedition in 1941 that infamously exhumed the grave of Tamerlane that purportedly unleashed the war, according to local legend. However, it was the Russian “insiders” who first mastered the new paradigm to greatest acclaim, not the Uzbeks. Vasily Ian’s historical novel, *Chingiskhan* (1939) won an inaugural Stalin Prize and seemingly spoke for the entire cultural region.

By 1941 Central Asian writers had been adapting to Soviet cultural dictates for a decade or more. A nucleus of politically and aesthetically accomplished writers had emerged, though as a whole they were deemed to be slow in adapting to the new genres. The region’s literature remained relatively unknown, and not only because of the slow pace of translation. The poetics of Friendship of the Peoples, which emerged in earnest in the mid 1930s, meant joining a chorus of other national voices which spoke in almanacs adorning the Soviet empire like separate branches. Although authors had vertical connections to the center – and to the figure of Stalin especially – for the most part the national literatures did not speak to one another laterally, and their themes and imaginative geographies remained strictly local in scope.

The war accelerated all of these processes, including translation and the development of mature topics – such as the war and mobilization – in mature genres. When the war concluded and the writers were celebrated for growth and heroism, the new questions were whether they needed their Russian guides at all, and how Central Asian the new Soviet Central Asian literature was supposed to be.

#### *National History, Compilation, and Translation on the Eve of War*

By the winter of 1941 eight years had passed since the creation of the Uzbek National Commission. It was still concerned with its original tasks of translation, publication, and building literary connections between Moscow and Uzbekistan. Like all administrative bodies, it had a constant need to justify its existence. The Uzbeks’ purported slow growth in prose and playwriting provided much of this rationale, but in the war it gained a new bugbear. War literature became essentially a fifth genre for which Uzbek writers needed expertise and counsel.

The Uzbek Commission was led by the translator L.M. Penkovskii and included older Central Asia hands like Petr Skosyrev and Petr Pavlenko. On the eve of war the Commission’s primary task was in codifying Uzbek national literary history. As part of the 500<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration of Alisher Navoi, Penkovskii and Skosyrev volunteered to translate and publish a selection of his works and invited the charismatic Khamid Alimdzhan, the Secretary of the SSP Uz, to deliver speeches at “literary evenings” in Moscow and Leningrad.<sup>431</sup> Alimdzhan was also preparing an anthology of Uzbek literature to coincide with the celebrations.

Given that all anthologies have origin points, Alimdzhan’s joined the complex debate about Uzbek national origins that Oshanin and Gerasimov were investigating via archeology and anthropology. Despite a congealing consensus that Uzbek ethnogenesis was rooted in the Timurid era, Alimdzhan chose to return to the 11<sup>th</sup> century writer Makhmud Kashgari as the progenitor of modern Uzbek literature. Born near Issyk Kul in present-day Kyrgyzstan to an emir whose state was based in Kashgar, Kashgari spent much of his life in exile in Baghdad, where he compiled his *Dictionary of the Turkic Language*, a collection of idioms, songs, and expressions, that captured “all the wealth of popular creativity” of the Turkic peoples. Alimdzhan explained

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<sup>431</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 6, d. 612, l. 35, 36.

that he could not place the beginning any earlier because the invasion of the Arabs in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries had “destroyed the whole culture of the people, its literacy.”<sup>432</sup> Alimdzhhan may have hoped that his unorthodox dating and minimization of the role of Arabs and Islam would find approval in Moscow and Tashkent. However, by extending Uzbek history farther into the past of the multi-ethnic region, and by appropriating Kashgari for the Uzbeks, his approach risked being labeled pan-Turkic or nationalist, which may have accounted for why the project does not seem to have been completed. However, this did not bother the Commission, and by July 1941 Alimdzhhan was still appealing to the SSP to send qualified translator-poets to Tashkent to end the delays.<sup>433</sup>

The Uzbek Commission was far more concerned with other prerogatives. Although the Commission celebrated two recent prose works – Aibek’s historical novel on Turkestan during World War I, *Sacred Blood* (1938), and Sadridin Aini’s *Death of a Moneylender* (1940) – it determined that Uzbek writers were completely cut off from military themes and modern Soviet achievements, such as geological exploration, irrigation, cotton, and new industrial enterprises. Writers were uninterested in consulting with Tashkent’s filial of the Academy of Sciences and the Central Asian Military District. Clearly the ideological mandate to study and define the national past was embraced more widely than the preparation for possible war.<sup>434</sup> It appears that for all of Madzhidi’s hand-wringing about the lack of Soviet transformation in the 1935 almanac, Moscow’s sudden re-valuation of historical themes was so sudden that the great Central Asian Five Year Plan production novel never even had a chance to be conceived.

As usual, the situation in Tajikistan was even worse. The Uzbek Commission’s emissaries had been implored to make a special trip to Stalinabad by vice chairman of the Tajik Sovnarkom, Mazaev. They found Tajik literature to be on an island of its own. There were no Russian writers in Stalinabad, which deprived Tajik writers of essential consultation and creative connections. Many members of the Tajik Writers’ Union (SSP Taj) did not know Russian nor Russian literature, and without anyone to translate them, the “Tajik comrades complain[ed] that the Russian population of Tajikistan [could] not read their works.” Penkovskii appointed the writer Petr Slietov to be sent as a permanent consultant to create a “closer link between Tajik literature and its brother Russian literature,” and to oversee a Russian-language almanac to bridge the Russian and Tajik populations.<sup>435</sup>

Literary translation also fell into the purview of the Uzbek Commission, and a discussion from April 1941 reveals that Russian authors and readers had grown more familiar with Uzbek language since 1935. Furthermore, a set of key concerns had emerged in translation among the brotherly Soviet peoples. Kamil Iashen’s play – a reworking of Khamza’s classic, *Bai and Batrak* – was a tragedy about a scheming *bai* who sends his laborer to Siberia in order to seduce his wife, who subsequently takes her own life in shame. The SSP presenter noted that the

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<sup>432</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 6, d. 612, l. 1. Alimdzhhan continued this anti-Arabic orientation in Uzbek historical thinking, as revealed in the discussions of his play, *Mukanna*.

<sup>433</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 6, d. 612, l. 7, 34. Having been unable to track down this anthology I suspect the project was abandoned and many of the poems dispersed to other collections published during the war.

<sup>434</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 6, d. 612, l. 17.

<sup>435</sup> The report mentions that a certain Kunin had visited Stalinabad posing as a literary specialist, but the mysterious figure turned out to be a fraud and unaffiliated with the SSP. RGALI f. 631, op. 6, d. 612, l. 17-18.

translation, by Tashkent-based L. Satserdotova, was accurate though failed to convey the lyrical mastery of Khamza or Iashen. But her main error was to leave too many Uzbek words untranslated, which would result in “a certain abracadabra” for Russians. The presenter clarified that she should leave in “Eastern words which, one could say, have earned the right to citizenship in the Russian language – like *plov*, *mulla*, *bai*, *paranja*” – but the rest needed translations. Each of these “Eastern” words had been in the glossary of the 1935 almanac but had now entered the Russian lexicon. The presenter provided a model of assimilation whereby certain linguistic and cultural boundaries between the Soviet peoples were soluble and open to mixing. The metaphor of citizenship connoted a juridical embrace of foreign words, which had full legal rights but were marked by their foreign origins, residing in their new milieu as badges of its diversity. However, unfamiliar “Eastern” words created too magical – or exotic – an aura, and needed to be translated. The ultimate arbiter was the credulity of the Russian reader. Although the formal “you” – or *vy* – may have been used by intimate friends and lovers in the Eastern tradition, “in the contemporary view of a European it does not fit and sounds like a clear fake.” He suggested replacing *vy* with a “heartfelt *ty*” in order to convey intimate relations, staking a claim for altering “Eastern” cultural conventions to fit Russian sensibilities.<sup>436</sup> Of the four words granted linguistic citizenship in Russian, one was culinary (*plov*) and the others were economic (*bai*) or religio-cultural (*mulla*, *paranja*) terms that had in theory become cultural remnants in the Soviet order. These concerns – retaining authenticity while maintaining legibility for Russians, marking foreignness while refraining from “abracadabra” – served as guidelines for translation in the Friendship of the Peoples paradigm, and especially in the wave of translations that occurred over the next four years.

On the eve of war Russian writers on the Uzbek Commission and Uzbek writers in the SSP Uz continued their work to acquaint cultures and literatures that rarely intersected, and set the terms for these interactions. Although the Russian language was absorbing foreign linguistic citizens into its lexicon, plenty still needed glossaries. And the Commission, in introducing war literature, had identified another sphere that required its assistance.

#### *Wartime Tempo and the Arrival of Evacuees*

Just like factories and kolkhozes, Uzbek writers adjusted their output to meet the needs of war. But the Soviet army’s rapid losses in summer and autumn of 1941 triggered old concerns about nationalist disloyalty, forcing Uzbek writers to work doubly to prove themselves worthy. However, the SSP Uz was not able to prove its merits independently for very long. By October the arrival of a contingent of Moscow writers reshaped the relationship between Uzbek and Russian writers, and helped to inaugurate a new era of Uzbek Soviet literature.

Denunciations from summer 1941 were not numerous, but highly visible and created a narrative of dangerous Uzbek aberrance that mimicked concerns in the Army about Central Asian disloyalty. The OGPU agent and writer Andrei Stanishevskii (Aziz Niallo) had spent the 1920s rooting out Basmachi cells both real and imagined in addition to writing novels that documented the later days of the Great Game in Central Asia through thick Bolshevik lenses. He had been removed from an administrative position in the SSP in 1938 presumably for making false allegations, however this did not stop him from claiming that Alimdzhan and other members of the SSP Uz were nationalists with German sympathies that dated back to the 1920s. He wrote a note to the SSP leadership in Moscow that was quickly passed to the head of the

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<sup>436</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 6, d. 612, l. 20-22.



Central Committee's agitprop department, Aleksandrov, an indication of how seriously it was received. The note was a masterpiece of the genre, part literary fiction, part paranoid Uzbek literary history – an alternative to Madzhidi's 1935 article. It began with the 1910 creation of the Jadid group "Society for the Dissemination of Useful Knowledge in Bukhara" in Istanbul and weaved in the genealogy of the first generation of Uzbek Bolsheviks and their connections with German intelligence, before concluding that the Red Quill literary circle that had been purged in the 1930s included present day Uzbek writers such as Alimdzhhan, Shakir Suleiman, Davron, Gairati, Uigun, and others. Stanishevskii contended that one of the group's associates, Gaiaza Iskhaki, living in Berlin, had been waiting for Hitler's war against the Soviet Union to "reactivate Basmachi sheikhs" into border confrontations with Afghanistan that would force Great Britain to break its alliance with the Soviet Union. Far fetched as they were, Stanishevskii argued that these events would be assisted by poor Communist Party propaganda in Uzbekistan and he called for the strengthening of Party-mindedness in the SSP Uz.<sup>437</sup>

Stanishevskii's allegations shaped a narrative of masked Uzbek nationalism that could not be ignored in the climate of war. A Party agitprop report on Uzbekistan sent to Moscow in October mentioned the "well known" presence of "nationalistic elements" in the Uzbek intelligentsia that needed to be monitored, and whose strongest antidote would be the doctrine of "Friendship of the Peoples."<sup>438</sup> Interestingly, in July the SSP Uz, with Khamid Alimdzhhan presiding, unanimously voted to expel two writers for spreading "provocative rumors," one of whom was the same Shakir Suleiman of Stanishevskii's report.<sup>439</sup> The summer of 1941 was full of defeatism and rumors on the Soviet homefront, and the SSP Uz does not seem to have been particularly aberrant. However, Stanishevskii demonstrates how Uzbek writers bore an extra burden.

The high number of desertions from the Red Army and the re-opening of ethnic fissures between Russians and Uzbeks demonstrated that the Uzbek Writers' Union was presiding over a society that faced unique challenges.<sup>440</sup> Yet at root, its job did not differ from other republics' writers unions: to instill patriotism, hatred for the enemy, and willingness to sacrifice among its readers. Protocols from SSP Uz Presidium meeting from before the evacuation of Russian writers reveals that, like other sectors of Soviet society in August 1941, it was aware of its mandate but scrambling to catch up. The Presidium recognized the need for "increased revolutionary awareness" in light of the removal of several of its members and found that some of the writers had not yet produced anything war-related. It created an agitprop department to oversee and assign writers for articles, public speeches, radio addresses, and posters. And it celebrated the emergence of the first "poet-*frontovik*," Khasan Said, who was based in the Red Army and sending worthy battle poems to the Uzbek-language press for publication. He was immediately voted into the Union *in absentia*. However, just as Uzbek soldiers were found to be lacking in basic military skills, Alimdzhhan and the other writers admitted that early literary returns displayed an "ignorance of military matters, an inability to show frontline situations, and no sense of [the] times." Furthermore, by September several writers had still not written anything about the war. Fattakh remarked that although many writers had "amicably taken" to writing songs on military themes, their quality suffered. They read like "naked agitation," were written

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<sup>437</sup> RGASPI, f. 17, op. 125, d. 69, l. 14-23.

<sup>438</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 125, d. 29, l. 73.

<sup>439</sup> TsGARUZ, f. 2356, op. 1, d. 84, l. 6.

<sup>440</sup> See Chapter One for Uzbek military traditions, desertions, and ethnic tension.

in haste, and would be improved greatly with a closer connection to industry, kolkhozes, and the military. To rectify the situation, the poet Gafur Guliam was sent to observe military exercises.<sup>441</sup> Thus the writers, too, recognized the need to increase their knowledge of military technology, frontline life, and tactics. This inability to capture the real observed detail echoed Madzhidi's complaints about the lack of "real life" in Uzbek prose. Although this inadequacy should have been explained by the sheer novelty of war correspondence and military newspapers, this inability to capture the war's stark details was given a cultural explanation with the arrival of Russian authors.

In Tashkent, the arrival of authors from the European corners of the Soviet Union fundamentally changed the make-up of the Uzbek Writers' Union. They were an enlarged, involuntary "shock brigade," with echoes of 1930 and 1933, and with both pedagogic and representational obligations. They also accelerated and expanded the advisory work of the National Commissions of the 1930s. However, the war period was unlike other bouts of Soviet literary development. It was sustained, urgent, and no longer on the periphery, but rather took place in the center of Soviet literary culture.

### *Organizational and Aesthetic Pitfalls of Evacuation*

In October 1941 the first echelons of writers arrived at the Tashkent train station in a reluctant exodus of relief. They and their families were happy to reach the safety and relative prosperity of wartime Tashkent, yet preoccupied by news from the front and their native cities. Many were excited to see "Asia" for the first time, though depravations of daily life, food shortages, and climactic extremes often intruded on their ability to find creative inspiration in Tashkent or devote themselves to the literary development work they were called to perform. The evacuation to Tashkent and other cities resulted in increased cultural and personal acquaintances for Russians and Central Asians. But in order to overcome the pitfalls of previous literary brigades and become effective collaborators and advisors, evacuated writers had to overcome their physical discomfort and make productive use of this sense of foreignness; to overcome the language barrier and the urge to focus on the exotic.

The city was indeed a difficult place to live. In total around a million arrivals took refuge during the war – almost doubling its population. In addition to creative and technical elites, who were evacuated by the state and provided with lodgings and cafeteria access, hundreds of thousands of others made the trek on their own, without the benefit of institutional affiliation to help procure food and shelter. Disease was rampant and food was often scarce, driving up prices and creating a thriving black market. Aleksei Tolstoi deemed the city the "Istanbul of the poor," presumably in reference to that city's embrace of political emigres after 1917, with its images of downtrodden masses marooned in a suitably exotic landscape.<sup>442</sup>

Although Tashkent had a significant Russian-speaking language, most evacuees had only vague impressions of the city. Images of colonial Turkestan would have been best known to Moscow's intelligentsia through the paintings of Nikolai Vereshchagin, which created an Orientalist landscape of physical beauty and violent depravity. As members of the SSP, some would have been familiar with early Soviet literary depictions of Turkmenistan from the "writers' brigades," or with Uzbekistan through the 1935 almanac. Many more would have been

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<sup>441</sup> TsGARUZ, f. 2356, op. 1, d. 84, l. 6-7.

<sup>442</sup> Rebecca Manley, *To Tashkent Station*, 149. For more on living conditions in evacuation, see Manley's chapters 6 and 7.

familiar with the concept of the “city of bread” of Aleksandr Neverov’s novel about delivery from civil war deprivation, however its author did not stay long and left few detailed remarks of the city.<sup>443</sup> Most evacuees knew they were heading for Asia, for safety and the promise of greater food supplies, but little else.

What was clear from diaries and informal comments is that the visitors arrived in a distinctly foreign place. Akhmatova allegedly remarked that the city “could have been Istanbul or even Baghdad.” In diaries, writers like Kornei Chukovskii and the teenage son of Marina Tsvetaeva, Georgy Efron, remarked on leaving behind Europe and entering “Asia” for the first time.<sup>444</sup> Chukovskii was immediately taken by the city and the people, writing a breathless diary entry from October 24, 1941:

Rows of poplars, unusually tall, lend the city a special poetic, musical air. Walking the streets, I seem to be hearing music, and it’s all the poplars’ doing. *Aryks* [irrigation ditches] and the thousands of different little bridges spanning them, a panorama of one-storied houses looking even squatter than they really are under the tall poplars, southern street life and the kind and gracious Uzbeks, the bazaars with their nuts and raisins, the bounteous sun – how is it I’ve never been here before? Why didn’t I come before the war?[...] I went outside early this morning and saw janitors, Uzbeks mostly, pouring buckets of water from the *aryks* over the streets – an ancient custom, obviously, passed down from generation to generation – and schoolchildren hurrying off to school, something I hadn’t seen this year in Moscow.<sup>445</sup>

Chukovskii’s observations were entirely visual and removed from interaction with the subjects across their language barrier. His focus on the poplars, bazars, fruits, and the “gracious Uzbeks,” and the presumption of “ancient customs” placed him in a lineage of European imperial travelers and amateur ethnographers whose fixations Madzhidi had criticized. But diaries did not have to conform to socialist realist depictions of Eastern transformation. On these pages Chukovskii relished the cultural and temporal distance from European Russia and the sight of happy children going to school created another duality: Tashkent the peaceful homefront versus Russia at war.

Chukovskii seemed to profit creatively from all of this novelty. It is perhaps no surprise that this “special poetic, musical air” formed the backdrop for a particularly productive period in his life. In addition to tireless work in Tashkent society delivering speeches and writing stories for *Pravda Vostoka*, he edited Uzbek poetry collections, wrote about and helped to organize the adoption campaigns for evacuated orphans with his wife, Maria, and wrote the first draft of his best known fairy tale, *Odoleiam Barmaleiia*, much of which came to him in the night, as if “a somnambulist.” He wrote: “Nothing like that ever happened to me before.”<sup>446</sup>

As enthusiastic as he was, Chukovskii was not immune from the hardships of daily life shared by many evacuated writers. And the daily life travails formed an important backdrop and frequent inhibitor to the creative work and consultations of the evacuated writers. In the same entry that Chukovskii extolled the “southern street life,” he lamented being in a “terrible state,” suffering from fever, dysentery, and having lost three of his false teeth. In April, 1943 he

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<sup>443</sup> See A.S. Neverov, *Tashkent – gorod khlebnyi* (Moskva: Zemlia i Fabrika, 1927).

<sup>444</sup> Manley, 149.

<sup>445</sup> Kornei Chukovskii, *Diary, 1901-1969* (ed. Victor Erlich, transl. Michael Henry Heim) (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2005), 343-344.

<sup>446</sup> *Ibid*, 346.

celebrated his sixtieth birthday while fretting over his son, Vova, a *frontovik* who had been missing since October, and of his other son Kolya, who was trapped in Leningrad. And he was certain that his dacha and its precious library at Peredelkino had burned down.<sup>447</sup> For Chukovskii, fascination with Tashkent's exotic qualities coexisted with the concerns and tragedies of the front.

Tatiana Lugovskaia, younger sister of poet Vladimir Lugovskoi, who had participated on the initial Soviet writers' brigade to Turkmenistan, did not share his romantic view of the East. She recalled the city as a dirty, foreign place, filled with donkeys and camels being called "aga," the Uzbek honorific meaning "older brother."<sup>448</sup>

For Chukovskii, Lugovskaia and others, Uzbekistan was a new, exotic land, but their awe at its differences were not supposed to be made public. According to Soviet thinking, focusing on novelty and difference implied unbridgeable cultural differences between Russians and Central Asians and thus an imperial relationship between center and periphery rather than the harmony implied by the Friendship of the Peoples. Therefore critiques of the "exotic" gaze of writers and filmmakers had existed since at least the 1920s. Film critic Ippolit Sokolov rebuked Dziga Vertov for violating the rules of Soviet poetics:

The approach to the USSR in *One Sixth of the World* is not economic and social (one or two shots of demonstrating crowds and meetings do not count), but geographic and ethnographic (seas and rivers, flora and fauna, backward "exotic" peoples, their customs and habits.... In the five parts of the film the theme is not developed logically, systematically: the USSR is not shown in economic, technical, social, cultural, and political cross-section; what is presented is disparate ethnographic elements without any connection or coherence.<sup>449</sup>

Vertov's film had focused on "disparate ethnographic elements" rather than socialist transformation. Like the first literary brigades to Turkmenia, evacuated authors were supposed to go past the mere cataloging of novel ethnographic details and organize local people and landscape into narratives of socialist transformation. This imperative had only become more entrenched in the 1930s due to the consolidation of socialist realism, which was supposed to capture the socialist reality in the imminent future. Chukovskii, Lugovskaia, and other evacuees used informal conversations and journals to catalog these details, and usually refrained from putting them uncritically into their texts. But avoiding this urge was a constant struggle for even the most accomplished Soviet writers.

The proper way to acknowledge or work through one's amazement at the contrasts found on the periphery was to emphasize the promise of transformation. Donkeys, camels, and old men with white beards were standard images used by Soviet authors to set off the factories, trains, and canals that emphasized the hurtling rate of change. The poet and translator Lidia Bat', who spent the war years in Tashkent, recollected how Alimdzhan deftly responded to the Europeans' thirst for "exotica." They were walking together when she began staring at a camel walking towards them carrying a load when he commented: "Well what are you looking at? Camels are useful

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<sup>447</sup> Ibid, 344, 346, 350. Returning to Peredelkino in July 1943 he found the library pillaged but the house still standing.

<sup>448</sup> Manley, 164.

<sup>449</sup> Ippolit Sokolov, "O fil'me 'Shestaia chast' mira'," *Kino-front 2* (1927): 9-10, as cited and translated in Holt, 59.

animals but I know that they're interesting to you as exotica, they have camels in the streets of Tashkent, you're saying. But better to look at the automobiles. In fact, they're becoming more common..."<sup>450</sup> This episode revealed how Alimdzhane flipped the script to play the tutor to the visiting "European" on the proper socialist realist gaze towards a camel.

The exotic gaze was not supposed to be a problem because the evacuated writers were not to feel foreign. In his introductory request to Usman Iusupov, the SSP chairman Aleksandr Fadeev asked him to assist the group of writers ("many with all-Union importance") with housing and to support their literary, political, and social work, in addition to organizing their connections with Informbiuro, TASS, Radiokomitet, and the central newspapers in support of the war effort. Yet he also encouraged Iusupov to think of them as part of the Uzbek workforce, as teachers and translators, and a resource for growing Uzbek literature's profile throughout the Soviet Union: "the presence of the group of Moscow writers in Tashkent should be used both for the study and the popularization of Uzbek writers into Russian language, especially written on patriotic and defense themes."<sup>451</sup> Alimdzhane responded in kind, urging the writers, "I hope that you will not regard Tashkent as a room to wait out the end of the war but that it will be a native home for you, which you will remember for the rest of your life."<sup>452</sup> Alimdzhane's hopeful sentiment epitomized a congealing cultural identity for the Uzbeks that was perpetuated by the evacuation. While on the front the Kazakhs and Turkmen were represented as preternatural warriors and Uzbeks were less precisely marked by their overall aptitude, on the homefront they were described as gracious hosts for some of the Soviet Union's most important guests. Although unlikely that any of the evacuees had time to feel that Tashkent had truly become a "native home," the gesture nonetheless epitomized the hopes of both Party and SSP elites that they would become more than mere visitors and allow for especially intimate, helpful relations.

Meanwhile as the visitors adjusted to new living conditions in the unfamiliar city, they took on two related roles: first, as authors writing for pan-Soviet audiences; and second, as tutors and guides to writers whose language they could not read, and whose culture they did not know. The ease with which they adjusted to these responsibilities can partly be explained by their elite status within the Soviet Union at large and within the SSP. They possessed what Pierre Bourdieu calls "cultural capital," a fungible prestige acquired from mastering a craft (that was finite, and thus had to be defended and maintained constantly).<sup>453</sup> In Tashkent this distinction was marked by their living arrangements and access to ration cards and cafeterias. In comparison to other evacuees, most writers lived in relative comfort. Two apartment buildings in the city center were vacated for them, thus allowing them to replicate the sort of writers' colony that many enjoyed on Lavrushenskii lane in Moscow. Aleksei Tolstoi, the doyen of Soviet letters, was housed at the dacha of Abdurakhmanov, head of the Uzbek Sovnarkom.

This power dynamic was especially rigid because of the nature of Soviet literature. Outside of living arrangements, the arriving writers, regardless of their seniority or previous

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<sup>450</sup> Lidia Bat', "Pamiat' o nem – v serdtse. Iz vospominanii o Khamide Alimdzhane," *Zvezda Vostoka*, 3, 1967. As cited at <http://mytashkent.uz/2011/05/14/iz-vospominanij-o-xamide-alimdzhane/>. Last accessed February 26, 2015.

<sup>451</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 15, d. 565, l. 6.

<sup>452</sup> Manley, 236.

<sup>453</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in J. Richardson (Ed.) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (New York: Greenwood, 1986), 241-258. Accessed at <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/bourdieu-forms-capital.htm>.

contact with Central Asian literature, asserted their mastery in relation to Uzbek literature by a dynamic that Timothy Mitchell has called the “rule of experts.”<sup>454</sup> Socialist realism operated in many ways like a social science, with universal laws that superseded and replaced local realities and which resulted in the extension or cementing of power relations between Moscow and Tashkent, Stalinabad, and Ashkhabad. In its purview, socialist realism included the whole suite of organizational activities of the SSP as well as the standard and new genres, such as military correspondence. For historical reasons (though they may have seemed cultural), Russian writers were the more capable adepts of this aesthetic system, whose universality and correctness were beyond doubt. Hence the Russians’ unquestioned role as leaders in creative discussions, guides, and tutors. And though the Russian writers had ideological reasons to extend this “expertise” and share this “cultural capital,” it would inevitably undercut their own access to these limited quantities. This largely explains their reluctance to view Central Asian literature as its equal at the end of this chapter.

The Muscovite contingent’s takeover of the SSP Uz reins from Alimdzhhan and the senior Uzbek writers was inevitable, but not immediate. When the evacuated writers ushered in their “rule of experts” in spring 1942 they had to justify it on aesthetic and organizational grounds. However, the scant records from winter 1942 reveal that the SSP Uz had in fact reoriented to meet the needs of the war, though perhaps not at the same pace the visitors were accustomed to. It does not seem to have objectively been in crisis.

According to SSP Uz records, in January the Presidium admitted two local Russian women into the Union, poets and translators Svetlana Somova and L.E. Sotserdotova, in recognition of the increased importance of “bringing two literatures together.” The ethnic Uzbek core of the Presidium was joined by evacuees such as the poet Iosif Utkin, wounded at the front and sent to Tashkent to rehabilitate; Lugovskoi, member of the first two Turkmen writers’ brigades; Skosyrev, the Central Asia hand and member of the Uzbek Commission; Edi Ognetsvet, a poetess from Belarus; and Emil Madaras, the Hungarian Communist poet living in Russia since 1922. Items of business included sending Abdulla Kakhar and Timur Fattakh to the hometown of Kuchkar Turdiev, Uzbekistan’s first Hero of the Soviet Union, in order to write a realist biographical sketch. And the Presidium organized discussions for Chukovskii’s stories about adopted children, and Gafur Guliam’s poem, “*Ia – evrei*” (“*I am a Jew*”).<sup>455</sup>

In April the TsK VKP(b) UzSSR summoned the SSP Uz to give an accounting for itself. It is not clear who initiated the action – the evacuated writers, the TsK UzSSR, Iusupov, or someone higher – but it eventually resulted in the union’s reorganization with the Russians in charge. Another factor making this reorganization all but inevitable was the dire straits of the Soviet war effort and Party leadership’s likely desire to have a center of literary agitprop under its immediate direction. *Pravda Vostoka* reported that the TsK VKP(b) UzSSR meeting was attended by the leading all-Union and Uzbek writers, and began with a report from Khamid Alimdzhhan, after which a series of evacuated writers spoke of the “complete lack of assistance” they were receiving from the Presidium of the SSP Uz, especially in their creative work, and the need to devote “all their strength to create works that reflect[ed] the heroism of the Soviet people at the front and at home.” Usman Iusupov was quoted as saying that the “creative scope of the

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<sup>454</sup> Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

<sup>455</sup> TsGA RUz f. 2356, op. 1, d. 93, l. 1, 2, 5.

writers of Uzbekistan [was] still far from meeting the gigantic tasks” that the war had created.<sup>456</sup> The public shaming of the SSP Uz sent a message, in coded ethnic terms: the local (Uzbek) leadership was not meeting the expectations of the evacuated (Russian) writers, nor the needs of wartime.

In a Party report from two years later, the local Russian novelist and *Pravda Vostoka* correspondent Mikhail Sheverdin (1899-1984) revealed part of what went unsaid in the newspaper. He was deeply critical of Alimdzhan’s leadership and blamed the Uzbek Presidium’s inability to meet the required pace, discipline, and thematic content of war. His short biographies of each major Uzbek writer included their purported bourgeois nationalist backgrounds.<sup>457</sup> His venom and distrust paralleled the reports of Stanishevskii (Aziz Niallo) and served both to justify the Russian-led reorganization as well as his own position on the SSP Uz Presidium.

If Sheveredin’s notes are accurate, there was indeed tension boiling between the evacuees and the locals. Alimdzhan seems to have been the only Uzbek writer to be given the floor and he defended the union’s work, maintaining that in a short period of time Uzbek authors had written nearly 130 plays, “many beautiful poems,” and delivered 216 speeches, presentations on “brother literatures,” and “creative discussions” with representatives of Russian literature. They had also opened a writers’ “club” at the SSP Uz building. In short, they were “working according to plan.” The evacuated writers saw things differently. Boris Lavrenev (1891-1959), the playwright and novelist who had fought in Turkestan during the Civil War, held that although “Tashkent has become a great cultural center, where all the scientific and literary forces and artists have gathered, the Writers’ Union is run by the crook Ianovskii. The Union is headed for breakdown. Writers are forced to meet in the private ‘salon’ of [Russian poet] Iosif Utkin to read their works...”<sup>458</sup> Nikolai Pogodin (1900-1962), the author of the play and hit film, *Chelovek s Ruzh'iem (Man with a Gun)* (1938), laid the blame with Alimdzhan and Ianovskii:

There [is] no Union in the Muscovite sense of the word, just Khamid [Alimdzhan] and no one else. No Presidium, no *aktiv*. I decided for myself: it’s not nationalism, it’s provincialism. A little organization with little people. Ianovskii is half-criminal and *blatnik*. [Playwright Zinat] Fatkhullin is a completely minor figure. [...] I’m ashamed that over the course of four months this large organization in Uzbekistan remains in the shadows. The Union leadership has not been able to cope with its task, hasn’t recognized the wave of new forces, hasn’t led them forward. Squabbles have begun, people have become embittered, retreated into themselves.

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<sup>456</sup> *Pravda Vostoka*, “Soveshchanie sovetskikh pisatelei,” April 12, 1942.

<sup>457</sup> RGASPI, f. 17, op. 88, d. 238, l. 139-159. The document dates from December 24, 1943. Sheverdin’s venom directed towards Alimdzhan, a full two years after the arrival of the evacuees, is striking given the poet’s general popularity among local and evacuated writers. In this context, it seems important to mention that Alimdzhan was killed under mysterious circumstances only seven months later – run over by a car in the streets of Tashkent.

<sup>458</sup> RGASPI, f. 17, op. 88, d. 238, l. 153. The figure in question appears to be Mikhail Iurievich Ianovskii, a Tashkent-based writer who authored a play, *Tamerlan*, in 1940 that does not seem to have been published. His role in the SSP Uz is not clear, but the allegation of corruption indicate he may have been involved with the Litfond, which was in charge of distributing salary, accommodations, and meal cards.

Iosif Utkin added that “the Writers’ Union is not living in the atmosphere of war time. There is no poetry section, nor prose. It’s not a Union with a cafeteria, but a cafeteria with a Union.” Aleksei Tolstoi called the Writers’ Union in Tashkent “an institution with tightly closed windows, equally isolated from the people and the war,” and maintained that merely listing creative works and discussions was meaningless without assessing their quality.<sup>459</sup>

The complaints primarily stemmed from a divide in expectations between the writers from the center and the periphery – “provincialism” and not “nationalism” – and the only true villain, Ianovskii, was Russian. The charge about the cafeteria was a common one in evacuation Tashkent, where food shortages and active black market meant that evacuees would do anything to get coveted cafeteria passes (and it is possible that Ianovskii was selling these).<sup>460</sup> The Moscow writers were surprised that the Union’s sections did not meet according to genre like they did in Moscow, and were baffled by the lack of rigorous Party and organizational structure. The SSP Uz seems to have been run far more informally than its mother organization in Moscow, likely because its only connection with the center was the occasional emissary from the SSP’s Uzbek Commission. In actual fact, there was no *aktiv* because none of the Uzbek writers were Party members at the start of the war. Alimdzhhan only joined in 1942, and a handful of others joined a year later, likely under some compulsion. This fact does not seem to indicate a lack of political loyalty, but certainly a lack of familiarity with the Party’s expectations for organization, tempo, and “Party-mindedness,” the ability to ascertain and execute the will of the Party at a moment’s notice. At the very least, Alimdzhhan seems to have been a more gifted poet than administrator, and failed to discipline his underlings or sense the changing tide of expectations. More than anything, the Moscow writers – for whom the war was a personal reality forcing them into evacuation – did not believe that the urgency and productivity needed in war had found its way to Tashkent.

The remarks also betrayed the disdain of metropolitan elites for the provinces that was felt by local organizations in cities like Alma-Ata, Kazan, and Novosibirsk.<sup>461</sup> The Tashkent case was more poignant because here cultural and linguistic differences could make the two groups literally talk past one another. Aleksei Tolstoi was frustrated by creative consultations with Uzbek authors, saying that his suggestions, for instance, on battle scenes, were met with the answer, “the people won’t accept them (*narod ikh ne primet*),” a likely reference to the debate about whether local audiences could respond appropriately to realist approaches, a concern that would grow. In other instances, the divide between the two groups had traces of chauvinism. The poet and translator Sergei Gorodetskii (1884-1967) cautioned that “there is an Uzbek expression, ‘only a bad guest speaks poorly of his host.’ This has been the case within the Writers’ Union, where some have discounted local literature [*sushchestvuiut elementy skidki na mestnuiu literature*].”<sup>462</sup> With this cryptic comment Gorodetskii’s was a rare voice of self-criticism in the discussion about the evacuated writers’ behavior in Tashkent. Employing an Uzbek expression

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<sup>459</sup> RGASPI, f. 17, op. 88, d. 238, l. 153.

<sup>460</sup> For more on the black market and the importance of connections to acquire deficit goods, see Manley, esp. pp. 164–172.

<sup>461</sup> Erina Megowan, “Evacuated Theaters, Wartime Mobilization, and the Development of Soviet Culture in the Regions, 1941-1945,” conference paper, ASEEEES Annual Convention, San Antonio, TX, November 20-23, 2014.

<sup>462</sup> RGASPI, f. 17, op. 88, d. 238, l. 153.



revealed the penetration of local culture into the minds of certain authors, and raised the piquancy of this critique.

Thus the Uzbek writers' union was not reorganized due to any duplicitous Uzbek motives – nationalism, rumor-mongering, disloyalty, or wrecking. Neither does the Uzbeks' creative output – its politics and aesthetics – appear to have been a factor. Rather, its pace and organization provided the cover for the Russian evacuees to create a new order to meet the war needs. Their “rule of experts” was predicated on their mastery of running a Soviet institution with a live connection with Moscow, of connecting with other Soviet groups, organizing their work according to strict standards of genre and criticism, and assigning writers to observe military and industrial enterprises. They hoped to turn the Uzbek writers from a group of semi-isolated Soviet-oriented poets into a Soviet collective with vertical links to the center and lateral ones to the “people.”

### *Polishing National Stereotypes, Collaborative Anthologies, and the Friendship Narrative*

After the chastening public remarks, Uzbek writers found redemption in their collaborations with their Russian colleagues and their mastery of the suddenly ubiquitous theme of “Friendship of the Peoples.” These artistic collaborations – culminating in the 255-page *Tashkentskii Al'manakh (Tashkent Almanac)* confirmed the positive growth of Uzbek writers during the war, their political maturity, and their adoption of new, pan-Soviet worldviews.<sup>463</sup>

Spring 1942 was the season for Friendship of the Peoples. Although it had been an ideological plank since the war's earliest days, it was not until after the war's first winter, when the Red Army recognized the linguistic divisions and ethnic dissension in its ranks, that the Party signaled to its writers and propagandists to elevate the theme. One of the most direct of these beacons was a front-page editorial in *Pravda* from June 7, “*Krasnaia armiia – armiia bratstva i druzhby narodov SSSR (The Red Army is the army of brotherhood and friendship of the peoples of the USSR)*.”<sup>464</sup> This mandate was reflected in the army's reorganization of agitation materials, such as Order #12, the *Nakazy Naroda (Peoples' Instructions)*, the elevation of native-language agitators, and increasing coverage in the military press of the achievements of non-Russian soldiers.<sup>465</sup>

The Bolshevik affinity for the idea of “friendship” dates from early in the revolution.<sup>466</sup> Friendship was considered the basis and guarantor of social relations not based on exploitation, as in the capitalist world, and so it fit snugly to describe the relationship among the peoples of the former tsarist empire, and was easily expanded to include the international socialist community. However, as an accessory to the economic and political aspects of Communism, it was relatively under-theorized. Much like the aesthetic of socialist realism, there was no doctrine of Friendship of the Peoples, but rather a set of practices that developed over time. As Terry

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<sup>463</sup> *Tashkentskii Al'manakh*, eds. Kh. Alimdzhan, Vs. Ivanov, I. Lezhnev (Tashkent: “Gosizdat UzSSR,” 1942).

<sup>464</sup> The same article was printed in *Pravda Vostoka* on June 10, 1942.

<sup>465</sup> For more on the Red Army's rediscovery of Friendship of Peoples in its agitprop materials, see Chapter One.

<sup>466</sup> See Shaw, “Friendship under Lock and Key.”

Martin has argued, the concept reemerged in earnest in 1935 as the “imagined community” for the multi-national Soviet empire.<sup>467</sup>

By the mid 1930s, the depiction of national groups and republics had been streamlined into a series of clichés whose homogenization helped different groups to understand their scripts. The various peoples had their distinctive national language, customs, and skills, and each had its role to play within the Union’s economy and army. As we have seen, the representatives of Central Asian literature noted how filled with exotica they were. Uzbekistan, for instance, had already become synonymous with cotton, and it was often a landscape populated by white-bearded, robed men in *chaikhanas*, itself an ideally benign replacement for the connotation of Uzbeks as knife-wielding Basmachis from the 1920s. In the 1930s Uzbekistan was depicted as a land of cotton and gardens. And as we have seen, as Uzbek men joined the Red Army, they were celebrated for having transformed from peaceable gardeners, poets, and teachers into soldiers.<sup>468</sup> The writers in Tashkent had a range of thematic assignments, but as the capital of evacuation and the Central Asian homefront, most fell under the Friendship rubric. In daily life they practiced inter-ethnic curiosity and empathy, and in their writing polished the contours of national specialization.

The SSP Uz’s mobilization of Friendship activities started even before the evacuees took over the organization. Writers organized evenings and readings designed to acquaint evacuated writers with Uzbek culture. In spring 1942 these included presentations on classical Uzbek poetry and Uzbek poetry during the war by Uigun and Lugovskoi; presentations of songs by sanctioned, pre-revolutionary Jadid authors Mukimi and Furkat; “creative evenings” with Uzbek artists such as Sarra Ishanturaeva, Khalima Nasyrova, and Karim Zakirov, and actor Abrar Khidoiatov; a concert of Uzbek folk music and songs; and a meeting with artists from the Uzbek State Philharmonic. The writers also participated in public Friendship events such as the “evening of Uzbek literature” at the Central Asian Military District (SAVO) in May. And Friendship became lateral among representatives of the many evacuated peoples, hence the meeting with Solomon Mikhoels and the birthday celebration for Belarusian poet Iakub Kolas. Evacuation also created a Jewish section in the SSP Uz, and that spring it made plans to translate the play *Khamza* into Yiddish for performance by the evacuated State Jewish Theater, and planned a group visit to one of the Uzbek theaters of Tashkent.<sup>469</sup>

Tashkent’s identity as an internationalist socialist city was reflected in the publications of Gosizdat UzSSR from 1942, which issued books not only by Russian and Uzbek authors, but Belarusians, Ukrainians, Germans, and Hungarians, all in translation. The city’s stages were also filled with an international group of evacuated theater troupes, including the Ivan Franko Kiev Academic Theater, Mikhoels’ Moscow State Jewish Theater, the Moscow Theater of the Revolution, and the Lenkom Theater. More so than any of the other cities of evacuation, the theme of intra-Soviet and international Friendship saturated the cultural life of war-time Tashkent.

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<sup>467</sup> See Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*. It’s worth noting that Stalin emphasized the “friendship of the peoples” in 1935 upon a visit of Tajik kolkhoz workers in Moscow. The idea was closely linked with Central Asia.

<sup>468</sup> For a brief illustration of this replacement, see the poem “Sadovnik daleko (the gardener is far away)” by the Uzbek poetess Zulfia, *Tashkentskii Al’manakh*, p. 90.

<sup>469</sup> TsGA RUz f. 2356, op. 1, d. 94, l. 14, 15, 15ob.

But the most urgent creative task for evacuated and Uzbek writers was to draw connections between Uzbekistan and the battlefronts, and to cities under siege like Kiev, Leningrad, and Moscow. They reversed the formula for the “Peoples’ Instructions,” which were issued starting October 1942. Instead of convincing local Uzbek audiences of the urgency of the distant war effort, these documents were written for both local and distant Russian-speaking audiences, often on behalf of the Uzbeks, to demonstrate that the region was not removed from the suffering of war but was sacrificing in its own right. What is more, it was transformed – just like the soldiers on the front – and ready for the myriad tasks of supporting the war effort. In the local context, these articles could help soothe tensions between Uzbeks and Russians that had flared up the previous year, or between locals and evacuees.

Just days after the *Pravda* editorial on “Friendship,” *Pravda Vostoka* devoted almost half an issue to the siege of Leningrad and its connections with Uzbekistan, featuring texts from well known authors that were spread to other papers. Under the heading, “We are with you, dear Leningraders,” Kornei Chukovskii wrote to his native city, and especially the anxious parents of children adopted by Uzbek families, reassuring them that their children were in good hands:

I could not have foreseen, having lived so many years in Leningrad, that for Leningrad would appear such a reliable and dedicated friend – Uzbekistan. When I lived on the Neva, on the Fontanka, Uzbekistan seemed to me and many other old Peterburgers like a different planet. And I couldn’t imagine that a country [*strana*] separated from Leningrad by seas, deserts, many thousand versts, could feel such a brotherly closeness to itself. It has really never happened before, that people of a different nationality, different lifestyle [*byt*], different language, different climate, different part of the earth have displayed such ardent love for Leningrad. This is happening for the first time in our history. I always knew how much Lenin-Stalinist friendship of the peoples meant, but – I must admit – it never entered my mind that this friendship could reach such an emotional, sincere, selfless tenderness.<sup>470</sup>

The distance and the difference – like two planets – actually exacerbated the emotive content of Chukovskii’s words, and made the friendship more “earnest” and “tender.” In another context his emphasis on all of the differences separating Uzbekistan and Leningrad – especially in their lifestyles – would have been politically risky, yet this was allowable difference. Though artistic production from the NEP era celebrated not just diversity but difference, artistic content after the First Five Year Plan was to reflect “national in form, socialist in content,” or unity in diversity. Equally important, Chukovskii admitted that “Friendship of the Peoples” felt like an empty phrase before the war, but in evacuation, among the Uzbek people, it took on profound resonance. Here it was exemplified by the “wide hospitality of thousands of Uzbek people who take [children] into their homes like family, for their whole lives.” In so doing Chukovskii helped to associate Friendship of the Peoples with the Uzbeks, becoming one of their special gifts, enabled by “hospitality” that was both “wide” and “selfless.”

Alongside Chukovskii appeared Vasily Ian (1875-1954), the Stalin Prize-winning author of novel *Chingiskhan* and one of the most senior Russian intermediaries to Central Asian culture. His article “Friendship of the Soviet Peoples” put these Uzbek traits into historical context. He recalled that when first visiting the region forty years ago (when he served as an inspector of wells in Turkestan), “the Uzbeks treated me hospitably and affectionately, but I was still foreign

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<sup>470</sup> *Pravda Vostoka*, “Druz’ia Leningrada,” June 14, 1942.

to them. We were divided by century-old prejudices and the ‘culture’ of imperialism, which stood between us like a tall, deaf wall.” However, now “everywhere I see new people. I don’t feel like a guest but as if I’m among close friends, relatives, connected by one passion, one wish.”<sup>471</sup> For Ian the Uzbeks’ “affectionate” embrace of guests was a cultural constant that now flourished in the new Soviet environment. The eclipse of “prejudice” and the rise of “new people” in Soviet Uzbekistan had turned the Uzbek custom of hospitality into something even more familiar because the distance between guest and host had disappeared.

Chukovskii and Ian were joined by one native voice, Islam Shair (1874-1953), whose poem “*Gordost’ rodiny*” (*Pride of the motherland*), was translated by Vladimir Derzhavin. He was identified as a “folk singer” (*narodnyi pevets*), providing the imprimatur of local tradition with pre-Soviet roots. Islam Shair, rather than a younger Uzbek poet, was in keeping with Chukovskii and Ian’s thematics, that emphasized the distance and unlikeliness of Uzbekistan becoming the host and protector for Leningraders. Using the translated title of “*rodina*,” he asserted Uzbeks’ equal right to consider Leningrad, the former seat of the tsarist empire, part of their patrimony and homeland, allowing them to transcend their regionalism and adopt a pan-Soviet scope. However, we can see from the poem that this a poetic assertion rooted more in will than in fact. The short poem has four stanzas but after the first line – “the pride of our motherland is the beauty, Leningrad!” (*Gordost’ rodiny – krasavets Leningrad!*) – the city fades from view. The poem is mostly composed of assertions that the Fascist army will never take the city, that Soviet soldiers are bombing the enemy, whose bodies are piling up in the millions. He finishes by urging the city to “stand unbending” (*stoi nepreklenno*), and repeating that that Soviet soldiers are on the attack. The lack of realistic details makes it clear that Islam Shair has not visited the city though his patriotic zeal is unequivocal.<sup>472</sup>

As Uzbek culture was shaped into the embodiment of “Friendship of the Peoples,” other Soviet figures refined the image of the Uzbek homefront and its concrete contributions to the war effort. In an August editorial in *Pravda* designed to reach all corners of the Soviet Union, Aleksei Tolstoi scattered any thoughts that Uzbeks were not making equivalent sacrifices to Russians and Ukrainians who had lost their lives, cities, and homes. In “Selflessness” (*samootverzhenost’*), Tolstoi noted that the “the psychology of the Red army has deeply changed. The man on the front has become morally cleaner, more serious, simpler and deeper.” Parallel to this, Uzbekistan had changed developmentally. He went on to recite what he’d seen “with [his] own eyes in Uzbekistan.” He supplemented statistics with imagery, mentioning new canals (such as the Tashkent or Gissar) cut almost entirely with manual labor by men using *ketmen* (an Uzbek tool similar to a hoe) who moved more than 25 million cubic meters of earth. “These people worked, like always, in *khalats* with exposed chests, sleeping on the earth, and using titanic labor reached the goal.” Uzbekistan had also tripled its grain harvest, begun to plant sugar beats for the front, and accessed newly discovered coal and gas deposits. But the “greatest resources [were] its people” (*glavnoe bogatstvo – chelovek*). And despite the images of industry, Tolstoi ended with a portrait of an Uzbek kolkhoz laborer in the “heavenly garden” of the Fergana valley. It is worth quoting in whole because it employs almost all of the Uzbek clichés:

There he is, an Uzbek in midday in the 60 degree July heat, in a quilted *khalat*, opened to reveal a tan chest, with black bare legs, with a rose tucked behind his ear, under his *tiubeteika*, with a wave of his sinewy army raising his heavy *ketmen* above his head and

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<sup>471</sup> *Pravda Vostoka*, “Druzhba Sovetskikh Narodov,” June 14, 1942

<sup>472</sup> *Pravda Vostoka*, “Gordost’ rodiny,” June 14, 1942

letting it down on the wide furrow of earth between two ditches full with water. There he is, having tucked in his robe, walks behind the plough in water above his knees along the glistening rice field. There he is, white-bearded, his head wrapped with a handkerchief, he stands, leaning on a biblical staff on the slope of a hill where sheep graze. There he is, swarthy like a peach, with the shadow of his mustache under a straight nose, with black, shiny, but modest eyes, because his mother taught him to be modest, he stands at a factory machine, amidst blond Moscow girls. There he is, in the quiet evening hour he crouches near the clay walls of his home as if listening to the faint gurgling water in the *aryk*. There he is at a meeting of respected and distinguished old men, rising from the carpet and, beckoning his son, he unfolds a silk handkerchief, reaches for a knife and tells his son with an abrupt and angry voice: “Go and kill a fascist. I want to see the blood of the enemy on this knife.”<sup>473</sup>

Tolstoi’s composite sketch of Uzbeks was full of the ethnographic and anthropological details common for Russian visitors since the start of the Soviet era, and which embodied precisely the sort of exotica that Central Asian literary men criticized behind closed doors. Facial details, the dark skin, a preference for bulky robes in extreme heat, and the peppering of the text with the Uzbek words that had gained “citizenship” in Russian, but here operated to highlight the unfamiliarity of Uzbek life. His Uzbek is always a man – never a woman – who is feminized by the rose in his headband, non-threatening, and humble. The factory Uzbek is depicted placidly, running against the common Soviet depiction of factories as sites for transformation. Perhaps this is to reassure husbands and boyfriends of the Muscovite factory girls that they have no need to fear miscegeny: his modesty is mentioned twice. The “biblical staff” – a trope in European Orientalist literature – anchors the image of a slow-moving Eastern idyll that includes the Uzbek at rest above the babbling *aryk*. The narrative turns sharply with a call for bloody vengeance from father to son, using the sanctioned cliché of the knife ritual, an echo of the Basmachi era which became the “national in form, socialist in content” stamp of Uzbek draft call-ups. The only one who needs to fear the Uzbek man is the fascist enemy. The piquant ending promises the chance for masculinity and agency for both the young and the old man. However, the transformation of the agricultural Uzbek on the homefront takes place off site, at the front. Of the six Uzbeks depicted, five of them remain stuck in place. The transformation of men promised at the start of the article is elusive. Despite the industrialization of the Uzbek economy, the personal transformation does not occur here. If rural Uzbekistan has transformed, it has done so selflessly, nonthreateningly, to serve the rest of the Union.

For their part, Uzbek writers also took up the themes of patriotism and Friendship of the Peoples. A core of Uzbek poets – especially Sheikhzade, Alimdzhani, and Gafur Guliam – were especially prolific. In addition to its original Uzbek, their verse appeared in translation in Russian-language newspapers and the many war anthologies. This was largely due to their poetics, which were clearly influenced by Russian and Soviet forms, and thus translated more easily to Russian readers who in turn viewed them as the most aesthetically developed; they were the true “insiders,” doing the Party work that made “insider iconography” irrelevant. They spoke on two registers – to Uzbeks (“this is what we’re doing”), and to Russians and the Russian-speaking Union (“this is what the Uzbeks are doing”). Looking at their prodigious war-time oeuvres, two thematic trajectories stand out: mobilizational poems, describing the paths of Uzbek

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<sup>473</sup> *Pravda*, “Samootverzhenost”, August 16, 1942. The article also appeared in *Pravda Vostoka*, August 19, 1942, and in *Tashkentskii Al'manakh*, 150-152.

soldiers to the front, inspiring call-ups to fight, and celebrating their heroics; and “Friendship” poems which explicitly addressed the theme of ethnic relations during the war. Both themes – bravery and empathy – enabled the poets to “Uzbekify” the Russian and Soviet landscapes in new ways, allowing their “imaginative geography” to transcend its regional confines, and stake claims for Uzbeks to play larger, pan-Soviet roles.

A first important venue for these expressions was the collected volume, *My pobedim* (*We will conquer*), which featured poetry and prose in Russian translation including Uzbek, evacuated Slav, and anti-Fascist European authors. Exemplifying an explicitly Uzbek call to fight was Sheikhzade’s poem, “*Nam imia Stalina v bor’be oplot*” (“Stalin’s name is a bulwark in our struggle”). It enumerated, in one unbroken stanza, the many things that Uzbeks were fighting for, including general Soviet themes: “all that we’ve created with our labor”; “the lamp of Stalin, the light of our attack”; “Lenin’s undefeatable banner”; “our land and our borders.” But it focused on the specifically Uzbek cultural patrimony: Navoi and Babur’s “*ghazal*”; “so that our *dutars* freely sound”; “our gigantic Fergana canal”; “for ancient palaces, for Samarkand./ For the tomb of the Ulugbekids, and the fate/ of all our science”; “for the songs of Khorezm, dances, and games.”<sup>474</sup> He labels the Uzbek soldiers “tigers,” “lions,” and warns the enemy that they shall wield their “horrible sword.” After such an Uzbek-specific call to arms, his call “Oh, motherland” (*o, rodina*) seems to envelope Uzbekistan primarily in this term. But at the same time he calls “Oh, brother, people (*narod*), fatherland (*otechestvo*) – fight/ for us, for humankind – fight.”<sup>475</sup> In fighting for Stalin and for Uzbekistan, Uzbeks were fighting for all of humanity.

Alimdzhan’s celebration of Uzbek soldiers, “*Nashim gvardeitsam*” (“To our guardists”), was ideologically and formally in sync, neatly packed into five stanzas of four lines each. It called Uzbek soldiers to battle directly by Stalin, employing the same sanctioned vocabulary for Uzbek soldiers. It began: “*Salam* to you, brave *zemliaks*, dear soldiers! / We congratulate you with rewards due to loyal soldiers/ With the banner that the great Stalin gave you himself! / *Salam* from your mothers, brothers, and fathers.” Uzbek soldiers were “lions” and “falcons,” and made their families proud. And the poem concluded: “let the enemy know the blows of the Uzbek sword.”<sup>476</sup>

*My pobedim* featured two other standard mobilizational approaches: poems dedicated to specific Uzbek war heroes, such as Kuchkar Turdiev, and poems from the Central Asian epic tradition. This volume featured an outtake of the *Gerogly* cycle, translated by Derzhavin.

Military service did not only create a direct link into the Uzbek national past or a vertical connection with Stalin; it was the pathway for Uzbeks to claim a connection with Moscow, Leningrad, and the Russian landscapes for themselves. Another subset of poetry allowed Uzbek poets to lay claim to the Soviet center as their own homes, their own *rodina*. It is important to note that none of the poems in the 1935 volume had departed from the geographical space of Uzbekistan or Central Asia. Even Islam Shair’s poem to Leningrad, “*Gordost’ rodiny*,” was clearly removed from the city.

In *My Pobedim*, Sheikhzade made one of the strongest claims to shaping the Uzbeks’ imaginative geography with “*Nasha Moskva*” (Our Moscow). It began: “Radiant Moscow/ any city would name you our older sister/ the capital of our great lovely fatherland/ we call you our

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<sup>474</sup> Note, his neologism, the “tomb of Ulugbekids” (*grob ulugbekov*), which erased the progenitor of the Timurid line, Tamerlane, by renaming it in honor of the scientist grandson.

<sup>475</sup> *My pobedim: lit. khudozh. al’manakh*, ed. Utkin. (Tashkent: Gosizdat UzSSR, 1942), 9-10.

<sup>476</sup> *Ibid*, 13.

happiness.” It described Kremlin particulars such as the belltowers and the Lenin mausoleum and then switched registers, offering an oath of fealty: “We received from Moscow everything everlasting/ Uzbeks – the word Uzbek itself/ clear songs – the old singers/ the ability to read and write – the kishlaks.” He continues by putting himself into the city: “In Moscow I grasped the book of life (*bytii*),/ here I drank from the springs of wisdom.” He seems to have been to the city himself. Sheikhzade concludes by recalling that Moscow has never given in to its enemies, and bids that it repel the current attack.<sup>477</sup> Moscow here functioned not only as an actual city, and the capital of a joint Soviet *rodina*, but it symbolized the political center.

The theme of personal connections to Moscow and Uzbek loyalty was reflected in countless poems from Uzbek authors. *My Pobedim* included “*Moskva*” by Davron, “*Eto moia rodina*,” by Mirtemir, In his poem “*Moskva*,” Alimdzhan elaborated on these themes, exclaiming “My Moscow! Bright house of peoples!/ [...] My Moscow!/ Any of us will guard/ you like our heart, like our breath./ your granite steadfast eternal, / The firm banner of your radiance.”<sup>478</sup>

However, the poetry steeped in patriotism and Friendship of the Peoples did not always obey script. The coming together of the Soviet Union’s many nationalities in the war effort forced them to mix, to grow together, and become different people. If at one pole “Friendship of the Peoples” reflected the idea of imperial diversity, and hermetically sealed, disparate nationalities revolving around an Elder Russian brother, then on the other was “Soviet people” (*sovetskii narod*), a more national, horizontal model that reflected the ways in which the various peoples grew together in wartime circumstances, how they grew to resemble one another. Several of the poems that are on the surface primarily about mobilization or Friendship actually betray a more complicated image of the Soviet “imagined community.”

Gafur Guliam’s poem “Winter” departed from the usual role of Uzbek authors representing Uzbek interests. Instead, by taking pride in the severity of the Russian winter – negative 42 degrees – that had felled Napoleon and would soon do the same to Hitler, he was writing from the center. Guliam had visited the frontlines in winter 1942, and his depiction of the Uzbek soldier who laughed in the face of his “native Russian winter” made the novel claim that military service allowed Uzbeks could master winter for themselves, removing climate as one of the barriers separating them from Russians and the other nationalities.<sup>479</sup>

Sheikhzade’s poem “*Edinokrovie*” (“Kinship,” lit. “Of one blood”) reimagined the relationship of the Soviet nationalities not as friends, but as brothers who not only shared a common ancestry but literally the same blood. He introduced an unnamed “ancient legend” about seven kings who were brothers and who fought on each other’s side in battle. When injured they would be tended by their seven beautiful sisters who, instead of using medicine, would use their own blood. In this way, their kinship was sealed, or even compounded. He wrote, “In our age the legend has flown in/ like an arrow and come back to life” [...] “The song in our hearts beat like one/ For us each people is brother to the other./ In the Russian heart there is the blood of a Georgian/ in the veins of a son of Ukraine/ there is the blood of an Armenian and Kalmyk, / a Tajik’s blood boils like wine/ in a Belarusian, breathing strength; / The blood of an Uzbek is in the veins of a Latvian.” In this model the blood of the various nationalities literally flowed through one another, as if in a patriotic transfusion. And though the Russian is mentioned first, the brothers are treated like equals. Only the Tajik’s blood has a distinctive tint, whose heat

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<sup>477</sup> *My pobedim*: lit. *khudozh. al'manakh*, 124-125.

<sup>478</sup> *Tashkentskii Al'manakh*, 15.

<sup>479</sup> *My pobedim*: lit. *khudozh. al'manakh*, 16-17.

tempers the perhaps more limpid Belarusian. The final stanza speaks not of many peoples but one: “The heart of the USSR is one/ A whole world can fit into it./ The alliance of kinship has soldered our country./ Our goal is great – and one/ our formation is militant and inseverable./ We are strong with friendship. We will prevail!/ Our powerful, free people [...]” Thus the war has compressed, or “soldered” the disparate peoples together into a unified whole. Although the term “Soviet people” is not used, he has beckoned it. The poem reimagines the Soviet community, enabled by the common blood in its veins, scored by friendship, but ultimately fired in the kiln of war. What is more, the guiding metaphor for the consanguinity comes from the distant, unspoken Central Asian past, again assigning a special role for the region and the advancement of the idea of Friendship.

Finally, two of the most celebrated Soviet poems from the war era, Gafur Guliam’s “*Ty ne sirota*” (“You are not an orphan”) and “*Ia – yevrei*” (“I’m a Jew”), exemplified the transcendence of narrow national identity. He wrote both in the winter or spring 1942 against a backdrop of Soviet army losses and the evacuation of thousands of orphans to Uzbekistan. “*Ty ne sirota*” was composed in four long stanzas with short lines that in Svetlana Somova’s Russian translation range from one to four words and have a loose rhyming scheme. Although the poem touches on the hideousness of Hitler and the greatness of Stalin, it is primarily a tender appeal from the author to an evacuated child: “Are you really an orphan?.. / Calm yourself, my dear! / It is as if the kind sun, / setting above you / full of deep / motherly love, / [is] the great country / taking care of your childhood. / Here you are home, / here I guard your peace, / Sleep, little piece of my soul.” The author continues by symbolically replacing the child’s father: “If your father lives, – / anxious shadow / Let him not be worried / among threats and fire, / let him know: / his son is growing up / with me! / If your father has died, – / gird yourself, don’t grieve. / Sleep, my son, / My little white lamb, / fall asleep. / I am your father!” Although the child is legally an orphan, spiritually and emotionally he has gained a new home and a new family, sprung from natural, spontaneous empathy. The poem references Gafur Guliam’s own childhood as an orphan and his poem “Uzbekistan” from the 1935 Almanac: “I was blinded from grief / from looking for a home / And no one / caressed my face...”<sup>480</sup> Whereas the young poet suffered while parentless, the boy he has adopted has immediately been warmly embraced, for there are no orphans in Stalin’s Soviet Union, and because he has landed in Uzbekistan, referenced by the “golden tulips” that will bloom when the child wakes up. However, nationality is not central to the poem. And labels, such as “orphan,” can be transcended. The child’s greater fortune is to be born in the Soviet Union, full of empathic people, some of whom happen to be Uzbeks.

In “*Ia – yevrei*,” Guliam adopted another nationality entirely. The poem will be discussed more fully below, but for now its importance lies in its imaginative geography and act of symbolic replacement. Even today, one of the most arresting aspects of the poem is that an Uzbek poet, deeply removed from the European holocaust, placed himself symbolically amongst Hitler’s victims in Europe. And again, the formula that empathy can replace nationality epitomized the ambiguous call to action of Friendship of the Peoples; that in its most heightened state it resulted in the shedding of narrow nationality and embracing all Soviet people, and even all of humanity. The poem’s public debut may have been the Evening of Uzbek Literature conducted at the Central Asian Military District on May 20, 1942 that also featured readings and

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<sup>480</sup> Gafur Guliam, “*Ty ne sirota*,” *Tashkentskii Al'manakh*, 229-230.



presentations from Sheikhzade, Timur Fattakh, Uigun, Somova, Nikolai Ushakov, and Penkovskii.<sup>481</sup>

By spring 1942 evacuated and Uzbek writers had responded to the Friendship theme. One part of this response was a polishing and buffing of national stereotypes. This can be seen in poetry that referred to Uzbek soldiers as sword-wielding epic heroes, “lions,” and “tigers” and prose that emphasized Uzbek empathy, adoptions, hospitality, and self-sacrifice. Yet calls for Friendship also resulted in poetics that superseded nationality. Sheikhzade and Gafur Guliam exemplified a different strand of imagery, emphasizing Uzbeks’ elevation among the Soviet people rather than narrow nationality. This was an aesthetic violation of the model of Friendship as a Russian trunk with national branches, and it echoed the rise of Uzbek contributions to the war economy and military, encompassing Uzbek aspirations in the Soviet order that was desperate for greater expression. Comparing Tolstoi’s composite sketch of untransformed, benign, and exotic Uzbeks to the depiction of Alimdzhani’s soldiers who had absorbed the Russian winter or Gafur Guliam’s adoptive father and symbolic embrace of all humanity, we see that Russian depictions retaining exotic portrayals served to reinforce the hierarchy of the Friendship model that Uzbek authors simultaneously worked to challenge.

### *Reorganizing and Assessing the SSP Uz*

Despite noteworthy works from individual Uzbek authors the TsK VKP(b) UzSSR reorganized the SSP Uz to reflect its new position on the Soviet literary landscape. After the war’s first winter, the Tashkent-based writers recognized that they would be in Uzbekistan for the long haul and turned the city into the capital of war-time Soviet literature. Although the SSP SSSR was technically based in Chistopol, its members were dispersed throughout the Soviet Union and it could not coordinate its many de facto branches. In numbers and reputation, the Tashkent group was its most important, and it redirected the center of Soviet literary activity to the heart of Central Asia. In the context of the pre-war Writers’ Brigades, the reorganization of the SSP Uz was unprecedented, as instead of visiting to consult, it had arrived indefinitely and absorbed the local branch. In the coming months many evacuated writers were voted into the Uzbek Writers’ Union. Against the backdrop of Central Asian soldiers becoming “Ivan-Tajiks,” the transformation of Muscovites into “Uzbek writers” was an analogous development of the center absorbing the periphery.

When its Presidium met again in June 1942 the evacuated writers dominated the proceedings rather than passively observing. Alimdzhani used his introductory remarks to introduce a new Presidium to reflect the many “major writers” now living and working in Tashkent, and cited the need to “widely expand” the Union’s work. The new Presidium included major Uzbek writers, including Abdulla Kakhar, Gafur Guliam, Sheikhzade, Aini, Iashen, Uigun, Sabir Abdulla, and Amin Umari. They were joined by the evacuated writers Isaiia Lezhnev, who was made Second Secretary of the SSP Uz, Aleksei Tolstoi, Chukovskii, Penkovskii, and Tikhonov, plus Sheverdin.<sup>482</sup>

Now largely under control of the evacuees, the new members of the Presidium bandied about new organizational ideas and discussed how best to interpret war-time Uzbekistan and assess its literary achievements. Aleksei Tolstoi began the June Presidium with a grandiose address, celebrating the pace of heroic growth demonstrated by Uzbek society. He admitted that

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<sup>481</sup> “Večer Uzbekskoi Literatury,” *Pravda Vostoka*, May 21, 1942.

<sup>482</sup> TsGA RUz f. 2356, op. 1, d. 93, l. 26.

the Writers' Union's plan was "huge" and unlikely to be finished, but finish it they must – an oxymoron that neatly summed the spirit of the age. He praised a book, *Sokrovishcha Srednei Azii* (*Jewels of Central Asia*), which was dedicated to the region's new, wartime industry, for its "movement of people and machines," which he called a "pure Balzac theme." But most of all he viewed the war as a sort of Bildungsroman for Uzbek heroes to rise from obscurity: "nobody knew, he didn't know himself, and now he's become a hero." He cited factories, canals, and soldiers among the "miracles" (*chudesa*) of the age but, warned that they could not be captured by Russian writers (who were still getting to know the area), but had to be done by Uzbeks.<sup>483</sup> For Tolstoi, the accelerated development of Uzbeks was the war's central motif. And the call to arms for Uzbek writers to capture these "miraculous" events in the realist aesthetic – as symbolized by the reference to Balzac – exemplified a contradiction first encountered by Soviet writers in the First Five Year Plan – between urging superhuman feats and depicting them in a realistic way.

The poet Sergei Gorodetskii agreed, but with less hyperbole, adding the need to showcase theme of "Eastern Renaissance and the role of Uzbekistan in it."<sup>484</sup>

The Russian writers proposed a number of organizational imperatives to reflect these themes. More than anything else, their stewardship of the SSP Uz resulted in a jolt of public literary activities that were befitting of the relocation of the Soviet Union's most visible writers in war-time Tashkent. Some of these programs included: appointing Tikhonov to do a series of "educational lectures" on local themes; sending Gorodetskii to the Samarkand filial of the SSP Uz to reestablish their connection; creating a collected volume about Uzbeks at the front; connect with local factory leaders and workers to learn "what to write about and how to write it"; to coordinate with the publishing house Sovetskii Pisatel' for more expedient printings that would reach a pan-Soviet audience; and to collect material in Andijan, which was home to "lots of interesting factories." Tikhonov proposed that "with all work connected with Central Asian culture, we should enlist Ian Ianchevetskii," thus bypassing any number of the Uzbek authors present. And Madaras, the Hungarian Communist, reminded all present that the German, Polish, and Hungarian antifascist writers were ready and willing to be assigned to radio work.<sup>485</sup>

The linguist Viktor Zhirmunskii (1891-1971), an evacuated member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, offered an important corrective to the writers: none of these tasks could be completed without knowledge of the local language. He clarified:

The literature of the Soviet East remains distant from us. We're seeing much of the culture of the Soviet East for the first time. I should remark that our worldview about [Uzbek] monographs has greatly widened. We need to verify and think through, it's not all smooth. Need to work on this seriously. If we want to work on these themes, we need to remember that popularization of the verbal arts begins with learning the language.

Zhirmunskii's frank assessment of literary "distance" cut against the mood of the day. What is more, in all of the Uzbek Commission's discussions about "bringing closer" the two literatures, the obligation for learning had always been unidirectional and aimed at Uzbek authors to master Russian language and culture. The idea that Russian writers should learn Uzbek, apart from a small set of translators, was inconceivable without the writers' relocation to Tashkent.

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<sup>483</sup> TsGA RUz f. 2356, op. 1, d. 93, l. 26.

<sup>484</sup> TsGA RUz f. 2356, op. 1, d. 93, l. 26.

<sup>485</sup> TsGA RUz f. 2356, op. 1, d. 93, l. 27.

Zhirmunskii's expectations were unusually high, however. As a scholar of Germanic languages, he easily adapted to his evacuation to Uzbekistan. He soon mastered several local Turkic languages, and went on to translate *Alpamysh*, *Manas*, and other Turkic epics.<sup>486</sup>

In the same vein Ian confirmed that Russians' knowledge of Uzbek culture and language was lacking. The teaching of Uzbek in local Russian language schools was "poor," and "necessary popular books" from the likes of Sadriiddin Aini were "forgotten about," as were the great "Uzbek" authors who had "entered world literature," like Avicenna.<sup>487</sup> The acquisition of Uzbek was also slowed by a lack of pedagogical resources.

Indeed, Russians were only able to study Uzbek language in earnest due to the war. The press welcomed the first complete Uzbek-Russian dictionary of the Soviet period only in March 1942. Its need "was long ago apparent," given that the lack of textbooks and dictionaries had "caused serious difficulties in studying the Uzbek language for the European population." Its completion was a cause for "widespread salutes," because it reflected the "gigantic strides that [have] occurred in the Uzbek language" after the October Revolution, notably the inclusion of "thousands of Soviet and international terms that have occupied a firm place in the Uzbek language."<sup>488</sup> The first condensed Uzbek-Russian and Russian-Uzbek dictionaries – the sort intended to assist daily communication – were only published for the first time at the end of June. Blame for the delay, conveniently, was placed on a number of factors, including "opposition of bourgeois-nationalist anti-Soviet elements entrenched in scholarly institutions – first and foremost the *Komitet Nauk* (Sciences Committee) and UzFAN (the Uzbek filial of the Academy of Sciences)."<sup>489</sup>

The most visible result of the Russian evacuees' stewardship of the SSP Uz was a bounty of collaborative volumes that reflected the themes of Uzbek mobilization and Friendship of the Peoples. In 1942 alone the Union published: *V ataku! (To the attack!)*, a collection of "agitpoems" written by Tashkent-based poets in their native languages, including Russian, Uzbek, Belarusian, and Yiddish – a rare example of untranslated linguistic diversity; *My pobedim*, a collection of poetry and prose in Russian translation including Uzbek, evacuated Slav, and anti-Fascist European authors; *Voiny Uzbekistana (Soldiers of Uzbekistan)*, a collection of "agitpoems" dedicated to Uzbeks in arms; *Nashi deti (Our children)*, a poetry collection devoted to Soviet children, especially the evacuated orphans in refuge in Tashkent; and

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<sup>486</sup> TsGA RUz f. 2356, op. 1, d. 93, l. 27. Zhirmunskii's publications include: Fazyl Yuldash, *Alpamysh: Uzb. nar. epos*, Per. V. Derzhavina, A. Kochetkova, L. Penskovskogo; pod red. i s predisl. V. M. Zhirmunskogo. (Tashkent: Gosizdat UzSSR, 1944); and V.M. Zhirmunskii, Kh. T. Zarifov, *Uzbekskii narodnyi geroicheski epos*. (Moskva: Goslitizdat, 1947).

<sup>487</sup> TsGA RUz f. 2356, op. 1, d. 93, l. 27. The rediscovery and publication of "Uzbek" texts from the classical age of Islam was an important part of the Uzbekistan's cold war cultural politics, though Avicenna (980-1037), born in Bukhara, would not have considered himself Uzbek.

<sup>488</sup> *Pravda Vostoka*, "Novyi uzbeksko-russkii slovar'," March 31, 1942. The dictionary was formally the result of a joint effort of Uzbekistan's most visible scholar, Kary-Niazov (a mathematician), and Aleksandr Borovkov, a Turkologist born in Tashkent who had traveled back and forth between the region and Russia before returning to Tashkent in 1939 as the vice director of Uz FAN SSSR.

<sup>489</sup> *Pravda Vostoka*, "Tsennye slovari," June 28, 1942.

*Tashkentskii Al'manakh*, the culminating effort that wove together all of these themes, published at the very end of 1942.<sup>490</sup>

However, it was the publication of a collection of Uzbek poetry in July that prompted the first significant assessment of the growth of Uzbek literature in war conditions. *Poety Uzbekistana* (*Poets of Uzbekistan*) was edited by Chukovskii and Utkin and published by “Sovetskii Pisatel’,” with a forward by Sheikhzade.<sup>491</sup> It was the first compilation of Uzbek authors for a pan-Soviet audience since the 1935 Almanac, though *Pravda Vostoka* forgot about that volume and celebrated the new book as the first ever collection of Uzbek poets in Russian – essentially setting the Uzbek Soviet literary clocks back to zero. The volume was celebrated for its “high level of ideological commitment (*ideinost’*), patriotic development (*pod’em*), and [being] permeated with the spirit of Stalinist Friendship of the Peoples.” It mentioned especially the works of Islam Shair, Sheikhzade, Alimdžhan, Aibek, Amin Umari, and Gafur Guliam, for “*Ia – Yevrei’*” and “*Ty ne sirota.*”<sup>492</sup>

Unlike 1935, Sheikhzade’s introductory text presented the volume as nothing but a success. In the Friendship vein, he added poetry to the series of Uzbek natural-born traits: “From time immemorial the land of the Uzbeks has been renowned not only for its gardens and densely settled cities, not only for the military valor and hospitality of its inhabitants, but for its bright and wise poetry.” And he further gives a genealogy of Uzbek poetry that has three major roots: the urban, court poetry of “intellectuals”; poetic folklore, with its “romantic pathos, hyperbole, predilection for rhythm and *relif* aphorism and metaphorical style”; and the “conceptual (*ideinyi*) saturation, democratic orientation, novelty of approach and thematic breadth” of Russian poetry. For Sheikhzade these three streams mingled happily, giving Uzbek poetry its unique quality within Soviet literature: “possessing methods of socialist realism, Uzbek poets also maintain the traditions of their romantic poetic past to a great degree.” Hence he could celebrate the poets who best represented these three streams. With the clearest Russian influence were Gafur Guliam, whom he likened to Maiakovskii; Alimdžhan, whose poems were a “sharp agitational weapon”; and Aibek, whose work ranged from “abstract-symbolic poetry to concrete realistic reflections of modernity.” He saw the epic tradition in the work of Mirtemir, whose “poetic lyrics [were] intimately tied to folk-hyperbole,” and Timur Fattakh, whose soldiers were “almost titans.” And representing the first group were Sabir Abdulla and Chusti, who “obey the older formal laws of prerevolutionary literature, [yet] give new sound to several of its clichéd images.”<sup>493</sup> In fact, Chusti’s final poem in the volume was a *ghazal*, “Greetings soldiers-warriors” (*Privet boitsam-bogatyriam*). The pencil-line drawings by V. Alfeevskii that separated the poems also reflected the collection’s chronologically shuffled influences, from a singing *bakhshi* (folk singer) with *dutar* on the title page, a *tiubeteika*-adorned Uzbek cradling a baby with Gafur Guliam’s “*Ty ne sirota,*” to pictures of Red Square, and modern battle scenes with tanks and airplanes. Based on the drawings and Sheikhzade’s introduction, the poems revealed

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<sup>490</sup> *V ataku!* eds. Lugovskoi, Somova. T. Gosizdat UzSSR; *My pobedim: lit. khudozh. al'manakh*, ed. Utkin. T. Gosizdat UzSSR; *Voiny Uzbekistana: sb. Stikhov [na obl: agitstikhov]*, eds. Lugovskoi, Somova. T. Gosizdat UzSSR; *Nashi deti: sb. stikhov [na obl.: agitstikhov]*, eds. Somova, Lugovskoi. T. Gosizdat UzSSR.

<sup>491</sup> *Poety Uzbekistana*, eds. Chukovskii, Utkin (Moskva: “Sovetskii Pisatel’,” 1942).

<sup>492</sup> “Poety Uzbekistana,” *Pravda Vostoka*, July 15, 1942.

<sup>493</sup> *Poety Uzbekistana: sbornik stikhov*, red. K. Chukovskii, I. Utkin, pred. Sheikhzade (Tashkent: “Sovetskii Pisatel’,” 1942), pgs. 4-7.

varied and rich aesthetic influences, but were comfortably within the Soviet socialist realist cannon. In fact, the editors' comfort with Uzbekistan's distinctive brand of socialist literature could be found on the cover, where the drawing showed a knight on horseback slaying a snake, in reference to its folkloric heroes, and not unlike Christian images of St. George.

The Presidium's discussions were no less positive. They revealed the excitement of first acquaintances and the Russian joy at presiding over the growth of their Uzbek colleagues. Kornelii Zelinskii exclaimed that it was a "significant achievement" and – erroneously – "the first serious collection in Russian." He continued the theme of the heroic and the miraculous that Tolstoi had introduced at the previous meeting, speculating: "if this book got into the hands of an old writer, he would consider it a miracle (*chuda*). Here is amazing maturity of political awareness, remarkable pathos of Friendship of the Peoples. We've come a great distance." Zelinskii also complimented the poetry for its emotional impact: "[it] comes from the soul, not just words. It tears at the heart. It uses bright paints. I want to shake their hands."<sup>494</sup>

Zelinskii revealed no clear answers on how to balance the national and the realist in Soviet Uzbek literature, but he sided with the idea that national literatures should be encouraged to have their own distinctive styles. He identified two tendencies in the volume, "one towards realism, one to folklore." And while he praised the poet-translator Penkovskii for superbly conveying the "national color (*kolorit*)" he believed other translators, like Somova and Levik, "sought Russian tendencies." In general, he viewed the authors in the volume as "working through the war theme in traditional ways" and believed that "it would be wrong to urge Uzbeks to distance themselves from tradition." Yet he celebrated Guliam's two poems as "true innovation, channeling Maiakovskii, yet with more emotion." And he exclaimed rhetorically, "if others felt in him what I feel..." He admitted that, "how to convey national color – [was] a complicated question."<sup>495</sup>

Izzat Sultanov, the solitary Uzbek literary critic in the SSP Uz, agreed with Zelinskii's diagnosis, but was not satisfied with the level of achievement: "clearly we can say that Uzbekistan has its own poetry. [But] this collection only gives a few hints at the maturity of our poetry." While it showed the people's hatred for the enemy, it still had a "certain declarativeness." For Sultanov, "this [was] because before the October Revolution folklore was dominant for us. The readers' tastes were trained on the romantic epic. We want to say that our poets should search for the new."<sup>496</sup> Like Madzhidi before him, Sultanov took a harder line towards Uzbek literary tradition, demanding innovation. Yet how to eliminate the "folkloric," the "epic," and the "declarativeness" while retaining the national was still an open question.

Iekhezkel Dobrushin (1183-1953), playwright and member of the Jewish Antifascist Committee, joined in the praise of authors like Fattakh and Alimdzhhan as "new exemplars" of poetry, and announced that he had "never encountered more heartfelt poetry" than Guliam's "*Ty ne sirota*." He also compared Uzbek poetry favorably with the Jewish (Yiddish) poetry that he was familiar with in Birobidzhan, noting their similar roots in song and common challenge to balance the national and the Soviet. As a representative of Jewish literature, Dobrushin, like the

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<sup>494</sup> TsGA RUz f. 2356, op. 1, d. 93.

<sup>495</sup> TsGA RUz f. 2356, op. 1, d. 93, Zelinskii went on to further work on the problem of the national in socialist realism. See K.L. Zelinskii, *Natsional'naia forma kak problema sotsialisticheskogo realizma* (Moskva: "IML im. Gor'kogo-AN SSSR, 1957), and K.L. Zelinskii, *Oktiabr' i natsional'nye literatury* (Moskva: "Khudozh. Lit," 1967).

<sup>496</sup> TsGA RUz f. 2356, op. 1, d. 93, l. 33.

Uzbeks, saw their literary growth almost in dialectical terms with a clear outcome. He saw the Uzbek collection as “a synthesis of two layers working themselves out (*ishetsya*). I see how national poetry is made streamlined; it becomes common to all mankind. We are still struggling with hyperbole. But Uzbek poetry has already done away with this.”<sup>497</sup> For Dobrushin, Uzbek poetry – and most likely Guliam and Alimdzhan especially – was more developmentally advanced than Jewish (Yiddish) in overcoming its provincial, “hyperbolic” tendencies. The key was to become “streamlined” and thus accessible to all “mankind.”

The conversation moved to the role of the translator in maintaining or altering the poems’ cultural specificity. Mikhail Sal’ye (1899-1961) was a translator and Orientalist who had moved to Tashkent in 1939 to head up Tashkent’s public library and spent most of the rest of his career in the Institute of Oriental Studies AN UzSSR. He became well known for his translation of *A Thousand and One Nights* from the Arabic into Russian, and later participated in the celebrated translations of Avicenna, the Baburnama, and works of Biruni. Although he was better versed in Uzbek culture than the rest, he deemed the poetic quality of the translation to be of utmost importance. Sal’ye called the publication of the volume a “joyful event,” and was especially complimentary of “*Ya – Yevrei*,” which he deemed the volume’s strongest poem. More importantly, he praised Somova’s translation because “it [was] unclear what comes from the translator and what is the authentic from the author.”<sup>498</sup>

Penkovskii, the translator of many of the volume’s poems and head of the SSP’s Uzbek Commission, disagreed. He criticized Efros and others who had commented on the translations without at least having seen the *podstrochniks*, much less reading them in the original. For many Russian authors, they judged poetic quality on how well it sounded to Russian ears, or how they assumed Uzbek *should* sound in translation. He summarized what he called an “extremely important question” [...]: “To what degree should the poet-translator be permitted to instill the character [in his translations] that he likes more, and finds easier.” Penskovsky argued that creating translations that were too familiar and smooth would be the “first step towards sterilization,” and asked rhetorically what would be the difference between Turkish, Uzbek, Ukrainian, and Belorussian poetry. As an example of the danger he cited K.N. Altaisky-Korolev’s translations of Dzhambul, the Kazakh bard. He recalled visiting the poet in 1938 for his birthday celebration and getting acquainted with his work more closely and realizing that the poet had been so disfigured by translation over the years that if he were now translated more sensitively the Russian reader would not recognize him anymore. In other words, in order to accelerate Dzhambul’s Sovietification translators had removed his distinctiveness. He had particular scorn for one of Altaisky-Korolev’s more anachronistic lines – “I drove on the Kaganovich highway” – which represented true “pride and folly” given Dzhambul’s steppe-nomadic origins. Ultimately, Penkovskii pleaded for the preservation of national and cultural specificities. Just as they should not Anglicize or Frenchify them, they should not Russify them.<sup>499</sup> In this way Penkovskii, the poet and seasoned Uzbek translator, defended a more ecumenical relation of socialist literary aesthetics towards the peripheries, within the imperial model of Friendship of the Peoples. Each branch deserved to be seen in all of its national distinctiveness, offering beauty and truthful translation, but not necessarily creative equality with

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<sup>497</sup> TsGA RUz f. 2356, op. 1, d. 93, l. 33-34.

<sup>498</sup> TsGA RUz f. 2356, op. 1, d. 93, l. 34.

<sup>499</sup> TsGA RUz f. 2356, op. 1, d. 93, l. 34.

Russian poetry. Whereas Sultanov and the more ambitious, Party-minded Uzbeks wanted to call attention to their more “mature” – and perhaps more Russian – works.

The Hungarian antifascist Madaras concluded on a happier note. With less at stake on the Soviet literary landscape and little previous exposure to Uzbek culture, he greeted the volume “with joy, that with this little book the Uzbeks have outgrown [their past], and reached an international scale.” What is more, “this [volume] should have been done long ago. We’ve been living here ten months and still haven’t been properly acquainted with Uzbek works.”<sup>500</sup> In his way Madaras was right; it was this simple. Before their eyes the Uzbek authors had outgrown their regional register and entered an international scale, best exemplified by the poems of Gafur Guliam. The collection of poetry was a literary and political success which had essentially reintroduced Uzbek literature to a large group of Russian and foreign evacuees, effectively replacing the 1935 Almanac. However, under the surface many questions remained. Most importantly, if the volume was testament to their growth, whence and to where? Going forward it was not yet clear how much of the “Uzbek” should remain in “Soviet Uzbek” literature and how best to present it in translation to the rest of the Soviet Union. Perhaps not surprisingly in an imperial formation, it was the Uzbek authors who pushed for a greater aesthetic assimilation, while from the center many of the Russian voices vowed to preserve the diversity. Just like the instability in the “Ivan-Tajik” formation on the front, it was not yet clear how Uzbek writers could keep their “national coloring” if they wanted to transcend to all-Union audiences.

Behind the scenes, the SSP Uz was full of bickering. The tenure of the Moscow writers did not eliminate the shortcomings that had served as the pretext for taking control of the SSP Uz. In fact, reports on professional discipline blamed both Uzbek and Russian writers for thinking too much about full stomachs and avoiding organizational responsibilities that distracted from their writing.

In late August 1942 Lezhnev, in his role as Vice Secretary of the SSP Uz, stated that despite calls to double union discipline, this had not transpired: “There is an expression that can be applied to both Russian and Uzbek groups – ‘*khop*.’ This means ‘okay’ (*ladno*). I want to say, ‘Don’t say ‘*khop*’ until you’ve completed the job.’”<sup>501</sup> Even though he called all writers to attention, his use of an Uzbek expression indicated there was something culturally Uzbek about shirking the requisite pace of work that had rubbed off on the Moscow writers. “*Khop*” needed to be overcome by all. These included the literary seminars that Tolstoi had proposed and Tikhonov and Aidyn oversaw. Chukovskii had led the first one, but nobody had come. Lezhnev reminded the Russian writers that the Union had taken care of them, ensured they would not be mobilized to work in factories, created “home-like” conditions to work, and made sure their families were also not mobilized. The Uzbek writers were also to blame. The TsK VKP(b) UzSSR suggested they send writers to a grain-growing kolkhoz because they were “cut off from kolkhoz life.” Given that the all the kolkhozes spoke Uzbek, this burden fell upon the Uzbek writers. Yet each one offered “ten different reasons” why he could not go, including Ismailov and Mirtemir, the latter who seemed to have asked Mikhoels to excuse him. Lezhnev also identified other problems: an Uzbek writer summoned to write for an Uzbek-language newspaper had refused;

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<sup>500</sup> TsGA RUz f. 2356, op. 1, d. 93, l. 35.

<sup>501</sup> TsGA RUz f. 2356, op. 1, d. 93, l. 42.

several of the Russian translators had refused to speak publically at military hospitals; the “newspaper walls” (*stengazety*) had been set up but never updated.<sup>502</sup>

Sheverdin, the ever-vigilant watchdog, complained that he had never seen a greater “tendency towards personal wellbeing” than among the writers. And he alleged cryptically that a “major writer” had engaged in “vile trading” with the editors at *Pravda Vostoka* for his honorarium on a poem about hatred of the enemy. He alleged that other poets and translators had followed the writer’s lead and were now slow to bring their work.<sup>503</sup> However, other comments made clear that writers believed that the honoraria were simply not high enough.

Alimdzhan defended his leadership by going on the attack. Although seventy people had been invited to the evening session, only fifty had come. He reminded the writers that during wartime, not working for a day constituted a crime. Further, he implied that funding for the *stengazety* were being siphoned off. He echoed other complaints that Gafur Guliam and Kakhar, especially, had failed public speaking obligations and to write certain assignments. And he concluded with the ultimate zinger: “we have a lot of writers when it comes time to feed them, and not many when it’s time to work. There are comrades who are committing sabotage.” This conduct was “inexcusable” and he warned that it could result in exclusion from the Union – and its cafeteria.<sup>504</sup>

Though the two groups seemed to shirk their agitational responsibilities as equals, Uzbek and Russian writers struggled to collaborate efficiently. Antokolsky was to edit a volume of Uzbek war-themed poetry that would be published in Moscow comprised of 70% previously unpublished, new work. By August the delays resulted in the adding two writers to the editorial board, the more experienced Penkovskii and Alimdzhan, the most reliable go-between with the Uzbek writers. Although the Russian portion of the text was ready, the translations of the Uzbek portion were in a “catastrophic state.” Alimdzhan deemed that the Uzbeks had not yet produced enough quality poetry. Fattakh spoke of being unable to pressure his Uzbek colleagues to create the required *podstrochniks* for Russian translation. And Lezhnev noted the Russian writers’ general “inability to speak with the Uzbek soldier,” suggesting how linguistic distance divided the group and its work. The Presidium continued to complain about the slow pace of translation over the coming months and, for reasons not fully clear, the volume did not appear until 1944.<sup>505</sup>

Regardless of their lackluster public speaking engagements, Tashkent’s writers wrote steadily for local newspapers and edited volumes. *Pravda Vostoka* continued to play a role as the mouthpiece for poems and articles celebrating Uzbek mobilization and Friendship of the Peoples, such as Amin Umari and Timur Fattakh’s “Sacred war” (*sviashchennaia voina*), Mirtemir’s “Greetings to the defenders of Stalingrad from the Tashkent intelligentsia.” Lugovskoi’s “Tashkent,” and Lavrenev’s “Uzbekistan during the days of war.”<sup>506</sup>

At the same time Uzbeks and other non-Russian soldiers were entering the popular consciousness as more and more the war was conceived as a multi-national effort due to

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<sup>502</sup> TsGA RUz f. 2356, op.1, d. 93, l. 43.

<sup>503</sup> TsGA RUz f. 2356, op.1, d. 93, l. 44.

<sup>504</sup> TsGA RUz f. 2356, op.1, d. 93, l. 45.

<sup>505</sup> TsGA RUz f. 2356, op.1, d. 93, l. 41, 43-45. The volume in question was *Poety Uzbekistana – k frontu!*, ed. Antokolsky (Moskva: Goslitizdat, 1944).

<sup>506</sup> These articles appeared in *Pravda Vostoka* on, respectively: Sept. 13, Oct. 16, Oct. 23, Nov. 3.



Directive #12, the publication of the *nakazy narodov*, plus the articles celebrating Friendship and the contributions of particular nationalities in the Soviet press, such as Ilya Ehrenburg's nationalities series.

The 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of Soviet Uzbekistan in December 1942 provided an occasion for musing on the growth of Uzbek literature under Soviet conditions. To mark the occasion, the SSP Uz conducted several evenings of presentations in Tashkent. Alimdzhan delivered introductory remarks on Friendship of the Peoples as a facilitating factor. Evacuated writers presented on pan-Soviet topics, like Pogodin on Soviet playwriting, E. Boltin on the image of the Red Army in Soviet literature, prof. Nechkina on the theme of the Motherland in Soviet literature, and I. Grinberg and M. Golodnyi on the literature of the Patriotic War. As points of comparison, Mikola Tereshchenko, Yakub Kolas, and Dobrushin gave presentations on Ukrainian, Belorussian, and Jewish literature, respectively. Evacuated scholars also contributed. The (newly Turkic) linguist Zhirmunskii reported on the Uzbek heroic epic and Yevgeny Bertels (1890-1957), the Persian and Turkic linguist evacuated from the AN SSSR, presented on "prerevolutionary Uzbek literature." Finally, the Uzbeks diagnosed their own progress in the Soviet era. Sultanov gave an overview, Sheikhzade spoke on "tradition and innovation in Uzbek literature," Gafur Guliam provided "thoughts on poetry," the translator Somova spoke on "traits of the lyric hero in all-Union Uzbek poetry," and Uigun spoke on the "acquisition of Russian classics in Uzbek literature."<sup>507</sup> Each of Uzbek themes was informed by the Union's theoretical discussions on translation and the role of the national past in socialist literature, yet unfortunately these transcripts have not survived.

The week of presentations concluded with TsK VKP(b) UzSSR Secretary Usman Iusupov, who drove home the meaning of the war on Uzbek literature and society. Like Stalin, he fancied himself a literary connoisseur and chided and prodded the packed hall of Uzbek writers to further heights. He began by affirming the need for "something gigantic [...] big, majestic works [...] that are interesting not only to Uzbeks, but all Soviet peoples, and abroad," because these "gigantic" works would reflect the "gigantic" changes occurring in the Uzbek economy. "An Uzbek can say with pride that he is actively participating in all life process of our Motherland." Iusupov shared the hopes of Party-minded writers that the war would catapult the republic to the center of Soviet and worldwide attention. However Iusupov was not satisfied with the results: "if these works exist, then forgive me, but [...] I wouldn't be bold enough to name them for you today." Although his ambitions may have been welcome by the republic as a whole, his snubbing of Aini, Lakhuti, and Guliam and others in the audience may have been unsettling. He also chided Iashen for the "cowardice" in one of his characters, criticized Sabir Abdulla's rendition of the legend "Takhir and Zukhra," and held forth on Alisher Navoi. The writers, it seems, were not keeping pace with the economy.<sup>508</sup>

Iusupov's speech was characteristically bombastic but also subtle. While raising the expectations for Uzbek literature, he also offered fealty to the Russian authors and the Soviet order. They had no reason to fear the rise of the Uzbeks. Uzbek writers had not gone through the same "historical path," the same "struggle, the same flame" as the Russian intelligentsia, whose path towards realism coincided with the revolutionary movement's imprisonment and exile. Uzbeks had "skipped over an entire epoch of development: from patriarchal, half-feudal, via the

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<sup>507</sup> *Pravda Vostoka*, December 12, 1942. Unfortunately, the SSP Uz records at TsGA RUz do not contain these stenograms.

<sup>508</sup> TsGA RUz f. 2356, op. 1, d. 95, l. 1-6.

help of Russian people we have arrived immediately at socialism, bypassing the torturous stage of capitalism.” True, he admitted that Uzbek writers had suffered the “double yoke” of imperialism and feudalism but it had not resulted in artistic maturity. Iusupov’s unorthodox literary history fully skipped the revolutionary era, implying that the Second World War was providing revolutionary finishing school that the Uzbek intelligentsia had lacked. In a sense, it was their second revolution.

Iusupov finished with an unambiguous and crude conclusion: “the Uzbek people can only exist in the great family of people of the Soviet Union and therefore I hold that Friendship of the Peoples is the only correct, just path, the only progressive path for humankind. [...] and if you disagree I’ll knock out your thirty-two teeth.”<sup>509</sup> His revaluation of the war in Uzbek history reflected the headiness of the age. It certainly seemed to Iusupov and others that although all Soviet peoples had pulled together, the Uzbeks had also made a developmental leap – with all that it implied about their future relationship with Russia. Hence he affirmed their still subordinate role in the Friendship paradigm – with the threat of a punch to the mouth.

The apotheosis of all the war-time themes – mobilization and Friendship, hatred and love, Uzbek development – arrived in the collected volume *Tashkentskii Al'manakh*, edited by Alimdzhani, Lezhnev, and Ivanov, which was published in the final days of 1942. More than any other document or book, it represented the “imagined community” of World War II-era Uzbekistan. Read in comparison with the 1935 Almanac, it encapsulated Uzbekistan’s economic, social, and intellectual development, from a “formerly backward” periphery into the Soviet center.

Unlike the previous volume, it had no introductory essays explaining the editorial process or the translations. The editorial group was ethnically mixed. And the pedagogical role played by the Russians took place entirely beyond the pages. The Russians and the Uzbeks were joined by a diverse group of international and domestic authors including Jews, Belarusians, Ukrainians, Tajiks, and Karakalpaks, and Hungarians, Germans, and Poles. Each was translated into Russian – the language of Friendship – with the translator’s name in small print below each entry. And, like a community whose members were already well acquainted, there was no separate glossary, just the occasional footnote (exclusively for the Central Asian authors) explaining proper nouns from Central Asian history and a few specifics of Uzbek dress and culture. The Uzbeks did not call attention to themselves as hosts, apart from the volume’s title, and instead joined the diverse nationalities presented visually as threads in one fabric.

The volume compiled the most significant works of evacuees and local writers from the start of the war and had six thematically related sections. The first, dedicated to the 25th Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution, included what seem to have been the most political significant, including the “letter of the Uzbek people to comrade Stalin,” Anna Akhmatova’s “Courage,” Sheikhzade’s “Kinship,” and Alimdzhani’s “Moscow.” The second and largest, “On the fronts of the patriotic war,” collected poems and stories explicitly on military themes, such as Aleksei Tolstoi’s “Tales of Ivan Sudarev,” Mikhail Golodnyi’s poem “Hatred,” a chapter from Vsevolod Ivanov’s novel *Prospekt Ilyicha*, also entitled “Hatred,” Khasan Pulat’s poem “Blood,” many of the Uzbek poems dedicated to Red Army themes, and a series of poems dedicated to Leningrad by Sultan Dzhura, Amin Umari, Mirtemir, Pavel German, and A. Rakhmat. The debut of Chukovky’s fairytale *Odoleem Barmaleia* was included here given its

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<sup>509</sup> TsGA RUz f. 2356, op. 1, d. 95, l. 9, 9ob.

thematic of good versus evil. The third section was dedicated to “Heroes of the front,” and included biographical poems and sketches of Uzbekistan’s World War II military heroes such as Kuchkar Turdyev, Akhmed Daliev, Siratkhiddin Valiev, Zufar Iusupov, Ivan Petrov, and Ziba Ganieva. The fourth, “Behind enemy lines,” featured the poems of Eastern European, Ukrainian, and Belorussian poets. The fifth, and second largest – “Uzbekistan during the days of the patriotic war,” focused on the transformation of Uzbekistan, featuring Russian journalists and Uzbek poems like Gafur Guliam’s “*Ty ne sirota*,” and others dedicated to Uzbekistan. The volume concluded with a small journalistic section on “Literature and art,” featuring Ivanov’s profile of the singer Khalima Nasyrova, Lezhnev’s summary of Tolstoi’s “patriotic articles,” Zelinskii’s assessment of Uzbek poetry at war, Kh. Zarifov on Uzbek folk singers, and Efros on Tashkent’s exhibition of evacuated children artists.

Much of the volume’s contents had already appeared in other edited volumes or in newspapers. However, the consolidation of so many works in one edition brought out many of the themes in even sharper profile. Two points are especially worthy of note.

First, as one of the richest collections anywhere devoted to multi-ethnic unity, the volume revealed more starkly the divergent imagery between “Friendship of the Peoples” and “Soviet people” as models of “imagined community.” Many poems emphasized dual or bipolar relationships between Uzbeks and Russians or other ethnic groups embodied in the neatness of “Friendship of the Peoples.” These included several group letters from the Uzbek people or from Uzbek poets to, variously, Stalin, the defenders of Stalingrad, and the soldiers of the Great Patriotic war. They also included the works dedicated to Moscow and to Leningrad and its children. In the other direction, writers like Yakub Kolas, Emil Madaras, Gorodetskii, Tolstoi, Lugovskoi, and Somova wrote explicitly to Uzbekistan and Tashkent. And there were also a few examples of lateral friendship between Tajiks and Uzbeks on the opening of the Gissar canal.

However, embedded in other poems was the idea of one “Soviet people” being forged in war, and epitomized by themes of identity being transcended. This was exemplified in Gafur Guliam’s two poems and Sheikhzade’s “Kinship” and “No, I didn’t die.” In this poem Sheikhzade refuted the notion of death, essentially arguing that heroic deeds lived forever. He began: “Splendid achievements! They have the right to live” and maintained that “Although I lay in the grave, my voice is not gone,/ I am a falcon of mountain peaks: I fly and see you.” In other words, all heroes lived forever, and given that all Soviet soldiers were heroes, they all lived eternally. If death could be overcome, so too could other banal categories. In “Blood,” Khasan Pulat continued the theme of soldiers linked by common blood: “And I know that in my blood/ pass my comrades in attack,/ that this blood is in the hearts of my friends/ and gives birth to ineradicable valor.”<sup>510</sup> The adoption of Slavic children by Uzbek families also celebrated these themes of national or ethnic mixing. Ye. Tarakhovskaia’s short poem “Friendship,” from the point of view of Sharafat, an Uzbek girl whose family took in an orphan named Galya, described how the two girls walk around in “multicolored *khalats*.” They share peaches, apples, and pomegranates – all split down the middle. Soon enough her neighbors, parents, and others remark that the two look like sisters, “like two halves of a pomegranate.” the only thing to tell them apart are their braids, one sister’s are blond, the other’s dark.<sup>511</sup> Galya emerges as something of a hybrid, still blond and with her Russian name, but dressed in Uzbek clothing and raised by an Uzbek family.

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<sup>510</sup> *Tashkentskii Al'manakh*, 74-76.

<sup>511</sup> *Tashkentskii Al'manakh*, 231.

Yefim Dorosh's "In a quiet city," an ethnography of an evacuated city, takes the hybridity even further. Positioned as a flaneur in an unnamed city, he comes upon a "blond-haired and blue-eyed boy in brightly knit *tiubiteika*" throwing unripe apricots on the street. We learn that Stasik is a Belorussian boy whose father has "died a hero" in war, and whose mother was killed as they escaped their village. A family friend brought him to Uzbekistan and deposited him in an orphanage until one day "sun-tanned people in striped *khalats* came and took the child home." The names of his new parents are not given – they are just described as "Uzbeks," which is further emphasized by the enumeration of clichés: their mud-brick home, full of bronze pitchers, red porcelain teapots, *sunduks* (storage chests), and carpets. They know the boy's given name, Stasik, but rename him Tursun instead, presumably for his new father. Tursun is thus symbolically transformed, from a Belorussian into an Uzbek. Dorosh recounts how the boy began to grow "like a sapling in a garden" and purports to witness his mother calling him in Uzbek "*Tursun, ota chaker iapte,*" or "your father is calling you," in the accompanying translation. The child goes to eat *plov* with his father and falls asleep against the "wide chest of the Uzbek." Some time later the author purports to ask the boy "who are you?" He answers with one word – "Uzbek" – and runs off in play, tugging on his *tiubiteika* which is sitting on his "swarthy" ears.<sup>512</sup> Didactic but touching, Dorosh's model of integration is actually transformation. The Slavic boy becomes an Uzbek in evacuation. And the irrevocability of nationality disintegrates. As I have suggested, with all the centripetal energy of patriotism, the war fused the Soviet peoples together, offering a temporary, alternative reimagining of the Soviet Union, full of hybrid "Ivan-Tajiks" and "Ivan-Uzbeks." Rather than celebrating the diversity of unity, it focused on the unity within diversity. As these sketches show, these processes occurred not only on the front. The adoption campaign, the very epitome of selflessness, affection, and friendship, actually subverted the Friendship model by leading to the obsolescence of its very categories. However, as we shall see, it was ultimately unstable, and the imperial diversity of Friendship re-emerged after the war.

The second important aspect of *Tashkentskii Al'manakh* as a state of the field of Uzbek literature and an "imagined" rendering of Uzbek society was genre and authorial perspective. The volume helped to celebrate Uzbekistan's literary and economic development as one of many equal nationalities. However, an enduring genre divide suggested either that different national literatures in fact had different specializations, or that Uzbeks still had a ways to go before mastering all aspects of Soviet literature. The volume on the Uzbek homefront was split almost in half between Uzbek poems and Russian journalistic sketches. The latter repeated the "insider iconography" of the early 1930s when Russians reporting on the socialist transformation of the periphery wrote from a local or seemingly omniscient perspective.<sup>513</sup> They did this presumably until the Uzbek writers would come of age to record their own transformation in the socialist realist aesthetic. Yet here the Uzbek writers responded strictly in poetic forms to topics like cotton, women in silk factories, and men in the army. The manufacturing tale – where the worker gained political maturity through labor – remained strictly a Russian genre and had many versions in the *Al'manakh*, including: M. Iufit's profile of one of the few Uzbek female soldiers, Ziba Ganieva; G. Lenobl's sketch of "Zufar," an Uzbek politruk; I. Grinberg's "Chirchik: Story of an old resident," about the eponymous power station; P. Lopatin on the new mines at Angren; P. Lopatin's "Maturity," about a young Uzbek boy's work at an evacuated factory in Andijan; A.

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<sup>512</sup> *Tashkentskii Al'manakh*, 196-198.

<sup>513</sup> Holt, 173.

Palei's "Silk," on the female workers of a factory making parachutes; and K. Shildkret's "Khidoiat," which recounted a girl who overcame her fears, the language barrier, and her *paranja* to become a factory worker in 1933, and which was still deemed relevant. Embedded in many of these stories were remnants of the exotic gaze, such as Dorosh's place-making first line: "Birds fly to the west from nearby India," and repeated attention to *tiubiteikas*, *khalats*, and sun-darkened skin which continued to burnish the sanctioned national clichés. More importantly, the genre divide among nationalities demonstrated that the theoretical assistance called for by Madzhidi in 1935 about reconciling national culture with socialist genres had not yet been clarified. Could Uzbek society transform outside the canon? Would it be considered a full transformation in Russian eyes if it did not look like Russian socialist realism? As we will see in other venues the insistence on genre orthodoxy, especially of socialist realism, aligned with insistence on political orthodoxy that was also defined in the Russian tradition.

For the time being, Uzbek wartime literary efforts were deemed an unambiguous success. Zelinskii's article, "Uzbek poets and war," formed a celebratory coda to the *Al'manakh*. Zelinskii described the Uzbeks' poetry as the apotheosis of their cultural progress since the October revolution, expanding the Sheikhzade's genealogy from earlier in the year:

The poetry represents a revolution in the mental life of Uzbeks. Those who remember old Arabic books, old Samarkand, light-blue majolica mosques, medresas, Muslim book wisdom. Those who remember the spicy erotica of prerevolutionary "secular" poetry, who know how tenaciously all this remained in people's minds, for all of them modern Uzbek poetry appears to be a miracle. This wide worldview, this maturity of political thought, national spirit (*narodnost'*), moral purity, all of it seems to arrived here from a different world. And it has. It is poetry of a new world!<sup>514</sup>

The prerevolutionary worldview, characterized by eroticism, Muslim culture, and excess ornamentation was replaced with a new orthodoxy (of cotton fields, vast canals, theaters, and kolkhozes). He acknowledged that old world views hung on "tenaciously," hence the "miracle" of the world presented in contemporary Uzbek poetry.

Zelinskii then provided his own simplified literary history of Uzbekistan, in which the poets came from kishlaks and their parents were illiterate peasants – ignoring the Jadid heritage, the Red Quill group, and the actual biographies of the major poets in the volume. Instead, the Uzbek literary heritage began when the October revolution removed the barriers separating Uzbeks from Russians, allowing the two cultures to flow together like two streams – and naturalized to appear without hierarchy:

The new Uzbek poetry was born between their mothers' fairy tales and the newspapers, between old folk songs and Russian poetry, memorized in school, between ancient Persian books (that "grandfather made us learn") and translations of Maiakovsky. Navoi and Pushkin were contemporaries for them. The sacred lines of the East mixed with the clear voice of the North. The young poetic thought struggled through the bends of the Uzbek classical influence, folkloric motifs, and Russian patterns to find its own expression.<sup>515</sup>

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<sup>514</sup> *Tashkentskii Al'manakh*, 245.

<sup>515</sup> *Tashkentskii Al'manakh*, 246.

Zelinskii's version of Uzbek literature was more Russophilic than Sheikhzade's, with two streams instead of three. Still, it was a hybrid identity in which Uzbek and Russian influences intermingled harmoniously. He did not comment on the compulsion of employing the "clear voice of the North." Instead, "Uzbek poetic thought," was purged of Persian, mixed with Russian, and then emerged with a new national label.

If Zelinskii had any reservations about Uzbek poetry's tendency towards the folkloric, he did not show them. In fact, the folkloric past fit organically with the heroic demands of the present war. In Uzbek poetry he perceived an innate "romanticism" created by "the bluest sky, eternally setting sun, bright colors, the clothes of peasants, the gigantic (*bogatyrskie*) proportions of the heroes of its national epic heroes, Alpamysh and Gor Ogly, and finally, the most astonishing feats of the epoch of socialism in Uzbekistan." He believed Uzbek poets had already mastered the "most basic feature of Soviet poetry – its optimism." Perhaps Uzbeks were even uniquely suited to the aesthetic demands of the war, and precisely because of their non-realistic heritage. The Uzbek poets captured the "heroic feats of Soviet people who had performed miracles of bravery" because they matched the scale of their own romantic epic heroes. Zelinskii saw the epic approach in poems by Amin Umari, Khasan Pulat, Guliam, Alimdzhhan, Chusti, and others. And he called "Sacred War" by Umari and Timur Fattakh nothing less than an "authentic new epic," simply with an updated vocabulary.<sup>516</sup> Depending upon one's perspective, Zelinskii was either sanctioning a return to a past aesthetic, or permitting its existence alongside new Soviet forms. He implied that the elusive military tradition that Uzbeks seemed to lack in the armed forces could be found in the poetic epics, and could even be appropriated to depict the feats of heroism of other nationalities.

Still, remaining entirely in the folkloric register meant not assimilating Russian cultural norms. Just being the Soviet Union's epic poets meant retaining a regional specialty. Therefore Zelinskii also celebrated the poets with the greatest absorption of Russian culture. Gafur Guliam was the transcendent Uzbek poet who departed the regional aesthetics and emerged at the center of Soviet and even world culture: "Without exaggeration I can say that in our [Soviet] and in world poetry there is likely nothing similar." That Guliam "broke all the rules of Uzbek poetry" and displayed the "innovation of Maiakovskii" was the highest possible praise.<sup>517</sup> Guliam was the epitome of Soviet Uzbek poetry – rooted in a national culture but with relevance across the Soviet Union and abroad. He was the literary promise of Soviet development in its East, come to its logical conclusion. His Friendship-themed poetry was precisely the "gigantic" creations called for by Iusupov and Tolstoi before him.

*Tashkentskii Al'manakh* was a barometer of both Uzbek literature and society within the wartime Soviet Union. It showed Uzbek culture rising to the peak of the Soviet center. Or rather, the Soviet center had come to Tashkent and pronounced in its hospitality, industrial transformation, internationalism, and poetic innovation all of the promises of October: a national culture that was simultaneously Soviet and eminently legible to all audiences. Yet Uzbek literature had feet in two worlds. It had not mastered all of the Soviet forms. It usually chose not to describe its own transformation in fluent prose. With certain exceptions, its poetry was full of regional efflorescence – no less patriotic – but decidedly national. In one volume its output displayed both models simultaneously, the *sovetskii narod* and the Friendship of the Peoples.

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<sup>516</sup> *Tashkentskii Al'manakh*, 246.

<sup>517</sup> *Ibid*, 248.

*Soviet Uzbek literature after evacuation: military literature and Uzbek realism*

The German surrender at Stalingrad in January 1943 turned the tide of the war and initiated the Soviets recapture of territories. As Soviet cities were liberated, little by little the evacuated authors left Tashkent, returning control of the Uzbek Writers' Union back to the Uzbek writers themselves. After a period of guidance and intensive collaboration that were considered great successes, Uzbek writers were again on their own to pursue their literary and publishing goals. As the war continued they were judged according to these loftier standards. Yet after the heady peak of 1942, Uzbek and the other Central Asian literatures were deemed to have seen only partial success. Despite the talk of transcending their regional scale, Moscow-based writers criticized Central Asian writers for their purportedly outsized interest in history and the negative influence of their classical tradition. More than anything, they bemoaned the writers' inability to create works on contemporary themes in the socialist realist aesthetic. This debate was more than merely a question of genre, but about how Central Asian people and their authors viewed the world, and thus the very translateability of socialist principles. In other ways, the Russian writers' refusal to fully approve Central Asian writers' aesthetic and political mastery was rooted in a classic conundrum of empire, whereby the closer the subject peoples got to self-rule, the further away they seemed to be.

According to the Uzbek writers one of their greatest literary achievements during the war was to "get closer" to the military. The rise of this "military literature" (*oboronnaia literatura*) accompanied the Uzbek soldiers' actual rise through the army ranks. Given that one of the longstanding critiques of Soviet Uzbek literature had been its inability to portray industrial, agricultural, and military affairs with realist detail, this was a development of both aesthetic and political importance. Previously writers did not visit the construction sites, canals, and military bases – or so it was believed. Among Uzbek literary elite, Aibek, Timur Fattakh, Alimdzhan, and Gafur Guliam took celebrated visits to Soviet soldiers at the front. And the SSP Uz worked in concert with the Uzbek TsK to coordinate the visits of writers and creation of songs for Farkhadstroi and the other five hydroelectric stations being constructed in Uzbekistan. As Uzbek literary critic Izzat Sultanov remarked in a February 1943 Presidium, "the war has taught Uzbek literature a lot, it has brought us closer to the army. [Previously] there was no term in Uzbek literature for 'military literature,' we were so far from war. Now all literature has become military." This literary development resulted in new political consciousness: "Uzbeks have become officers, this has never happened before. Uzbeks as a nation (*natsia*) have become aware (*osoznali sebia*) during the war. We need to show Uzbeks in officers' stripes in our literature."<sup>518</sup> By fixing the officers in prose, writers would consolidate these political and mental gains. However, he also noted that Uzbek achievements in prose and playwriting continued to lag.

Sultanov and other Uzbek writers embraced the terms of Soviet literary development just as Madzhidi had in 1935. In August 1942 Alimdzhan had reported that SSP Uz received dozens of poems each day from soldiers on the front. He collected them into a montage and read them aloud on the radio. Some of the poems were good enough to get the writers admitted into the Union *in absentia*. There was also talk of creating a book of Uzbek frontline poets.<sup>519</sup> In *Tashkentskii Al'manakh*, Zelinskii deemed the existence of thirty Uzbek poets in the Red Army as a sign of Uzbeks' growing political maturity.<sup>520</sup> The *Al'manakh* featured at least one entry

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<sup>518</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 6, d. 669, l. 120-121, 126-127.

<sup>519</sup> TsGA RUz f. 2356, op. 1, d. 93, l. 40.

<sup>520</sup> *Tashkentskii Al'manakh*, 247.

from a “front-poet,” a short untitled poem by Davron in which the narrator demonstrated precisely this change in consciousness. Scanning a dark city street he imagines that if it led to his own home he would play with the son and sleep in his soft bed. However, his bed is firm, and “everything around – home and yard – is foreign.” Rather, “revenge calls me, / my heart and hand,” and he vows not to return until he’s entered Berlin and Hitler is dead.<sup>521</sup>

The “front-poets” themselves were well aware of their roles as the enactors and recorders of Uzbek transformation. A battle sketch written by Abdullakhon Khudzhakhonov in December 1944 was the very height of political and aesthetic transformation. The author sent the sketch to his friend – the same Sabirzhan Ibragimov who tracked down Inobad Kholdarova in Andijan – who worked at the AN UzSSR’s Institute of History. Khudzhakhonov wrote that he had already sent several such “episodes” to newspapers but none had been published. He had received word from the *Kizil Uzbekistan* editor Khamid Guliam that his materials had been passed to the radio station, but he was not satisfied, writing: “it seems that the comrades in the editorial office are completely uninterested in giving place in their newspapers to lively, interesting material coming in from the front.”<sup>522</sup>

Khudzhakhonov’s letter was replete with the consciousness that he was creating a historical source. He wrote in both Uzbek and Russian to accelerate its path past the military censors and for the ease of future editors. Apart from his quibble about being published, he maintained a classic, optimistic mien: “I express my thanks for your inquiry about those of us located on the fields of battle. Do not worry about me. I am healthy of body, in good spirit, wonderful mood. In need of neither clothing nor food. [...] I often receive letters from home from my son Akhmedzhon, younger brother Usmandzhon, and daughter Nuri.” He rooted his authority as an author on his own transformation into a soldier: “As far as appearance, you would not recognize me. We’ve become completely different, real military people (*voennye liudi*). Military bearing and the rest.” And he emplotted his writings as the fruits of a break in the action: “[...] we are routing the Hitlerites, not even letting them up to see. We force them to gnaw on the earth with their teeth. In this way, in the minutes of rest, freed from the profession of Abdumuslim \*, I rush to write down what I’ve seen and experienced in battle, so that at least something will be saved in my memory.” His episode was thus a first-hand account that deserved to be published for its truthfulness and freshness. And he provided his own annotation for Abumuslim in a footnote, identifying him as a “powerful, warlike *bogatyr* who led an uprising in Khorasan in the year 127 of the Muslim era in the waning period of the Allavi dynasty.”<sup>523</sup> Khudzhakhonov likely selected the figure of Abumuslim for his social origins. Furthermore, his opposition to the Umayyad Arab invasions in 747 CE was becoming positioned as a proto-national, anti-Islamic movement by Party-minded Uzbek intellectuals.

Khudzhakhonov’s “battle episode” was a developmental stage further than Davron’s poem by its genre alone. As journalistic prose, its worth was premised on its truthful depiction of horrors and proximity to military action – in other words, its realism – rather than lyric mastery. The sketch describes an episode from the Soviet liberation of the Belorussian city Bobruisk on a

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<sup>521</sup> *Tashkentskii Al'manakh*, 35.

<sup>522</sup> AANRUz f. 54, op. 1, d. 3, l. 8ob.

<sup>523</sup> AANRUz f. 54, op. 1, d. 3, l. 8, 8ob. All quotations taken from the Russian version of the letter. The footnote appeared in the same handwriting in both the Russian and Uzbek versions, indicating it was in fact written by Khudzhakhonov and not Ibragimov, who recopied both versions on a typewriter.



particular day (June 30, 1944), with the full names of all the main characters, including the rank of all eight Soviet soldiers (three guards' lieutenants, two guards' sergeant majors, one guards' sergeant, and one guards' corporal – Khudzhakhonov does not give his rank). Of the group only the corporal, Kasymov, has a Central Asian last name. He and Khudzhakhonov become the major characters among the soldiers, but their nationality is not central to the text.

The episode begins with the soldiers entering the decimated city in which the hungry, exhausted inhabitants begin to emerge from their hiding places in the wake of the German exit. Khudzhakhonov, the narrator, stops at a home and asks a boy for water. The boy beckons towards a neighboring house and tells the soldiers that a pair of Germans is hiding in the attic, including “the German who killed my mother and brother.” The soldiers circle the home and Kasymov plays the main role in apprehending them and leading them back on to the street at gunpoint. “Out of the attic appeared two Germans with disgusting physiognomies,” writes Khudzhakhonov, employing the standard iconography of Red Army literature. The child, Sashka, identifies the one who killed his mother, and the soldier immediately turns pale and begins to shake. Although the execution of the soldiers is not shown, it is implied by Kasymov's pronunciation of summary justice. “The hour of your death has come!” Kasymov yells. “Don't fear son! We'll take vengeance on them for your mother and brother. We've come here to defeat these scoundrels and liberate you. The city is cleansed of fascist filth. A red banner is now flying over the city.”

The narration transitions to the old man who has adopted Sashka. He invites the soldiers in to tell the story of how the boy and mother were killed. Khudzhakhonov uses his recollections of the past few months to summarize the German occupation of Belarus: tortures, torments, innocents from many brother nationalities killed, girls' honor defiled, and pillaged homes, possessions, clothes, and food. The German soldiers and their police are “literally dogs.” The prose becomes terse as the man recalls the horrors, replicating human speech. He identifies the German soldier who committed the murders as a Karl Schultz. He then describes young Sashka's family, their neighbors. Their father had been seized by the Germans for assisting the Partisans. A few weeks previously their mother, Olga Kulikova, grew desperate in her search of food. She finally procured some bread and left her three sons at home while she fetched water for tea. In walked the German soldier who seized the bread and demanded eggs, milk, and butter from the boys. Upon her return, Kulikova became hysterical and tried to seize the bread. The German pushed her back against the stove and shot her in the chest. She fell to the ground and he shot her again. “The second shot blew apart her skull. Olga stopped moving. The children went mad with horror.” The German left. The three kids hid behind the stove and the youngest, five-year-old Zhora, would not stop sobbing. “The German went back into the house, the bread under his arm, and shot him. The bullet entered his right eye. And he fell dead beside his mother in a pool of blood.” The old man then described taking the boys into the house with his wife, burying the two bodies under the cover of night, and locking up their house. His narrative ends with the Red Army entering the town. Sashka watches at the window, following the Germans running to and fro, trying to find a hiding place, and winding up in the neighbors' attic.<sup>524</sup>

With this Khudzhakhonov finishes the story and promises more in his next letter. He bids Ibragimov send his greetings to other Uzbek writers, including Aibek and Shams.<sup>525</sup> Although the sketch is not complete, the author has depicted Red Army bravery and heroism firmly within

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<sup>524</sup> AANRUz f. 54, op. 1, d. 3, l. 9-15.

<sup>525</sup> AANRUz f. 54, op. 1, d. 3, l. 15ob.

the aesthetic of realism, with its emphasis on geographical and chronological emplotment and realistic dialogue. It also conforms to political orthodoxy of the day, with the Soviet soldiers as arbiters of spot justice and friends of the meek, and the Germans as inhuman “dogs” and “fascist filth.” Unlike an epic poem or poetic tribute to the Red Army men as timeless heroes, Khudzhakhonov has provided the specifics of character, time, and place. The terseness of language allows the horrors of the Germans and the heroism of Soviets to stand out against the backdrop of the Belarusian town. Khudzhakhonov’s realism performs precisely its job, not as a vessel to show the mundane, everyday business of soldierly life, but to reflect the war’s extraordinary peaks of violence and fortitude.

It is impossible to know why Khudzhakhonov’s realist sketch was not published in *Kizil Uzbekistan*. Perhaps it was considered too violent. It is also hard to know whether it saw the light of publication in any other places. But is nonetheless a valuable reminder that Uzbek soldier-writers at the front imbibed Russian socialist realist stories, techniques, and vocabulary. Whether they realized it or not, this intense exposure to a Russian-language political and aesthetic environment rubbed off on them. Whether the adjudicators of Uzbek literary progress were acquainted with battle sketches like these is also an unknown. At the very least it is clear that Uzbek authors at the front were ably recording their “battle episodes” in recognizably orthodox socialist realist modes.

#### *Measuring Progress Behind the Scenes*

In May 1943 Sovetskii Pisatel’ publishing house returned to Moscow, thus eliminating a major venue for Uzbek authors and signaling a turning point in the literary life of Tashkent. Over the protests of Alimdzhan and other Uzbek writers, Tikhonov explained that the return was inevitable since all the evacuated writers had returned.<sup>526</sup> The return of publishers, writers, and literary guides to Moscow symbolized Uzbek literature’s return to the periphery of Soviet letters.

Yet all that had transpired since the start of the war gave Uzbeks hope that their hospitality and progress would be recognized. In December the Uzbek Commission of the SSP organized a series of “literary evenings” in Moscow for Uzbek authors and their translators to make presentations in front of the capital’s intelligentsia. In genre, they echoed the *Dekada* of the late 1930s. However, as representatives of the now-less-distant Soviet periphery, the events offered a chance for various figures to take stock in Uzbek literature’s wartime growth.

Uzbek literature still required translators and emissaries. The second “evening” was held at an officers’ club and was inaugurated by the Ukrainian poet Maksim Rylskii, who reminded the audience that Uzbeks had been involved in the Soviet recapture of Ukraine. He was followed by Chukovskii, who “gave his impressions of Uzbekistan” and remarked on works by Gafur Guliam, Alimdzhan, Aibek, Iashen, and Sultanov. Then the Uzbek writers gave brief readings in Uzbek, and Penkovskii, Derzhavin, and Somova read their translations. The evening concluded with performances by Khalima Nasyrova and other singers.

As reported by *Pravda Vostoka*, the highlight of the evening was Il’ia Ehrenburg – hardly an expert in Uzbek literature – whose address brought his national caricature of the Uzbeks to its full fruition. If in his article of October 1942 the Uzbeks primarily functioned as the dark-skinned foil to the Russian soldiers, in December 1943 the Uzbeks signified the ultimate transformation from peaceful to militant. He recounted meeting an Uzbek named Astanov in Belarus who was the first of his unit to cross the Sozh river in an attack that routed the Germans.

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<sup>526</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 6, d. 669, l. 129-131.

Before the war Astanov was a teacher in Tashkent. “He read children tender, wise *ghazals*. Then he took up a gun.” He polished the cliché: “Uzbeks used to be a peaceful people. They raised gardens. Loved subtle poetry and complex ornament, they knew that no face is the same as another, and that it is difficult to grow a beautiful peach.” Uzbek poetry also changed accordingly. It used to be “the poetry of paintings and singers.” Now he was proud to salute the poets who had “given their hearts to the difficult matter of defending the motherland.”<sup>527</sup> Innately poetic, their love of verse seemed to be the lone constant in this trip from garden to frontline, East to West. It is perhaps no accident that a writer who was most removed from Uzbek literature could be so unambiguously positive. Other judges were more critical.

A report from the TsK VKP(b) UzSSR to Moscow put the Uzbeks’ triumph into a more rigorous perspective. V. Nepomnin, a member of the Uzbek TsK agitprop committee who had coordinated the Uzbek writers’ mobilization to Farkhadstroi, considered Uzbekistan’s wartime “cultural construction” to be full of “unquestionably massive achievements,” especially in elementary and secondary education, the rise of local national cadres in the technical intelligentsia, and the growth of Soviet Uzbek literature, theater, and music. However, he noted that certain “unhealthy tendencies” in the cultural sphere failed to keep pace with economic advances:

Given Uzbekistan used to be exceptionally culturally backward and the presence even today of patriarchal-feudal vestiges in the daily life of a series of districts we must admit that in the cultural sphere there are still serious shortcomings, especially disproportionate to the development of agriculture, especially during the war years.

Any admission of “patriarchal-feudal vestiges” during the war era was noteworthy for its candor. In Marxist terms he essentially diagnosed that the base had outpaced the superstructure. As Uzbekistan’s technical specialists grew more numerous, its writers were not depicting them or writing for them. He added that apart from the handful of writers celebrated in Moscow, Uzbek writers had not contributed much of artistic significance during the war. Furthermore, even many of the gifted writers – such as Alimdzhan and Sheikhzade – chose historical subjects, many with an “unhealthy idealization” of the past. Meanwhile, the writers’ milieu was characterized by a certain “isolation.” Well-known writers like Sabir Abdulla and Chusti did not know Russian.<sup>528</sup> In the weight he gave to Uzbek writing on historical themes, Nepomnin thus came to the opposite conclusion to Zelinskii in the *Al’manakh*. For him, works based on Uzbek historical epics represented dereliction of their political roles rather than avenues of patriotism.

Mikhail Sheverdin, the only remaining Slav in the SSP Uz Presidium and a self-appointed informant for the TsK VKP(b) UzSSR, offered his characteristically alarmist perspective. He reported to Moscow on delays or cancellations in the printings of several books by Sovetskii Pisatel’ and Uzgosizdat (Uzbekistan State Publishing House) in 1943. This report was ecumenically critical of both Uzbek and evacuated writers and demonstrated the suffocating and often contradictory scrutiny faced by writers who hoped to be published. As a rare Party member in Tashkent’s writers’ milieu, Sheverdin was particularly vigilant against Uzbek nationalism and the harmful naivety of the evacuated writers. For instance, Izzat Sultanov’s introduction to a volume of Uigun’s poems praised the author’s “constant striving to find the

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<sup>527</sup> *Pravda Vostoka*, “Večera uzbekskoi literatury v Moskve: vystuplenie pisatel’ia Il’i Erenburga,” December 15, 1943.

<sup>528</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 238, l. 134-137.

most precise lyrical form for expressing his feelings and sensations.” Even though all Uzbek writers were encouraged to innovate, Sheverdin interpreted this praise as support for formalism. A (very) close read of Uzgosizdat’s compilation of Mukimi’s poetry found elements of “pan-Islamist agitation” and nationalism, which were originally left in by Tikhonov, the editor. However, as Sheverdin noted, “characteristically, when the book of Mukimi was published by Uzfan in 1942 in Uzbek, all of these crude distortions were left in.” Sheverdin also found that evacuated writers had imperfect mastery of local themes and the subtleties of local politics. For instance, in his introduction to a collection of poems by Sheikhzade, Abram Efros wrote that his father was a “pureblooded Azerbaijani Turk” and that in his work the “streams of Western, Russian, and Eastern, Turkish clashed and competed.” Of course, Sheikhzade’s biography needed to be finessed into a purely Uzbek story, and the competing strands of Eastern and Western influences were supposed to mix harmoniously. The book *Sad Zhizni (Garden of Life)* by poetess Lidiia Bat’ was banned for “idealizing” the era of Navoi, ignoring its true class dynamics, and displaying a “complete ignorance” of the daily life and history of the Uzbek people. Edi Ognetsvet’s poem “Rodnye khaty” was suspended for its “cheap exotica,” testament that the author “did not know Uzbekistan.” However, the lines in question were not discernibly different from the work of Ehrenburg or Tolstoi: “amusing themselves in a *chaikhana*,/ pouring a full cup,/ at the first sheaf of wheat / with a friendly cry of *khop!* (Rus: *ladno*, Eng: “okay”)” Other books were pulled for basic political transgressions, such as Andor Tabor’s depiction of the Hungarian people as Hitler’s innocent victims rather than his allies, inadequately heroic depictions of the Soviet troops, or caricatured portrayals of the German enemy.<sup>529</sup> Thus under the surface of the successful collaborations between Uzbek and evacuated writers and the newcomers’ embrace of local themes lingered the Party’s familiar political anxieties.

Sheverdin showed that the Party lacked trust in the Uzbek intelligentsia after the departure of the Russian writers, an opinion all the more important since his was the only such document to reach the Central Committee in Moscow. His twenty-page magnum opus summarized the influences of war and evacuation on all of Uzbekistan’s creative fields, including theater, visual art, architecture, music, and literature, and apparently also sought to prove his worth as their man on the ground. Sheverdin provided a paranoid account of the Uzbek writers, emphasizing their purported nationalist pasts and their limited achievements. He reminded the TsK that before the war the Uzbek Writers’ Union had “never shown itself as a creative organization. It was an isolated group of Uzbek poets and prose writers with old connections, including with the nationalist organization ‘Red Quill.’” These writers included the SSP Uz’s most visible success stories, including Alimdzhhan, Aibek, Uigun, Aidyn, Izzat Sultanov, Mirtimir, and Timur Fattakh, and the “reconstruction of the majority of these people has gone extremely slowly.” With a worldview unchanged since 1937, Sheverdin recited a few telling episodes. Sultanov had written an article with a “nationalist spirit,” in which he advanced the “theory” that “what is good for Europeans (Russians), is not always good for Uzbeks.” And during the showing of the film *Chelovek s Ruzh'em* (1938), which depicted a common worker’s unexpected interaction with Lenin in disguise, he was alleged to have reported: “it will not reach the Uzbek people. Lenin is too simple, and in the Uzbek understanding he is an inaccessibly giant figure.”<sup>530</sup> Of course, the issue of Uzbek popular tastes was a key issue, but only Sheverdin

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<sup>529</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 238, l. 131-133.

<sup>530</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 238, l. 152.

sought an explanation in nationalism, which kept this concern alive in the TsK in Moscow, if not among other Soviet writers.

Sheverdin also downplayed Uzbek literary achievements and denigrated the work of the SSP Uz. Part of his critique betrayed a seeming cultural antipathy – “almost all poets of Uzbekistan met the war with tearful jeremiads – the *dzhigit* goes to the front, anguish breaks the hearts of his family, all cry, etc.” – while ignoring many other poems. His other issue was organizational. He pointed out that apart from Alimdzhan, a handful of other noteworthy poets joined the Party only in 1943, and only at the behest of the TsK UzSSR. And he alleged that the SSP Uz had produced almost no new cadres in recent years, which he blamed on the “isolation” of Alimdzhan’s leadership. He claimed that the “creative work” in the Union had stalled and the genre sections had stopped meeting. And he described the republic’s theaters as suffering from a “sharp famine of repertoire” because none of the war-time plays on military themes (*Polet Orla* (*Flight of the Eagle*), *Kurban Umarov*, *Kuchkar Turdyev*, *Smert’ Okkupantam* (*Death to the Occupiers*)) demonstrated enough quality to remain in theaters. He concluded the report with short biographies of twenty-five of the major members of the Union (including himself), each with a terse mention of their strengths and an elaborate recitation of their weaknesses (excluding his own), citing factors like nationalist views, a focus on historical rather than contemporary subjects, lack of popularity, and delays in output.<sup>531</sup> For example, he recognized that Gafur Guliam was, “without argument, a highly talented” poet and prose writer, many of whose poems had turned into folksongs. However, his poems “gave too much attention to the theme of ‘grief and separation,’” which “often did not mobilize but produced the opposite effect,” though they were always published in the Uzbek-language press. And though Sheverdin praised his partially-published autobiographical story *Ozornik* (*The Rascal*) and his knowledge of Uzbek classical literature which accounted for his election to the newly formed Uzbek Academy of Sciences, his “bohemian mood and connections” negatively affected his output and was reflected by his lack of training the junior writers.<sup>532</sup> Sheverdin was well-acquainted with the writers and their material, offering at times subtle critiques and detailed observations. His document, which depicted untransformed writers with little Party-mindedness and residues of nationalism, was the result of viewing the Uzbek Writers’ Union with strict Stalinist categories. In Russia, after all, those with suspect political or class backgrounds had been more fully culled in the 1930s. That so many Uzbek writers with former ties to Red Quill still inhabited the Union was impermissible in his eyes. However, as he noted, there were not enough junior writers to replace them. More than any other effect, Sheverdin’s letter cut the Uzbek achievements down to size and allowed those in the Moscow Party apparatus to continue viewing them as untrustworthy group in need of vigilant observation.

Khamid Alimdzhan took the floor at the SSP Presidium in Moscow on December 18 to provide his own prospective on the work of Uzbek authors during the war. Unlike Ehrenburg’s broad strokes or Sheverdin’s mean dismissals, he built a positive and comprehensive assessment, using it to make demands on behalf of the SSP Uz in the center of Moscow. Relying on themes of growth, loyalty, and friendly sacrifice for their brother writers, Alimdzhan staked new claims for Uzbek literature that implied a shift in the cultural hierarchies within the Friendship of the Peoples order. Like Sultanov, he considered the greatest literary achievement to be military literature and a crop of poet-soldiers, neither of which had existed before. Like Zelinskii, he

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<sup>531</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 238, l. 152, 154-159.

<sup>532</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 238, l. 156.

emphasized the organic way that Uzbek people viewed their epics as playing out in the present. “When people left for the front, the people (*narod*) appealed to these heroes, and folk poets (*narodnye poety*) told the soldiers that Kara Ra... seized the land of Chenlibel, threatened us with 5,000 men, but Ger Ogly defeated them all.”<sup>533</sup> He noted in gratitude that the war had given writers such as himself a reason to study their own history and epics, and instill in soldiers “the spirit of national pride.” Further, he agreed with others that Soviet Uzbek literature’s best works had been created during the last three years of war, citing Gafur Guliam, Sultanov, Sheikhzade, Aibek and others, as well as the work of frontline journalists, editors, and front-poets, including Davron, who had died in battle. And he admitted that at the beginning of the war many works retained a “superficial” character.<sup>534</sup>

Just as important for Alimdzhhan was the rising Uzbek presence in Soviet letters and its intermingling with other literatures: “Our literature came out on a wide stage in front of all of Soviet literature, and in front of all the Soviet people.” The evacuation had accelerated the translation of Uzbek classics, folk songs, and modern authors into Russian and other languages. In the other direction, the evacuees helped translate critical Russian classics into Uzbek for the first time, such as a three-volume collection of Lermontov, as well as antifascist, Belarusian, and Ukrainian authors. And the presence of *Sovetskii Pisatel’* had facilitated the publication of over twenty Uzbek authors in translation, plus the large anthologies, which facilitated the “literary evenings” and future *dekadas*.<sup>535</sup> These ties had the chance to grow further because evacuation had lit a new passion for Uzbek culture. Zhirmunskii, Zelinskii, Aleksandr Deich (1893-1972), Mikola Tereshchenko and others became “hot patriots and propagandists” of Uzbek literature. Each one “fell in love” with the literature and began to learn the language, and each was at work on a book about Uzbek literature. As a measure of its entrance onto a new stage, Alimdzhhan noted that “at literary evenings we [now] speak as if before our own public, which was impossible to say two years ago, when they would confuse our last names, now not one mistake.”<sup>536</sup> With its writers now well known in the capital and by the whole “Soviet people,” and the center’s writers living and falling in love with the periphery, the very essence of these categories seemed to be dissolving.

In the long term, Alimdzhhan hoped to “liquidate the isolation of Uzbek writers and make Uzbek literature the property of all peoples of the Soviet Union and vice versa,” a process that

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<sup>533</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 15, d. 638, l. 4. The *narodnyi poet* is giving a shorthand summary of the Turkic and Persian epic that in Uzbek is usually spelled “Ger Ogly.” According to the story, Ger Ogly, or “son of the blind man,” flees the kingdom of Khasan, the cruel ruler who blinded his father, and sets up an ideal new state, Chenlibel. In one of the iterations, Khasan attacks and is routed defeated by Ger Ogly. The stenographer, who records the hero’s name as “Garull,” was unable to keep track of the foreign names, so “Kara Ra...” remains a mystery.

<sup>534</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 15, d. 638, l. 5-7.

<sup>535</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 15, d. 638, l. 7.

<sup>536</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 15, d. 638, l. 8-9. Titles include: A.I. Deich, *Abrar Khidoiatov* (Moskva-Leningrad: “Iskusstvo,” 1948); V.M. Zhirmunskii, Kh.T. Zarifov, *Uzbekskii narodnyi geroicheskii epos* (Moskva: “Goslitizdat,” 1947); Mikola Tereshchenko, *Tashkentskaia Tetrad’* (Tashkent: “Gosizdat UzSSR,” 1945). Among Tereshchenko’s poems was “Pesnia i oruzhie,” dedicated to the memory of the Uzbek poet-soldier Davron, and short biographical tributes to major and minor figures from Central Asian literary, political, and religious history, such as Navoi, Babur, Mashrab, Yassavi, Liutfi, Turdi, Gul’khani, Uvaisi, Mukimi, Furkat. and Khamza.

would be aided with more translations into Russian and other brotherly languages. With these goals in mind, he voiced new demands in keeping with Uzbekistan's profile in Soviet letters. Most importantly, the SSP Uz did not have its own Uzbek-language literary magazine, which meant that the Uzbek public was essentially "without literature." In fact, he noted that writers were primarily published in Russian, which was inaccessible to the overwhelming majority of the republic, who continued to share poems orally and through song. A journal would help grow the profession of literary criticism, and even neighboring Turkmenia had its own. Alimdzhān also sought the end of the "indifference" of Moscow's journals and publishing houses for Uzbek literature, which explained why Aibek's celebrated biographical novel, *Alisher Navoi*, could remain unpublished for more than three years, or why a 3-4 page booklet of Uzbek poets designed to be released during the Moscow "evenings" was delayed for over two years. He demanded that Goslitizdat and Sovetskii Pisatel' make firm commitments to publish Uzbek classics, folklore, and modern literature in the coming year. In the same vein, Alimdzhān requested assistance in putting on Uzbek plays in "central theaters" and noted that the only theater to have ever done so was Mikhoels' production of *Khamza* in evacuation Tashkent. He also hoped for budgetary expansion to open a new branch in Samarkand and the administrative leverage to remove five writers from the ranks of the army, or at least to remove them from combat units into front newspapers.<sup>537</sup>

Alimdzhān's list of requests was more than just a collection of petty gripes. He stood on behalf of his constituents and before his superiors, appealing for administrative assistance, budgetary increases, and a different unofficial social contract within the Soviet Writers' Union. He essentially argued the war had *de facto* eliminated literary peripheries, which needed to be reflected institutionally and in attitudes. Hence equal supports for creative outlets and equal exposure in the heart of the country. Extended further, his argument about Uzbekistan's proper role in the Soviet literary firmament threatened to destabilize the hierarchy that underpinned Friendship of the Peoples, with its lone elder brother and many younger brothers. And so, in concluding his speech, Alimdzhān affirmed Friendship both to leverage his demands and to reassure his patrons: "Practicing (*osushchestvliia*) Friendship of the Peoples, our writers should develop their work in this attitude. During the course of the war the Uzbek people showed its worth. I think the Uzbek people demonstrated how it strengthened this friendship in its actions – the kolkhoz peasantry, workers, intelligentsia, Uzbek soldiers together with peoples of the whole Soviet Union, hand in hand joining the fight against fascism and in this atmosphere Uzbek literature will go further and create beautiful pieces."<sup>538</sup> The Uzbek people earned its reappraisal by "practicing" Friendship in word and deed, and their literature would continue to develop in this vein.

However, Alimdzhān was also advancing a different understanding of "Friendship of the Peoples." Nowhere in his speech did he mention Uzbek gratefulness to their Russian guides and guests, unlike Iusupov's reverential speech in Tashkent the year before. Rather, Uzbek writers themselves had risen to the occasion demanded by war. The logical analog to the removal of peripheries and the labels of "backward" or "formerly backward" was, of course, the removal of guides and thus the Elder Brother. However, although Alimdzhān was destabilizing the Friendship of the Peoples model, he was not renouncing it. Instead, he advanced an alternative model, capturing the collegial, empathetic, and friendly inter-ethnic relations that, in their best

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<sup>537</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 15, d. 638, l. 10-12.

<sup>538</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 15, d. 638, l. 12-13.

cases, had seemed to spring up naturally, like the adoption campaigns. This was friendship without hierarchy; a popular value “practiced” in Tashkent and reflected in its literature. This Uzbek or Tashkent model of Friendship emphasized lateral relations without the patronizing overtones of guidance or seniority, hence the pride with which Alimdzhhan and others spoke of it.

Alimdzhhan’s audience – which included several Uzbek counterparts and Central Asia’s literary emissaries – largely agreed. The audience unanimously approved a new journal (*Sharq Iulduzi* or “Star of the East,” began publishing in 1946) and praised Uzbek literature’s growth and heightened profile. Skosyrev pronounced that indeed, “in the last two years Uzbek literature stopped being only for Uzbeks, and entered the all-Union arena.” Tikhonov added that “Uzbek literature stands tall, without [needing] any discounts.” And of the relationships with Uzbek authors, he noted: “at first there was a certain lack of teamwork, but some of the Russian authors made it so. Later this disappeared. We lived amicably, worked in common, and we didn’t have any friction.” Izzat Sultanov added several more examples of inter-ethnic collaboration in theater, and noted that by “communing with Uzbek culture, representatives of Russian culture also picked something up for themselves.” He also offered the only negative comment, that Uzbek literature had not produce a single worthy play about the war.<sup>539</sup>

Publishing looked to improve. Tikhonov announced that he had formalized relations with central publishing houses. Goslitizdat would handle the anthologies while Sovetskii Pisatel’ would publish modern Uzbek literature, and he mentioned a few agreements already in place. A. Deev (likely representing Sovetskii Pisatel’) promised to publish Aibek, Guliam, and Alimdzhhan. Yet Skosyrev responded that Uzbek authors still needed to get concrete commitments in order to be published. Even the star Uzbek writers were reliant on their Moscow advocates in order to be published in Moscow.

Only Zelinskii, who was indeed a “patriot” of Uzbek literature, reasserted the orthodox vision of Friendship of the Peoples, reminding everyone that before the war, “Uzbek literature was differentiated by a certain isolation from Russian life.” All of its greatest successes had come in the last three years, during the period of “intimate connection with Russian literature.” He recognized the tremendous strides of Uzbek authors, but reminded that they still did not know Blok, much less Tiutchev, and there were still some “feudal” characteristics that needed to die out. They still had a more growing to do.

The audience did concede its former “indifference” and the need to redistribute resources and redraw the Soviet literary map. SSP Secretary Aleksandr Fadeev concluded the discussion by acceding to many of Alimdzhhan’s requests. He held that Uzbek writers deserved to be published in book and journal form because through the war years they had become a “big nation (*natsia*),” whose creative output had turned into the “big literature of a big people (*narod*).” He reminded the audience, though, that a new journal would have to be approved by the TsK in Moscow. Further, he would try his limited powers of persuading theaters, and hoped he could convince the army to put the Uzbek writers into newspapers, though he could not arrange for their recall. And he vowed to find some Litfond money for the Samarkand branch.<sup>540</sup> More than just promises and plaudits, the SSP Presidium essentially acknowledged Alimdzhhan’s program and his complaints, though admitting a broad shift in priorities, or acknowledging the source of previous inequities, would have been politically unpalatable.

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<sup>539</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 15, d. 638, l. 14-26.

<sup>540</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 15, d. 638, l. 30-31.



In short, this was not exactly the British granting Indian home rule, but within the narrow literary world of the Soviet empire, it represented a significant reordering of the Uzbeks' status. Alimdzhan's speech implied that Friendship was not just an important ideological tool in the war effort, but a source of leverage to renegotiate patron-client relationships with the Soviet center. It was also a first step in enunciating a new model of Friendship of the Peoples, one which emphasized lateral relationships rather than vertical ones. Friendship, like socialism and communism, was a concept that would change with time.

*The Stalin Prize: another form of assessment*

One of the triumphs of Uzbek literature's new profile was Gafur Guliam's selection for the Stalin Prize (second degree) for 1943, making him the first Central Asian writer to receive the award.<sup>541</sup> Immediately following Alimdzhan's speech the SSP Presidium discussed the three Uzbek nominations – Aibek's literary biography, *Navoi*; Alimdzhan's historical play, *Mukanna*; and Guliam's poetry collection, *Idu s Vostoka (I Come from the East)*. Yet another mid-war referendum on Uzbek literary progress, the discussion demonstrated the precarious position of Uzbek literature of the era. Even when their works seemed to be politically and aesthetically inscrutable, Uzbek writers could always be framed as aberrant.

Aibek's novel was considered one of the primary achievements of Central Asian prose, a realist historical biography in the spirit of Aleksei Tolstoi. It tells the story of Alisher Navoi, the progenitor of Uzbek literature and, in a way, the Uzbek nation, beginning with his role as a statesman in 16<sup>th</sup> century Herat.<sup>542</sup> In December 1943, few of the assembled authors would have been able to read it because it only existed in Uzbek – to Alimdzhan's frustration. Sergei Borodin pronounced it and Aibek's earlier novel, *Sviashchennaia Krov' (Sacred Blood)* the most significant achievements in Central Asian literature. And it won the Stalin Prize in 1946, more by virtue of what it represented, pegging Uzbek national history to a sanctioned figure, as Skosyrev noted, it was a "direct answer to the fascist 'theory' that we didn't even have a history." (Note Skosyrev's use of "our" includes the Uzbeks.) By depicting Navoi among figures like Ulugbek and Bobur, Aibek showed him "not as an exception but a direct result and a direct development."<sup>543</sup> The novel's setting in present-day Afghanistan may have been another factor for its eventual victory, as it was both national history and a political statement; a shot across the bow, emphasizing the shared literary, religious, and political history with Afghanistan, which the Soviet Union began to court again in earnest after the war.

But support for *Navoi* was not unanimous. Even if its genre and politics aligned with the needs of the Soviet state, it was not considered an unblemished piece of art. The following year at a discussion about the classical heritage in Central Asian literature, Petr Slietov (who spent much of the war in Tajikistan), cited the novel as a primary culprit of "carrying the traces of the folkloric and classical tradition" into a modern novel. The problem was that the novel was the biography of a courtier and military commander rather than a poet, with his creative process and great works almost invisible in the work. Slietov believed that "Russian-European writers"

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<sup>541</sup> The Stalin Prizes for 1943 and 1944 were not awarded until 1946. Two Uzbek-based Russian novelists won the award in 1942: Vasily Ian, *Chingiskhan*, and Sergei Borodin, *Dmitri Donskoi*.

<sup>542</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 15, d. 638, l. 10. Alimdzhan said that it had "laid around for several years" without being published. The first Uzbek edition was published in 1944. The first Russian translation (by Penkovskii) appeared in 1946.

<sup>543</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 15, d. 638, l. 32-35.

looked at literary biographies differently. One could not, after all, imagine a work on the life of Pushkin without mention of “Eugene Onegin” or “Boris Godunov.”<sup>544</sup> This seeming deviation from a “Russian-European” maxim did not affect the novel’s consideration for the prize, but it demonstrated how narrow genre specifications entered Russian writers’ assessments of Uzbek literature.

Alimdzhhan’s play *Mukanna* was also nominated, both because of its patriotic subject and because it was a rare and worthy Uzbek play. Since the 1920s, playwriting had been Uzbek literature’s developmental weak spot. Sultanov had called the war-time decision of several poets to become playwrights a “joyful development.”<sup>545</sup> As we have seen, Russians were of two minds on Central Asian historical works. They were celebrated for promoting patriotism, but everyone would have preferred that a fighting spirit be inculcated with modern, local, socialist subjects. *Mukanna* demonstrated the thorniness of historical themes. According to Alimdzhhan, the leader of the failed 8<sup>th</sup> century uprising against the Abbasid caliphate in Mawarannahr was a misunderstood popular hero who, because history is written by the victors, had entered the chronicles as a “sorcerer and fraud” who sought to win followers through magic. To Alimdzhhan, *Mukanna*’s example had a powerful endurance, for when Chingis Khan’s armies invaded the region in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the people had “his name on their lips.” However, *Mukanna* was a complex figure for a Marxist national republic. The messianic leader of a schismatic group combining elements of Islam, Zoroastrianism, and other faiths, *Mukanna* was devoted to avenging the assassination of his former commander and spiritual mentor, Abu-Muslim, to eliminate Abbasid power, and to “inaugurate a final era of paradisial bliss” for his followers.<sup>546</sup> He went by the derisive nickname *Mukanna*, “veiled” or “covered by a sheet” in Arabic, because he wore a veil, supposedly to shield his followers from the divine radiance of his face after conversing with God. Although some of his followers were Turks, the ancestors of the Uzbeks were still several centuries from entering the region, while *Mukanna* himself was a Persian-speaker from Sogd (in present day Tajikistan). After waging his insurrection for at least ten years, his fortress was surrounded and his followers routed. According to legend, he killed his remaining courtiers and wives before killing himself by jumping into his fireplace, not leaving behind an earthly trace, to return again in divine form.

Turning a religious figure into a politically appropriate wartime hero was quite an accomplishment, and aided by the play’s high aesthetic and production qualities. According to Sultanov it was the highest form of Uzbek-language playwriting and a first-rate staging at the Khamza Theater, under the supervision of Mikhoels. The discussants believed that *Mukanna*’s own beliefs were subsumed naturally under the mantle of popular revolt against the Arabs – and thus also Islam. Sultanov summarized it as a “strong, poetic depiction of a folk (*narodnyi*) hero against the Arabic yoke in Central Asia.” Aleksandr Deich praised the “religious side” of the play, depicting “fire-worshippers versus Arabs,” because “in wearing the veil he is carrying in himself the image of God. His god is his people and freedom. [...] This topic sounds good today as the fascists are tormenting all of Europe.”<sup>547</sup> Alimdzhhan sacralized the nation while removing *Mukanna*’s theological content. In other words, religious in form, national in content, and not unlike the sacred role of the Motherland that was voiced throughout the Soviet Union. The play’s

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<sup>544</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 6, d. 704, l. 35-36.

<sup>545</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 15, d. 638, l. 23.

<sup>546</sup> See <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/moqanna> (last accessed March 27, 2015).

<sup>547</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 15, d. 638, l. 41, 43.

anti-Islamic elements were clearly recognized by audiences. In a separate testimony, Sheverdin reported that older viewers grumbled, cursed, and even demonstratively walked out of performances. They complained that “the Great Stalin has permitted Allah, but here they revile Allah” and that “They curse God, but why they do so, we don’t understand. Rotten play.” Sheverdin also explained that the theater’s attempts to soften the play’s antireligious line were unsuccessful because it would have contradicted the play’s “basic tenor” which, he said, Alimdzhan had received directly from Iusupov himself.<sup>548</sup> Others expressed concern that the main character committed suicide, and especially by self-immolation.<sup>549</sup> As Trenev pointed out, Mukanna called himself “the people,” the expression of their will, and their leader, but when he was encircled he chose to light himself on fire. Alimdzhan explained that he had led the revolt for seven or fourteen years straight, and that when he was hopelessly surrounded and under siege he committed suicide, but with the vow that he would return. This was enough to convince Fadeev, who pronounced the play a “romantic work in the Schillerian style. Mukanna, the bearer of freedom. [...] a Jean of Arc, bravely fighting for his people.”<sup>550</sup> In this way the self-fashioned half-divinity who committed suicide was turned into an anti-Islamic hero for the Uzbek national republic fighting the Germans.

Amazingly, purported cowardice and theology were not the most problematic aspects for the jury. They were more concerned with the orthodoxy of Marxist history: was Mukanna’s popular revolt waged against a higher culture? As Fadeev pointed out, it would be a mistake for a play set in Vladimir’s Russia to show a national uprising against Christianity. He wanted to know whether “the Uzbek culture was higher or lower [than Arabic].”<sup>551</sup> Although 8<sup>th</sup> century Mawarannahr was a mosaic of peoples, the question would be more accurately posed as whether the higher culture belonged to Muslim Arabs or the Zoroastrian (though syncretic) Persian-speaking Sogdians and their Turkic-speaking minority. Fadeev believed Islam was the higher culture and did not want to violate the “Marxist/Leninist/Stalinist” principle of historical progress, but was willing to make an exception for this “romantic” and “distinctive” figure, noting that one could conquer the Africans but still sympathize with them, and that James Fenimore Cooper could likewise celebrate “Indian” culture. Alimdzhan, Aibek, and Sultanov held firm that the “Uzbeks” were the higher culture, that the “revolt against Islam” was politically sanctioned, and was more than just a romantic or quixotic episode. Aibek attested that during the mid-8<sup>th</sup> century the Arabs were not yet the bearers of a higher culture and alphabet, but merely “evil and exploitation.” Like Chingis Khan, they were “nomadic barbarians” who

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<sup>548</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 238, l. 146.

<sup>549</sup> Self-immolation as a method of suicide had deep roots in Central Asia, where fire’s sacred cleansing qualities were originally rooted in Zoroastrian theology. Ironically, female self-immolation was on the rise in conservative rural Uzbekistan and was a concern for Uzbek Communists. See Chapter 5.

<sup>550</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 15, d. 638, l. 42-44.

<sup>551</sup> Turks began arriving in the region in significant numbers in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, though speakers of a language akin to modern Uzbek only arrived with the Shaibanid invasion in 1510. The Uzbek SSR’s national history was being codified during World War II at the Academy of Sciences in Tashkent, where it appointed the later Timurids of the 15<sup>th</sup> century as the first Uzbeks. For Alimdzhan, the projection of “Uzbek” onto the Mukanna revolt reflected the freedom of this era to search Central Asian history for national origins. Fadeev was unfamiliar with the region’s history and took his cues from the Uzbek writers.

conquered higher, agricultural civilizations, and only emerging as civilized under Persian influence. But Borodin offered the corrective that carried the day. Although it was understandable that Alimdzhhan sympathized with “his people,” an objective assessment of the Arab influence on Central Asia revealed a “progressive” influence which brought governmental organization, literacy, schools, and agriculture that remained. “It was correct that the Uzbek people fought against the [Arab] state, but incorrect that they fought against the Arabic culture.” In this way Mukanna had two options: be embraced by the Soviet cannon as one of history’s “romantic” losers (like the Indians and Africans) or languish on the wrong side of history.

Fadeev’s other discomfort stemmed from another bit of Soviet orthodoxy: the unassailable peak of realism. Fadeev declared that the play “created a romantic mood” by leaving the hero’s deeds off stage and that he “wanted to see something closer to realism.” Others agreed. Sultanov came to Alimdzhhan’s defense, explaining that one of the “peculiarities of our Uzbek literature” was the large role played by “rhetoric and declamation.” He described it as a “culture of the word (*kul’tura slova*),” and not unlike the Romanticism of Schiller. Therefore Uzbek poems often included long dialogues between two heroes that might seem “uninteresting to Russian readers, but is very interesting to Uzbeks.” He reminded them further that the play was a “dramatized poem,” which accounted for moments unsuited to the stage. Although he acknowledged that Alimdzhhan might need to better acquaint himself with playwriting devices, they should consider Uzbek “specificity” and the places that “our viewers greet with delight.” Fadeev, the secretary of the SSP, was unexpectedly won over: “Sometimes you get so tired of realism that I would read Schiller with pleasure. And I am the one who wrote the article ‘Down with Schiller’ at one point!”<sup>552</sup> Fadeev’s two reactions were contradictory – one as an orthodox realist, the other enjoying romanticism. And they revealed his sense of Central Asia as a separate cultural space, a place where aberrations from realism could exist – for both writers and readers to appreciate – but could not be recognized for a central prize. It is thus no surprise that Alimdzhhan’s *Mukanna* was not nominated for a Stalin Prize.

Gafur Guliam was ultimately nominated and won the Stalin Prize for poetry in 1943. In a sense, the Uzbek Maiakovskii was a shoe-in. His compilation published that year, *Idu s Vostoka (I come from the East)*, included poems that directly addressed the political issues of Uzbekistan, the Soviet Union, and the whole world, in clean, evocative verse that was easily translated. Politically and aesthetically he was at the center of the Soviet Central Asian zeitgeist. Writing the book’s introduction, Zelinskii brought these lessons their climax: “what comes from the East is the light of Leninist-Stalinist truth, the light of humanism and love for our miraculous multilingual and multinational Motherland and steely hate for the Hitlerite cannibals who have encroached upon her territory. From the East comes the light of Friendship of the Peoples and belief in the victory over our enemies. That’s today’s East.”

However, not all those assembled were as convinced that Guliam had captured the “Leninist-Stalinist truth.” Still several years before the Doctors’ Plot, Borodin thought that the poem “I am a Jew” had a “certain cosmopolitan tendency.” The portion of the poem in question had been elevated in Zelinskii’s introduction as the very height of poignancy: “I am/ a representative / of the human race, / my nationality is/ human!/ Races and classes, / will disappear from earth/ but I will remain forever./ My soul / doesn’t know/ the drug of religion.

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<sup>552</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 15, d. 638, l. 42-48. In 1929 Fadeev gave a speech in defense of realism at a Plenum of RAPP, the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers, that was later published in *Literaturnaia Gazeta* and *Na Literaturnom Postu*.

/My body / doesn't know/ the illness of poison./ I'm a citizen/ of the great/ Soviet world.” Guliam's renunciation of narrow nationality and embrace of a larger Soviet or even human identity was an organic outgrowth of Friendship's empathy and its analogous opposition to Nazism. His conflation of “Soviet citizen” and “Soviet world” embodied the great optimism of *Sovetskii narod* as a model of integration. However, elevating the individual or humanity – and not the nation – as the base unit of identity inherently contradicted the Soviet political order. Fadeev picked up on this, noting that “our humanism is not conditional, humanity grows out of the national pride of a people. The place where humanism rejects the nation is politically incorrect.” However, Fadeev was willing to credit this “cosmopolitanism” to a translation error and proposed it be translated again and nonetheless be nominated for the Stalin Prize.<sup>553</sup> Ultimately, Guliam's poetry was elevated for the award because it was deemed both authentically Uzbek and the most Maiakovskii-like, or the most Russian. Simultaneously, it reflected important Soviet values, especially humanity and Friendship, which were vital not only to persecuted European Jews but to lubricate social relations in Soviet society.

These discussions anticipated more pointed debates about genre and the nature of national character in Soviet literature. Aibek and Alimdžhan's politics were correct but their form was deemed lacking, while Guliam's form was impeccable even if his politics were glancingly incorrect. Yet his devotion and fluency to a form that seemed Russian was in a way just as important as the politics of his poetry. Of course not all Uzbek writers could be Maiakovskii, and Guliam's success was hardly representative. The December 1943 Stalin Prize discussions led to more rigorous debates the next year about whether it was feasible to expect Central Asian writers to master a European and/or Russian aesthetic – that of realism.

#### *Literary Tajikistan: the Failed Transformation*

If Uzbek literature represented the possibilities of transformation, neighboring Tajikistan represented the other extreme: stubborn backwardness and unbridgeable distance from Moscow. Writers' Union correspondences reveal deep frustration from Moscow's representatives to affect literary change. It is worth briefly examining the Tajik case to see what went wrong in order to put Tashkent's success in perspective. First, Tajikistan and its capital, Stalinabad, were far less developed than Tashkent, both economically and culturally. If Uzbek Soviet literature was built upon the basis of a local intelligentsia, this foundation was missing from a city that had been a village two decades previously. Second, Tajikistan's distance and isolation from the center, and even from Tashkent, were more pronounced. And third, the contingent of evacuated writers was much smaller, with much less social and cultural capital than the Tashkent contingent. They fulminated against the cadre of Tajik writers as unwelcoming and uninterested in receiving their creative assistance.

When the overwhelmingly rural and mountainous Tajik ASSR was made a full national republic in 1929, the small market town of Dushambe was turned into the capital, Stalinabad. Of the republic's 1.5 million people, only about 82,500 lived in the city by 1939, almost 60% of whom were Russians sent to build Soviet institutions.<sup>554</sup> Although its elevation to full republican status was a boon for national development, the new borders separated it from Bukhara and

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<sup>553</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 15, d. 638, l. 36-40.

<sup>554</sup> *Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleniia 1939 goda: osnovnye itogi*. (Moskva: “Nauka”, 1992).

Samarkand, home to the majority of Tajik-speaking intellectuals. Only the northern city of Leninabad (Khodzhent), in the Fergana valley, was allotted to the Tajik SSR, but it was cut off from the capital by the Zeravshan mountains. The earliest members of the Tajik SSR intelligentsia had never lived within its boundaries. Sadriiddin Aini (1878-1954) moved back and forth between Samarkand and Stalinabad in order to help develop Tajik cadres. The most visible of the early Soviet Tajik writers, Abulkasim Lakhuti (1887-1957), was an Iranian immigrant who lived primarily in Moscow. In the republic itself, traditional folk singers – known as *shair* – were far more prominent than the young Soviet authors. If Soviet literature was in search of a territory in which it could make true its claim to develop writers out of illiterate peasants, it was Tajikistan.

Stalinabad was isolated both physically and culturally from the rest of the Union and even Central Asia. Its rail link to neighboring republics was only completed in 1928. Before then travelers to Eastern Bukhara and the Tajik ASSR had to travel by cart or by horse over the mountains from Tashkent or east from the Uzbek city of Termez on the Afghan border. The relationship between the Tajik Writers' Union (SSP Taj) and the center was characterized by distance, delay, and isolation, problems that were exacerbated due to the war.

As a barometer of Tajikistan's cultural development, one needs only to consider its literary anthology from 1933. When the SSP's national brigades were appointed that year, only Lakhuti agreed to travel to Stalinabad, the others presumably refusing presumably due to the city's material hardships, great distance from Moscow, and meager literary scene.<sup>555</sup> The finished product, *Tadzhikskii Sbornik*, was paltry. It contained 140 pages of poetry, short stories and folklore, but no prose or playwriting, the real indicators of progress. There were few submissions from home-grown Tajik authors. Instead, of the ten authors, Lakhuti wrote four pieces, Aini had three, and Aziz Niallo (Stanishevskii) had a "fairytale." Despite his peremptory optimism about the new age of Tajik Soviet literature, Ievgenii Shteinberg noted in the forward that the collection suffered from some "fundamental defects," especially the stubborn influence of "pre-revolutionary Bukharan literature," with its "thick, tearful sentimentality, drawn out and monotonous tempo of narration, and intricate-rhetorical form of versification, deriving from the traditional *qasida* and *ghazal* of old Persian poetry." This influence took shape in adapting old constructs – like the 'young hero' and 'beauty-heroine' – and applying them crudely to new material conditions, thus retaining the basic appearances of Persian stories, fairytales, and poems. Apart from Aini and Lakhuti, "primitivism and simplification" were especially prominent in Tajik prose and its depictions of the "socialist construction, class war, the human psyche, and human relations."<sup>556</sup> Shteinberg's diagnosis of the stubbornness of the old and the imperfections of the new echoed similar assessments of Uzbek literature at the time, but were even more extreme. Thus the republican and all-Union Writers' Unions faced a tall order in developing young Tajik writers in subsequent years.

Whereas Tashkent was a primary destination for dozens of evacuated Russian and Ukrainian cultural institutions during World War II, Stalinabad welcomed far fewer evacuees, though this did include representatives from major cities, such as Soiuzdetfilm, the Ukrainian State Symphony Orchestra, and the Leningrad Comedy Theater. The writers who found themselves in Stalinabad arrived after being re-directed from Samarkand, Tashkent, and

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<sup>555</sup> Holt, 183.

<sup>556</sup> *Tadzhikskii Sbornik. Proza i stikhi*. ed. S.L. Vel'tman (Moskva: "Khudozhestvennaia Literatura," 1933).

Ashkhabad. Unlike Tashkent, no publishing houses evacuated to the city, and without the presence of literary stars, the evacuated writers did not have the cultural capital to make demands on the SSP. The priorities of war functioned to exacerbate the city's distance from the center. A case in point is a letter from SSP Taj Secretary Mirsaid Mirshakarov (1912-1993) to the SSP Presidium in Moscow in May 1943, sent by way of Lakhuti, a messenger and advocate. Mirshakarov summarized the situation: "for some time now we've been almost completely cut off from the administration of the SSP SSSR. We do not receive any directive, do not even receive answers to our queries, often putting us into a difficult position." In particular, he had received no news on the anthology of Tajik literature *1000 Let (1000 Years)* since sending the translations in 1940, as well as other translations that awaited replies. And he requested that the Presidium ensure that Sovetskii Pisatel', based in Tashkent, publish Tajik writers.<sup>557</sup>

By June 1943 the Tajik TsK had replaced Mirshakarov with the playwright Mukhammedzhan Rakhimi (1901-1968), who was pulled directly from the ranks of the Red Army. But the sense of abandonment continued. In a note to the Presidium, Rakhimi passed along the lone Tajik submissions for the new Soviet hymn. There would have been more, he wrote, but they had only received the assignment by telegram ten days previously, as opposed to the Russian writers who had been working for almost nine months. He concluded his letter with the plaintive words, "don't forget about us, write to us."<sup>558</sup> Thus although geography and infrastructure contributed to the Tajiks' sense of isolation from the rest of the Soviet writers, they also felt ignored by SSP leadership.

The arrival of a small group of evacuated writers from the center could have been a great boon to the underdeveloped Tajik literary scene but relations between the two groups were marked by distrust and discord. The SSP Taj blamed the evacuees for making unrealistic material demands while the evacuees accused the locals of refusing their assistance, resulting in the further stunting of the Tajiks' artistic and political growth. Why did this failure of Friendship occur? The Tajiks' own intractability was partly to blame. However, the relationship faltered for structural reasons too. First, the two groups lacked a common language. Few local writers knew Russian, none of the evacuees knew Tajik, and they lacked the local Russian literary intermediaries (such as Borodin and Sheverdin in Tashkent) to lubricate creative interactions. Second, Stalinabad did not receive the star-studded cast of Tashkent, whose reputations, connections, and prestigious literary assignments would have been an important stimulus for collaboration. Further, the small group of evacuees was full of elderly and the very young (as well as several from Poland and Vilnius without SSP membership) and lacked organizing experience and the energy to impart on Tajik writers the urgency and duties of Soviet writers at war. In addition, having arrived via Tashkent, Ashkhabad, and Samarkand, the writers understood they had been diverted from the more comfortable evacuation sites. They may have felt spurned by the Writers' Union and lacked motivation to swiftly pursue its development project. The SSP archival record only begins in the second year of the war, but it reveals a deep divide between the two groups, with each side accusing the other of failings.

Mirshakarov's removal from the post of SSP Taj was predated by a sharply critical letter in spring 1943 from Nadezhda Pavlovich (1895-1980), a poet and formerly a close associate of Aleksandr Blok, who became spokeswoman for the evacuees. She depicted the creative and organizational work of the SSP Taj as unmitigated failures. At a time when Uzbek literature and

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<sup>557</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 6, d. 669, l. 23.

<sup>558</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 6, d. 669, l. 10.

Tashkent's hospitality were celebrated as reflections of Friendship of the Peoples and the transformed Soviet East, Pavlovich posed the question for the SSP and the TsK VKP(b) TajSSR: "Why has Tajik literature not shown itself to be worthy in this important historical moment?" Aesthetically, she found Tajik writers to be burdened by their past and organizationally deficient.

In his conclusion to the *Tashkentskii Al'manakh*, Zelinskii found that Uzbeks' literary heritage mixed harmoniously with the Russian realist influence. Uzbeks' innate poetic gifts found easy application under new Soviet circumstances. Pavlovich found the opposite: "Tajik literature has a great past which both nourishes and weighs upon it." She believed that Tajik writers did not know how to martial this past: "for them, classics are, more than anything an arsenal of premade images, premade literary devices, and even attitudes." Instead of "freshness," "originality," or the "concrete traits of modern Tajikistan, its people, and landscapes," she found unreformed Tajik writers who simply recycled old poetic approaches to new socialist material. This verdict was not all that different from Shteinberg's ten year earlier.<sup>559</sup> In war poetry this resulted in the basic tropes of a few patriotic words, the parents sending their son off to the front, his vow to be brave, or the delivery of a few epithets towards Hitler and the fascists, and not much else. There were exceptions, such as Mirzo Tursunzoda's poem "*Syn Rodiny*" (*Son of the Motherland*) and Mirshakarov's "*Zolotoi kishlak*" (*Golden Kishlak*), but even Tursunzoda's was a "naïve but earnest romance" that did not show real war, while Mirshakarov's poem told of a man's journey to a mythical kishlak high in the Pamirs that was, literally, a land of milk and honey, to demonstrate the promise of the Soviet order. It read more like a Soviet-themed folktale from the 1920s than a politically mature work for the war-era.

Essentially, Pavlovich found that the relation between the Tajiks' base and superstructure was out of alignment. Just as the past "weighed" upon the literary present, so Tajik writers were dragging back the Tajik people. "The Tajik people have made gigantic historical strides the past few years, is experiencing the most complex processes, completing a revolution from the ground up." From the context, is not clear whether Pavlovich meant that the "gigantic strides" were occurring during the war years or the entire Soviet period, however she implied the war ushered in Tajikistan's final flourish of revolutionary promise. The Tajiks were working "intensively to support the front," and "people from mountain regions who not long ago did not know a bullock cart (*arba*) are going off to modern war fighting with tanks. None of this is shown in literature."<sup>560</sup> Thus Tajik workers and soldiers were completing a "revolutionary" transformation via their efforts at war, becoming so many Ivan-Tajiks. Yet these heroes of the Soviet present were not depicted in literature.

Ultimately, she held the Tajik writers responsible for their lack of skill and truculence. They still related to their past "reverentially and primitively. They [did] not know how to critically assimilate it, make necessary choices, nor how to study the classics." Their deficiencies were rooted in a stubborn lack of will. Tajik writers did not go to the front in artist brigades nor visit kolkhozes and mines, thus could not depict the "revolution" in a realistic manner. Furthermore, "Tajik writers [did] not want to nor know how to study from Western-European and Russian classics. [...] In order to move Tajik literature from this dead spot, it needs an inoculation of socialist realism and must take the experience of Russian and Western-European literature into account." Compared to Zelinskii's depiction of Uzbek and Russian traditions' "organic" mixing, Tajiks needed a very inorganic "inoculation" in order to meet the

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<sup>559</sup> *Tadzhikskii Sbornik*, 5-10.

<sup>560</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 6, d. 669, l. 16-16ob.



revolutionary needs. But the tonic of Western and Russian realist literary tradition was not so easy to provide without a common language and a disorganized Writers' Union. She wrote that Tajik writers worked in isolation. In the fifteen months she was in Stalinabad she had not witnessed a single creative gathering. And when the Russians gathered, only a handful of local writers attended. Although most Tajik writers were busy in their own ways, she claimed that others were more concerned about getting provisions, despite living more comfortably than all of the evacuees.<sup>561</sup> Many of these remarks echoed the Russians' initial reactions to the organizational life of the SSP Uz, but this contingent was unable to exact similar changes. Even more striking was Pavlovich's belief that Tajik wartime writers needed to find time to master the basic techniques and tools of Western literary classics. The success of *shairs* and "traditional" poetry to inspire the Tajik soldiers were entirely outside her lens.

Pavlovich concluded her note with a seven-point plan that she hoped would "widen and enrich the worldviews" of Tajik writers, so that their poetry "becomes revolutionized, so they begin persistently and passionately searching for a new path." The key to this spark was to create a "cultural connection" between the Russians and the Tajiks that was currently nonexistent. She proposed forcing Tajik writers to go on front brigades, encouraging them to visit and write about specific homefront sites and people. Furthermore, they were to study the work of Russian writers since the start of war and use the appearance of Russian writers in their midst – especially Shvarts, Kazmicheva, and Shlossberg – to acquaint themselves with Western-European literature and the mechanics of translation. They needed to increase the translation of Russian and Soviet classics into Tajik, as well as "at least the most important of Western-European and American literature." The evacuees were not above reproach, and had not shown any interest in pursuing translations into Tajik. Organizationally, she wanted stricter control over cadres and the Union's entry process to crack down on loafing and the sale of ration cards. And finally, though it had little to do with "revolutionizing" the locals' worldview, she pressed the SSP Taj to use its Litfund to care for the evacuees' health. One had contracted tuberculosis, another dystrophy, and another was laid up for several months.<sup>562</sup> Like all revolutionary dreams, Pavlovich's plan was utopian, reliant on a small and temporary group of ailing Russian literary figures to oversee the translation and assimilation of the Western literary canon, all during a war, and competing with the writers' other obligations.

Presumably after learning of the Pavlovich letter, Mirshakarov and Dekhoti wrote to Skosyrev (Secretary of the Presidium SSP) in their own defense. Though silent on her artistic allegations, they described the evacuees as entitled and needy. Despite its limited funds, the SSP Taj had provided each with living space and requested the Presidium to increase its Litfund allowance to continue paying for their expenses. Although six out of the fifteen were actively working, "there are other comrades who just rest on the fact that they are 'members of the Writers' Union – golden stock ... need to preserve them,' but they don't want to understand that a writer must write." According to Mirshakarov and Dekhoti, they flatly refused to write, and when told that they should instead find work, they held firm that the "Litfund should feed them." Further, Pavlovich entreated the Tajik Litfund to pay for each one to receive a medical check-up and a trip to a sanatorium, which would have been difficult to cover even in peace time.<sup>563</sup> In an

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<sup>561</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 6, d. 669, l. 17.

<sup>562</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 6, d. 669, l. 17-18.

<sup>563</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 6, d. 669, l. 19-20.

environment of mutual allegations, it would have been difficult to imagine Pavlovich's evacuees acting as a revolutionary force in local literature.

In a final report to the TsK VKP(b) TajSSR before Mirshakarov was sacked, SSP Taj leadership gave a far more sanguine picture of Tajik literature at war. They noted that writers had concentrated on "instilling hatred for the enemy and defense of the Fatherland," as evidenced in popular songs written by Tajik writers that "were sung by half of Tajikistan." They saluted Lakhuti, Tursunzoda, and Dehoti and others for creating patriotic verse, and evacuees like Pavlovich, Kasmichev, and Romanovskaia for taking up local themes in their work and mentoring young writers. They did not address aesthetics, the "burden" of literary classics, or the Tajiks' stunted evolution, though they recognized their developmental inadequacies in certain genres. Like in Uzbekistan, there was an "extreme need" for playwrights, children's literature was floundering, and there was a lack of "war heroism" throughout. However, this did not mean renouncing the folk singers and storytellers. In fact, the "old generation writers" like Bobo Yunosu Khudoidod, Said Vali Zoda, and Zufar Dzhavkhari had found great popularity composing patriotic songs, and the Union leadership called for further collaboration with these artists to collect contemporary folklore from the Patriotic War. And finally, to head off charges of deficient Union work, they pointed out that the House of Writers had been occupied by other organizations since the start of war, disrupting collaborative work.<sup>564</sup> Although agreeing that they had much room for improvement, they had mostly coped with the rigors of war, using well-proven and popular forms to mobilize the people.

The SSP and TsK Taj saw things differently. The presence of the evacuated Russian writers offered a chance for implementing revolutionary change in Tajik literature that had eluded it for over a decade. Thus they recalled Rakhimi – both a playwright and a soldier – from the Red Army to lead the Tajik Writers' Union. The Presidium meeting of June 1943 offered him his first chance to oversee a "reconstruction" of union work, and gave both evacuated and local writers a chance to diagnose the problems of the previous two years.

Rather than address the underlying cause, senior Tajik writers simply noted the lack of requisite quality in newer Soviet genres. Mirzo Tursunzoda (1911-1977), Tajikistan's leading poet, Party member since 1941, and head of the Tajik Committee for Artistic Affairs (*Komitet po Delam Iskusstv*) offered his stern approval of Mirashakarov's sacking. Although poetry was responding "more or less satisfactorily" to the war needs, playwriting, prose, and children's literature were the "unconditionally lagging sections." Many theaters were without repertoires and none of the prose writers had created anything "noteworthy." Other writers had written nothing at all, which "in our stern days is totally inexcusable." Dzhahalol Ikrami (1909-1993), another senior writer, agreed that no significant prose had appeared since the start of the war.<sup>565</sup>

For evacuees and Rakhimi, the problem was organizational. Tajik writers were not going to the war nor visiting homefront institutions. Ievgenii Pomeschikov (1908-1979), screenwriter of *My s Urala (We're from the Urals)*, which was filmed by Soiuzdetfilm in Stalinabad in 1943, described his short trip to the Western Front as having "created impressions for a life time," and presumably provided him with the raw material for his screenplay, which follows several teenagers from homefront factory jobs to the front lines. Although at the front he met a Kazakh playwright and an Uzbek writer, there were no Tajiks. Although the republic had sent clothing and food supplies, "no Tajik writer has visited his countryman in battle." He proposed sending

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<sup>564</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 6, d. 669, l. 22-27.

<sup>565</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 6, d. 669, l. 2-3.

two or three Tajik writers to the front, where “material is located at arms length in boiling lively life, and to stand aside is inexcusable.” Rakhimi echoed this call, and voiced the need to send writers around Stalinabad, to hospitals, soldiers, enterprises, call-ups, and to connect with the AN filial.<sup>566</sup> Although the Tajik writers’ absence from the front brigades could have been viewed as a political error akin to desertion, evacuees did not view it this way. Realist writing was a new creative practice, built upon direct observation at the front or at enterprises. As the instructors of this new skill they – and the language barrier – were also to blame, allowing them to avoid more troubling questions about the source of the Tajik writers’ resistance.

Indeed, the “connection” with evacuated Russians was deemed the major source of problems. Ikrami spoke of no “close ties” between the two groups except for himself and playwright Aleksei Faiko (1893-1976) (who had written the screenplay for the 1924 film, *Aelita*), and Tursunzoda and Pavlovich. In other words, the only successful partnerships were among the most senior evacuees and Party-minded locals. The newly-appointed Rakhimi urged both sides to begin closer collaboration and “creative discourse” but challenged the Tajik writers especially to think of the evacuees – the “Russian masters of art” – as a resource: “it is time to extend our hands to the apple tree and get a juicy apple.”<sup>567</sup>

The June meeting provided a chance for reconciliation. The evacuated writers still did not feel particularly welcomed, materially or morally. E. Zhurbina noted that “evacuated writers especially need a caring leadership” when it came to securing their material and professional needs. Yet she also called on her fellow evacuees to get rid of their “‘evacuated’ psychology” and take more initiative to join the creative life of the SSP Taj, and offer assistance. Communication was one barrier, and poetess Nadezhda Pavlovich and others urged their colleagues to learn Tajik.

Other evacuated writers recognized that they could do more to ameliorate the two populations, both in the Writers’ Union and in Stalinabad at large. Evacuation, after all, provided new opportunities to forge connections between local Russians and Tajiks. Shlossberg noted that the local Russian population was recently arrived and few spoke Tajik. Consequently, Tajik and Russian children were not learning one another’s stories. One evacuee, Maria Romanovskaia, responded to this call by writing a short children’s story about a young Tajik girl who helps an evacuated Belarusian boy to reunite with his father when the socks she knits and sends to the Red Army wind up – miraculously – in the boy’s father’s hands.<sup>568</sup> Shlossberg called upon the writers’ union to assist in this mixing by creating books on Tajik folk tales that would be equally enthralling to both groups. Further, he called upon local publishing houses, newspapers and radio to assist the evacuees to promote Tajik literature, especially to Stalinabad’s Russian audiences, who would be served to learn Tajik. And he believed it was “absolutely necessary” for Tajik playwrights and theaters to stage the Western-European classics.<sup>569</sup>

Two years into the war, the Tajik Party leadership deemed the Tajik literature’s political and artistic development inappropriate to the needs of war. The evacuation of Russian writers was largely viewed as a missed artistic and political opportunity. Embedded in these failures was a clash of several different Soviet cultures, with Russian evacuees, local Tajik Party leaders, and elder and younger Tajik writers bringing different expectations about the appropriate rate of

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<sup>566</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 6, d. 669, l. 4-5.

<sup>567</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 6, d. 669, l. 3, 5.

<sup>568</sup> Maria Romanovskaia, *Podarok Mamlakat* (Stalinabad: Gosizdat TadzhSSR, 1942).

<sup>569</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 6, d. 669, l. 6.

change. Some evacuees envisioned a war-time “revolution,” enabled by visiting cadres bearing Russian classics. On the other extreme, older Tajik writers, *shairs*, and poets did not feel that visiting Russian “masters” had anything to teach them about inspiring the local populace. Their refusal to visit the front and to “reach for the apples” were signals of local discontent directed towards the creative and organizational demands of the Muscovites, a type of foot-dragging that can be considered a “weapon of the weak.”<sup>570</sup> This divide had national overtones, as the alarmist reports about wartime’s special demands all came from the Russians. Meanwhile Tursunzoda and Mirshakarov – Party-minded and senior Tajik poets – occupied a middle ground. They recognized the artistic shortcomings of prose writers and playwrights, but were not alarmed, citing the genres’ novelty. Seeing in this conflict a chance to rise in authority were the ambitious, young, and Party-minded – playwrights and novelists like Rakhimi and Ulugzoda who were called back especially from the front to take up leadership roles. However, they still had to prove themselves artistically, which would take time. As in other spheres, Tajik literature’s socialist development took longer than in the other republics.

It is difficult to determine how exactly the June 1943 intervention changed the course of Tajik literature. For artistic matters, it was almost certainly too late, as the evacuees soon returned home. More than anything, it put the ideological, artistic, and organizational deficiencies of Tajik literature on the radar of Party leadership in Stalinabad and the TsK VKP(b) in Moscow.

Evidence that Tajik literature continued to be considered in crisis came from the All-City Congress of Workers on the Ideological Front in Stalinabad in October 1946, convened by P. Naliy, the secretary of the city’s *gorkom*. The affair was attended by over 900 people in spheres such as education, literature, theater, music, and film, however the writers were the primary targets of criticism. Although the impetus for the meeting seems to have been Zhdanov’s critique on the “apolitical,” “bourgeois” works of Zoshchenko and Akhmatova in the journals *Leningrad* and *Zvezda*, in the Tajik context the discussion took the form of an assessment of the war years and the first year of peace, hitting on the perennial complaints about the Tajiks. While *Zhdanovshchina* represented a new direction in cultural criticism in Russia, here it was viewed as further impetus for the Party to pursue old goals. The meeting offered some of the goats from 1943 a chance to stick up for themselves and further enumerate the artistic deficiencies of their younger colleagues. Again, we see a divide between Russian or Party-minded, ideological writers and the Tajik unreformed.

In his opening remarks, Naliy raised the general alarm that Tajik “ideological workers” had not produced any “significant works of high ideological or artistic level” in the preceding five years. In particular, Tajik poetry, prose, playwriting, and film did not display the concrete characteristics of the republic’s recent growth. Playwrights were again singled out for “being distracted with pseudohistorical folklore that idealized the life of *bais* and khans.” The few plays on modern themes were “surface-level, schematic, and unprincipled.”<sup>571</sup> Naliy’s ideological and artistic prescription was simple, to portray the “noble qualities of the Soviet person, the heroic achievements of workers, and the blossoming of Soviet Tajikistan in the brotherly family of

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<sup>570</sup> James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

<sup>571</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 684, l. 32. The “pseudohistorical” plays included *Takhmos Khodzhentskii*, by Kasymov and Saidmuradov, *Printsessa Sagdiana*, by Iskhakov, and *Rustam i Sukhrob*, by Pirmuakhamed Zade and Volkenshtein.

peoples of the powerful Soviet Union” – something like a more orthodox form of socialist realism. Naliy’s speech signaled that the “Soviet person” was the same in all republics, and needed to be depicted in uniform ways. Thus he sounded the same battle horns that had been played for decades, but with more impatience. According to this logic, the socialist construction of the 1930s and the sacrifices and unity of war had each given Tajik authors and artists the chance to display their countrymen as part of the unified “Soviet people,” but at every turn they had chosen to look backwards. After the war there was no such excuses.

This urgency was reflected in the changing leadership of the SSP Taj. In the preceding years Rakhimi (1901-1968) had been replaced by his fellow soldier-playwright Sotim Ulugzade (1911-1997), who was in turn replaced by Mirshakarov, who began his second tour as Secretary in 1946. Without the full archival record it is impossible to know the exact reason for Mirshakarov’s return. The changeover seems to have been a signal to shake up the Union organizational practices. It also sprang from a realization that elevating soldier-playwrights did not guarantee aesthetic or political quality. Ulugzade, along with Ikrami and others, was singled out for political deficiencies, allegedly depicting Soviet officers as “cowards,” and in one case, depicting a Russian officer as a “gluttonous, lazy, absolutely uncultured person,” veering on nationalism.<sup>572</sup> Mirshakarov was the more accomplished artist and politically more dependable, even if his poetry had a penchant for fantasy. “*Zolotoi Kishlak*” was considered one of the highest literary achievements of the war period, regardless of its subject or approach. Mirshakarov’s return was a vote for quality, that simply plying new genres was not enough.

Eager to make amends, Mirshakarov reported that the SSP Taj was drastically reorganized to meet the expectations of the center. Each genre now had a section that met separately. Most of the young writers were now studying evenings at the university under the direction of the Gorkom to raise their ideological maturity. Further, to increase quality, for the first time ever all pieces for publication were to be discussed by the entire collective. And finally, in order for writers to witness and reproduce the “Soviet reality,” he was sending writers’ brigades to enterprises and kolkhozes in Leninabad and Kurgan-Tiube oblasts. Not to be outdone, Rakhimi, the other former Secretary, reported that the union still had “lots of deficiencies” and requested that Moscow send a “leading writer” to organize a permanent Russian section.<sup>573</sup> Thus chastened, the SSP Taj was starting to operate like a Soviet creative union, with a more Russian orientation, to depict “Soviet reality,” and opening the door for locals who would pursue these priorities.

Meanwhile, the output of Tajik writers continued to be a target for the SSP and the Tajik Party organization. With the end of the war and the emergence of *Zhdanovshchina*, the authorities tightened the rope of expectations. If before the war Tajik literature was allowed a syncretic absorption of Soviet (Russian) literary principles based on toleration of its historical backwardness, then these expectations became leveled after the war, for all “Soviet people” to depict a similar “Soviet reality.” Imperial looseness, the permission of multiple artistic standards and aesthetics, was being replaced with an almost national uniformity. What was tolerated and even celebrated for its mobilizational success during the war could now be exhibited as proof of Tajiks’ perpetual backwardness, justifying Moscow’s perpetual expertise.

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<sup>572</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 684, l. 38. Ulugzade’s errors were grave enough that he was not even included in the war-time compilation, *Literaturnyi Tadzhikistan* (1945).

<sup>573</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 684, l. 34.

The subsequent presentation of a certain Stepanov, the editor of the newspaper *Kommunist Tadzhikistana*, revealed both urgency and frustration with Tajik literature's collected volume from the war. *Literaturnyi Tadzhikistan* (1945) was compiled by Rakhimi and edited by the evacuated poets and translators Sergei Gorodetskii and Adelina Adalis (1900-1969) with about a two-year delay. Like *Tashkentskii Al'manakh*, there were requisite local poems to Stalin, Lenin, Moscow, and Leningrad, as well as to soldiers, etc. However, it was very short (81 pages) and barely reflected the presence of evacuees, other than four poems and all of the translation duties. In other ways it was a step forward from 1933. There were twenty local contributors and each major genre was represented – poetry, prose, and playwriting. However, Stepanov disparaged it as a “weak collection,” reserving his highest praise for the poetry of Tursunzade and Mirshakarov, which was “not bad.” As usual, the newer genres received the harshest scrutiny. Prose was “crudely expressed” and filled “entirely with pot-boilers, without one work that maintains one's attention.”<sup>574</sup>

The primary prose violation was the story “Timurmalik,” by the elder of Tajik literature, Sadreddin Aini, an episodic history of the hero of 13<sup>th</sup> century Khodzhent who defended his city against the Mongol invasion before succumbing to their overwhelming numbers. Stepanov accused the writer of not obeying the “sense of reasonable limits” (*chuvstvo mery*) – depicting the main character as acting everywhere on his own, and chopping through a thick metal chain with his sword in one fell swoop to escape his enemies.<sup>575</sup> In other words Aini disobeyed the law of realism, which should have been followed both as a general rule and because the editors had included it in the “prose” section. However, Aini, was well aware of the dictates of realism and had written the only Tajik realist novel, *Raby (Slaves)*, in 1934. More likely he had deliberately mixed genres, creating a sort of epic-historical hybrid, including precise dates, names, and geographic locations while providing a patriotic tall tale for raw Tajik soldiers sent to fight against an overwhelming enemy. Aini created this heroic register by recounting the Herculean feats of the main character. In the amount of time it took for the sultan Mukhammad to flee the Mongols, Timurmalik built an entire fortress himself, in the middle of the Syr Darya river, clad with special covering to defend against arrows and missiles. He built ships and trained one thousand of the best soldiers in military arts and poetry. His depiction of the enemy is also without measure, as the Mongols are crude, blood-thirsty, and stupid; believing that the ships are some sort of “armored elephants,” and being continually confused by Timurmalik's maneuvers until their raw numbers and the treachery of several “merchants, *bais*, and feudals” defeat him. The story reads as a parable for World War II, as the thousands of men are trained from scratch, buffeted by poetry, seated in armored elephants, against a dehumanized enemy – with the exception of the outcome. All of Timurmalik's thousand soldiers perish, and he floats on to the Aral Sea and to Khorezm, before joining Dzhalaaladdin's resistance to the Mongols. When this struggle ends fruitlessly, Timurmalik escapes in the clothes of a dervish and wanders many years around Syria and Arabia before walking home to Khodzhent, overcome by longing for his homeland. Like Odysseus, he returns in disguise and inquires about Mongol rule, eventually finding his lone surviving son, who has built a hut on the remains of the island fortress. Chagatai Khan learns of the hero's return and sends a detachment to capture the old man. Timurmalik is encircled and succumbs, but not before refusing to kneel, cursing the Mongols, and chopping off several heads with his characteristic “lightning quickness.” The tale ends with his young son

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<sup>574</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 684, l. 35-36.

<sup>575</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 684, l. 36.

sneaking in via the commotion and chopping off the head of the commander sent after Timurmaliik before falling dead on the body of his father.<sup>576</sup> Thus ends the tale of an indefatigable local hero. There is in fact little sense of measuredness in Aini's Timurmaliik. Rather, he cultivates the legend of a Tajik son in something like a native, heroic register, and fixes him specifically to Khodzhen and the geography of the current Tajik SSR. Rather than depict "Soviet reality," Aini combed local history for heroic models, just like Aleksei Tolstoi's Kutuzov and Nevskii, and Eisenstein's Ivan the Terrible. Aini's violation – celebrated in other contexts – was to break from realist form. Stepanov's unyielding rebuke of Tajik literature's elder statesman indicated a maximalist position about acceptable socialist prose, showing none of the earlier toleration for Tajik divergence.

Stepanov and other delegates at the congress panned Tajik playwrights not for leaping genre boundaries but for more rudimentary errors in politics and quality. A selection from Dzhalol Ikrami's play, *Serdtsse Materi (A Mother's Heart)*, depicts the relationship between a young, untrained Tajik nurse named Maudzhigul' and Taras, a wounded soldier assigned to her care, who is inconsolably morose at the prospect of losing his leg to amputation. Stepanov found that although the relations were "presented as a great friendship, it grows essentially into love, and as she seduces him, it turns out the girl announces 'I'm sneaky,' and leaves, having deceived him the whole time and departs."<sup>577</sup> In the play, as Taras' thoughts sink lower and lower – was this not cowardice for a Red Army soldier? – she stops at nothing to cheer him up, reading to him, calling the visiting singers to him, and even playacting as his doctor to make him laugh. His despondent rebukes and refusal to take a sedative appear immature and rude. Meanwhile, to add a backdrop of romance, Taras' foil, a cheerful young Tajik soldier named Mekhtar, repeatedly intercedes, singing a love song to Maudzhigul' on his *doira* that she ignores. Finally, she convinces Taras to tell her a story – a Tajik legend about a mother's love that he learned from a Tajik fellow soldier – to which she contrives to become weepy. The roles reverse and Taras convinces her to take the sedative. The supervising doctor later asks Maudzhigul' if she is too weak for the job to which she responds, "No doctor, you're wrong. I'm sneaky!"<sup>578</sup> The play presents a depiction of Central Asians' gendered experience of war. Maudzhigul's service is not at the front, but as a hospital nurse. Her contributions to society are not predicated on gaining new knowledge, training, or replacing departed men, but rather her natural femininity. In fact, her competence is doubted by her supervisors the whole time and she is only exonerated by her coquettishness at the end. In his way, Ikrami reflected the events of war realistically. The tender friendship and even love that developed between soldiers and their nurses was well known, while in Central Asia the socialization between men and women of different nationalities tested traditional taboos. In fact, evidence that interethnic marriage was a controversial new phenomenon came from the criticism of another speaker, a certain Korokh, the director of the Stalinabad Opera and Ballet Theater, who complained that based on Tajik playwrights' repertoires, one would think that "our leading workers in agriculture, industry, and culture are only interested in events that took place a thousand years ago and the problem of Tajiks marrying Russian women."<sup>579</sup> However, Stepanov was not bothered that the romance was interethnic, but

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<sup>576</sup> *Literaturnyi Tadzhikistan*, red. S. Gorodetskii, A. Adalis, sost. Rakhimi (Stalinabad: "Gosizdat pri SNK Tadzhikskoi SSR", 1945), 43-51.

<sup>577</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 684, l. 36.

<sup>578</sup> *Literaturnyi Tadzhikistan*, 65-69.

<sup>579</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 684, l. 43.

that a potential romance between a nurse and soldier be the centerpiece of a play at all, much less have this relation prove to be nothing but a seductive ruse to trick an injured soldier to regain his vitality. The play – or at least this outtake – was in fact entirely devoted to this relationship and Taras’ profound depression. This was not the “Soviet reality” that Stepanov and others had encouraged the Tajiks to depict.

It is important to note who in *Literaturnyi Tadzhikistan* was not criticized: the evacuees. In fact, two of their four poems – “*Staraiia Legenda*” (*Old Legend*) by Gorodetskii and “*Tadzhikskaiia Legenda*” (*Tajik Legend*) by Tatiana Kazmicheva – did not address “Soviet reality” or any of the ideological war themes. Rather, they celebrated the Tajiks’ perceived proximity to their legendary past. Thus even if in their actions the Russian guides led Tajiks astray, local writers were nonetheless solely responsible for their errant ways.

Thus if Uzbek literature at war was considered to celebrate the possibilities of transformation precipitated by the elder Russian brothers, Tajik writers were caught in their traditional backwardness. However, the goalposts had been moved on them. The war sanctioned the celebration of the heroic past, which was taken up by writers throughout the Soviet Union. But mostly Tajik writers lagged far behind the other republics in their slow uptake of socialist realist plays and novels. Their inability and disinterest in mastering these genres in comparison with their fluency and popularity of Tajik poets also put into stark contrast just how foreign – Western and Russian – these genres were. They needed a revolution, but instead, frustratingly clung fast to old ways, seemingly trapped in backwardness.

#### *Central Asian Literature’s Classical Heritage and the Trap of Socialist Development*

In battle, in factories, and the arts Central Asians raised their profiles as individuals and for their republics. Yet how far had they come? Progress was deceptively hard to measure in a non-imperial empire where all citizens had equal rights and differentials of development were described with the vague label “formerly backward.” How long would the Central Asian republics be “formerly backward?” And once the label disappeared, what would it mean for the Friendship of the Peoples? The SSP’s assessment of Central Asian literature during the war years offers one way to measure the question. The Uzbek, Turkmen, and Tajik Writers’ Union were each celebrated with various degrees of artistic development and political maturity. In this context it is useful to remember that wars have frequently forced imperial powers to redefine their ruling contracts with colonized peoples. War traditionally strained these arrangements, either resulting in new privileges or an even sterner justification of colonial rule. World War II was the final breaking point for British rule in India. There was a similar reckoning within Soviet culture about how to assess the prolific and politically mature Central Asian war literature. It would also include new privileges and recognition but also new justification for the center’s rule of “experts.”

The existence of the SSP’s Nationalities Commission was predicated on its ability to assess non-Russian literature and facilitate its development towards socialist realist ends. As seen here, socialist realism functioned as a barrier that allowed the SSP to justify its role as experts, and maintain the pre-war hierarchy between Moscow and the Central Asian republics. This dynamic is clearest in debates about the role of Central Asia’s literary heritage in its contemporary literature. Essentially, the logic of Soviet literary development demanded that although each republic should celebrate its own folklore and its peculiar national arts (the oral tradition of epic poetry in Central Asia, for instance), it also had to demonstrate its fluency in the more “advanced” genres of prose and playwriting that needed to portray, above all,



contemporary “Soviet realities.” Poetry was a grey area. Even the most traditional or national techniques could in theory be praised for topical ideological content (like Stalin, hatred for the enemy, or Friendship of the Peoples). As the war drew to an end, rather than acknowledge the prominence of history in Russian authors’ war-time creation or the success of Central Asian authors with military themes, the commission raised a critique based on what it viewed as the stubborn resistance of historical themes and old, poetic, folkloric, and epic devices that supposedly prevented the emergence of realism. Akin to other “vestiges” of old Central Asian culture – *kalym*, *paranji*, etc. – these were more vexing because they were lodged squarely within the Central Asian intelligentsia. The literary center’s perception that this was a problem provided an ongoing justification of its expertise in the republics, and characterized the non-imperial empire’s confusion about how to assess cultural differences. We might call this the Soviet literary development trap.

Petr Skosyrev, the SSP’s most prominent literary ambassador of the East, first addressed the issue of Central Asian literature’s classical heritage in a speech at the *Dekada* of Central Asian Literature in Ashkhabad in April 1944, an event which highlighted the region’s epics, poets, historical figures, and contemporary Soviet prose writers and playwrights. However, the issue had been around for at least a decade. Gor’kii’s keynote speech at the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers defended the place of folklore as a wellspring of images and themes, calling upon republican writers, “I repeat: the beginning of the art of the word is folklore. Collect your folklore. Study it. Develop it.”<sup>580</sup> However useful as a basis for realism, folklore was not supposed to predominate the socialist literature of the republics. Writing in the republican Almanacs created in the wake of the Congress, Madzhidi and Shteinberg identified the stubborn prominence of folkloric tendencies, and anticipated their imminent disappearance. The folkloric tendencies of the local writers caught the eyes of evacuated writers in Tashkent and Stalinabad who responded both approvingly (namely Zelinskii and Chukovskii) and disapprovingly (namely Pavlovich). Although Skosyrev’s address in Ashkhabad is unavailable, he expanded on this theme in a presentation to the unified Nationalities Commission of the SSP in Moscow in December 1944, entitled “the Influence of the Classical Heritage on the Creative Works of Writers from the Central Asian Republics,” which he defined as Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan.

In a speech worth quoting at length, Skosyrev addressed what he viewed as the “most interesting issue” of the war years based on his visits to all three republics. The problem was not that Central Asian writers were writing about the past or even used its methods, but that they did it crudely, uncritically. He saw the deployment of fantasy and folklore devices as antithetical to socialist progress, and the greater unification of the Soviet people.

He viewed the rise of historical themes among Central Asian authors as an organic “desire of the peoples to draw on their heroic, glorious, rich past” as a “spiritual resource” to unify people against Fascist racial theory. And he reminded the assembly that Gor’kii himself had “celebrated” the importance of the classical heritage. However, his war-time travels brought him to some stark criticisms that he felt obligated to share as a “representative of the center” sent to the “brother republics.”

Skosyrev enumerated some of the clearest violators of socialist literary aesthetics. Dzhahalol Ikrami, “one of the most talented writers” of Tajikistan, had written only one story set at

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<sup>580</sup> Maksim Gor’kii, *Sobrannye sochineniia v 30-ti tomakh*, t. 27, s. 342. As cited in “M. Gor’kii o folklore,” at <http://rusprogram.ru/f98>. Last accessed June 12, 2015.

the front but it enjoyed great popularity and was printed for Tajik soldiers. The story followed “Mekhtarbot,” the leader of a group of six or seven scouts who are hidden in a shed when the village they are in becomes occupied by an entire German division. The situation is dire and Mekhtarbot recalls his legendary eponymous ancestor who knew how to get out of any situation. He tells the scouts to yell out in German, “one, two, three” (*eins, zwei, drei*) and march out the door. Even though they are dressed in Soviet uniforms, the yells in German confuse the enemy, who allow them to march right out of the village. A general even drives by and stops to thank Mekhtarbot, erroneously, for his brave service, and they seize him and take him back to the Soviet side.

Similarly, in a 300-line poem, the “old Tajik poet” Sirius described another six or seven-man subunit led by a Tajik commander. They fall into an ambush and run into a German tank regiment. The six infantrymen destroy the entire regiment, killing 120 men and taking the rest prisoner.

And the popular poem “Father and Son” by Said Ali Vali-zoda, depicted a dialogue in which a son asks his father’s permission to join the army, rather than relying on orders from the voenkamat.

According to Skosyrev, each of the authors was “honest and attentive to their duties as gifted writers helping their people,” yet each had created works that could “scandalize” a critic. How did this occur? Each of the soldiers above “fights like Rustam. Each has the heart of a lion. And the enemy he fights is an evil dragon. The author has, unbeknownst to himself [...] jumped inside these fantasy, folklore-classical works.” The authors and their characters literally entered the realm of fantasy and myth. Rustam and Mekhtarbot each defeated thousands of enemies. And folkloric convention demanded that a son ask his father for permission to fight. Thus the authors were faced with a conundrum: “could it be that in reality the [World War II] heroes are weaker than the classics?” They answered in the negative, and instead relied on the “fantastic poetics” of the classics.

Skosyrev believed that the authors did this unwittingly. And when he entreated, “my dear, don’t you see this is impossible?” that six men could defeat a tank regiment, instead of defending themselves the authors would simply reply, “I guess I didn’t think of that.” Skosyrev’s intercession seems to have been responsible for some of the delay of *Literaturnyi Tadzhikistan*, which was undergoing a “fundamental reworking.” In the 1945 finished product, only “Father and Son” was included. Skosyrev seems to have convinced Vali-zoda to make the dialogue less about asking permission and more about mutual promises. Further, in the final edition the son pointedly takes out the voenkamat summons from his pocket and references his oath to Stalin and to Friendship of the Peoples.<sup>581</sup>

What was wrong with this failure to “critically interpret” the past? After all, according to Skosyrev each of the above works enjoyed great success among the Tajik soldiers. First, it made the author an unwitting “victim of the past.” He became trapped or lost in time, “with his back to reality, forgetting about the distance between the creation of the classics and the present reality.” This loss of chronological perspective would not be inherently damaging if the rest of the Soviet populace was not marching forward, which was especially problematic given the Central Asians were starting from behind to begin with.

To underscore this problem, Skosyrev cited another violation of poetics from Berdy Kerbabaev, the head of the Turkmen Writers’ Union, whose poem “Ailar” was “the most

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<sup>581</sup> *Literaturnyi Tadzhikistan*, 22.

significant work of Turkmen poetry” during the war. Although the lengthy poem had several strong sections, including realist descriptions of Russian nature, on the whole Kerbabaev failed to “leave the boundaries of his ‘little motherland,’ his Turkmenia.” The poem tells of Ailar, a tractor driver, who becomes a nurse and is sent to the front to search for her beloved who has gone missing. She joins the partisans and gets captured by the Germans and is called into the tent of a German commander. Then begins the “mechanical transfer of mechanical devices,” as Ailar becomes the hero of a “fable.” He sentences her to death unless she agrees to become his personal entertainer. She refuses. Not only does she kill him with a knife but she takes his clothes in disguise and arouses no suspicions by jumping into his Mercedes and drives back to the Soviet side. Not only is the action “supernatural and fantastic,” the author misses every opportunity to take up the theme of Friendship of the Peoples on the front. By writing for the Turkmen audience in an approach that only they will recognize and appreciate, Kerbabaev misses the chance to write for an all-Union audience. Skosyrev concludes that in order to “exit from this national isolation, we need to conduct a lot of interior work.”

But Skosyrev did not simply berate the Central Asian writers for their “fantastic” and “folkloric” approaches. He returned to Soviet scripture to pose a solution. He noted that Lenin called for the “critical reworking” of one’s literary heritage in order to make truly “proletarian culture,” and not simply its crude re-use. A more precise exegesis was the job of literary critics, and he called upon himself, Zelinskii, and other Russian writers to formulate a path forward. And he called upon Russian writers to relate to Central Asians with greater understanding and compassion. He reminded them that Russian writers, too, were sometimes guilty of recycling their classics, but they were fortunate because their heritage included “critical realism.” Central Asian writers were in a “much more complicated” situation without a realist heritage, and their writers thus experienced far greater “ruptures in worldview” to adapt to Soviet literary norms. He enunciated a new task for the Soviet (Russian) literary specialist: “to assist in the development of the cultural heritage of our peoples.” In other words, to teach Tajiks how to rework their Nizami and Firdowsi.

Skosyrev noted that certain cultural traditions were fated to expire. He had particular spite for the *qasida* form of verse, which he defined as the “ode of glorification that arose in Arabic poetry, the ode of poet-courtiers to those that fed them.” This poetic form was attached to a certain stage of historical development and would disappear with the October revolution, just as Russian poetry no longer included prayers nor did Jewish poetry rely on psalms. Skosyrev allowed that not all of the *qasida* heritage could be disposed of, and that it remained in the “shadow of tradition” and in “certain poetic habits.” Lakhuti chimed in that “when you throw out the crown, you take out the gems and give them to the people.” However, Skosyrev had a bit more venom, claiming that he could see *qasida* remnants in the odes of certain Turkmen poets to the Hero of the Soviet Union, Kurban Durdy. In these poems “we learn nothing of him, not his achievements, not about him as a person, or a soldier, just a string of epithets, epithets that do not reflect existence, or life. This is a rejection of the duty of a Soviet poet.”

One way out was to introduce the folklore and classic of the brother republics to one another, but starting first and foremost with the Russian classics. This was partly the mission of the literary journal *Friendship of the Peoples*. Skosyrev found the Turkmen translation of Krylov’s fables to be “truly joyful and comforting.” And Nadezhda Pavlovich had precisely this task in mind the previous year in Stalinabad when she spoke of the need for an “inoculation” of the “Western-Russian classics.” In other words, the various Brother Republican readers would lose their attachment to their individual habits and devices via exposure to other traditions,

especially the Russians. In response to the worry that readers would not accept literature without familiar artistic devices, Skosyrev reminded them that culture is rooted in “historical fate and conditions,” and thus can change with history. He noted that Uzbeks, Tajiks, and Turkmen were currently on the fronts, fighting the Fascists. “There is your new Uzbek, Tajik, and Turkmen reader. Of course he wants his writers to reflect reality in a realistic way.”

Skosyrev hardly provided a recipe for how to re-work the tradition of Firdowsi or preserve other gems from the crown. This awaited further study. However, he was heartened that the war was a great accelerator of historical change, and it promised to bring home (Russian-speaking) soldiers with new demands for realistic prose. Not only did he reassert the role of Russian folklore and classical realism as the basis of a superior cultural model, he reappointed himself and other Russian critics as the irreplaceable guides on this journey. Thus as Ivan-Uzbeks became the equals of other soldiers on the front, Skosyrev outlined how Central Asian writers were still behind and preserved the role of Russians as unquestioned guides and experts.

The assembled audience included poets, translators, and other specialists in Eastern literature, but none of the writers under review. None of them doubted the orthodoxy that socialist realism was the only worthy goal for Central Asians’ literary development. They disagreed about the significance of the crisis of Central Asian literature, and whether socialist realism was even attainable. About half of them agreed vehemently with Skosyrev about Central Asians’ errant ways, however the others were less convinced that Central Asian literature was in any particular crisis and, if it was, who was at fault. Both sides were essentially arguing about whether socialist realism, as an aesthetic and a worldview, was translatable into Eastern cultures and, if it was, when it could be expected.

One group of attendees was more sympathetic. Gogoberidze, Binnik, Penkovskii, and Volpin did not accept the idea of crisis and noted many shortcomings in the work of the SSP. As such, they were far less likely to suggest discarding traditional poetic devices. They pointed to the war-time pace as a culprit forcing writers to sacrifice quality and fall back upon certain motifs and potboilers. Gogoberidze, mentioned that young Georgian writers were also unable to rely on a realist tradition and displayed no shortage of their own “*eins, zwei, drei*” and the replacement of gun with the sword. But he believed they would simply outgrow these tendencies with time. Others noted that the worst offenders of the folkloric or fantasy aesthetic had not visited the front. There was nothing unusually tenacious about the Central Asian culture or its authors’ abilities, and once exposed to the front’s salubrious effects, they returned more willing and capable of depicting what they’d seen realistically. Others wondered how they could criticize any of the Eastern authors without being able to read them in the original. Binnik challenged Russian writers to learn and appreciate what seemed a “strange Eastern enumeration of epithets,” which might be a flaw in Russian culture but a strength in its own.<sup>582</sup> He believed that these “epithets” were a training tool that Eastern authors needed to develop in order to interpret their classical heritage, which made it incumbent upon them to learn their own classics first before approaching the Russians. This perspective radically questioned the superiority of the Russian classics and the orthodox line that socialist realism should not accept Eastern poetics. It was not taken up by other writers.

Volpin, who had spent the war years in Ashkhabad, widened the responsibility for this crisis to include Russian writers, language, and structural issues. He encountered many Turkmen writers who did not speak Russian, much less any European language, making their training in

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<sup>582</sup> This may have been the fantasy writer Aleksandr Yakovlevich Vinnik (1912-1981).

socialist realism all but impossible. Yet Russians who had lived in the republic for years could not speak Turkmen: “We and they are both lazy and not curious.” He also alleged that the pace of war accounted for much of the poor quality. He was instructed by Kerbabaev, the SSP Turk Secretary, to translate 1,500 lines a month, which he felt was impossible. He also believed that a mere trip to the front could not replace actual training and education. He alleged that Kerbabaev’s prose actually got worse after his trip to the front, becoming full of clichés. This was the solitary voice that believed a trip to the front was not a cure-all.

Other writers supported Skosyrev’s position more unequivocally, placing the blame for the persistence of folklore and fantasy upon factors such as Islamicate poetry itself, the will and ability of the Central Asian writers, and the pull of local readers. Several were quite pessimistic about the possibility of change at all, many due to their own first-hand experiences in the Central Asian republics. They believed that the weight of tradition was so rooted among writers and readers that they might not be able to adopt new forms, or at least not without throwing out the past entirely.

Pavlovich reaffirmed what she had signaled a year before in Stalinabad. The Tajik writers were not curious, not open to innovation, deeply conservative, and “fearful” of change. Despite the mobilizations of artists to the front, none had gone, which accounted for the “*eins, zwei, drei*” and the swords in place of guns in their verse.

Petr Slietov, who had also traveled to Tajikistan in 1940, noted that while being charged to make an Uzbek compilation of poems and prose for soldiers that only three of the Uzbek poets wrote about modern material. The collection turned out to be very thin, and rested heavily on Russian works in translation by Pavlenko, Gorbatov, Stavskii and others. When asked why they could not provide more material about contemporary Uzbek soldiers they threw up their hands and said “our prose is still very young.” Slietov was also convinced that Central Asian writers had not adapted to the workday demands of Soviet prose. He and others mentioned a “unsatisfactoriness” in writers’ refusal to critique one another, or work with the necessary pace. He was also sure that the *qasida* was incompatible with socialist poetics. He said that Blok believed the maximum length for a lyric work was 20 lines, but talk to an Uzbek and he’s working on a lyrical work of 80 or 100 lines. He even implied there was something lost in the translation to realism for Uzbek authors. He mentioned Aibek, a “gifted writer,” but whose biography of Alisher Navoi did not undertake the poet’s mental or “creative life,” instead presenting him as a military advisor and statesman. He said that “we Russian-European writers look on the task of the biography of a creative person differently,” and could not imagine a biography of Pushkin without discussion of *Eugene Onegin* and *Boris Godunov*. Slietov’s remarks reveal his frustration at the seeming irreconcilability between Soviet (Russian) and Eastern (Islamicate) literary forms. The critique also revealed the arbitrariness of using nationality or culture as the primary explanation for all of a writer’s creative decision. Thus it was Aibek’s Easternness that explained his decision to shy away from depicting the poet’s rich interior life, focusing instead on his military adventures.

Adelina Adalis, the poet and translator evacuated to Stalinabad, and one of the co-editors of *Literaturnyi Tadzhikistan*, was even more grave, essentially saying that Tajik poetic language was unequipped to incorporate modern life. She believed that “we have been noticing a reversal in the growth of our brother literature in the East for some time already,” and we finally needed to say something – “and coarsely.” Her work on the almanac brought her to the conclusion that Tajik use of classics and folklore had reached a “sclerotic” moment, becoming completely “without life.” She noted that Skosyrev had not even noticed that the Sirius poem included six

lines pulled directly from Firdowsi – a traditional method of honoring the senior poet that Tajik readers would have recognized, but which she considered anathema to Soviet letters. As a self-proclaimed expert in *qasida*, Adalis proclaimed it as widespread and, indeed, the main culprit for dissatisfactory Soviet Eastern poetry. She recalled meeting with old Tajik poets a few years previously who said that they could write well about the old, but poorly about the new because the *ghazal* “does not accept new words. It possesses a certain lexical system and it is difficult to introduce another.”<sup>583</sup> In other words, these authors argued that the lexical system and rhyming schemes of traditional *ghazals* were bound not just to a certain worldview, but a certain vocabulary. Thus they could not accommodate the various Soviet neologism (*soviet, kolkhoz, raikom*, etc.) much less the particular lexicon of modern war (*tank, pulemet, battalion*, etc.).<sup>584</sup> For Adalis, *ghazals* were incompatible with modern needs, thus casting doubt that Central Asians could write socialist realist poetry or prose without giving up their cultural traditions.

A certain Vinokurov believed the conversation could have applied equally to Yakut literature. For him, Yakut and Central Asian writers used old forms because of their slow pace of life, a classic Orientalist critique of the somnolent East. As he said, if one imagines a Yakut who lives by himself, riding atop his bull and singing out improvised verse, a “great tempo” is not needed. He recalled telling Yakut writers that if their beautiful muses walked down a Moscow street in the parade dress of Elizaveta Petrovna, they would be laughed at, similarly they could not use old techniques to capture modern life. He hoped war would be the cultural accelerator to prompt the “reconstruction” of Yakut poetry. When the war broke out, many writers left for the front. But those who remained relied on old folk motifs, and created “unripe poems” that sounded like parodies, including one that cursed Hitler with paralysis, plague, leprosy, and other diseases. Vinokurov was waiting for the poets to return from the front to bring the revolution in Yakut literature that had not yet occurred in the first quarter century of Soviet power.

In addition to the writers and their forms, Central Asian readers were also partly to blame for holding back literary progress. Adalis noted that Tajik workers “thirst for realist literature.” However, they were not the majority of readers in the rural republic. “Many parts of Tajikistan are mountainous and cut off from literacy and written language. Others speak in different dialects. They cannot master Tajik classics much less the new.” She proposed that the answer to this “lifeless” situation was for Tajiks to train themselves on Russian folklore and classics. Due to Tajikistan’s linguistic diversity and (lingering) illiteracy, she believed it would be more useful to jump straight to the Russian classics (from the 19<sup>th</sup> century) rather than struggle with Central Asian classics from the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Lev Penkovskii, the poet and prolific translator of Uzbek verse, elaborated on the stubbornness of Central Asian tradition. He reminded the group that Central Asians had Firdowsi and Navoi – the “pinnacle of poetic mastery” – when all the Russians had was *bylini*. Their

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<sup>583</sup> *Qasida* is a poetic form in Arabic and Persian verse that is typically between 50 and 100 rhyming lines. It developed as a panegyric form to be composed and performed for a patron. *Ghazal* is another popular form in Islamicate poetry that is usually a dozen stanzas. It begins with a rhyming couplet followed by succeeding couplets in which only the second line obeys the rhyme scheme. It developed as a chosen form for Sufi love poetry.

<sup>584</sup> RGALI f. 631, op. 6, d. 704, l. 39. Adalis viewed a similar process at work in Azerbaijan. She wrote that they’d had a breakthrough in studying Mirza-.... [untranscribed], which had led to a rapprochement with Russian literature and an outburst of creativity. But recently such progress had stagnated.

classics were “ingenious” but old and without much innovation since them, hence their rootedness. He recalled asking talented Uzbek and Kyrgyz colleagues why they needed to include a garden and tulips – i.e. the attributes of classics and folklore – even if they were well-versed in Russian and Western poetry. More than once at SSP Uz meetings Uzbek poets explained that “people do not understand new forms, they do not reach them. We’re surrounded by a thousand-year tradition.” For instance, the epic poem “Farkhad and Shirin” had very important opening lines that needed to be retained, along with other “aesthetic laws.” This poet explained his decision to make his poem about a prince: “do not even bother writing the first words if they are about some unknowns. That is bad.” Penkovskii was countering the claim that Central Asian poetry had merely “stagnated” for centuries after its initial peak, and that modern writers were unable to muster the creativity to break from its legacy. Rather, the definition of creativity was different in Central Asian letters, and required authors to prove their fluency with old forms and to cite old masters before beginning to innovate.

Still, Penkovskii was optimistic. As he, Skosyrev, and others mentioned elsewhere, technical advances were easier to master than cultural ones. In Marxist terms, although the base had changed, it would not register immediately in the superstructure. In other words, the great Uzbek socialist realist production novel might very well still appear. Meanwhile, he urged his fellow writers to be more ecumenical towards different forms of patriotic verse. He did not think old poetic forms were completely incompatible with socialist subject matter as Adalis and Sletov claimed. It just required more able writers to reconcile the traditions. He cited the “unusually popular” Uzbek poet Chusti, who wrote “as precisely as Navoi,” employing the same *ghazals* but on military themes. “If they are accepted by a kolkhoznik or soldier, then this is important.” In other words, the “*eins, zwei, drei*” was not all bad if it yielded results. Furthermore, he reminded his colleagues the difference between Soviet poets and traditional singers (*shair, bakshi, akyn*, or in Russian, *skazitel*). There was a hierarchy within Soviet literature, and what was permissible for the practitioners of the oral tradition (folkloric motifs) did not need to concern them, only the work of literate, new Soviet poets. Thus Penkovskii synthesized the two major positions at the meeting, the first which did not think Central Asian authors had any unique struggles, and the second which considered traditional poetics and folklore to be irreconcilable with present needs. He believed tradition was deeply rooted, but not simply an enemy.

The lone and true exit for Penkovskii and others was language. If the prescription for original expression was a dose of Pushkin, this treatment foundered if the authors could not read the classics in their original. Without being able to appreciate them in “all their subtlety,” one could only grasp the main idea. Language learning was a significant but not insurmountable hurdle. But it would require concerted effort to modify a “thousand-year-old” tradition. And if indeed one of the results of the war was the drastic increase in learning Russian, then it would only be a matter of time before Central Asian writers would be able to assess their work through the lens of Pushkin. Language learning was a pleasantly concrete task, much clearer than to reckon with the malleability of *ghazals* to socialist circumstances. Thus Penkovskii ended on an optimistic note and Zelinskii concurred, reminding the others that this struggle was not only a negative one against “vestiges of Eastern formalism, clichés, and heartlessness,” but a “positive struggle for socialist realism,” which was deemed a joyful goal.

The Russian critics argued among themselves without a Central Asian response. The only self-described “Easterner” was Sakhb Dzhamal (Novbari), a mysterious figure who treated his Party biographies with the same fantastic touch as his stories, was born either in Iraq or

Azerbaijan, and claimed to have worked in the Soviet consulate in Turkey.<sup>585</sup> His response is worth mentioning because it reflected the power dynamic at work for non-Russian writers in the SSP. Like the Uzbeks in SSP meetings in Tashkent, Novbari (as he is referred to in the documents) used the opportunity to boisterously uphold the Party line, demanding stricter expectations for Eastern writers, and a more concerted pedagogical effort from Russian writers: “You never worked with us! [...] Has any of us created even the smallest work for the East on Belinskii?” He advocated pairing the most promising writers of the East with the best of the Russians, happily reporting that he was paired with Konstin Fedin. But in addition to demanding better works from Central Asian authors, Novbari also broke rank in support of Eastern culture. He was the lone voice to remind the Russian writers that Lenin’s prescription for “proletarian culture” involved incorporating the culture of all mankind. Although Penkovskii was confident that the *ghazal* could be rehabilitated for mobilizational writing, he did not anticipate for it an all-Union role. Novbari went much farther, positing that Soviet literature and socialist realism might also be bound to absorb some of the “gems” of the Eastern poetic heritage, and not just the other way around. But no one seems to have taken him up on this enjoinder. Although it would have fit the cultural mood of the 1920s, asking Elder Brother to embrace some of the techniques of the East ran antithetical to the dictates of Friendship, which was a one-way street.

Several things stand out from this discussion, first and foremost the new urgency about Central Asian Soviet literary progress, which signaled both its growth and its backwardness. In the early 1930s Central Asian literature was acceptably backward. Iermilov, head of the Uzbek literary brigade, noted that *Literatura Uzbekistana* displayed “traits of youth and immaturity” alongside its achievements. Madzhidi, the far more critical SSP Uz Secretary, castigated the lack of “real life” depicted by Uzbek poets, novelists, and playwrights identified. Noting the authors’ struggles to master new genres, he hoped “old forms of versification” might be used to “reflect modern themes.” The *Tadzhikskii Sbornik* was also deemed a success, despite its “primitivism and simplification” in showing the socialist construction, class war, and the human psyche. “Tearful sentimentality” remained, deriving from the entrenched Persian poetic forms. Its struggle to master realism was pardonable sin of its youth.

The war functioned as a historical accelerator for both artistic growth and developmental standards. Evacuated Russian writers described the joys of presiding over Uzbek literary progress. In *Tashkentskii Al'manakh*, Zelinskii described Uzbek poetry as a “miracle” whose “wide worldview, maturity of political thought, national character, and moral purity” would have shocked someone from the past. Uzbek poetry was an alloy in which the “sacred lines of the East mixed with the clear voice of the North.” Though retaining its national distinctiveness, its political and artistic content were without impurity. Grateful to their hosts and enthralled by their patriotic sacrifice, the volume’s authors did not mention problematic poetics or the lack of realist prose. However by December 1944, with the guests returned to the capital, artistic and political imperfections reentered their vision, and developmental gaps seemed to return to prewar chasms. Meanwhile Tajik literature was never accorded such great heights, no matter the popularity of its mobilizational poetry, songs, and prose, its spirit of patriotism or hatred for the enemy. Russian

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<sup>585</sup> For biographical curios, see <http://berezin.livejournal.com/1648394.html>. Dzhamaal specialized in depicting the “foreign East” in such books as *A Dark-skinned Boy in Search of Happiness*, *The Palestinian’s Daughter*, and *When the Tulip Wilted*. Dzhamaal (Novbari) also noted, with some pleasure, that there were some double standards at work, and that Andrei Platonov “is not a Tajik but he has the same ‘eins, zvei, drai.’”



writers focused on the stark differences in political activity and poetics. The war was a unifying experience, as previously unknown populations encountered one another and engaged in common labor and sacrifice. This had the affect of flattening literary standards as well. For the first time Central Asian writers were held accountable to the metric of socialist realism. And as Skosyrev and others noted, for reasons including the weight of tradition on writers and readers, gaps in linguistic knowledge, and shortcomings in mentorship, socialist realism still seemed far beyond the horizon for them. Though the elevation of standards was a cause for celebration, it also kept Central Asian authors in need of Russian expertise, a development gap expressed in clear national terms.

Second, are the myriad functions of socialist realism in the discussion. Not only did it serve as the unquestioned goal for Central Asian letters and the objectively superior literary form, it was an aesthetic with Western and Russian origins, antithetical to Islamicate poetic forms. Lenin's idea of a "proletarian culture" drawing upon the achievements of all humankind was no longer to be found, except in a brief suggestion from the solitary "Eastern" voice. Socialist realism did not seem to have room for different national tints. Instead, the appearance of socialist realism in the region was a zero-sum game. Thus the debate centered around an anomaly: why Central Asian socialist realism had not appeared despite the war and, secondarily, whether the "jewels" of the Central Asian poetic crown – the *ghazal* and the *qasida* – were worth saving. In another context they may have stood a chance at preservation under the rubric of "national in form, socialist in content," but apart from Adalis and perhaps Novbari, none present knew the tradition nor could read them in the original. They spoke with clear disdain for poetic forms that they barely knew, unable to tell the difference between a fine *ghazal* and a "pot-boiler."

Socialist realism was also assumed to be the lens through which Soviet people saw the world; a political and aesthetic optic. Writers in Moscow, Stalinabad, and Tashkent repeatedly held that once the Central Asian writers visited the front they would have no choice but to employ observation-based description to capture its overwhelming, harrowing detail. They believed that modern life and modern warfare could simply not be captured in traditional forms. Similarly, Russian writers were certain that progressive Central Asians – defined as soldiers, workers, or other professionals – viewed the world in this realist mode themselves and demanded realism from their writers. This thirst for realism seems to be born out in fact. Skosyrev mentioned that his original speech in Ashkhabad was even more "harsh," but was applauded by the "most active people," like the poet Akhal Durdy, who said he was up to his neck with tulips and roses and that it was not the people who demanded them but the writers. The "battle sketches" submitted by Khudzhakhanov to the historian at the II AN UzSSR were done in a realist manner, and he was miffed that such lively, truthful prose was snubbed by the newspaper. At an SSP Uz meeting in November 1945 a frontline author confirmed that he and others craved more realist prose and subjects about contemporary heroes.<sup>586</sup> And in Stalinabad Party meeting members blamed the stubborn demand for Firdowski's *Farkhat i Shirin* and *One Thousand and one Nights* in the city library on the absence of translated realist works.<sup>587</sup> They assumed that once translated, Tajik readers would naturally gravitate to realism, and that political maturity was rooted in literary tastes. In this way, they imagined the war was not only a social conveyor belt and a school for Russian, but also a training course for socialist realism. Central Asians writers

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<sup>586</sup> TsGA RUz f. 2356, op. 1, d. 104, l. 15.

<sup>587</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 684, l.

and readers clearly understood the political stakes of these aesthetic wars. They conceived of realism as the lens to prove their progressive Soviet credentials.

Finally, we see in stark terms how socialist realism functioned as an imperial ideology, joining other justifications for Soviet Russian expertise in Central Asia. As concrete as the region's political and technological backwardness, the absence of this artistic aesthetic perpetuated a role for Russian literary experts and their errant Central Asian protégés. I do not use the imperial framework as a crude simplification to apply to all spheres of Soviet cultural or political life. However, in literature the imperial comparison is productive. Unlike Communist Party efforts to attract a native proletariat, where small success stories were exorbitantly celebrated, in literature Russians were predominantly negative, emphasizing Central Asian failures amidst a backdrop of successes and doing so in clear national terms. The perpetuation of the gap in aesthetics perpetuated the institutional role of the SSP Nationalities Commission. Further, like many arguments for colonial rule, the Russian writers' claims required leaps of credulity and revealed no small amount of hypocrisy. For instance, they had to explain away medieval Central Asian poetry's sophistication compared with Russian literature, which they did via the Marxist logic of development and "stagnation." Making this argument, the Russian writers self-consciously represented Russian and also all of Western culture in helping raise the Eastern poets from the trap of inadequate poetic approaches.

In addition, though they castigated the Central Asians for fixation on historical themes, Russian writers had provided the blueprint. Whether in Aleksei Tolstoi's novels *Ivan the Terrible* (1943) and *Peter the First* (1935, 1937, 1946), Eisenstein's films *Alexander Nevskii* (1938) and *Ivan the Terrible* (1944), or newspaper articles on Suvorov and other military figures, Russian artists led the way in using national history for contemporary patriotism. The Uzbek publications of *Dzhelaleddin*, *Gerogly*, *Raushan* and *Alpamysh* were the functional equivalent, but were guilty of straying from realism. Meanwhile, even a worthy realist historical novel, Aibek's *Navoi*, was perceived more for its shortcomings than its strengths. Furthermore, just as Soviet Russian writers had led them back to their history, they joined Central Asian poets in perpetuating the folkloric and fantastic lens. They did so by perpetuating stereotypes of Central Asians themselves, like when Ehrenburg described the Kazakhs as preternatural warriors, or the Uzbeks as having the hearts of a lion. Olesha viewed the Turkmen as a nation of warrior-poets, and the national stereotypes perpetuated by the likes of Aleksei Tolstoi in his depiction of Uzbeks in Fergana were full of their own clichés and boiler plates, even within the realist tradition. If one remembers that socialist realism itself was mastered in order to capture the almost supernatural achievements of Soviet people during the First Five Year Plan, one realizes that Skosyrev's divide between folklore and fantasy on one side and socialist realism on the other is actually a porous border.

In this tradition, the war provided another dose of outsized proportions and superhuman sacrifices. Tolstoi and Zelinskii and others in SSP Uz meetings described the unexpected and "miraculous" heroism of Uzbek soldiers and workers, and the no less significant growth of writers and soldier-poets. Gorodetskii and Sultanov asserted the theme of Uzbekistan's "awakening" and its role in the war-time "Eastern renaissance." *Tashkentskii Al'manakh* portrayed the maturation of young Uzbek workers in evacuated factories. Iusupov demanded "gigantic" and "majestic works" to reflect the spirit of the age. And even the small profiles of kolkhoz laborers like Inobad Kholdarova and Ogulkhon Kurbanova tersely described superhuman feats on the homefront. Each characterization, in its own way a hyperbole, showed how the Russian writers cornered the market on acceptable depictions of heroism, miracles, and

legend. Meanwhile the miracles performed by Kerbabaev's Ailar and Ikrami's Mekhtarbot were ruled to be aberrant. Of course outside of military literature, Soviet literature had bracketed off fantasy and science fiction as safe precincts for the unlikely and the supernatural, however Central Asians lacked these traditional subgenres. In this way the Russian-dominated SSP denied Central Asians the right to portray the fantastic and the heroic in their own national styles.

Central Asian writers made great strides in the war to master new genres such as frontline-poetry and observation-based sketches. They also polished traditional forms into patriotic verse. Poets lifted themselves from regional obscurity onto the pan-Soviet stage by demonstrating that national springs wrought universal themes. The evacuation brought Russian and Central Asian writers together for the first time. Locals absorbed the evacuees into their local unions as trusted guides and teachers, and evacuees translated and compiled local verse and proselytized it in Moscow and all over the Soviet Union. Furthermore the presence of Russian evacuees resulted in a rigorous restructuring of Central Asian writers' unions. And these war-time interactions modeled the broader cultural introductions such as the maturation of translation theory, the growth of scholarly interest in Central Asian epics, and lateral translations among the various Soviet peoples. Thus it was against a backdrop of great breakthroughs that the SSP focused on Central Asia's deficiencies in socialist realism, thereby chartering for itself a postwar role of continued mentorship of perpetually backward Central Asian writers.

The leveling effects of the war combined with the unplanned Soviet development project in the "formerly backward" periphery addresses some fundamental questions in the context of Soviet multinational history. In the 1920s and 1930s after their brief visits, Russian writers left the burden of transformation with the local writers' unions. They departed with reports that emphasized progress – but with much work ahead, especially in prose and playwriting. However, with wartime publishing opportunities and the lengthy sojourn of leading Soviet writers, the onus of transformation became shared by both sides.

Akin to the transformation of the millions of "Ivan-Tajiks" on the front, writers were patronizingly but earnestly celebrated for taking their final steps towards creative and political maturity in the hallowed aesthetic of socialist realism. As their compatriots took developmental strides as soldiers and factory workers, Central Asian writers were charged with creating the characters and role models for a new generation of Soviet Central Asians that had seemingly expunged its backwardness once and for all. By the war's end Gafur Guliam (1943-1944) and Aibek (1945) had been awarded Stalin Prizes as a sure sign of Uzbek literary maturity. So what did it mean for Central Asian literature to have grown up? SSP discussions focused on the negatives – Central Asians' "folkloric" approaches and the overall low quality in playwriting, prose, and children's literature. The writers themselves often defended their creative choices in the name of comprehensibility to their readers. Old forms such as the *qasida*, *ghazal*, and the miraculous lens of folklore, they argued, were more fitting for local preferences. Central Asians must have felt that the "mature" prose that the SSP called for were in fact Russian genres and outlooks under a different name. Other writers believed that "new" Central Asians – factory workers, soldiers, and intelligentsia – demanded realism and tried to write it accordingly. In this way seemingly esoteric questions about literary aesthetic were tied to social transformation. Who were the Soviet Uzbek, Turkmen, and Tajik readers? Did they prefer the "progressive" lens of Soviet realism or "traditional" aesthetics of heroism and *ghazals*? These competing characterizations of the Central Asian reading public reflected the actual contours of a society in

flux, in which a young, growing, Russian-speaking urban intelligentsia and former soldiers was offset (in the official mindset) from a rural population with traditional tastes and horizons.

Despite the cross-cultural friendships, surge of translations, and the supposedly dizzying growth of Central Asian authors, Russian authors demarcated new fissures between themselves and the writers of the periphery. Paradoxically, as Turakul Toshev and millions of other Central Asian soldiers were forging new hybrid identities, with a few noteworthy exceptions, Central Asian writers failed to overcome their national origins. Akin to the liberal promise of empire that set developmental measures on the horizon and then kept moving them back, Russian Soviet writers felt a certain professional encroachment of Central Asian brothers. But unlike in other empires, instead of holding them perpetually at bay, Russian Soviet writers eventually resolved the situation by treating them as separate, but not quite equals. While on the front it was possible to imagine the many Soviet nationalities growing together into one – the Turakuls becoming Ivan-Tajiks, and then perhaps only Ivans – this national thinking foundered on the rocks of culture. In the sphere of writing and reading, Central Asia was found to be irrevocably different. Russian writers wrote for Russians, and everyone else. Uzbek writers wrote for Uzbeks. Thus the *sovetskii narod* thinking of the war turned sharply back into the Friendship of the Peoples.

## CHAPTER SIX: *The victories of Ivan-Uzbek and the failures of postwar transformation*

In conversation at his Andijan home, Ortyqjon Abdurakhimov (b. 1924) described being a hot-headed youth who too easily got into fights, and for whom military discipline was a blessing. His “battle path” took him from the Ukrainian front in 1942 all the way to Budapest and Vienna before a detour to Ukraine to fight the “Banderovtsy.” Growing up he learned Russian among the Russian and Armenian youths near a local factory, which allowed him to become radio signaler. Despite his relatively urbane childhood, it was only in the army that he took up drinking and smoking, habits he retained until well into old age. In response to my question about Muslim dietary restrictions he said he ate everything he was given but that many Uzbeks refrained from eating pork meat though they would drink its broth. He described serving in a unit with Kazakhs, Armenians, Azeris, and Tajiks, and spoke with special reverence for his commanding officer, a Russian from Alma-Ata, and a Jewish politruk.<sup>588</sup>

Other than minor infirmities and the medals he lost some time ago, the only tangible artifacts from Abdurakhimov’s military service are the gold he sent back from a Budapest jeweler that later became his false teeth, and three photos taken in a Vienna photo salon. Photos like these taken in Budapest, Bucharest, Warsaw, and elsewhere became popular mementos for Red Army soldiers celebrating their Victory with military comrades. One of these depicts him and a soldier named Koniushin from Russia, his closest military friend, with whom he kept in touch for many years. The two are about the same size and age and wear nearly identical military issue caps and uniforms. Abdurakhimov’s chest has three medals while his friend’s has none. The two sit slightly forward and lean in towards one another to reflect their affection and likely the command of the photographer. Without knowledge of their backgrounds it would be very difficult to recognize any faith or ethnic differences between the men.

A frequently reproduced photo of Red Army graffiti at the Reichstag shows “From Tashkent” etched alongside other messages and hometowns from across the Soviet Union. These inscriptions represent both the diversity and unity of the Soviet armed forces. All are written in Russian. But each obscures the writer’s nationality. “Tashkent” or “Stalinabad” could have been written by an ethnic Russian, but just as plausibly an Uzbek, Tajik, or any of the other local nationalities who found in military service a sort of finishing school for transcending his narrow, local national identity for something more broadly Soviet, as a hybrid Ivan-Uzbek and Ivan-Tajik.

When the Central Asian Ivans returned to their hometowns and kishlaks they found exhausted kolkhozes and depleted flocks. In Uzbekistan the economic balance had transformed by evacuated factories, new mines, and a new, multi-national proletariat. They discovered young women who were attuned to affairs of state, and integrated into various kolkhoz roles. They were Soviet mothers and wives as well as producers on the home front. But they were still Inobads, not Inochkas.

The final chapter assesses the fate of Uzbek men and women in the aftermath of the war. What were the fates of the Muhammeds who became Mishas? How durable was the Ivan-Uzbek identity? Would it become brittle once removed from the fires of war? And with the return of thousands of men to Uzbek cities and villages, what lay in store for the Inobads? How did the war experience affect Uzbek gender relations? More broadly, how did the war experience change Uzbeks’ relation to the Soviet state?

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<sup>588</sup> Interview with Ortyqjon Abdurakhimov, September 20, 2014.

Uzbekistan of the immediate post-war was vastly different from the republic of 1941. Kolkhoz production was diversified but in shambles. Agricultural acreage and mechanization decreased even as several large canals were dug for what would become the framework for agricultural expansion into formerly barren lands. The republic ceased its cotton monoculture in order to feed itself and other parts of the Soviet Union, introducing sugar beets and other food crops. These changes were overseen without the presence of seasoned kolkhoz and Party experts, and carried out by a workforce without animals and machines. The labor of young women and children was repaid in new authority in kolkhoz life though most leadership positions were dominated by men.

In 1945 the Party announced a cotton campaign that effectively continued the war-time urgency, giving the toiling people little relief. In an effort to reassert Party control in the villages and to impel still greater production, the government reduced the number of kolkhozes from 6,700 to about 2,000 in 1955.<sup>589</sup> Smaller, less productive kolkhozes were joined to larger ones, thus consolidating rural power in fewer, more trustworthy hands and creating higher stakes struggles for local authority.

The republic's demographics became more complex and multi-national. Of the over one million evacuees, untold numbers remained, especially for factory and mining jobs in the republic's cities. Tashkent's population alone increased by approximately 29,000 people from 1939 to 1946.<sup>590</sup> In March 1949 the republic housed more than 179,000 "special settlers", including 115,101 Crimean Tatars, 41,770 Meskhetian Turks, as well as Germans, Kalmyks, and smaller numbers from the North Caucasus.<sup>591</sup> Uzbekistan also became home to 12,000 Greek partisans upon losing that country's civil war in 1949. The republic was also the chosen destination for smaller numbers of Kurdish and Iranian political refugees. Including the Koreans who had arrived in 1938, Uzbekistan became the home of more previously exogenous groups. With each of these new arrivals the Party-state was promoting hospitality and international friendship as an indigenous Uzbek national trait. The famed warmth and hospitality of the Uzbek people was celebrated in earnest during the war and transitioned easily as the Soviet state began to promote just this image to the developing world.

And perhaps most significantly, Muslim religious life reemerged into the open. The Central Asian Spiritual Directorate (*Dukhovnoe Upravlenie Musul'man Srednii Azii i Kazakhstana*, SADUM) was building its institutional credentials and authority in the eyes of the faithful while constructing an Islamic-oriented pillar of Soviet support. Instrumental in this effort was its oversight of mosque and shrine re-openings and the resurrection of the region's only madrasa in Bukhara. SADUM also presided over the selection of the first group of Central Asian Hajjis in a generation. While Muslim believers themselves often reactivated these spaces and religious institutions without official permission, SADUM was quickly becoming a powerful voice as the state-sanctioned arbiter of religious questions and personnel. But although SADUM was meant to buttress state power, its very existence acknowledged that the Party had ceded its monopoly on ideological truth.

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<sup>589</sup> Hansen, "Ambivalent Empire," 39.

<sup>590</sup> Tashkent's population was 595,800 on July 1, 1945 and rose by another 18,301 the next year. Its 1939 population was 584,955. See RGASPI f. 17, op. 122, d. 184, l. 14; *Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleniia 1939 goda: osnovnye itogi* (Moskva: "Nauka," 1992), 53.

<sup>591</sup> GARF f. 9479, op. 1, d. 483, l. 138.

Almost half of Uzbekistan's able-bodied men fought in the war, and almost a third of them perished. According to data from Nuronii, the Uzbekistan fund for veterans' support, some 1.5 million men were drafted, 640,000 received injuries, and 485,000 never returned.<sup>592</sup> As in other corners of the Soviet Union, Uzbek society was ravaged by the human cost of war. Ali Sabirov recalled the visibility of disabled and drunk veterans in Tashkent immediately after the war, men without arms or legs in wheelchairs, many who resorted to begging. He considered 1947 the true end of the war era, when ration cards disappeared and bread could be bought freely in stores. Qochqar Honazarov recalled veterans' battles with mental illness. Others coped silently. Inobat Yunusova's husband trained as an officer in Tashkent and returned to work for the Ministry of Internal Affairs but he almost never spoke of the war.

As in other Soviet republics, war invalids struggled to find productive work because it was not in enterprises' productive interests to hire the disabled. An Uzbek TsK KP(b) report from January 1945 estimated that only 51,457 out of 62,032 – some 83 percent – of invalids had gone on to work or study, about half of them in agriculture and only 16 percent in industry. Because their state pensions were not enough to live on, many invalids could be found in bazars in cities like Tashkent, Samarkand, and Urgut selling cigarettes, tobacco, and beer at “speculative” prices. And living conditions at state invalid homes and industrial dormitories were described as squalid, without pillows, sheets, blankets, and fresh clothes.<sup>593</sup> These outcomes were hardly what the Party-state had promised its disabled veterans and did not represent a stable social contract on which to build the postwar order.

These numbers eventually improved, however, but more via the initiative of individuals than increased government aid capacity. Although Party documents did not pay attention to nationality, it is likely that ethnic Russians and other European invalids struggled disproportionately. Many having arrived in the republic on the eve of war or just after, without large family networks, and often trained in industrial capacities, they were more reliant on state aid and the benevolence of enterprise directors. Without a doubt, the traditionally large Central Asian extended family structure and the varied, non-labor-dependent jobs at kolkhozes – such as watchmen, cleaners, postmen, herders, gardeners, shop assistants – allowed rural men of local nationalities to make ends meet and integrate themselves into local society.

Able-bodied soldiers often remained with their units in European capitals for a year or two while others were sent to the Eastern front against Japan or to Ukraine to put down the anti-Soviet insurrection. Those who had been prisoners of war, like Turakul Toshev, were delayed by interrogation or a second imprisonment. Uzbek veterans experienced the universal victories and tragedies of war. But the war had a particular meaning for them. Military service and their

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<sup>592</sup> See [unpublished pamphlet] *Ma'lumotlar kitobi. Informatsionnaia kniga*. Tashkentskoe gorodskoe otdelenie fonda “Nuronii” po sotsial'noi podderzhke veteranov Uzbekistana. 1995. Uzbek historian Khamid Ziaev estimates that 1.5 million served and that 420,000 perished. See Kh. Ziaev, *Uzbekiston va adabioti va san'ati*, No. 20, June 20, 2003, as cited by the Uzbekistan Embassy in Moscow, <http://uzembassy.ru/pr6.htm>. Last accessed July 29, 2015.

<sup>593</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 122, d. 100, l. 156-170. A similar report for the Turkmen SSR found only 75 percent of invalids had found work, along with similar difficulties with housing and living conditions, l. 44-51. On the economic disincentive for enterprises to hire disabled workers, see Beate Fieseler, “The bitter legacy of the ‘Great Patriotic War’: Red Army disabled soldiers under late Stalinism,” in Juliane Furst, ed., *Late Stalinist Russia: Society between reconstruction and reinvention* (Routledge: New York, 2006), 54.

experiences abroad had shaped them in ways unlike previous generations. But the Uzbekistan they encountered was different as well.

Even in the 1920s the state considered Red Army service to be a revolutionary school for Central Asian men to bring Communist culture back to their native *kishlaks* and *auls*. The million men eventually demobilized back to Uzbekistan composed a cultural transmission belt without equal.<sup>594</sup> Veterans spent years absorbing the ideals of patriotism and internationalism and gaining various military skills – like shooting, gun maintenance, driving – but most importantly the Russian language. Although the Red Army catered to national cultural differences and preferences, by the end of the war many Central Asian men instead asserted their universal Soviet cultural attributes, as indicated in their letters from the front. They took on Russian nicknames and habits of diet and drink. Some remained in European Russia upon demobilization. Many took Russian wives. Veterans experienced this transformation not as “Russification” but rather an assimilation into the culture of victory over fascism, the foundational achievement of their generation and a multinational achievement whose *lingua franca* and de facto culture happened to be Russian. If the Soviet Union was in fact a communal apartment in which various national republics inhabited the rooms and the Russians made do with the hallway, the war impelled Uzbeks and other nationalities to open their doors and stride into the corridors.

Demobilization also bolstered the Party’s presence throughout Uzbekistan. By December 1946 124,158 Uzbekistan veterans returned from the army and 26,450 were Party members or candidates, immediately raising the Party presence by about one third.<sup>595</sup> By 1947 an estimated two-thirds of all Communists in Uzbekistan had joined the Party during the war, making it a relatively young group who associated Party membership with the victory over Fascism.<sup>596</sup> They were joined by those referred to as its “best” men, the rural Uzbek Communists whose departures in the first months of war had left a vacuum in rural Party organizations. Their return plus the consolidation of kolkhozes after the war ensured that the Uzbek countryside would never again lack a Communist presence. Historian Mark Edele has noted that not only did the war levy of Communists increase underrepresented Party groups like the Uzbeks, but that these kolkhozniki-turned-Party members were among the most important subgroups in the Party, men for whom the war was an “autobiographical point of reference and point of departure” and who, more so than others, were transformed from “peasants into Soviets” by the war. They were less likely to return to their villages and were more likely to “preserve the momentum of upward mobility after the war,” as indicated by their presence in higher education. If they did return to villages it was usually in positions of authority.<sup>597</sup>

Military service also integrated non-Party Uzbek families even more closely into state institutions. Soldiers’ families and war widows were eligible for state pensions and preferential

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<sup>594</sup> According to data from Nuronii, the Uzbekistan Foundation for Social Support of Veterans, 1.5 million men from Uzbekistan fought and 485,000 died in the Great Patriotic War. See [unpublished pamphlet] *Ma'lumotlar kitobi. Informatsionnaia kniga*. Tashkentskoe gorodskoe otdelenie fonda “Nuronii” po sotsial’noi podderzhke veteranov Uzbekistana. 1995.

<sup>595</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 122, d. 141, l. 71.

<sup>596</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 708, l. 113ob.

<sup>597</sup> Mark Edele, *Soviet veterans of the Second World War: a popular movement in an authoritarian society: 1941-1991* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 136, 138.



food and goods distribution. Military families were also eligible to receive monetary and food aid from fellow villagers and kolkhoz members.<sup>598</sup>

Soviet veterans considered the war their most formative experience, as a zero hour from which the rest of their lives began.<sup>599</sup> Red Army service sealed men's participation in the central epic of their generation, equivalent to the Revolution for their fathers. The war launched the careers of a new generation of political and cultural elites, and provided redemption to various "former people," criminals, members of suspect nationalities, and other socially marginal. Able-bodied veterans and those fortunate to move past the trauma described the war as a valuable but rigorous rite of passage that trained them for the rest of their lives. Madamin Khasanov (b. 1924) described the transformation like this:

The front, the army made me a different person. I endured all the trials that fell to me. There were many like me, but also those who could not endure. I think the ones who emerged with honor from the crucible of war returned to peacetime and were not afraid of anything. Many suffered on the front. It was difficult. It was painful to lose friends, but the war hardened me. This tempering (*zakalka*) probably helped me long after in life as I had to work in very responsible positions. To not come undone, to be strong, to appreciate the little things, to clench your teeth and persevere – only war can teach this.<sup>600</sup>

Khasanov's reflection, honed over a lifetime of Victory Days and public speaking appearances, can be considered an orthodox account of the war's effect on the frontline generation: making them reflective, stoic, and resolved to lead amidst the challenges of peacetime. His use of "tempering" suggests an analogous Bolshevik maturation to the hero of Nikolai Ostrovskii's influential socialist realist novel, *How the Steel Was Tempered (Kak zakalialas' stal')* from 1936. Highly decorated and promoted for his participation in a just war, his personal biography became intertwined with Party and state service.

Khasanov embodied the coalescing of personal ambition, good fortune, and "affirmative action" that elevated veterans into positions of political and social influence. Each of the ten boys in his class fought but only four returned. He was granted leave to his native village of Voroshilovsk (now Khonabad) in Andijan oblast just days after May 9, 1945. He recalls being treated like a hero, and being driven to kolkhozes and schools to speak about life at the front, as a living embodiment of the local contribution to Victory. His army service lasted another year before he returned full time. Twenty-two years old, able-bodied, literate in Russian, having completed an NKVD officers' course and become a *politruk* and Party member, he was in high demand. The kolkhoz chairman sought to make him the accountant but the director of a new leather-tanning factory, opened during the war, interceded that as a newcomer he needed to develop local cadres, and overrode the kolkhoz chairman. In this way Khasanov was elevated into the industrial sector that the state sought to fill with ethnic Uzbeks. He began work as a laboratory assistant and a year later became the deputy director of the factory.

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<sup>598</sup> Sh. Aliev, "Pomoshch' sem'iam frontovikov," *Pravda Vostoka*, March 3, 1944.

<sup>599</sup> On veterans' perception as the war as a new point of origin in their lives, see Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, 324. Conversely, Mark Edele grants this characterization of the war only to the youngest soldiers who had no other frame of reference or other career to fall back upon when the war ended. See Edele, 13-14.

<sup>600</sup> Biographical details from interview with Madamin Khasanov, June 26, 2013, and his autobiographical pamphlet prepared over years of interview requests.

A year later Khasanov was again at the forefront of the Party's political objectives when he was summoned to the *raikom*. Whether in newly consolidated kolkhozes or in inefficient government sectors, the Uzbek Party identified veterans as trustworthy executors of its agenda to reassert control. Khasanov was informed that consumer goods and trade sector was rife with theft and embezzlement and that a government order sought to strengthen it by hiring former frontoviki. Around 1947 he became deputy chairman of the district society of consumer goods (*obshchestvo potrebkoperatsii*) and rose through the ranks of the republic's lucrative consumer goods sector, earning a degree at distance from the All-Union Cooperative tekhnikum, and then spending three years at the Moscow Higher Cooperative School. He led the Andijan oblast *potrebsoiuz* (consumers' union) before ultimately becoming the Minister of Trade for Uzbekistan in 1977.

Although Madamin Khasanov's career was uniquely accomplished, almost all of the fifteen other veterans interviewed for this study attained measures of success and responsibility in the post-war social order. This sample size is certainly not representative of all veteran outcomes. Each interviewee was selected by their local veterans' organization in Tashkent, Andijan, and Gazalkent for their lucidity and likely their achievements. These men were the most fortunate, the longest living, the healthiest, and the most accomplished. And only two of them lived or worked on kolkhozes. However, they are not anomalies either. They represent the generation defined and often elevated by war, and almost all of them came from humble beginnings.

Among those interviewed were the head of the Uzbekistan Composer's Union; a prosecutor trained in Moscow; a scholar of modern France and translator of Lenin into Uzbek at Moscow's Institute of Marxism-Leninism; a KGB general who studied in Moscow and oversaw operations near the Afghan border at Termez; and a kolkhoz chairman. Others worked in lower rungs in Party or other patriotic work, such as several who remained in the army, including as a driving instructor. There was also a career "organizer" in the Komsomol, a train engineer, a physical education teacher, and the director of a food store. The only veteran with a modest career wholly apart from state organizations – a truck driver – struggled because he had two strikes against him, as the son of Uzbek kulaks deported to Kherson, Ukraine in 1930 and then having lost his army documents.<sup>601</sup>

A successful military career was an essential requirement for high Uzbek Party servants into the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras. Sharaf Rashidovich Rashidov (1917-1983), the long-serving First Secretary TsK KP(b) Uzbekistan (1959-1983), began his career as a Party member and journalist in Samarkand oblast before enlisting in the first year of war. Being demobilized with an injury he briefly returned to journalism before starting his rise in the oblast Party structure. Nuriddin Akramovich Mukhitdinov (1917-2008), First Secretary of Uzbekistan (1955-1957) and the first Central Asian to serve in the Politbiuro TsK KP(b) SSSR (1957-1961), became a *politruk* and earned his Party ticket at Stalingrad before receiving a serious leg wound. His memoirs include an episode demonstrating Uzbekistan's growing status in the Soviet war-time conscience and the war as a facilitator of inter-ethnic friendships. While on the operating table for an amputation a Ukrainian doctor asked his nationality and, learning he was Uzbek, exclaimed that all of the clinic's sheets, gowns, bandages, and swabs came from Uzbek cotton, and resolved to operate instead of amputate to ensure Mukhitdinov could return home and deliver lectures and propaganda in Uzbekistan. He learned the doctor's family had been

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<sup>601</sup> Interview with Shoikrom Shonosirov, November 25, 2013.

evacuated to Karshi, and later befriended them after the war upon learning of the doctor's death. Mukhitdinov was appointed as Party secretary for propaganda in Namangan obkom in 1946 before beginning his meteoric rise to become Khrushchev's chosen representative of the Soviet East to the Cold War's unaligned East.<sup>602</sup>

We might consider these men the ultimate Soviet Uzbek Ivans. They were perfectly assimilated into the Russian-speaking world of Soviet and Party institutions, several of them going on to live in Moscow for a time, and other traveling around the Soviet Union and even internationally, taking positions that required their wives to play active social roles. Although most had wives of local nationalities, one married a Ukrainian and another had a "secret" Ukrainian wife. The photos from their post-war lives showed many with the characteristically long, wavy hair of the pan-Soviet intelligentsia. None of them continued using their Russian military nicknames after their service, but others retained habits picked up in the military, such as smoking and drinking, albeit some of them limited this to a ritualized drink on Victory Day. Although this mosaic of behaviors and habits is hardly a summation of complex worldviews, these attributes reflected the men's fluency within a pan-Soviet cultural world. As for the religious beliefs of these now elderly men, one described himself as a "civilized Muslim," emphasizing his comfort with worldly habits yet retaining the duty of prayer, while another described himself as a "pure-blooded Muslim," emphasizing his renunciation of vice and his marriage to a Muslim woman. Of course, some of these self-descriptions reflect a turning to faith in old age and the fall of the officially atheistic Soviet state. However, none of the men recalled a conflict between their Muslim faith and their long careers in Soviet service, aligning them with scholarly accounts that emphasize how Uzbeks rarely viewed Islam and Communism in contradiction to one another after the war.<sup>603</sup> Nor did they view their Soviet and Uzbek national patriotism as at odds. Most importantly, military service launched a generation of men into professions where they worked to advance the interests of the Soviet Uzbek state. Just as the Stalinist "Revolution from above" actually solidified the Soviet regime by creating a new class of young, socially mobile recipients of jobs, so did World War II solidify the Soviet Uzbek state among young patriots who were grateful for opportunities to rise in Party and state work.<sup>604</sup>

Of course, most of the Uzbek Ivans returned to more humble stations. The cultural hybridity that defined this identity was less pronounced in them and more likely to dissipate after the war. These were men like Turakul Toshev and myriad other simple kolkhozniki who were not interviewed for this study. They spoke Russian less freely and their careers were less international and even less interethnic. Depending on their fates they wound up removed from the halls of power. But still they were personally transformed by the simple fact of military service, as described by Madamin Khasanov. From the moment they were demobilized the state relied on them to advance their economic and political programs in Uzbek villages. The archival record retains traces of this spirit and rhetoric. One veteran epitomized the transfer of the spirit of

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<sup>602</sup> Nuriddin Mukhitdinov, *Reka vremeni. (ot Stalina do Gorbacheva). Vospominaniia* (Moskva: "Rusti-Rosti", 1995), 26-29. For more on Mukhitdinov's career, see Masha Kirasirova, "'Sons of Muslims' in Moscow: Soviet Central Asian Mediators to the Foreign East, 1955-1962," *Ab Imperio* 4 (2011): 106-132.

<sup>603</sup> See Khalid, *Islam after Communism*; Tasar, "Islamically Informed Soviet Patriotism."

<sup>604</sup> See Sheila Fitzpatrick, "The Russian Revolution and Social Mobility: A Reexamination of the Question of Social Support for the Soviet Regime in the 1920s and 1930s," *Politics and Society*, vol. 13, no. 2 (1984): 119-141.

victory to peacetime kolkhozes. At a meeting of demobilized soldiers in Romitanskii district in Bukhara oblast senior sergeant Islam Sharipov vowed: “As a participant in the storm of Berlin I announce to you, comrades, that we, the demobilized Red Army soldiers, will give all our strength to help you grow the harvest of victory, to ensure that the growth of cotton is carried out with honor.”<sup>605</sup> At kolkhoz Ittifak in Fergana oblast the veteran Ishimbai Ikramov (b. 1911) was interviewed in 1944 as one of five brothers who had gone to fight. He had joined the Party in 1940 and before the war worked as a district accountant. Now he served in the crosshairs of temptation and responsibility amidst economic shortages, as the manager of the warehouse for the Altaryk raikom consumer goods warehouse.<sup>606</sup>

Uzbek veterans were a conspicuous presence in their home kolkhozes as representatives of the great Victory. In the span of a generation the uniform of a Red Army soldier gained local roots and Uzbek legitimacy, ceasing to be associated solely with ethnic Russians. Photos taken at “model” kolkhozes in 1944 and 1945 by visiting researchers from the Institute of History AN UzSSR show veterans proudly wearing short-cut white shirts and army-issued belts, trousers, boots, and fur hats (*shapka-ushanka*) in Fergana, Namangan, Andijan, and Tashkent oblasts, setting them apart from the kolkhozniki who had remained during the war in their rubber galoshes, padded khalat, and tiubiteikas.<sup>607</sup> Just as the boots and leather coats of commissars during the Civil War became an important statement of Bolshevik credentials, so did Red Army accouterments legitimize these men’s authority by linking them to Victory. Soviet ethnographers followed the fashions of rural Uzbeks diligently for evidence of cultural merging and the “Russian influence” on national fashions. Collectivization and the introduction of rural stores brought a first wave of “European” manufactured clothes, but the war brought another large push. A “military look” was observed to be the favored style of kolkhoz leaders and white-collar workers at the kolkhoz im. Stalina in Chartak district, Namangan oblast, characterized by the soldier’s tunic (*gimnasterka french*) and trousers (*briuki galife*), and leather boots.<sup>608</sup> By the ethnographers’ estimations, Russian military fashions signaled a whole set of progressive cultural practices, indicating the growing saturation of universal Soviet values in the Uzbek countryside.

Frontoviki in the countryside did not wait long to assume positions of authority. In 1947 the TsK KP(b) UzSSR reported on the “impermissible” changeover and “baseless” prosecutions of kolkhoz chairmen. In one year in Samarkand oblast 54 kolkhoz chairs were replaced, with several positions changing more than once. Andijan oblast witnessed 22 such removals. The frontovik generation was using both its ideological authority and interpersonal connections to remove chairmen of an older generation, revealing their ambitions to define the post-war order. An example from the ethnic Uzbek village of Oshoba in the Fergana valley portion of Tajikistan shows how these coups could occur, toppling even long-serving “little Stalins.” Structurally, kolkhoz consolidation and the postwar mechanization drive increased the relative authority of kolkhoz chairmen over selsoviet leaders and elevated the importance of agronomists and other educated kolkhoz members, such as teachers, who had long been the village chairman’s rivals by

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<sup>605</sup> Kasymova diss, p. 236. Citing Uzbek Presidential Archive, f. 58, op. 21, d. 227, li. 8.

<sup>606</sup> AAN RUz f. 54, op. 1, d. 18, l. 12.

<sup>607</sup> AAN RUz f. 54, op. 1, d. 12, 13, 16, 18, 23, 24.

<sup>608</sup> Sukhareva O.A., Bikzhanova M.A, *Proshloe I nastoiashchee seleniia Aikyran (Opyt etnograficheskogo izucheniia kolkhoza imeni Stalina Chartakskogo raiona Namanganskoi oblasti)* Tashkent: AN UzSSR, 1955, 113.

virtue of their language skills and regional ties. In Oshoba in 1947 a group of veterans, including an officer, tipped the balance and formed a new elite with “new experience, new symbolic resources, and new ambitions” to bring down the old village leader, accusing him of theft of state flocks. The sheep and goats he kept separate from state records had been a secret to no one but were accepted by most villagers as his rightful perks. However, the new clique, with ties to the district newspaper and fluency both in Russian and the Bolshevik language of denunciation, deployed these tools to unseat the old leader. When the conflict ended a thirty-four year old army veteran became the chairman of the village’s solitary kolkhoz. As Sergei Abashin makes clear, ultimately the selsoviet chairman was not removed by men who were “more Soviet” than he was. After all, he was a “little Stalin” gifted in mobilizing people and diverting resources for local ends during the 30s and the war. However, the war enlarged the concept of “Soviet.” The new men were city-educated, Russian-speaking, and accessed universal Soviet values to justify their actions.<sup>609</sup> In orchestrating the removal of the old village leadership, the veterans of Oshoba aligned their interests with that of the state and illustrating how a new brand of state power was instantiated in local society through the Ivan-Uzbeks.

Historians assessing the affects of the war on the frontovik generation have observed a “psychological reorientation” characterized by a new assertiveness wrought from sacrifice, self-reliance, and autonomy required in war.<sup>610</sup> This new resolve was manifest in the veterans’ expectations for a better life, stoked by the state’s own promises in postwar propaganda.<sup>611</sup> Scholars have disagreed about the scope of the social mobility enjoyed by demobilized soldiers. Sheila Fitzpatrick has likened their postwar rise through managerial and administrative positions to the young *vydvizhentsy* who cemented Soviet rule during the Stalin Revolution and later during the Great Purges by flooding new industrial and managerial jobs. Mark Edele has refined this picture, cautioning that although the rise of individual veterans through Party, educational, and administrative ranks was significant, it did not constitute a generational advancement because there were no equivalent post-war purges to create similar vacancies. However, even as individuals their presence could be significant in rural life, as the above example indicates. And veterans’ symbolic claims only gained in significance. Their place in Soviet cultural and political life is doubtless, especially after 1965, which saw the creation of the Victory Day holiday, the formalization of the veterans’ movement into an “entitlement group” and the elevation of Leonid Brezhnev, a frontovik, as First Secretary.

Late Stalinist society has been characterized as fractured and contradictory, witness both to renewed state repression and the peak of the personality cult as well as the first stirrings of reform, dissidence, and vocal demands for material improvement.<sup>612</sup> One influential study has rooted the Thaw and the dissident movement in the psychology of the frontline generation.<sup>613</sup> Others have stressed the multiplicity of political views from veterans, ranging from heightened regime loyalty to the fiercest critiques, rooted in the war’s disastrous early losses and firsthand

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<sup>609</sup> For a detailed discussion of this conflict and the changing political landscape of Oshoba, Tajikistan in the immediate postwar, see Abashin, *Sovetskii kishlak*, 297-311, quote from 307.

<sup>610</sup> Zubkova, *Russia after the War*, 18.

<sup>611</sup> Edele, 15.

<sup>612</sup> Juliane Furst, introduction to Ed. Juliane Furst, *Late Stalinist Russia: Society between reconstruction and reinvention* (Routledge: New York, 2006), 1.

<sup>613</sup> Cite Seniaevskaia.

observations of European living standards.<sup>614</sup> The state itself was concerned about a potential repeat of the Decembrist movement, as evidenced in heightened surveillance and distrust and incarceration of Soviet POWs.<sup>615</sup>

The political aftershocks of the war in Uzbek society lead to a different set of questions. To search in the Uzbek war experience for the roots of the Thaw or political dissidence would be misguided given the Uzbeks' virtual absence in these phenomena. Further, the Central Asian republics lacked national independence movements and chose almost unanimously to stay with the Soviet Union in the 1991 referendum rather than to break apart. Instead of searching for the origins of the end, a new generation of scholars of post-war Central Asia has emphasized the naturalization and stability of the Soviet regime in local society.

Scholars have primarily focused on Islam as the key to social stability in the post-war. Adeb Khalid has shown how the establishment of SADUM helped to eliminate the contradiction between Communism and Islam in the eyes of local Muslims, not always to the approval of central Party organs.<sup>616</sup> Along the same lines, Eren Tasar has argued that in response, Central Asian soldiers charted for themselves an "Islamically informed Soviet patriotism," demonstrating the state's success in appealing to Central Asian soldiers as Muslims. He also shows how the postwar mosques were some of the largest sources of donations to the Funds for Soldiers' Families, taking on the mosque's traditional charitable role and simultaneously affirming the justness of the war.<sup>617</sup>

On the political side, Claus Bech-Hansen has linked post-war Soviet Uzbek regime durability to a sort of grand bargain of "limited statehood" between Moscow and Tashkent, wherein the former ceased its socially transformative demands in return for stability, political loyalty, and cotton production. However, although he places this arrangement in broader continuum of Russian imperial rule of Central Asia, this dynamic was not necessarily unique to Uzbekistan and might characterize post-war Soviet politics in general. Furthermore, it does not fully account for Moscow's comfort in trusting its Uzbek partners nor Uzbek attitudes.

Although each of these accounts offers an important perspective, they have not fully contended with the war to explain Uzbeks' embrace of the Soviet regime and its consequences for postwar Soviet durability. Most histories of Soviet veterans and the meaning of the war have focused on soldiers from a Russian perspective or without attention to national or regional differences. One noteworthy exception emphasizes a specific, regional narrative of the war in central Ukraine. Amir Weiner has argued that the war served to advance national reconciliation between Eastern and Western Ukrainians and between the Ukrainian peasantry and the Party-state. He demonstrates how Red Army soldiers and their families formed a powerful force for Sovietification in the Ukrainian countryside. The war functioned as a "powerful myth to integrate Ukrainians into the Soviet epic," thus serving to erase some of the wounds of the collectivization famine and rewrite the Ukrainians' relationship to the Soviet state.<sup>618</sup>

Similarly, I propose that the Second World War had specific meaning in Uzbekistan, rooted in its history as part of colonial Turkestan. The war was the vessel for Uzbeks and other

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<sup>614</sup> Mark Edele, "More Than Just Stalinists: the political sentiments of Victors," in *Late Stalinist Russia*, ed. Furst, 167.

<sup>615</sup> Edele, 10.

<sup>616</sup> Khalid, *Islam after Communism*.

<sup>617</sup> Tasar, "Islamically Informed Soviet Patriotism," 400.

<sup>618</sup> Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, 336.

Central Asian nationalities to take the final steps in overcoming the colonial legacy and their relative “backwardness.” As Uzbek and Kara-kalpak veterans reported, the war gave them the first chance to take up arms on equal terms with other Soviet nationalities, which they were able to do more fully with the dissolution of national units in 1942.<sup>619</sup> And although the Red Army catered to their linguistic, cultural, and religious differences, military service placed them in the same uniforms, compelled them to use a common language, and offered them paths to Soviet universality – as Ivans – that thousands walked wholeheartedly. True, the ideology of Friendship of the Peoples emphasized the Russians as the elder brother in the family, but the competing rhetoric of the “Soviet people” militated against that hierarchy. Furthermore, as shown by the Uzbek Borias and Mishas, Russianness could become more a state of mind than a primordial national identity. As equals in bravery, sacrifice, and heroism – as veterans – Central Asian men finally entered the broader, pan-Soviet epic.

As in other regions, the Uzbek veterans who took up managerial and Party positions aligned themselves with the regime. In Uzbekistan their arrival in Party structures, industrial enterprises, and in kolkhozes alike was especially significant because they had the power to disseminate this Soviet universal culture in places it had never existed. As the Oshoba kolkhoz example made clear, their education, Russian language, and wider interpersonal networks allowed them to wield these resources even in remote localities. They represented the state from within. Even if social mobility was not a universal phenomenon for veterans, the mere presence of these successful Uzbek Ivans – in Party life, cultural positions, and the Red Army – cemented an indigenization of the Soviet regime that had begun in the 1920s with the Party’s first “affirmative action” efforts. Uzbek soldiers became Soviet not because the regime suddenly called a truce with their Islamic faith. Rather, these men asserted a positive, Soviet identity buffeted by a heightened sense of equality, quite independent of religious questions. This identity and the veterans’ social mobility in the postwar were inextricably linked with the regime’s fate, forming an important element in the state’s durability in the region.

#### *Postwar Uzbek society and the disaggregation of Ivan and Uzbek*

Conceived as a generation of individuals, Ivan-Uzbek lived till the end of the regime and even after. These men were Soviet not because they submitted to new policies and institutions as their fathers had but because they assimilated into the ultimate Soviet vehicle for transformation, the Red Army. They modified their ritual piety and learned Russian. The lucky who survived exchanged provincial worldviews for pan-Soviet possibilities, many becoming the face of postwar Soviet Central Asia. But Ivan-Uzbek as a broader identity gradually came apart. This hybrid formula made up the kernel of a Soviet nationality based in shared language, culture, values, and a new historical experience that never quite formed in large enough numbers, especially after the war, and especially in rural Uzbek homes. Like an alloy forged in the heat of the front it grew brittle, just like other frontline solidarities that cool the longer they are removed from the front.<sup>620</sup> In this case a number of factors contributed to the disaggregation of Ivan and Uzbek after the war concluded.

Among the suite of values formed at the front in individual units and in propaganda was a Soviet-defined internationalism, in conscious opposition to Nazi racism. A key component to this integration was the assumption of common names and language. However, retaining the

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<sup>619</sup> Interview with Qochqor Honazarov, November 27, 2013.

<sup>620</sup> Edele, 18.

language gains among the Uzbek population required teachers and resources that the immediate postwar state was unable to provide. SAVO data from 1949 showed that the recruits who took the place of the frontoviki were increasingly less educated and less fluent in Russian. Among recruits born in 1928, 541 were illiterate or semi-literate. These numbers jumped to 3,072 and 7,204 for those born in 1929 and 1930, respectively. In the same age range, lack of Russian knowledge jumped from 268 to 5,695 to 7,412 recruits.<sup>621</sup> These young men had been the youths and teenagers pulled from school in order to assist their families during the war. It was on their backs that their older brothers had been able to join the Russian-speaking “Soviet epic.” Their lack of Russian fluency may have also been due to declining interethnic interactions after millions of European Soviets returned to their home cities.

The Uzbek state struggled to rebuild its education system in the immediate postwar, when so many human and financial resources were dedicated to rebuilding the cotton sector instead. Uzbek schools were without teaching materials in locals languages, trained teachers, and often faced truancy, especially during the harvest and even more so among young women. A Turkmen TsK report called children’s truancy due to kolkhoz labor a “mass” phenomenon and the “most sore and difficult question in rural locations.”<sup>622</sup> The Komsomol estimated that 160,000 students remained un-enrolled in Uzbekistan for the 1945-46 school year and that most kolkhoz schools were without books, pencils, and notebooks. The republic had a shortage of over 4000 teachers, largely because institutions like the Tashkent Women’s Pedagogical Institute could not retain students due to benighted conditions.<sup>623</sup> And without a strong early educational basis, Uzbek students continued to be a minority presence in institutes and universities in the half-decade after the war. At Uzbek State University in Samarkand due to abject material conditions in dormitories and their weaknesses with Russian, they studied in segregated classes from Russian students until the final year and had higher dropout rates. Yet Russian students complained of discrimination and not being accepted into graduate programs despite their greater competence with Russian.<sup>624</sup> At Central Asian State University in Tashkent about half of the 2,450 students were of local nationalities in 1950 but only 58 percent of students who had entered in 1945-46 graduated. Party investigators alleged that the administration to be a haven of Uzbek nationalists and that the teaching level had dropped off with the departure of many of the war-time evacuated professors. Local nationalities were especially poorly represented in scientific and technical specialties and had higher dropout rates than European students, a factor explained by their poor Russian knowledge and unhygienic dorms, without heat and running water. Uzbek-language textbooks did not exist forcing rural Uzbeks to quickly adapt and master Russian or depart again for their hometowns.<sup>625</sup> Even five years after the war the republic’s showcase venues for ethnic Uzbek elevation, the inculcation Soviet values, and ethnic integration were not meeting these promises.

Soviet internationalism was also predicated on equitable and amicable relations among national groups. “Friendship of the Peoples” retained a central place among the Party’s propaganda messages and both Russians and local nationalities were supposed to have

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<sup>621</sup> RGASPI f. 574, op. 1, d. 22, l. 72.

<sup>622</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 125, d. 457, l. 24-51.

<sup>623</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 121, d. 455, l. 10-11. The Komsomol estimated that in 1945-46 270 of 800 dropped out of that institution.

<sup>624</sup> RGASPI f. 574, op. 1, d. 20, l. 26, 107-108.

<sup>625</sup> RGASPI f. 574, op. 1, d. 60, l. 3, 5, 15-16, 69, 90-91.



internalized this key principle as the “guarantee of victory.” With the arrival of more exogenous groups, Uzbek society was largely characterized by tolerance. Overt Russian-Uzbek tensions that were observed with frequency at the start of the war were replaced with patriotic and peaceable relations. Still, Party monitors found interethnic flare-ups throughout the region in the immediate postwar, indicating that these relations still required monitoring and a constant propaganda assistance. The Party was particularly concerned when they occurred in the military and other institutions that were supposed to engender *sblizhenie*, or drawing together among the national groups. Its postwar reports are sprinkled with conflicts of varying degrees of seriousness. For instance, in Katta-Kurgan the ispolkom chairman of the city soviet, D. Ishbekov, interceded at a local restaurant on behalf of a group of women being mistreated by a drunken group of Slavic officers at a restaurant and called the police and MGB. In a drunken rage the major lashed out: “I am a Party member and I’ll drive you out, punch you in the face, they’ll find your body in the reservoir. In Uzbekistan it’s Ivan who keeps things in order. Iuldash stayed on the homefront, while I, a Party member fought from Stalingrad to Berlin. Tov. Stalin sacked your Iusupov and we’ll drive the rest of you out.”<sup>626</sup> Despite all of the Uzbeks’ wartime achievements, the stereotype of cowardly Uzbeks staying at the homefront could be voiced in the right circumstances.

In 1949 in Muinak district, Kara-kalpak ASSR, after a dance at the local House of Culture a group of 35 Kazakh youths stormed the apartments of Russian workers at the fish factory and beat up seven Slavs and two Kazakhs, one allegedly because he bore the Russian last name of his adoptive parents, and the other for being friends with Russians. The trigger for the brawl seems to have been the attempts of a young Kazakh man to dance with Russian women. The group of Kazakhs (members of the Karabas clan) allegedly chanted “Children of Karabas, take vengeance on the Russians, beat the Russians, they’re done for” as they searched for Russian targets, bearing poles, stones, and hunting rifles. A year later an MGB investigation resulted in eight new arrests of ethnic Kazakhs between 17 and 30 years old, one of whom was noted to have been a German prisoner of war (though none of the others seem to have been veterans). Party investigators were concerned that local authorities failed to recognize the political nature of the crime – and the potentially precarious position of ethnic Russians – given the district’s demography, which included 800 exiled Trotskyites, nationalists, and special settlers, 15,000 Kazakhs, 13,500 Kara-kalpaks, 876 Koreans, 300 Kalmyks, and 2,324 other nationalities, along with 6,500 Russians, an ethnic composition that was more and more the norm in rural Uzbekistan. Investigators noted that poor agitation work was to blame and that in all of Muinak in the previous one and half years there had only been lecture on the topic of internationalism and Friendship of the Peoples.<sup>627</sup> The Party took seriously all traces of anti-Russian sentiment, even the Uzbek kolkhoz boss who remarked, “it smells like shit where Russians work in Uzbekistan,” and the chairman who refused to offer ethnic Russians a translator for the speeches given in Uzbek, allegedly knowing full well they could not understand.<sup>628</sup> And some of Tashkent’s Russian population worried that they stood to suffer with the end of food rationing in 1947 and the food supply’s seeming return to Uzbek control, underscoring the perceived divide between Russianized cities and Uzbek farms.<sup>629</sup>

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<sup>626</sup> RGASPI f. 574, op. 1, d. 59, l. 47-48.

<sup>627</sup> RGASPI f. 574, op. 1, d. 4, l. 30-45, 56, 59; d. 59, l. 64, 65.

<sup>628</sup> RGASPI f. 574, op. 1, d. 5, l. 7.

<sup>629</sup> Stronski, *Tashkent*, 182.

These episodes also occurred in other parts of the region. In Kyrgyzstan at a children's home in Issyk-kul oblast two Kyrgyz employees at a children's home got into a fight with a Russian employee during the November 7 holiday in 1949. The two Kyrgyz later gathered a group of men on horseback under slogans of violence to the Russians and returned to the children's home, looking for Russians to beat up, including the head of the district MVD who arrived to investigate.<sup>630</sup> In this case, one of the worker's complaints about a professional slight morphed into a broader nationalist critique. And in Kazakhstan such episodes emerged between deported Chechens and Kazakhs and Russians. In this case, a mutual mistreatment of Chechens and the adoption of state's categorization of traitors could bring ethnic groups together.<sup>631</sup> In many cases, postwar demographics allowed simple professional conflicts to acquire ethnic overtones. But in other cases, such as the Muinak dance, it was the possibility of miscegenation that triggered the separation on strict national lines. Thus the Soviet state learned that interethnic maltreatment and violence still demanded its attention, and that in some quarters people still considered Ivan and Uzbek (and Kazakh, Kara-kalpak, and Kyrgyz) to be strictly separate entities.

Even interethnic marriages, conceived as an avant garde for the *sblizhenie* of the various Soviet nationalities, could come violently undone under local family influences. In Southern Kazakhstan oblast two veterans and Communists violently killed the Russian wives they had married during the war and remarried local Kazakh girls, under pressure from their families.<sup>632</sup> In Fergana oblast the manager of the Bagdad district financial department was recorded to have renounced his cousin as kin after he married a Russian woman.<sup>633</sup> Evidently not all sectors of society celebrated these interethnic marriages. The Uzbek Writers' Union was even criticized for permitting nationalist attitudes to seep into stories, including the depiction of an old woman who humiliates and oppresses her son's wife only because she is Russian.<sup>634</sup> And Russian women could not always be counted on to play the progressive role in the marriage, as one woman demonstrated by veiling after marrying an Uzbek.<sup>635</sup>

Regardless of the Uzbek people's supposedly innate hospitality, these episodes illustrate that peaceable relations among the republic's many ethnic groups could not operate entirely without lubrication from state propaganda.

#### *War and the reemergence of Central Asian tradition*

In June 1950 the bodies of two sisters – 17 year old Mukadam Akhmedova and 14 year old Salamat Akhmedova – were discovered in the fields of the Budennyi kolkhoz in Kassan district, Kashka-Dar'ia oblast. According to investigators, Salamat was a *pionerka* and Mukadam had expressed a desire to continue on to a tekhnikum and join the Komsomol upon finishing the 7<sup>th</sup> grade and. Over a period of time their relatives – described as former Basmachis who had also actively opposed collectivization – had “terrorized” both sisters, forbid them from going to school on threats of death, and made preparations to marry them to older men, including Mukadam's schoolteacher. During an argument with her mother Mukadam announced that if she

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<sup>630</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 939, l. 176-179.

<sup>631</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 950, l. 65, 66.

<sup>632</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 132, d. 258, l. 73-83.

<sup>633</sup> RGASPI f. 574, op. 1, d. 22, l. 123.

<sup>634</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 942, l. 84-86.

<sup>635</sup> Stronski, *Tashkent*, 193.

was further forbidden from studying, she would tell the authorities of the threats to her person and inform them that her mother, uncle, and other family members were hiding weapons and stolen gold. In response the girls' uncle and three of his nephews raped and killed the girls. The prosecutor's report alleged that the kolkhoz Party *aktiv* was well aware of the mistreatment of the girls and the threats to their lives but watched idly, and even helped cover up the plans for their illegal marriages. From the Party perspective the crime represented a perfect storm of social and Party ills: rural, patriarchal, anti-Soviet family members, in league with negligent Party officials had encircled the girls, stifled the perspectives of two assertive young girls and then taken their lives. Reports of the crime traveled from the district, oblast, republic, and all the way to the TsK in Moscow as representative of a serious problem in postwar Central Asia: the rise of "feudal-bai survivals" and the lack of decisive action from state and Party officials to fight against them.<sup>636</sup> The murder of the Akhmedova sisters was a particularly disturbing case but Tashkent Party observers – and frequently Komsomol and Party plenipotentiaries from Moscow – were concerned about a broader rise of violent crimes against young Central Asian women and their frequent suicides, such as girls as young as thirteen taking their lives rather than be married to older men, or because their husbands had forbidden them from taking "taking active role in the social life" of their kolkhozes.<sup>637</sup> Young girls' removal from schools and the reemergence of the *paranji* were considered less violent manifestations of the same backward practices. From the Party perspective, the socialist order in Central Asia, with its fundamental promise of liberation and protection for women, was failing the young women to whom it had promised the most. And by Party logic the two biggest reasons for these failures were the rising influence of Islam, especially unregistered "itinerant" mullahs and ishans, and the Central Asian Party organization's laxity to confront the "harmful customs of the past," also classified as the "feudal-bai survivals" that seemed to reemerge as soon as vigilance waned.

The most significant fissure between Ivan and Uzbek was the rise of these cultural practices because they drove a seemingly unbridgeable wedge between what was seen as rural, Islamic, patriarchy and urban, socialist culture. Scholars have problematized the Marxist teleology of "survivals" and have shown that the Party's new religious politics allowed Muslim Communists to reconcile their faith and their Party membership, complicating these dichotomies. In a particularly striking example, Eren Tasar records how a Communist father brought his son, Marlen, to Friday prayer in postwar Kyrgyzstan.<sup>638</sup> Others have registered the Party's disappointment at Uzbek society's conscious backsliding in gender matters, their continued absence from industrial jobs, and women's contented departures from social positions after the war.<sup>639</sup> However, less clear in the rise of this purportedly aberrant Uzbek culture has been the role of the war itself.

Ironically, the war effort that brought Ivan and Uzbek closer together also prepared the ground for their postwar disaggregation. In absence of a more detailed study, I wish to show how the new status of religion had complex reverberations in Uzbek society and was not as harmonious as has been depicted. I also hope to show how some of the purportedly backward

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<sup>636</sup> RGASPI f. 574, op. 1, d. 59, l. 8-11.

<sup>637</sup> This was the rationale in cases in 1947 Turkmenistan described at RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 810, l. 6-9 and Uzbekistan at RGASPI f. 574, op. 1, d. 22, l. 141.

<sup>638</sup> For an insightful historiography on the concept of "survivals" in Central Asia, see Abashin, *Sovetskii kishlak*, 10-15, ; Tasar, "Islamically Defined Soviet Patriotism," 400.

<sup>639</sup> See Stronski, *Tashkent*, especially chapter seven.

behavior was connected more to the cataclysm of war than the state's new religious politics. Ultimately, the war should be seen as having contradictory results for Uzbek women. Its labor expectations and propaganda messages implored them to further meet the Party's long-term liberation goals. But at the same time postwar demographics and the renewed sanction of religious tradition justified a particularistic and often patriarchal social order in the countryside that seemed irredeemably foreign to European Bolshevik ideology. These competing social vectors left some women, particularly the young and ambitious, in precarious positions.

The Ivanified veterans who had only just joined the Party returned to homes that seemed to go both forward and backward according to Marxist logic. Women worked on equal footing with men, the proletariat had grown, but religiosity was rising and the rural Party presence was tiny. Mosques that had been locked and shuttered when they left for the war opened and busily refurbished when they returned. As individuals, they had to decide how to reconcile their newly opened, pan-Soviet perspective with a rural order that seemed to have accommodated a number of very particular practices at odds with the universalistic spirit of Victory. A report from the Department of Party Information TsK VKP(b) on the rise of "reactionary customs" in Turkmenistan in 1947 was rare for blaming indigenous culture and Islam but also placing it against a demographic backdrop that served to exculpate the Party's failures. It held that before the war, the "feudal-bai survivals" in Turkmenistan and other Central Asian republics had not been as widespread, but that the departure of an "overwhelming portion" of the male population to the Red Army had left the "auls and kishlaks" in the hands of the elderly and the Muslim "clergy" who began to "cultivate" the old traditions.<sup>640</sup> A similar picture emerged from Southern Kazakhstan, which had fewer Russian residents than the north, and was considered similarly prone to backward social practices, though they were thought to be rooted more in clan custom and nomadic tradition than Islam. A plaintive message of a Communist war veteran that reached the Moscow TsK was testament to the Party's concerns that the presence of veterans alone could not ensure that "Soviet socialist culture" seeped into the villages. Seriukbai Emberdiev, the chairman of kolkhoz "Altyn-Tiube" in Chimkent district and a lieutenant of a tank formation, complained that upon returning from the army he tried to organize his own lifestyle in a "cultured" way. He cleaned his boots, shaved, began to sit at a table for meals and used a spoon. His elderly parents became offended that he did not sit with them on the floor and his neighbors began to laugh at him. He claimed that "no one supported me and I again began to live like before. Now I do not even read the newspaper." Emberdiev's description reads like the justifications of a Communist unmasked for some sort of crime who found in his parents' oppressive traditions a convenient scapegoat. Aside from the question of his own agency, it is instructive that the two sides are deemed purely oppositional – Soviet, cultured living, expressed in military habits of comportment versus the tradition wielded by the elderly, who come across as an imposing force that not even a tank officer can break.<sup>641</sup> The dichotomies in these reports were highly simplified but based in the truth of war-time demography. The youngest, Soviet-educated, and most patriotic young men had largely disappeared from villages and kolkhozes that often lacked any Party structures for the duration of the war. And the state's reconciliation with religion would have found support among the elderly and those who may have opposed the regime's broader cultural and social policies.

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<sup>640</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 810, l. 9.

<sup>641</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 132, d. 258, l. 73-83.

Pre and post-war aggregate numbers for “*byt* crimes” and “feudal-bai survivals” are hard to come by, but the data we have indicates an unambiguous increase compared to prewar levels. Looking back on his life, high Party functionary Nuriddin Mukhitdinov alleged that the Party’s postwar struggle with “backward” customs was nothing more than the local manifestation of Zhdanovshchina, a sort of unjustified punitive attack on Uzbek culture.<sup>642</sup> However, the numbers tell another story. The reemergence of tradition was not just a matter of Party perception but an objective increase of behaviors long considered aberrant. Unlike in post-war Ukraine, where religiosity was a minor development largely affecting the elderly, in Central Asia many of these behaviors affected all age groups.<sup>643</sup> A Party assessment citing Turkmenistan and the other Central Asian republics held that “old customs and survivals of the past” were “much less widespread” before the war due to a more active struggle against them.<sup>644</sup> The rise of female veiling with the paranji and chachvon in particular was of course a harsh blow to Party advocates who had made unveiling a centerpiece to win over local Uzbek society starting in the late 1920s. Party sources in Uzbekistan observed that “in comparison with the prewar period the number of women wearing the paranji has increased.”<sup>645</sup> In 1946 a visiting Komosmol secretary reported back to the TsK VKP(b) SSSR that in many cases Uzbek girls with higher educations, teachers, and agronomists were wearing the paranji precisely in order to marry.<sup>646</sup> In Namangan oblast in 1949 Party observers traced 74 instances of multiple wives and paranji. In Kokand it was described as a “mass phenomenon,” including among wives of Communists.<sup>647</sup> And in Leninabad and other districts of the Tajik SSR one “only rarely sees a woman without a paranji.”<sup>648</sup> The practice was especially widespread among urban elite women. In Kokand the wives of students were found to veil around the city. And the wife of the UzSSR minister of foreign affairs could be found using the ministry car for personal matters, including visiting relatives around Tashkent’s Old City while wearing the veil.<sup>649</sup>

While it is possible that these women were expressing a consciously national, Uzbek form of femininity, it certainly does not appear to have had an anti-colonial or anti-state character, as has been posited about veiling in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>650</sup> Most of these women had spent the war years precisely in support of this state and their family members within it. While the Party sources make it difficult to assess agency, reports about students and elite wives as well as the women in Namangan bazar selling *chachvon* indicate that men and women alike were responding to a relaxation in cultural politics by expressing what they deemed to be a more proper, traditional set of gender norms. These men and women may also have been responding to the war as a particularly cataclysmic episode. If officers’ wives in Ukraine and Russia were found to wear lipstick and heels as part of a postwar resurgence of traditional gender norms, the

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<sup>642</sup> Mukhitdinov, *Reka vremeni*, 46.

<sup>643</sup> This is Amir Weiner’s assessment of post-war Vynnytsia, Ukraine. See Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, 309.

<sup>644</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 18, d. 810, l. 6-9.

<sup>645</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 122, d. 141, l. 90.

<sup>646</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 121, d. 455, l. 9.

<sup>647</sup> RGASPI f. 574, op. 1, d. 22, l. 97.

<sup>648</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 125, d. 507, l. 254-260.

<sup>649</sup> RGASPI f. 574, op. 1, d. 5, l. 21; d. 22, l. 118.

<sup>650</sup> This is the argument made by Nothrop, *Veiled Empire*.

rise of the *paranji* in Uzbekistan can be considered an equivalent psychological response.<sup>651</sup> My understanding of unveiling aligns with Marianne Kamp, who has argued that collectivization – and the rise of the Soviet state in the Uzbek village – was the largest factor in impelling women to unveil and removing the patriarchal structures that resisted it. However, some women retained the veil of their own volition or in respect of their husband’s preferences.<sup>652</sup> The war experience was an analogous disruption of traditional village life and authority, yet it also empowered forces for tradition.

The rise of women’s suicides, especially by self-immolation, were considered to be a particularly barbaric indicator of Central Asian patriarchy. The practice was likely rooted in the Zoroastrian belief in the purity of fire which made it seem both tragic and culturally foreign to European Party observers. According to Party records there were 4 and 28 cases of self-immolations in Maryi and Ashkhabad oblasts (Turkmenistan) in 1944 and 1945, respectively. After the war these numbers grew: 30 in 1944, 66 in 1945; 63 in 1946, and 22 in the first quarter of 1947 alone.<sup>653</sup> These numbers dropped to 55 and then down to 30 in 1948 and 1949 respectively, likely as a result of concerted campaigns led by Party women’s departments.<sup>654</sup> Aggregate numbers from Uzbekistan are harder to attain, but the scope seems to have been similar. For instance, there were 28 cases reported in Uzbekistan in 1948 and in the early 1950s the problem was described as having become “widespread” in rural areas of the republic, such as Kashka-dar’ia oblast.<sup>655</sup>

As in the Party’s unveiling campaigns in the late 1920s and 1930s, Uzbek Party members and other male elites were found to be exacerbating violence through patriarchal behavior. For instance, in 1945 a Gosbank manager in Bukhara forced a seventeen-year-old bank guard to live with him. The girl soon had a baby, but the manager refused to assist her, putting her on the street. As a single mother, the girl faced social stigma and murdered the baby before attempting suicide. She was ultimately sentenced to eight years in prison while the bank manager escaped punishment. The kolkhoz Party aktiv and district level Party cells were also found to lack “decisiveness” in the “struggle” to protect women from rape.<sup>656</sup>

Although Soviet ethnographers who dispersed to the provinces were on balance optimistic about the rise of modern, European marital and courtship practices, Party observers focused instead on cases of polygamy, under-aged brides, and the exit of young women from schools upon marriage. According to their reports, itinerant mullas and ishans were proselytizing a man’s right to have multiple wives based on the example of Muhammed and especially if their first or even second wives could not bare children. They purportedly reminded men of their Islamic duty to murder their wives – *namakhrama* – if they engaged in extramarital affairs.<sup>657</sup> Polygamy was widely practiced, especially among provincial elites. In 1945 152 kolkhoz chairmen in Gizhduvan and Babkent districts had multiple wives, along with 29 chairmen of selsoviets.<sup>658</sup> An estimated 100 men in Shurchinskii district (Surkhandar’ia oblast) had two or

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<sup>651</sup> Weiner, *Making Sense of War*.

<sup>652</sup> See Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan*, especially chapters 7 and 8.

<sup>653</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 18, d. 810, l. 6-10.

<sup>654</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 121, d. 455, l. 9-11.

<sup>655</sup> RGASPI f. 574, op. 1, d. 22, l. 137; RGANI f. 5, op. 16, d. 696; op. 33, d. 55.

<sup>656</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 121, d. 455, l. 9-11.

<sup>657</sup> RGASPI f. 574, op. 1, d. 22, l. 77.

<sup>658</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 121, d. 455, l. 9-11.

three wives.<sup>659</sup> Of greater concern from the Party perspective, six prominent female Communists from the Parkent district near Tashkent agreed to become second wives. As Paul Stronski has noted, these women were not simple victims of a patriarchal system, but had made active choices that went against the course of Marxist teleology, reflecting the changing course of cultural norms. The Party blamed “reactionary Islam” for having influenced “transformed” citizens but offered few clear solutions.<sup>660</sup>

Underage brides and arranged marriages were also believed to be on the rise due to the growing influence of rural mullas. Parents made arrangements with teachers, selsoviet chairmen, and a seventy-year-old kolkhoznik to marry girls as young as 13 year old.<sup>661</sup> This was directly related to their removal from schools, where the usually male teachers were often complicit in looking the other way or marrying underage girls themselves. As a result, the war era was even more deleterious to girls’ education than boys’. According to Uzbek Party data in 1946 191,000 of 255,000 illiterate citizens were women.<sup>662</sup> Ethnographers dispatched to an ethnic Uzbek kolkhoz in the Tajik SSR over a three year study from 1950-1953 noticed an “indifference” to girls’ education. As a rule they concluded their educations after graduating primary school. A few finished 7 year schools but only a handful entered much less graduated the 10-year schools.<sup>663</sup> In all of Uzbekistan in 1949 only 980 Uzbek girls completed the tenth grade and one could find districts without any tenth-grade girls at all.<sup>664</sup> Seventh grade was also the cut off for most female students in Turkmenistan. Of 3,368 girls who finished the 7<sup>th</sup> grade there, only 379 continued on to grade 8.<sup>665</sup> Finally, in Tajikistan only 14 Tajik girls were in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in the city of Stalinabad, and they formed less than 1 percent of 10<sup>th</sup> graders in the republic as a whole.<sup>666</sup>

Upon the men’s return to kolkhozes, women exited the positions they had only recently taken. In Uzbekistan, where 12,500 women had taken mechanization courses at MTS in the first year of war and where 5,353 women were estimated to have worked in mechanized agriculture, only 103 women remained in 1949. Similarly, the number of female brigadiers decreased by 1000 people. Similar declines were reported in other leadership or specialized kolkhoz work, such as mechanics, combine operators, accountants, and managers of animal-rearing farms. Although women made up some 54 percent of kolkhoz labor, they comprised only 16 percent of managerial positions.<sup>667</sup> Rural female teachers also began exiting classrooms, presumably for the

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<sup>659</sup> RGASPI f. 574, op. 1, d. 5, l. 6.

<sup>660</sup> Stronski, *Tashkent: forging a Soviet city*, 192.

<sup>661</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 121, d. 455, l. 9-11.

<sup>662</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 19, d. 102, l. 230-233.

<sup>663</sup> Ershov, N.N., Kisliakov, N.A., Peshchereva, E.M. Rusaikina, S.P. *Kul'tura i byt tadzhikskogo kolkhoznogo krest'ianstva (po materialam kolkhoza imeni G.M. Malenkova, Leninabadskogo raiona Leninabadskoi oblasti Tadzhikskoi SSR)*. Moskva-Leningrad: AN SSSR, 1954, 170-171.

<sup>664</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 19, d. 102, l. 230-233.

<sup>665</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 132, d. 291, l. 10-25.

<sup>666</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 119, d. 146, l. 212-214.

<sup>667</sup> RGASPI f. 574, op. 1, d. 2, l. 8. The estimate of women in mechanized agricultural work during the war comes from Uzbek Party archival statistics cited in T. Sultanova, “Zhenshchiny Uzbekistana v bor'be za pod'em khlopkovodstva na zavershaiushchem etape velikoi otechestvennoi voiny,” *Obshchestvennye nauki v Uzbekistane* (12) 1969, pp. 39-42, 39.

same reasons that young girls exited schools – for marriage. The number of female Turkmen teachers declined precipitously in the postwar, from 2,703 in 1945-46 to 1,279 in 1946-47 and continuing decline the next year.<sup>668</sup> According to one Party estimate there were only 12 or 13 female Tajik teachers in all of the Tajik SSR in 1950.<sup>669</sup>

Throughout Central Asia women even disappeared from Party and state organs after the war. In Kyzyl-Orda oblast (Kazakhstan) there were 33 selsoviet chairwomen in 1943 compared with 7 in 1947.<sup>670</sup> In Kyrgyzstan's Dzhalsalabad oblast of Fergana valley, 964 women worked in raikom, gorkom, and obkom nomenklaturas in 1944. This number dropped to 854 in 1945 and 352 in 1948.<sup>671</sup> Analogous data from Uzbekistan is unavailable, but suffice it to say that they experienced similar declines if in 1948 only 73 selsoviet chairs and 31 obkom, gorkom, and raikom secretaries in the entire republic were women.<sup>672</sup> There was a sense within Komsomol and Party organizations in Uzbekistan that women were “artificially prevented from promotion to leadership positions.” In one meeting of the TsK KP(b) UzSSR Biuro five women were fired from their work, including a secretary of the TsK KP(b) Uz, Yuldashbaeva, which a Komsomol secretary labeled a “women’s pogrom.”<sup>673</sup>

With a few exceptions, Party reports rarely granted women any agency over these developments, whether their exit from school, an arranged marriage, or wearing the veil. They were considered defeats of the Party’s cultural politics, but a softer variety than the rapes, murders, and suicides. A more comprehensive study of “feudal-bai survivals” would need to determine in which instances women were unwilling victims and when they made active choices. The mental lives of historical actors is impossible to glean based on these documents alone. So we cannot know precisely what prompted the Namangan obkom deputy for women’s work to cease coming to work in the evenings.<sup>674</sup> Was it at the insistence of her husband, a doctor, as the documents indicated? Or was she a co-conspirator in reintroducing “tradition?” Furthermore, only a detailed institutional study of SADUM and the Uzbek branch of CARC (Council for the Administration of Religious Cults) would give a fuller picture of the way in which Uzbek religious personnel promoted these various practices in sermons and teachings. However, for the time being it seems that the institutionalization of Islam in 1943 played a key role in the rise of these “backward” social practices, just as the Party alleged.

Whether Uzbek ulema were registered with the state or not, in Islam they had access to an ideological universe completely foreign to Communism. It bears repeating that religious leaders and the Party-state did not necessarily operate at odds. As we have seen, immediately upon its organization in October 1943 SADUM issued a call to Muslim believers to consider their Red Army service versus the Germans part of a religiously sanctioned holy war. And even such a committed Communist as Usman Iusupov could appeal to the TsK for the rehabilitation religiously-associated harvest holidays in 1949 on the grounds that they would encourage rural

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<sup>668</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 125, d. 626, l. 47-52.

<sup>669</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 132, d. 377, l. 116.

<sup>670</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 813, l. 48-51.

<sup>671</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 941, l. 109-111.

<sup>672</sup> RGASPI f. 574, op. 1, d. 2, l. 15. According to Ibragimova, during the war years 158 women were obkom, gorkom, and raikom secretaries compared to 31 in 1948.

<sup>673</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 125, d. 507, l. 169-176.

<sup>674</sup> RGASPI f. 574, op. 1, d. 1, l. 22.



productivity.<sup>675</sup> However, by reintroducing Qu’ranic scripture as an alternative source of ideological truth, the Party was empowering guides and doctrines it could not control. Even if religious leaders were not constantly stirring up the faithful to violent treatment of their wives – as one would get the impression based on Party documents – they certainly promoted the return to tradition and away from recent Bolshevik social innovations, especially concerning the veil and women’s education. Their message was especially welcome among the older population, but not exclusively, as indicated by the reports about veiling students and Party members becoming second and third wives. And perhaps the more influential result of the Party’s new religious politics was the mixed messages it sent to Uzbek Communists, many of whom were the ones taking extra wives and accepting *kalym* for their underaged daughters. A Komsomol and profoiuz official reported back to Moscow that:

Individual raikom Party secretaries mistakenly believe that since the Soviet government has allowed the opening of mosques that they do not have to conduct antireligious propaganda anymore, and that the struggle with religion and clergy has become a second priority. A similar position of ‘non-interference’ brings heavy damages to our kolkhoz order and the culture of the Soviet family.<sup>676</sup>

Thus the creation of SADUM and the spiritualization of the Uzbek landscape either sent lower-level Party functionaries into confusion or gave them ample cover with which to conduct their family and kolkhoz affairs. Whatever the case, the reconciliation with Islam made the behavior of local Party officials more difficult to control and monitor.

Moscow Party officials and many in Uzbekistan as well clearly noticed the “non-interference” of Communist rank-and-file towards cultural politics. In the long duree, Moscow’s pullback from policing the daily lives of Uzbek Muslims can be considered part and parcel of a politics of “limited statehood” that Moscow created with the national republics. However, the immediate post-war is too early to diagnose this phenomenon. Women’s departments were reinvigorated by serious campaigns against patriarchal “survivals” in 1948 and 1950. It seems appropriate to use this conception only after 1951, when a major delegation of TsK KP(b) SSSR Communist Control officials returned from a one-year review of all aspects of Uzbek Party life.<sup>677</sup>

Rather, the war itself, specifically its hardship, mobilization, and demographic changes must be considered an equal factor in producing the behaviors Moscow viewed with disapproval. Wartime losses created a gender imbalance in Uzbekistan, as in the other republics. If about half of the republic’s able-bodied men fought and about a third of those perished, one could crudely estimate an overall loss of marriage-aged men of about 15 percent.<sup>678</sup> With a shortage of

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<sup>675</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 132, d. 114, l. 1, 2. Ultimately the request was denied but it triggered a fascinating discussion on whether the holidays – “Navruz-bairam” and “Kaun-sail” – would be better suited for the Uzbeks than the “revolutionary” holidays of May Day and November 7 because they would not interfere as directly with planting and harvesting cotton.

<sup>676</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 8, d. 941, l. 54.

<sup>677</sup> “Limited statehood” refers to the argument of Hansen, *The Ambivalent Empire*. The TsK VKP(b) sent its plenipotentiary, S.D. Ignat’iev, to Uzbekistan from 1949 to 1951 to conduct a survey of all aspects of Party and social life, forming the basis of f. 574 at RGASPI.

<sup>678</sup> “Vtoraia mirovaia voina i Uzbeki,” Uzbekistan Embassy in Moscow, accessed August 12, 2015, <http://uzembassy.ru/pr6.htm>. Summary based on an article by Uzbek historian Khamid Ziaev originally published in *Uzbekiston adabiet i va san’ati* No. 25, 20 Iiunia 2003.

marriage prospects for young women and fewer opportunities to meet eligible men, families had reason to rely on traditional practices of arranging marriages. In Ogulkhon's kolkhoz the women of her generation recalled that almost everyone they knew got married to a cousin or other extended family member because of this shortage. This same scenario affected families of urban elites who might have otherwise insisted on "love marriages."<sup>679</sup> Likely the most common outcome of this dynamic was the rise of polygamy, which was now being more openly affirmed by religious leaders as one of Islamic society's various tools to ensure social cohesion and harmony in the face of war losses. However, Party studies rarely connected the practice to demography. In southern Kazakhstan in 1947 Party observers noticed a rise in *amangerstvo*, described as a widow's obligation to marry the older or younger brother of her deceased.<sup>680</sup> And ethnographers in northern Tajikistan in 1950-1952 noticed the same phenomenon, though they considered it mutually voluntary, alongside a general rise in more progressive courtship practices among the village youth, including a number of Russian wives that had arrived after the war.<sup>681</sup> Many other cases of polygamy involved Uzbek rural elites marrying teenagers as young as thirteen, which were the Party's most vexing cases, and often attributed to the men's desire for a free form of secondary labor.<sup>682</sup> However, the guilty parties in various reports were older men and notables who usually had the financial means to support another family rather than using the tradition to exploit another set of hands. Young men and war veterans did not feature in these reports. It seems clear that whether for perceived charity or religious sanction, Uzbek men in the postwar took second, third, and even fourth wives without feeling they had violated social or Party mores.

Ironically, new Soviet legislation could also be used to justify polygamy, and may have also been partly to blame for the uptick in female suicide and infanticide. On July 8 1944 the Supreme Soviet SSSR issued a law to offer financial support of "single mothers." This pronatalist legislation recognized the rise of illegitimate births resulting in the gender imbalance and the need for the Soviet polity to promote population growth after the war. In Uzbekistan the law was "improperly explained" and met with opposition by some authorities who believed it would not fit a society where out-of-wedlock births were taboo and drove women to suicide or infanticide. The author, a Moscow-based Komsomol secretary, seemed to see in the rise of polygamy an effort to arrest the shame of illegitimate births.<sup>683</sup> In Kara-Kalin district (Ashkhabad oblast, Turmenistan) the law was interpreted differently: "if before it was proper to have one wife, now it's necessary to have two – the first is permanent, the second is called 'single mother.' The single mother is paid by the government. This is necessary now because the Red Army needs soldiers."<sup>684</sup> In other words, just as in Russia the law not only reacted to events on the ground but encouraged licentious behavior.<sup>685</sup> However, in Central Asia it could then be cloaked in religious sanction as an unregistered second or third marriage. In this way the state legislation could be understood as a stipend for the second and third wives in Muslim families.

<sup>679</sup> Interview with Inobat Iusupova (b. 1923), September 16, 2014.

<sup>680</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 88, d. 813, l. 48.

<sup>681</sup> Ershov, red., *Kul'tura i byt tadzhikskogo kolkhoznogo krest'inastva*, 174.

<sup>682</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 121, d. 455, l. 10.

<sup>683</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 121, d. 455, l. 9.

<sup>684</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 121, d. 455, l. 13.

<sup>685</sup> Mie Nakachi, "A post-war sexual liberation? The gendered experience of the Soviet Union's Great Patriotic War," *Cahiers du monde russe*, vol. 52 (2011/2): 423-40, 432-34.

However, the concomitant rise of suicide and infanticide showed that without an accompanying shift in popular notions of shame, the rise of single motherhood could lead to tragedy for young women and their babies.

The rise of suicide and infanticides was no doubt partly related to the rise of illegitimate births of the war and postwar eras. And regardless of the new legislation, the demographic picture in the countryside was fated to punish young women. For instance, in Turkmenistan it was noted that as a result of tradition, young widowed women were compelled to remain in the homes of their deceased husbands. If they were discovered to be in a relationship with another man during this time or become pregnant, they might also be driven to suicide. As a response the Turkmen Party organizations led an information campaign among war widows and their in-laws to explain the need to allow women to leave the home, re-enter social life, and become financially independent.<sup>686</sup>

The demographic shift and the removal of young men from kolkhozes likely also played a role in encouraging entitled behavior among the men who remained. It is recalled that Kodyrali, the villain in Sodyk Kalandar's novella, *We are in the Urals* (1948), stopped just short of forcing himself on Tufakhon, the kolkhoz Komsomolka, while her love interest left for the labor front.<sup>687</sup> However, many of the rapes or affairs that took place while soldiers were away were attributed not to demographic changes, the power dynamic on homefront kolkhozes, or the choices of the affected parties but to an indigenous, "feudal-bai" patriarchy, which was all the worse because it also led to violent abortion attempts or infanticides. For instance, the chairman of kolkhoz im. Lenina in Karakalin district (Ashkhabad oblast, Turkmenistan) took up with a Komsomolka and wife of a frontovik during the war and she, "under pressure from him," killed the newborn. The kolkhoz's Party secretary also had an illegitimate child with the wife of a frontovik which also resulted in infanticide.<sup>688</sup> In Fergana oblast two kolkhoz chairmen were accused of affairs resulting in illegitimate children, one with the wife of a soldier. Both cases resulted in the children's deaths.<sup>689</sup>

Finally, although the "indifference" to young women's higher education was undoubtedly born out in rural Central Asia the exit of women from Party, government, and kolkhoz leadership posts was part of a Soviet-wide phenomenon. Having arrived with new social capital and the state's explicit hopes that they would rebuild the rural order, Soviet veterans had ample reason to consider these positions rightfully theirs. Amir Weiner has shown that by January 1946 veterans had already taken over the majority of kolkhoz leadership positions in Vynnitsia oblast, to the disappointment of the kolkhoz chairwomen that many replaced.<sup>690</sup> In Uzbekistan the demographic picture was even less advantageous for women. With a net immigration due to evacuation and deportation, there was also greater competition for skilled positions. For example, the mother of Reshat Kazakov, a Crimean Tatar deported to a kolkhoz near Andijan, was able to support the family by working as a teacher in the kolkhoz school, which technically violated the terms of their settlement.<sup>691</sup> Furthermore, although factory and enterprise managers

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<sup>686</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 132, d. 291, l. 24-25.

<sup>687</sup> Sodyk Kalandar, *My na Urale* (Tashkent: Gosizdat UzSSR, 1948), 35.

<sup>688</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 121, d. 455, l. 16.

<sup>689</sup> RGASPI f. 574, op. 1, d. 22, l. 116-120.

<sup>690</sup> Weiner, *Making sense of war*, 315-316.

<sup>691</sup> Interview with Reshat Kazakov (b. 1939), May 24, 2013.

were instructed to seek out female Uzbek cadres, they had access to a labor force that was often more skilled, with superior language skills, and could be more productive.

The departures of Central Asian women from the kolkhoz labor workforce were also connected to the trauma of wartime mobilization. Many of the young girls who departed schools too early in the state's eyes left to replace their older sisters and mothers on whom the wartime work had taken a physical toll. Although data on wartime levels of exhaustion, premature births, and infant mortality among rural women are hard to attain, the Party's postwar women's initiatives reflected a desire to compensate women for their sacrifices. In August 1948 an Uzbek Party directive obligated party leaders especially at the city and district level to bring renewed attention to elevating female cadres and instructed women's departments to focus on women's health, neonatal care, and preventing premature births. That year several congresses were organized about childbirth and children's health by obstetricians and pediatricians in rural areas, indicating a refocus of the Party's propaganda strategy to reflect the traumas of war.<sup>692</sup> In Tajikistan maternity and children's health also suffered because one of the republic's three maternity hospitals was commandeered by a district military commissariat up to a year after the war.<sup>693</sup> Most Central Asian kolkhozes did not receive their first maternity hospitals and clinics until after the war.

Ultimately, just like in Russia, postwar Central Asian society was characterized by upheaval and contradictions. However, instead of youth countercultures and the origins of the Thaw alongside a reenergized Stalinism, in Uzbekistan one of the dominant tensions was between the universality of Victory and the frontline experience and the particularity of patriarchal and Islamically-oriented local society. The Soviet Uzbek veterans did not "become Soviet" at the front because most had already been educated in Soviet schools and worked in collective agriculture. However, at the front they had the chance to embrace a different set of Soviet values and behaviors – cloaked in Russian language and customs – that they now shared with men from all over the Soviet Union. Upon taking up their positions in the postwar order each decided for himself what new habits and values to propagate, but on balance the regime gained a large group of allies that often associated their war experience with both personal and national elevation.

The Uzbek homefront experience was convulsive for men and women. In the long run it strengthened regime goals for female emancipation that centered around exiting the home and taking productive, responsible positions in their local communities. In the short term it created contradictory pressures between the mobilizational demands of the state and a newly sanctioned religious order that reinforced traditional patriarchal gender roles. Although the cases were not representative, young women could still be the victims of violence precisely for insisting on joining the Komsomol, pursuing higher education, or productive work in kolkhozes. Sometimes the war effort itself and state policy worked against these long term goals. Demographic shifts and pronatalist policies placed Uzbek women at risk of being victims of violently enforced taboos against single motherhood. And the war and the immediate postwar order kept Uzbek young people, especially young women, out of schools due to ongoing kolkhoz labor needs, teacher shortages, and low material conditions.

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<sup>692</sup> RGASPI f. 574, op. 1, d. 2, l. 18-19.

<sup>693</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 121, d. 455.

At the same time World War II itself created the conditions to reinforce tradition. The war losses that created a gender imbalance all over the Soviet Union may have been more harmoniously weathered in Uzbekistan due to the traditions of polygamy, arranged marriages, and “cousin marriages.” And just like in European parts of the Soviet Union, part of the psychological response to the cataclysm was a resurgence in traditional gender roles. Ironically, what could be experienced in Russia as a rise of lipstick, high-heals, and dresses among Party and military elites may have been experienced in Uzbekistan as the return to paranji, at least for a time. Eventually, however, the expansion of schools, clubs, and clinics in the 1950s as well as the natural demographic correction of the postwar generation worked to eliminate the most visible traditional practices.

However, in the immediate postwar these cultural outcomes – polygamy, paranji, and women’s suicide – seemed irredeemably divergent from Russian and broader Soviet norms. The Party observers who authored many of these reports may have been disappointed by the “return” of tradition precisely because they had seen the war effort’s power to unify the Soviet citizenry. Their disappointed reports helped strengthen the idea of unbridgeable cultural differences that worked to pull apart Ivan and Uzbek and the notion of a nation-like “Soviet people.”

## *Epilogue:*

The fall of the Soviet Union was met by the toppling of monuments to the ancien regime. All over Eurasia Lenin, Marx, and Dzerzhinskii fell amidst popular demonstrations. Outside the presidential administration in Tashkent the massive Lenin was replaced by a globe depicting a solitary country – sovereign Uzbekistan. The national replaced the international.

Statues commemorating World War II have been treated with greater solemnity out of respect for the dead and justness of their cause. Simple memorials can be found in just about every Russian village and enterprise, as well as former Soviet capitals like Riga and Kiev. Small towns in Uzbekistan's Fergana valley and Khorog, Tajikistan, overlooking the river border with Afghanistan, are also part of this common landscape of memory.

In recent years former Soviet republics have been breaking rank, taking down memorials to Red Army soldiers under the pretext that they were not liberators but occupiers. The Estonian government's decision to remove the Soldier-Liberator statue from a main square to a military cemetery in 2007 was among the most controversial, especially in Russia. In Latvia a spirited public discussion has emerged about whether to dismantle the Victory complex and eternal flame located near the new National Library. And in the last year Lenin statues in all regions of Ukraine have been pulled down in popular efforts to clear the land of the Soviet legacy. As modern Russia reasserts its geopolitical influence and wraps itself further in the legacy of the Second World War, these episodes could increase.

In Tashkent the removal of war memorials has occurred in a more surreal and secretive manner. In 2008 and 2011, almost seventeen and twenty years after the fall of the Soviet Union, the Uzbek government removed two Soviet-era statues from the center of town during the dead of night, offering no explanation or announcement. Not only were the statues not at the center of public debate about the Soviet legacy, their removals were met by consternation and strong public disapproval. Statue removal is highly symbolic and usually accompanies a sea change in public opinion, however in this case the government changed its mind without informing the people. The question of why the Uzbek government removed these statues, and why in such a cloak-and-dagger fashion, gets to the heart of the inconvenient legacy of the Second World War in Uzbekistan.

The statue to the first Uzbek Soviet general Sabir Rakhimov was removed on January 7, 2011 and placed in an unkempt park on the city outskirts. Rakhimov's name was also scrubbed from the city topography, including the city district and metro station that bore his name. His erasure was the more predictable for a state that literally removed all others from the globe and which now officially considers the Soviet era a second Russian occupation. When Kazakhstani researchers brought up anew his ethnically Kazakh parents, despite being raised near Tashkent independent Uzbekistan's ethnonational founding myth found him newly untenable on the public landscape. Instead of being the only Uzbek general in the Second World War he was merely a Soviet Kazakh. This reflected both the new rivalry with Kazakhstan and the narrowing definition of Uzbekness from a civic to ethnic sense that is part and parcel with decisions to close Tajik-language schools for the significant minorities in Bukhara and Samarkand. Interestingly, the monument to the first Uzbek in space, Vladimir Dzhanibekov (b. 1942), an ethnic Russian who adopted his wife's surname, has remained in place in Cosmonauts' Square, across from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, despite his ethnic masking and the fact that the space program was an entirely Soviet creation.

The other guilty sculpture depicted Bakhri Akramova and Shaakhmed Shamakhmudov surrounded by their fourteen adopted children and was removed from Friendship of the Peoples square on the night of April 11-12, 2008 and now stands alongside Rakhimov in the same unkempt park. The statue shows the wife seated with the youngest child in her lap, the husband standing at her side with his arm on her shoulder, and the rest of the children gathered around them in solemnity. The official reason for its dismantling was the square's renaming as Independence Square. A bed of flowers now sits in its place and the square itself is the site of the lavish yearly independence celebrations. However, the urgency to remove one of the city's most popular monuments was far less clear. Reportedly the head of the bulldozer team charged with taking it down could not even name a reason.<sup>694</sup> Bakhri and Shaakhmed were considered to have displayed the best of human and Uzbek qualities, generosity, bravery, love for all ethnicities, hospitality, and self-sacrifice, in other words, Friendship of the Peoples according to a local understanding. The fact that the Soviet state had promoted and even exploited these traits as part of the Uzbek national character was immaterial for most people. And if so, so be it. The family was testament to how during war, and even during Soviet conditions, simple Uzbek people gained worldwide fame for actions that affirmed common human values. It is safe to say that most people did not look upon the statue as a Soviet imposition.

Perhaps the more interesting aspect of the statues' removal is the secretiveness. This can be partially explained by the modern Uzbek state's desire to avoid public demonstrations. However, the answer is rooted more in the regime's relationship to history than its authoritarian mechanisms. Rather than contend with the Soviet legacy openly, in the daylight, the state has chosen to lunge forward, without pulling apart its ramifications. Unlike in the Baltic states, where monuments were removed by passionate crowds as lies that masked a greater truth, the Tashkent statues were deemed to be monuments to self-delusion and culpability. Something deeply internalized was then sheepishly spit out. The statues did not so much oppose the narrative of modern Uzbek nationalism, which is pegged all the way back to Timur, but mocked its purported monopoly on Uzbek national heroism. They represented the bitter truth that some of their finest moments had been as part of the "Sovetskii narod," represented not by Russian occupation but at times a soaring internationalism and friendship. On the other hand, as the Soviet past moves further away, there is a sense that perhaps Uzbek generosity and tolerance were exploited by the state for gains they no longer see. The statues blurred too messily the lines between victimhood and victory that is the common burden of many former Soviet states.

The Ivan-Uzbeks have a complicated relationship with the Uzbek regime, as it does with them. They speak with great reverence for the Karimov government, which supports them financially and with medical care. They are considered heroes and respected elders in their communities and the state honors these longstanding obligations to honor its elderly. However, the Karimov regime has little use for the memories they keep and the cause they fought for.

The Uzbek state has retained the monument parks for the war dead but has transformed them from commemorating a common Victory to a national sorrow. The parks minimize the role of the adversary as well as the cause they fought for. In Tashkent the names of Uzbekistan's deceased (of all nationalities) are listed on metal sheets under a balustrade of wooden columns

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<sup>694</sup> Aleskei Volosevich, "Uzbekistan: v tsentre Tashkenta snesen samyi izvestnyi pamiatnik druzhbe narodov," *Fergananeews.com*, April 12, 2008. <http://www.fergananeews.com/articles/5665> - last accessed July 28, 2015.

carved in the national style. And a grieving mother has been added as the centerpiece sculpture rather than a monument to the soldiers themselves. Similar parks can be found in Samarkand, Andijan, and elsewhere. Andijan's retains the busts dedicated to several local heroes who died in combat, but they are presented as having died defending Uzbekistan and not the Soviet Union. In Almaty, by contrast, Panfilov Park has been left unaltered and the Kazakh state has managed to negotiate between charting a national future and celebrating the common Victory. Meanwhile the Uzbek Ivans find themselves in a state that often seems to be writing them out of history.

The remaining Uzbek veterans are the last bearers of a legacy that began in World War II and endured until the fall of the Soviet regime but is now dwindling. They remember the war as the cataclysm that called them to greater things; that elevated the Uzbeks as equals into the Soviet family that helped rid the world of a global menace. The basic contours of this Uzbekistan lasted until 1991 but will die with them. It was largely Russian speaking and marked by a comfort with pan-Soviet culture, including its atheistic features, dietary, and drinking rituals. The state formed an unspoken, uneasy truce with Islam. Uzbekistan was industrial, with all the cultural trappings of the other Union republics. And it was marked as a special region of Friendship whose indigenous ethnic diversity could easily be extended to embrace the world. The victims of this order – whether they died early on the front, unknown in the Urals, or were young women pinched by competing cultures on the homefront – were not much talked about and are not still.

Ivan-Uzbek was the first and last Soviet generation.



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