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From the Finland Station to the Khyber Pass:
The Soviet Union in Afghanistan, 1978-1989

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Abstract

This dissertation makes use of new archival materials to explore how the Soviet Union acted as a 'developmental state' – a post-colonial regime nonetheless attempting to remake Third World countries partly in its image – in occupied Afghanistan, with a focus on the first half of the 1980s.

Chapter 1 examines how, early during the war, Soviet feminists attempted to talk to their Afghan Communist counterparts at a women's conference held in Moscow. While many of the Soviet feminists perceived Afghanistan as a sequel to Soviet developmental efforts in Central Asia in the 1930s, their Afghan counterparts did not. Forging transnational alliances purely on the basis of gender proved difficult.

Chapter 2 examines how representatives of the Soviet state-muftiate complex sought to market Soviet modernity and development to Muslim audiences outside the USSR, in Izmir and Tehran, following the invasion of Afghanistan. Many of the attendees at the Soviet exhibitions seemed convinced that the USSR still stood against Islam. Still, many found the Soviet vision appealing enough when compared to the post-1979 (Iran) and the post-1980 (Turkey) political situation in their own countries.

Chapter 3 examines how Soviet Komsomol advisers ('mushavery') sent to Eastern Afghanistan in the early 1980s tried to build Communist institutions. Advisers were pressured to report back their top Afghan coworkers and inflated recruitment numbers to Moscow, but in reality, pragmatism not fanaticism was the watchword. While fair enough given the circumstances, the lack of true belief in Communist institution-building among even idealistic advisers forbade poorly for the Soviet system.

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List of Common Abbreviations

CRA	Committee for Religious Affairs
CSW	Committee of Soviet Women
DRA	Democratic Republic of Afghanistan
DOMA	Democratic Organization of the Youth of Afghanistan
DOWA	Democratic Organization of the Women of Afghanistan
GARF	State Archive of the Russian Federation
PDPA	People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan
RAWA	Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan
RGASPI	Russian State Archive of Social-Political History
TsK VLSKM Communist Youth	Central Committee of the All-Union League of Soviet
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Introduction

In the summer of 1979, Viktor Samoïlenko, a Soviet engineer from Moscow, exchanged his rubles at the Tashkent Airport and checked in for his flight – destination, Kabul.¹ While he had travelled all across the Soviet Union and multiple times to Moscow, he felt himself to be in a distant world as soon as he boarded the Aeroflot Tupolev. There was something different about the complexion of the few Afghans on the flight from the Uzbeks he was familiar with around the streets of Tashkent. As the plane crossed over the Soviet-Afghan border, he saw the regularized patterns of Soviet city planning and collectivization fade away into what he perceived as the unregulated mountains and dust of the Afghan landscape. Even though Kabul was not geographically far from Tashkent, he felt himself, surrounded by the unfamiliar rhythms of Dari, to be in a new, foreign world, all to defend something called socialism.

Eurasia was on the move. Over the next decade, tens of thousands of Soviet citizens would cross the southern border of the Soviet Union to bring their vision of development to Afghanistan. This dissertation aims to begin to tell the story of Samoïlenko and others like him – a motley crew of advisers, religious leaders, feminists, soldiers, and others, both Afghan and Soviet, who tried and failed to develop and build a communist state in Afghanistan. It tells a story of how the Soviet Union, in one of its most ambitious projects as a developmental state,² sought to bring its vision of modernity in the form of economies, institutions, and mentalities to Afghanistan. In doing so, it aims to supersede the focus on military history that often dominate histories of the Afghan experience. It also forms part of the first wave of historical scholarship on the war not produced by the Russian state to make extensive use of archival materials. It offers a panorama of this experience via in-depth analyses of three

1 Viktor Samoïlenko, *Kak otkryvaesh' stranu: Afganistan glazami ochevidtza* (Novosibirsk: Novosibirskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1986), 1-35.

2 For a fuller discussion of this concept, see below.

moments in Soviet developmental experience in Afghanistan and western Eurasia.³ In this introduction, I want to answer three general questions: why did I write on this topic? How did I do it? And what does this work teach us?

Why did I write on this topic? In the fall of 2010, I traveled to Moscow and Dushanbe intending to work on the history of Soviet Central Asia in the postwar era. But the state and Party archives in Moscow disappointed me. Most of the material in RGASPI,⁴ the former central Party archive for the entire USSR, covering Central Asia *per se* consisted of dry minutes of republican-level meetings of Party committees. While there was much to read in between the lines of these plenary sessions, nothing immediately leapt off the page. At the same time, while investigating the history of the Soviet women's movement in GARF,⁵ I came across unique documentation on Soviet-Afghan women's links that serves as the basis of the first chapter of this dissertation. And while visiting a sub-archive of RGASPI devoted to the Komsomol,⁶ the energetic help of an archivist and lifelong Komsomol administrator led me to the treasure trove of *mushavery* documents from Afghanistan that forms the basis of the third chapter of this work. Based partly on the strength of these materials, I felt prompted to change my focus to Soviet developmental efforts in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

Another motivation was that I felt there was no work that adequately treated the topic. True, there already exist many distinguished books about elements of the Soviet experience in Afghanistan which approach the topic from different angles. The Russian General Staff has produced a professional literature on Soviet and *mujahideen* military tactics in Afghanistan.⁷ During the war itself, a tidal wave

3 By western Eurasia, I mean roughly the lands that were influenced by a Turko-Persian cultural heritage: corresponding roughly to today's Pakistan, Afghanistan, the Soviet successor states outside of the Baltics, Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus, Iran, Turkey, and northern Iraq.

4 In Russian, *Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no-Politicheskoi Istorii*, the Russian State Archive for Social-Political History.

5 In Russian, *Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, the State Archive of the Russian Federation.

6 Komsomol, the Communist Union of Youth (in Russian, *Kommunisticheskii Soiuz Molodëzhi*), was the youth division of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. In some documentation, it is referred to as VLKSM (*Vsesoiuznyi Leninskii Komunisticheskii Soiuz Molodëzhi*, or All-Union Leninist Communist Union of Youth).

7 Lester W. Grau (ed.), *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan* (London: Frank Cass, 1998); Lester W. Grau and Ali Ahmad Jalali (eds.), *The Other Side of the Mountain: Mujahideen Tactics in the Soviet-*

of literature by war correspondents, Sovietologists, and travelers to Afghanistan satiated public curiosity and Western policy audiences' interest in the war. Soviet Afghanists produced a distinguished literature on the history of Afghanistan and attempted both pre-facto and post-facto to explain why socialism did or did not, respectively, fit into patterns of Afghan history.⁸ More recently, several authors, primarily journalists and diplomats, have written on the Soviet war in Afghanistan, clearly motivated by ostensible parallels with the American experience there (which has now lasted longer than did the Soviet one).⁹ In the field of Soviet history as studied in North American and European academia post-1991, some scholars have made tentative steps towards integrating Soviet history with the broader Middle East or South Asia.¹⁰ But graduate students are often limited by a lack of the requisite languages and feel compelled to limit their scope to the 1970s, at the latest, and on Russia, out of professional perceptions that writing on the 1980s, or on non-Russian topics, may not guarantee appropriate academic employment in Slavic or History departments.¹¹ The dissertations that have been produced more often approach the topic from the angle of 'security studies' or the reception of the war in the USSR (really Russia) itself, rather than that of development within Afghanistan.¹²

Afghan War (Quantico, VA: U.S. Marine Corps, Studies, and Analysis Division, 1999); Lester W. Grau and Michael A. Gress, *The Soviet-Afghan War: How A Superpower Fought and Lost* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2002).

- 8 For some works from a massive corpus, see: R. T Akhramovich, *Afganistan Posle Vtoroi Mirovoi Voyny: Ocherk Istorii* (Moskva: Izd-vo vostochnoi lit-ry, 1961); R. T Akhramovich, *Afganistan V 1961-1966 Gg.: Politicheskoe Polozhenie: Konstitutsionnaia Reforma* (Moscow: Izd-vo "Nauka", Glav. red. vostochnoi lit-ry, 1967); Marianna Rubenovna Arunova, *Granitsa Rossii S Afganistanom: Istoricheskii Ocherk* (Moscow: IV RAN, 1998); A. D Davydov, *Afganskaia Derevnia (Sel'skaia Obshchina I Rassloenie Krest'ianstva)* (Moscow: Nauka, 1969); A. D Davydov, *Afganistan, Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskie problemy razvivaiushchikhsia stran* (Moscow: Mysl', 1973); A. D Davydov, *Afganistan: Voyny Moglo Ne Byt': Krest'ianstvo I Reformy* (Moscow: Nauka, "Izdatel'skaia firma "Vostochnaia lit-ra, 1993); Viktor Korgun, *Intelligentsiia v politicheskoi zhizni Afganistana* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Nauka", 1983); Ibid., *Istoriia Afganistana: XX vek* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk / Izdatel'stvo "Kraft+", 2004).
- 9 Rodric Braithwaite, *Afgantsy: the Russians in Afghanistan, 1979-89* (London: Profile, 2011); Gregory Feifer, *The Great Gamble: The Soviet War in Afghanistan*, 1st ed. (Perennial, 2010); *20 Let Vyvoda Sovetskikh Voisk Iz Afganistana: Uroki Boevykh Deistvii V Afganistane (1979-1989 Gg.) I Problemy Patrioticheskogo Vospitaniia Molodezhi: Sbornik Materialov Kruglogo Stola* (Brest: Brestskii gos. tekhnicheskii un-t, 2009); Deepak Tripathi, *Breeding Ground: Afghanistan and the Origins of Islamic Terrorism*, 1st ed. (Washington, D.C: Potomac Books, 2011).
- 10 Robert Crews (Stanford) has co-edited and contributed to a volume on Taliban-era Afghanistan, *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009). James Pickett (Princeton) has done research in Tajikistan and Afghanistan and is writing a dissertation on Persephone urban culture in Inner Asia in the 20th century.
- 11 For an example of a partial exception to this rule, see: Christine Evans, 'From Truth to Time: Soviet Central Television, 1957-1985', (PhD Dissertation: University of California, Berkeley, 2010).
- 12 See, for examples: Howard M. Swartz, 'The Soviet-Afghan War in Russian Literature', (D.Phil. Dissertation, University of Oxford, 1992); Quadir A. Amriyar, 'Soviet influence, penetration, domination and invasion of Afghanistan', (PhD

What we lack is a history that treats the USSR as a *developmental state* in the same league as the postwar United States or Europe of the Cold War. What do I mean by this term? As scholars have shown, the concept of 'development' emerged in the late 1940s as colonial African regimes sought new justifications to legitimize their rule over African colonies whose new classes of urban dwellers and intelligentsia challenged the old tribal framework.¹³ Independence became inevitable, however, but 'development' from rich Western countries in exchange for political leverage became a viable compromise between native African élites and former colonial rulers, as a middle ground between total sovereignty on the one hand and Pan-Africanist supranational unions on the other. This shift in Africa, which primarily affected post-colonial European states at first, was part of a larger shift whereby 'colonialism' became completely discredited, and foreign efforts to influence the domestic structures of 'Third World' states had to be re-conceived as 'development.' As Frederick Cooper and other scholars have emphasized, what emerged from this conjecture, and what still exist to some extent around the Third (and former Second) World today, are 'developmental states': states seeking to use a mix of infrastructure investment, foreign and military aid, and soft cultural power to bolster their reputation and influence across the globe, while rejecting (at least publicly) any imperial ambitions.

True, the shift was different country to country. In the United States, for example, American social scientists like Walter Rostow proffered ideas of 'modernization theory' that underwrote American development efforts abroad.¹⁴ These American development efforts, meanwhile, often intersected with

Dissertation, University of Oxford, 1989); Douglas Anthony Borer, 'Superpowers defeated: a comparison of Vietnam and Afghanistan', (PhD Dissertation, Boston University, 1993); Victoria Joan Hulse Campbell, 'Soviet military intelligence in the Soviet-Afghan war: applying the lessons of history or doomed to repetition?', (M.A. Thesis, Harvard University, 2006); David Corey Cox, 'Soviet counterinsurgency doctrine and strategy in Afghanistan: an operational assessment of the campaign', (PhD Dissertation, George Washington University, 1991); Jennifer Fluri, 'Beyond the burqa: the spatial politics of Afghanistan's revolutionary women', (PhD Dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 2005); James S. Robbins, 'Soviet counterinsurgency strategy in Afghanistan, 1979-1989', (PhD Dissertation, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, 1990); Silke Wörmann, 'Afghanische Frauen zwischen Islam und Sozialismus: gesellschaftliche Realitäten von 1920 bis 2001', (M.A. Thesis, Philipps-Universität Marburg, 2003); Ben McVicker, 'Politics, Pensions, and Prison Sentences: the Forgotten Veterans of Russia's Afghan War', (PhD Dissertation, University of Toronto, forthcoming).

¹³ Frederick Cooper, *Africa Since 1940: the Past of the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

¹⁴ See, for some representative examples: Michael Adas, *Dominance by Design: Technological Imperatives and America's*

Third World demands on the rich world. Business played a role, too, as policymakers worked with aviation and construction firms like Pan Am and Morrison Knudsen, respectively, to promote American values, culture, and institutions abroad while at the same time helping Third World countries.¹⁵ The Soviet Union was much less saddled with a imperial burden than its Western European or American rivals; it had won its European imperium at the cost of 20 million dead over Hitler, and the Union had a history as an anti-colonial project. But after 1956 and 1968, this justification was less sound, and the USSR would always face challenges exporting its vision of development, justified by Marxism-Leninism, to the Third World. The willingness of partner nations to accept Soviet help notwithstanding, Tito and Mao offered alternative leadership within the socialist world to Stalin's successors, and by the 1980s, at least in Europe and East Asia, Soviet socialism was clearly not competitive compared to West German or Japanese capitalism.

So much for a very concise background to Soviet development during the Cold War. What this dissertation seeks is to examine the USSR as a postwar developmental state with respect to Afghanistan in order to seek to enrich existing historiographical debates about the nature of the Soviet state. Recent historical scholarship has focused on Russia and the Soviet Union as an empire – whether the two states can be classified as one, and if so, what made its markers of difference among imperial citizens unique in broader imperial history.¹⁶ Historians like Douglas Northrop and Adeeb Khalid have debated

Civilizing Mission (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2006); Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Michael Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and 'Nation-Building' in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

15 Jennifer Van Vleck, *No Distant Places: Aviation and the Global American Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, forthcoming); Ibid., 'An Airline at the Crossroads of the World: Ariana Afghan Airlines, Modernization, and the Global Cold War,' *History and Technology*. Van Vleck, a professor at Yale, is currently working on a project on Morrison Knudsen (which was heavily involved in the Helmand Valley Project) and American engineering abroad during the "American Century."

16 Much of the scholarship of the latter fashion came out of Princeton University (the author's undergraduate alma mater) in the last ten years. See, for some examples: Eileen Kane, 'Russian Hajj: Imperialism and the Muslim Pilgrimage to Mecca, 1801-1917,' PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, 2005; Robert Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009); Mustafa Tuna, 'Imperial Russia's Muslims: Inroads of Modernity,' PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, 2009; Michael Reynolds, *Shattering Empires: The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, 1908-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

whether the USSR in Central Asia in the 1930s can better be seen as a colonial empire akin to the British Empire in South Asia, or an 'activist, interventionist, mobilizational state that seeks to sculpt its citizenry in an ideal image,' more along the lines of Kemalist Turkey or Reza Shah's Iran.¹⁷ But these debates about the nature of the Soviet state have not extended themselves with comparable vigor to the postwar period. This dissertation is, then, an attempt to view the USSR less through an imperial than a modernist genealogy, treating it alongside other late 20th states (primarily the USA) that sought to export their cultural and economic institutions to Third World countries as 'development.'

While the USSR sent aid and specialists to countries like China, Angola, Cuba, Vietnam, and elsewhere throughout the Cold War, Afghanistan remains of particular interest to this historiographical conversation for several reasons. One is simply the relative dearth of post-1991 historical scholarship on the subject. While revisionist scholars have retraced Sino-Soviet cooperation in the 1940s and 1950s, Soviet exchange with the Persian-speaking world remains a relatively understudied topic.¹⁸ Late 20th century Afghanistan was also unique as an arena between several competing ideas of development. Afghanistan hosted both American and Soviet specialists throughout the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, and following Zia ul-Haq's Islamization of Pakistan in the late 1970s and 1980s, and his support of the *mujahideen* in Afghanistan, Islamist politics became a real alternative way forward in Afghanistan, too. The presence of other competing ideas of development in the same space as Soviet ones makes Afghanistan a special case for understanding what specifically was appealing about the Soviet vision for development. Finally, given current NATO and American development efforts in Afghanistan (while simultaneously carrying out military operations), a study of the Soviet experience may be

2011).

17 Douglas Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); Adeeb Khalid, 'Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization: Early Soviet Central Asia in Comparative Perspective,' *Slavic Review* 65:2 (Summer 2006): 231-251.

18 Odd Arne Westad, *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945-1963* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); Jeremy Friedman, 'Reviving Revolution: the Sino-Soviet Split, the "Third World," and the Fate of the Left', PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, forthcoming.

instructive for historical perspective on the current conflict.

This dissertation attempts to examine the Soviet developmental experience in Afghanistan through a close study of three episodes from the archives. Chapter 1, 'Under a Red Veil? Staging Afghan Women's Emancipation', looks at the question of how Soviet feminists approached their Afghan counterparts at a Moscow seminar in 1982 as they together sought to emancipate women in occupied Afghanistan. Soviet feminists from the Committee for Soviet Women (CSW) approached the 'woman question' in Afghanistan with a complex baggage of preconceptions about women's roles in 'less developed' countries, viewing Afghan women as on a similar track to their Soviet Central Asian counterparts some fifty years prior. But even as many of the Afghan representatives of the Democratic Organization of the Women of Afghanistan, a PDPA subsidiary, had themselves received their education in the Soviet Union and could communicate freely in Russian, something was lost in translation. The Afghan feminists in attendance viewed Soviet institutions like land reform, rural cooperatives, infrastructure and health development, and so on, as essential to the women's cause. But they did not share their Soviet counterparts' assumption of a natural affinity between Afghans and Soviet Central Asians, and remained skeptical that an alliance between the professional women of CSW and their rural, often battle-hardened Afghan compatriots could be struck. The encounter spoke to the difficulty of extending the Soviet mentality outside the space of the former Russian Empire, as well as the difficulty in the late 1970s and early 1980s of trans-national alliances based on the assumption of gender solidarity.

The difficulties of managing foreigners' perception of Soviet development was not limited just to Afghans. Chapter 2, 'Getting Re-Acquainted with the "Muslims of the USSR": Staging Soviet Islam in the Muslim World', examines how Azerbaijani representatives of the Council for Religious Affairs (the Soviet religious bureaucracy) sought to manage 'the narrative' as they traveled around Turkey and Iran in 1981-1982. Marketing Soviet development to Iranians and Turks would seem especially

difficult at this moment; the USSR had just invaded a Muslim country and both Iran and Turkey found themselves in the aftermath of, respectively, a self-branded 'Islamic revolution' and a military coup that would re-orient the country away from its Kemalist heritage and towards a 'Turkish-Islamic synthesis.' While the CRA representatives in Tehran and Izmir would confront crowds of protestors, hooligans, and threats to their personal safety, in their visits to mosques and Turks' and Iranians' homes, they found that the Soviet vision for development still held great appeal among the people of these two countries in flux. Many Muslims had never quite reconciled themselves to the idea of the USSR as a country that was anything but hostile to Muslims, but particularly for the oppressed of the Muslim world (Shias and Kurds in Turkey, Azeris in Iran), there still was much to admire in the USSR.

Chapter 3, 'From *Pashtunwali* to Socialism? Soviet *Mushavery* from a Globalised Second World to Eastern Afghanistan', examines how the process of development actually took place on the ground, specifically in Eastern Afghanistan (Kunar, Laghman, and Nangarhar Provinces). Authors outside of the Soviet Union typically associate the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan with military operations and soldiers (of which there were plenty), but a group of approximately 150 so-called Komsomol *mushavery* ('advisers') – idealistic, energetic young men in their late 20s from all parts of the USSR – also had a hand in socialist construction. Sent to all parts of the country, the *mushavery* worked with Afghan colleagues to develop Communist institutions in the provinces. This chapter provides both a sense of who the *mushavery* were, as well as the 'globalised' Second World they came from, where a boy born in rural Tajikistan could aspire one day to attend a Leningrad conservatory, or, in the case of the *mushavery*, volunteer to work in ... rural Afghanistan. It also provides what is, as far as I have been able to ascertain, the most granular portrayal of development in occupied Afghanistan yet – a world inhabited less by Communist ideologues than by practical young men interested in striking deals with local mullahs and keeping an eye out to developing Afghan youth. In some ways, the *mushavery* approximated a Soviet version of the Peace Corps.

Given the compressed research schedule of my field work in the former Soviet Union, I recognize that this approach is not perfect. One potential criticism of the approach taken is that it is too selective. But my approach in this M.Phil. dissertation has been precisely to provide a *panorama* of the late Soviet developmental state in three diverse arenas: intellectual exchange with Afghan developmental figures, propaganda and maintaining 'the narrative' across the Muslim world, and development on the ground. If the treatment of the Soviet developmental state ranges too much in this work, then this partly reflects, too, the nature of the archival materials: aside from the *mushavery* files in Moscow, none of the materials I found in Moscow archives goes into great depth on developmental efforts in Afghanistan in a way that would allow for a longitudinal study. I was unable to order archival materials in Dushanbe, but after reviewing the finding aids for the archives, none of the institutions whose files are contained there focuses on the Afghan developmental experience in great depth or breadth.

This dissertation does not draw on materials from Afghan archives. In spite of three decades of conflict, the Afghan National Archives still exist and are (based on reports from scholars and NGO workers in Kabul) apparently still open, although they maintain no online finding aids. To my knowledge, no historians have worked in them since the American invasion in 2001, much less since 1978. While the archives produced a finding aid in 1970, the current status of the collections circa 2011 is generally unknown.¹⁹ Given the security situation in Afghanistan at the moment of writing and the fact that I only elected to focus on Afghanistan in October 2010, I elected to leave a trip to the National Archives in Kabul to further work on the subject. The broader point, however, is that there exists a wide cosmos of potential materials for a PhD or D.Phil. thesis on the Soviet developmental state in Afghanistan. My focus in this project was guided by a desire to work more closely with new archival materials, as well as by the motives indicated above.

¹⁹ *Arshif-i Milli-yi Afqhanistan* (Kabul, 1970). The only copy of this book that I have been able to locate is a microform copy located at the United States Library of Congress, although I personally have not inspected it.

What are the lessons of this dissertation? One is that it may be helpful to view the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan less as a bound-off episode that 'belongs' only to military history than as a last hurrah for the Soviet developmental state. Afghanistan was a considerable military operation, one that left the country in shambles and resulted in the deaths of some 14,000 Soviet soldiers (one quarter the number of American dead in Vietnam). But as recent scholarship has shown, the decision to invade was intimately tied with the fact that the Soviet Union had already invested so much into cultivating friendly ties with and pouring development funds into Afghanistan in the years prior that it could not accept living with an irresponsible Amin-led government, much less one with American support, just south of its borders.²⁰ Indeed, because of its strategic location at the Eurasian crossroads, because of the persistently low standards of human development outside of Kabul, and because of its position as a buffer between the USSR and the rest of the Third World, Afghanistan throughout much of the Cold War had been an arena for both Soviet as well as American development efforts.²¹ The point is while Afghanistan represented a military episode, for the purposes of understanding the Soviet project, it is essential to situate it in a global history of Soviet development across the Third World. One aim of this dissertation has been to provide a more granular study of this process of development in Afghanistan than hitherto existing scholarship has yet offered.

Another lesson that this dissertation offers, as far as historiography is concerned, is that one can really only understand Soviet history by placing it in international context, and by placing close attention on the flow of ideas, people, and goods (not just states) across the borders of the USSR. Given the demands for non-native speakers of the language of learning Russian (or, more ambitiously, Russian and Uzbek, as some scholars have done), the temptation of focusing primarily on specifically

20 Braithwaite, *Afgantsy*, 58-81.

21 For an account by a Polish civil engineer who built roads, tunnels, and highways in Afghanistan in the mid-1960s, see: Stanislaw Miarkowski, *Na Drogach Afganistanu* (Warsaw: 1968); Ibid., *Na dorogakh Afganistana* (Moscow: Nauka, 1973). For more on American development in Afghanistan, see: Louis Dupree, 'The Emergence of Technocrats in Modern Afghanistan,' *American Universities Fieldstaff Report, South Asia Series* 17:5 (1974); Nick Cullather, 'Damming Afghanistan: Modernization in a Buffer State,' *Journal of American History* 89:2 (2002): 512-537; Jennifer Van Vleck, 'An Airline at the Crossroads of the World: Ariana Afghan Airlines, Modernization, and the Global Cold War,' *History and Technology* 25:1, 3-24.

Russian culture or institutions is in part understandable. But a focus on Russia within the Soviet Union can too easily lead to parochial histories. Without a strong knowledge of the languages of the constituent nationalities of the USSR or its neighbors, or at least an interest in how these different peoples related to one another, one runs the risk of writing essentially national, as opposed to imperial or international history, and, in doing so, missing out on a huge part of the story. Not only that, a focus on individuals and ideas moving across borders (as opposed just to diplomatic history, i.e. the international history of *states*) is essential to capturing what the idea of the Soviet Union meant to people living in and outside of it. This dissertation represents a tentative step in this direction of writing international history on an individual scale. While based on Russian-language sources, it seeks to place greater attention on the flow of people and ideas across the southern border of the USSR, emphasizing how Afghans, Iranians, Turks, and others viewed the Soviet Union. It represents, a tentative attempt to write a more truly *international* history of the USSR, with a strong emphasis on individual actors *within* Soviet institutions, rather than on diplomacy or high statecraft.

This is where we, like Samoïlenko at the Tashkent airport, join the traffic of Soviet, Afghan, and other (mostly Turkish and Iranian) citizens moving around Eurasia during the early 1980s, as the Soviet Union tried, in vain, to remake Afghanistan in its own image. From the *mushavery* landing in Eastern Afghanistan to the Afghan feminists traveling to Moscow and Tashkent, this is a story of people moving from one culture to another, trying to find a common language in an imagined 'socialism', but largely failing to do so. A project that took me thousands of miles and several journeys to complete, the focus throughout is on just that – curiosity, discovery, and adventure.

Chapter 1:
Under A Red Veil? Staging Afghan Emancipation in Moscow

'In 1921 in Moscow there also arrived Muslim women ... they met Comrade Lenin on the street, surrounded him, began to cry, said something to him, and hugged him. Comrade Lenin was also ecstatic. Afterwards they went with him to the Kremlin. Along the way he said: "Here rise the dejected of the dejected to conscious life! Today the victory of the laborers is made!"'

Nadezhda Krupskaya, *Zhenshchina – Polnopravnyi grazhdanin SSSR*²²

On Wednesday, June 23, 1982, a group of young Afghan women flew from Kabul to Moscow to discuss their liberation. While the war presented new challenges to the Soviet system, it also represented a great opportunity for the Soviet women's movement. The April Revolution²³ and the Soviet invasion had both sparked uprisings against the redistribution of land to women as well as their general emancipation, but they also gave feminist organizations like the Committee of Soviet Women (CSW) the chance to forge new links with their Afghan colleagues. Perhaps CSW members help their Afghan counterparts solve 'the woman question' and bring the promise of the April Revolution to fruition?

Still, curious Muscovites and tourists might have been surprised to see this troupe of ten Afghan women on a tour later that week of the Kremlin and the Lenin Mausoleum, and, later, on a boat ride along the Moscow River.²⁴ The Afghan women – all members of the Democratic Organization of the Women of Afghanistan (DOWA), Kabul soviets or provincial cooperatives – would spend three days in the capital participating in a seminar with their Soviet counterparts before leaving for Tashkent on Saturday evening to visit several institutions there.²⁵

²² Nadezhda Krupskaya, *Zhenshchina – polnopravnyi grazhdanin SSSR* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1937), 14.

²³ The April Revolution, also known as the Saur Revolution, was a 1978 revolution in Afghanistan in which the communist PDPA (People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan) overthrew the regime of Mohammad Daoud Khan.

²⁴ Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF), f. 7928 (Komitet Sovetskikh Zhenshin), o. 3 (Dela obshchego khraneniia, 1958-1991 gg.), d. 5583, l. 2, 'Poriadok raboty dvustoronnego sovetsko-afganskogo seminara "Puti i metody raboty sredi zhenshin v pervye gody posle revoliutsii (23-30 iunia, 1982g., g.g. Moskva, Tashkent.)"'

²⁵ Ibid., l. 2-3.

In this chapter, I closely examine this Soviet-Afghan seminar to see what it can tell us about efforts to bring Soviet-style development²⁶ to Afghanistan.²⁷ Following the insights of scholars who have written on gender and empire as well as the voice of subalterns in history, I want to examine two questions. First, how did the Soviet women see the Soviet mission for Afghanistan and the lessons of Soviet history for the emancipation of Afghan women? I argue that the Soviet women at the conference presented a vision of history and time in which Afghan women stood outside of the logical unfolding of Marxist history. Soviet women (*qua* 'Westerners' vis-a-vis Central Eurasians) had to give Afghan women the 'gift' of historical advancement towards communism. For the Soviet women, the *hujum*²⁸ in Uzbekistan presented *the* central lesson for how to build socialism for Afghan, and, to a lesser extent, all Third World women.²⁹

Secondly, I ask what the Afghan women wanted. While the Afghan women at the seminar could speak in scripted Soviet terms about History, at other moments they betrayed an understanding of the April Revolution, Afghan history, and the role of Soviet women quite different from the CSW message.

26 A word on this term 'Soviet-style development.' The mutual misunderstandings on the Soviet and Afghan sides at this encounter illustrate some of the difficulties in asserting any one meaning to terms and concepts like 'communism,' 'colonial,' 'Islamic,' 'feminist,' and so on; part of what makes this an interesting encounter is the distance between CSW women's notions of communism from their counterparts. In general, however, in this article, when I write of "Soviet-style development" or "secular socialist modernity" I mean a political system that encourages secularization, actively promotes women to enter the workforce and achieve economic independence from men, seeks to break up large landholding estates and redistribute land to individual peasants, does not regard religion as a legitimate ideology for the basis of civil law, and recognizes one-party rule, preferably by a Marxist-Leninist communist party, as the appropriate system of government to achieve these ends. Needless to say, this idea had different meanings to different people in South and Central Asia during the 1970s and 1980s. For more, see Ayesha Jalal, 'An Uncertain Trajectory: Islam's Contemporary Globalization, 1971-1979,' in Niall Ferguson, Charles S. Maier, Erez Manela, and Daniel J. Sargent (Eds.), *The Shock of the Global: The 1970s in Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010).

27 Nothing in the archives that I managed to find during my visit to Moscow in October 2010 indicated anything further about the organization of the conference. CSW, unlike other Soviet civil organizations, did not maintain offices in other countries and I was unable to locate any information attesting to the enthusiasm of the seminar participants, any material compensation they may have received, etc. One excellent question which an anonymous reviewer of this article raised which I am unable to answer is why there were so many Russian (and Kazakh) women at this seminar, and so few Uzbek, Tajik, Turkmen, etc. female activists. Nothing in the file indicates a conscious policy one way or the other on the part of CSW towards this question, and the domestic politics of Soviet feminism, specifically with respect to Muslim women, remains an open historical question for the postwar period.

28 The *hujum* (Turkic for 'assault') was a complex of policies in Soviet Central Asia initiated around 1927 aimed at the economic and social emancipation of women, including de veiling.

29 GARF f. 7928, o. 3, d. 7033, 'Dokumenty sovetsko-indiiskogo seminarara – "polozhenie zhenshchin v Indii i SSSR,"' March 10-11, 1988.

When they thought of Communist development, they had in mind a revolution that would free them from the poverty imposed by big landowners and patriarchy, but they were less enthusiastic about the Soviet prophecy of unveiling, industrialization, and secularism than their counterparts north of the border. In order to argue this, I examine the language the Afghan women used to describe themselves and their relationship with the revolution in Moscow when speaking directly to their Soviet counterparts in their speeches.³⁰

This story is significant for several reasons. For one, it gives us deeper historical perspective on the situation of women in Afghanistan. The Taliban regime in Afghanistan (1994-2001) became infamous for its policies towards women. Today, even as the NATO presence in Afghanistan enters its tenth year, atrocities against women, such as that of the story of Bibi Aisha³¹ depicted in *Time* magazine, remain common.³² The Western portrayal of these atrocities also speaks to a more general anxiety about whether the Islamic world can ever be fully modernized in synch with Enlightenment values.³³ But by investigating the voices of these Afghan women, one gets a better sense of two things. On the one hand, these files breathe of the energy of the DOWA women's movement in the 1980s. It is a story that challenges stories about Muslim women's lack of protest to 'oppressive tribal customs.'

30 For reasons of space, I have not in this article been able to contrast the language of DOWA activists at the 1982 seminar with that in other venues. I have obtained a copy of a 1980 DOWA conference summary from the Oriental Section of the Russian State Library, but aim to work with that document more in a future paper. I discuss the methodological issue of the language of the speakers later in this article.

31 Bibi Aisha is a young Afghan woman whose nose and ears were cut off following her attempt to escape from an abusive forced marriage. Her case became notorious after a summer 2010 *Time* magazine article featured photographs of her taken by the photographer Jodi Bieber.

32 For the related story, see: Aryn Baker, "What Happens if We Leave Afghanistan," *Time*, August 9, 2010. For more on the young women in question, Bibi Aisha, see Rob Nordland, "Portrait of Pain Ignites Debate Over Afghan War," *New York Times*, August 4, 2010, available online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/05/world/asia/05afghan.html>

33 For examples of this sort of literature, see: Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010); Greg Mortenson, *Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Fight Terror and Build Nations – One School at a Time* (New York: Viking, 2006). The plight of Afghan women is a frequent theme in the Western press. See, for a few recent examples of a common journalistic trope: Allisa J. Rubin, 'For Afghan Wives, a Desperate, Fiery Way Out,' *New York Times*, November 7, 2010; Jenny Nordberg, 'Facing Social Pressures, Families Disguise Girls as Boys in Afghanistan,' *New York Times*, September 20, 2010; Kirk Semple, 'Afghan Women Slowly Gaining Protection,' *New York Times*, March 2, 2009. The Western concern with "oppressed" Muslim women dates back long before the American concern with Afghan women. For one example, see Lata Mani, *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).



Figure 1: One Soviet juxtaposition of the 'old' and 'new' Afghan woman. From *Afghanistan emruz* (Kabul: Bihqty, 1981).



Figure 2: The communist dream for Afghan girls? From *Afghanistan emruz* (Kabul: Bihqty, 1981).

Examining these Afghan women's voices provides a better idea of what feminism might even mean in an Afghan historical context.³⁴ Women could be veiled at the same time that they took up arms against *mujahideen*,³⁵ all in the name of the April Revolution. Wearing a *chador*³⁶ and getting an education might not be opposed to one another. Nor might these acts seem contradictory to notions of what it meant to be 'Uzbek,' 'Tajik,' 'Pashtun,' or 'Afghan.' All three might rather be intimately bound up together in women's Afghan identity.³⁷

This story also encourages us to place the Soviet experience in broader context. The works of scholars like Robert Crews, Allen Frank, and Tomohiko Uyama have enhanced our understanding of the Tsarist 'confessional state,' the place of Volga Muslims within the Tsarist project, or the relationship of Central Asian Muslims to the imperial state. But Afghanistan, indeed, the broader Persianate world, with which the Empire had a longer border than any country except for China, often remains out of view.³⁸ This is not for want of material. Soviet Afghanists produced a distinguished literature, and

34 For more on this issue, see Lila Abu Lughod, 'Do Muslim women really need saving? Anthropologist reflections on cultural relativism and its others,' *American Anthropologist* 104:3 (2001): 783-790; Shrin Akiner, 'Between tradition and modernity: the dilemma facing contemporary Central Asian women,' in Mary Buckley (Ed.), *Post-Soviet Women: From the Baltic to Central Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Madina Tlostanova, 'Za chem obrubat' nogi, kotorye ne vmeshchaliutsia v zapadnye tufli? Neevropeiskie byvshie kolonii SSSR i sovremennaia kolonial'naia gendernaia systema,' posted online at Central Asian Network for Gender Studies, <http://www.genderstudies.info/politol/7.php>.

35 The *mujahideen* (Arabic for 'strugglers' or 'those in the act of *jihad*') were an informal alliance of various Afghan and Pakistani resistance groups which fought against the PDPA and Soviet occupying forces during the 1980s, often united by pan-Islamic ideology.

36 *Chador* (in Russian, *chadr*) is a confusing term referring to Muslim women's clothing, but in the context of Cold War Afghanistan it most often referred to a full-body garment which covered the face, although often with a net or grille in front of the eyes to aid the woman's vision.

37 My thanks to Alexander Morrison for emphasizing this point.

38 Robert Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006) & Robert Crews 'An Empire for the Faithful, a Colony for the dispossessed' in S. Gorshenina & S. Abashin (eds.) *Le Turkestan Russe, un colonie comme les autres? Cahiers d'Asie Centrale* 17/18 (Tashkent-Paris: IFEAC, 2009) pp.82-3; Allen J. Frank, *Islamic Historiography and "Bulghar" Identity Among the Tatars and Bashkirs of Russia* (Leiden: Brill, 1998); Tomohiko Uyama (ed.) *Empire, Islam, and Politics in Central Eurasia* (Sapporo: Slavic Research Centre, 2007). Crews is currently working on a project involving Tsarist Russia's relationship with Afghanistan, but at the time of writing has not published anything on this topic. For other works on the Soviet-Persianate dynamic, see: Natalia Yegorova, 'The "Iran Crisis" of 1945-1946: A View from the Russian Archives,' Cold War International History Project, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Working Paper #15. Fernande Beatrice Scheid Raine, 'Stalin, Bagirov and Soviet Policies in Iran, 1939-1946,' PhD Dissertation, Yale University (2000); Afshin Matin-Asgari, 'Iran and Russia,' Unpublished Conference Paper (2009). Tsarist scholars and adventurers were aware of this intercourse and produced an impressive body of literature. See G.S. Kharatishvili, and A.I. Polishchuk (Eds.), *Russkie putesthestvenniki v Afganistane* (Dushanbe: Donish, 1988).

plenty of Westerners visited the Soviet Union and Afghanistan up until 1980, whether as Peace Corps Volunteers or on the hippie trail. 'Perspectives,' as one scholar has written, 'not archives are determinative.'³⁹ If scholars open up their linguistic and – more importantly – geographical imagination about area studies, they will here many exciting stories of exchange between the Soviet and non-Soviet Persianate⁴⁰ world. Many of the reformists in Afghan history – Amanullah in the 1920s, Taraki and Karmal in the 1980s – received resources and ideological inspiration from the Soviet Union, in particular from Central Asia. Following the April Revolution, a literature on the Central Asian SSRs was produced in Dari. Thousands of Afghans came to Dushanbe and Tashkent to see examples of Central Eurasian socialism.⁴¹ Tajiks and Uzbeks served as translators for Komsomol operatives in Afghanistan in the 1980s. They also served as soldiers in the Soviet Army throughout the war. Many Afghans and Tajiks worked as merchants or middlemen between the borders.⁴² Cold War Central and Southwest Eurasia (Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Iran), far from a world of closed borders, was a dynamic zone of exchange of development models and ideas.

The Soviet Union also captured modernizing elites' imagination as an alternative non-capitalist route to development.⁴³ Throughout much of the 20th century, capitalist development was associated

39 Stephen Kotkin, "The State – Is It Us? Memoirs, Archives, and Kremlinologists," *Russian Review* 61:1 (2001), 37.

40 By 'Persianate' here I mean the regions of South and Central Asia where Persian culture, if not language, was historically dominant prior to 20th century Turkish nationalism or pan-Islamism: Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. For more on the concept, see: Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam, Volume 1: The Classical Age of Islam*, (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1977), 293.

41 See, for some examples of the former: Elena Yemelianova, *Enqelab, Hanrab, Zanan* (Moscow: APN, 1982); *Zanan-e shayaste-e Ozbekistan* (Tashkent: Progress, 1981); *Avvar-e Sosializm dar Tajikistan* (Moscow: Progress, 1985). Many other similar books are held at the Oriental Library of the Russian State Library in Moscow, Russia. Scenes of the latter are depicted in two Soviet documentary films concerning Afghanistan. See: *Afghanistan. Utro respubliki* (1981) and *Pust' vseгда budu ia!* (1981), Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Kinofotodokumentov, Krasnogorsk, Russian Federation.

42 For more on Tajik Komsomol workers, see Chapter 3. For more on Tajik soldiers, see Central State Archive of the Republic of Tajikistan, f. 1048 op. 1, 'Voiny-Internatsionalistov, Fond-Kollektsiia.' Unfortunately, while in Dushanbe I was unable to gain access to look at the contents of this *fond* or any contents of the archive even with letters of support from the International Research and Exchanges Board.

43 Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 151. James Pickett, a PhD candidate at Princeton, has written an unpublished piece on the interaction between Iranian leftists and Soviet cultural diplomacy in northwestern Iran during the 1940s that focuses on similar dynamics to this piece, but in an Iranian context: 'The Perso-Soviet Cultural Relations Society, the Iranian Left, and Soviet Modernity 1941-1953,' Unpublished Paper, February 2010.



Figure 3: One Soviet presentation of the liberated women of Uzbekistan, a 1980 book entitled *To Each Their Glory* (*U kazhdoi svoia slava*). The book, published in a Dari translation here, presents fourteen profiles of successful Uzbek women. The caption on the right reads: “The book that you have in your hand is about the women of Uzbekistan – cotton-pickers, ballet dancers, teachers, engineers, composers, and others. This book provides information about the subject of how one of the Soviet republics developed in the years of Soviet power, and how women were freed by the victory of the October Revolution, as well as how women participated in the field of industry.”

with mass unemployment, imperialism, coup d'états, racism, and stock market crashes; the Soviet vision, with successful industrialization, concrete prefab apartment buildings that offered an escape from the village, and some claim to greater cultural sophistication over Western shlock. Afghan and Iranian élites, not subject to forced Sovietization in the same way as those in Eastern Europe or North Korea, could pick and choose among what they found appealing in the Soviet vision of modernity. And with comparatively advanced Central Asian SSRs, all with a similar cultural background, just across the border, why could Kabul or Tehran one day resemble Tashkent?

But in the Afghan context, this vision for Communist development was complicated by the fact that the emancipation of women, especially veiled Muslim women, had also become part of the Soviet package.⁴⁴ And while Kabul had a sophisticated and cosmopolitan female intelligentsia, this represented less than 1 per cent of the country's total female population. And by the early 1980s, radical anti-feminist state-sponsored Islam was on the march in Pakistan and Iran. Secular socialist development seemed to be on the wane as a vision for Muslim South Asia.⁴⁵ How, then, to develop Communism in *this* world? If we read into the different visions of development in the seminar, we might understand how Soviet and Afghan feminists approached this challenge.⁴⁶

44 Gregory Massell, *The Surrogate Proletariat: Moslem Women and Revolutionary Strategies in Soviet Central Asia 1919-1929* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974); Douglas Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling Under Communism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006); Ibid., 'Three Lives of Saodat: communist, Uzbek, Survivor,' *Oral History Review* 28:2 (Summer/Fall 2001): 21-58.

45 Ayesha Jalal, 'An Uncertain Trajectory: Islam's Contemporary Globalization, 1971-1979,' in Niall Ferguson, Charles S. Maier, Erez Manela, and Daniel J. Sargent (Eds.), *The Shock of the Global: The 1970s in Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010).

46 One might well raise the question of why Afghan women's liberation occupied a relatively small role in the agenda of the CSW, or at least its archival base. Having examined the Moscow GARF files for the Soviet Committee for Ties with Foreign Countries (*Sovetskiĭ Komitet dlia svyazeĭ s zarubezhnymi stranami*), I have not found any other files there on this topic, either. It appears that the richest documentary source for these questions remains the Komsomol *mushavery* files. My initial suspicion is simply that (as opposed to American / NATO operations in Afghanistan), the Soviet policy complex, in its invasion of Afghanistan, chose to place far less emphasis on women's liberation than it had in Uzbekistan in the 1920s. More than that, given the extreme unpopularity of women's de veiling in parts of Afghanistan at the time, along with the difficulty of carrying out land reform alone, this can hardly seem like a foolish decision. I have been unable to locate more conclusive policy discussions on this point, however, and am open to corrections. I am grateful to Katharine Holt for emphasizing this point to me.

Soviet Women: Between State-Sponsored Feminist Evolutionism and *Mission Civilisatrice*

In their speeches to their Afghan counterparts at the seminar, CSW activists adopted a rhetoric of what we might call 'state-sponsored feminist evolutionism.'⁴⁷ According to this framework, the Muslim women of Eurasia (Afghanistan included) were, in the plan of history, objectively backwards; they persisted in states of human development (as defined by Marxism) that had been eclipsed first by capitalism, and, after the October Revolution, socialism. But if the coming of Soviet power had helped catapult the women of, say, Dagestan and Uzbekistan onto the path of socialist modernity and equal rights with men, Afghans remained shut out, at least until the April Revolution whose 'second phase' came with the Soviet intervention. It was now the job of the USSR – in particular, 'Western' Soviet women as opposed to these denizens of the 'East' – to give these women the 'gift' of the historical intervention and supercharge them along their road towards an end of history: equal rights and communism. By receiving the Soviet women, Afghan women could leapfrog centuries of forestalled development and complete their Historical Progress in a few years.

Was this not a *mission civilisatrice*?⁴⁸ On the one hand, yes: the Soviet women saw their Afghan counterparts not as fundamentally different, but as further back on a timeline of objective history and in need of a benevolent leg up. We might add that this vision of development still thought not in terms of backwards *individuals*, but *nations* in a peculiar way. The historical leap forward that Russian women were bringing was for all 'Afghan' women, even though Afghanistan's tribal and ethnic divisions would make it hard to apply a Soviet paint-by-numbers nation-building approach.⁴⁹

47 This phrase is inspired by Hirsch's idea of 'state-sponsored evolutionism,' whereby the Soviet government would supervise the development of the peoples of the USSR on two levels: along their progression towards nationhood and eventually total lack of nationhood under communism; and their progress towards socialism. In contrast to Hirsch, however, I want to emphasize the role that gender played in the vision of the CSW activists as they toyed with the Soviet concepts of History and Progress that Hirsch has discussed in her work.

48 A *mission civilisatrice* (French for 'civilizing mission') refers to an ideology that underwrote European colonial activity, whereby colonizers saw natives as backwards and in need of "progress," often synonymous with Christianity and colonial economic exploitation. In the last decade, historians of the USSR have often contrasted Soviet attitudes towards Muslim populations with such classical European attitudes.

49 For more on the construction of Soviet nations, see Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1929* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), and Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

On the other hand, seeing this episode merely as an issue of Russian women coming to 'civilize' Afghans ignores the broader Cold War / Islamic context in which this episode took place.⁵⁰ On one level, Soviet women brought their version of development in the form of women's rights to Afghanistan as a clear alternative to the secularist RAWA women's group that viewed the PDPA and Soviet Union as criminal.⁵¹ More serious opponents were Islamist groups sponsored by Zia ul-Haq's Pakistan and American money in order to destroy communism in Afghanistan and give Pakistan depth against India. There was, in other words, a significant difference between any Soviet 'civilizing mission' in Uzbekistan in the 1930s and this operation. If the former took place in a region of which other great powers knew little, and without real financed alternatives on hand, here the Soviet imagination for women's development was thrust into the much more hostile Afghan arena.

With these thoughts on Soviet colonialism and development, let us turn to some of the actual speeches that the CSW activists made at the seminar. Here, for example, is Nalia Erumukhanovna Bekmakhanova, a Kazakh senior scholarly coworker at the Institute for the History of the USSR of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, in her opening remarks on 'The Development of the Social-Political Activity of Women':⁵²

50 For more on the Soviet Union as a vision of modernity rather than a colonial power, see Stephen Kotkin, 'Modern Times: The Soviet Union and the Interwar Conjuncture,' *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 2: 1 (2001): 111-164.

51 RAWA produced a news organ, *Payam-e Zan* (Women's Message), issues of which exist, based on my research, at the Library of Congress, the Hoover Institute, Harvard University, the Center for Research Libraries (Chicago), the University of Michigan, the University of Wisconsin (Madison), and the University of Nebraska (Omaha). At the time of writing this article I have not been able to consult any issues of the magazine. For more on the RAWA, see: Melody Chavis, *Meena: Heroine of Afghanistan* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003); Anne E. Brodsky, *With All Our Strength: The Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan* (London: Routledge, 2003); Zoya, John Follain and Rita Cristofari, *Zoya's Story: An Afghan Woman's Struggle for Freedom* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002); Cheryl Benard, *Veiled Courage: Inside the Afghan Women's Resistance* (New York: Broadway Books, 2002).

52 Bekmakhanova was the daughter of Ermukhan Bekmakhanovich Bekmakhanov (1915-1966), the major Kazakh historian of the first half of the twentieth century who became a pariah for arguing that the Kenesary Karimov revolt had been progressive. Bekmakhanova herself, also a historian, of 18th and 19th century Kazakh history. See, for example, N.E. Bekmakhanova, *Kazakhi mladshevo i srednego zhuzov v krest'ianskoï voine 1773-1775 pod predvoditel'stvom E.I. Pugachev*, Dissertation, Leningrad Section of the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR (1966); Ibid., *Legenda o Nevidimke (Uchastie kazakhov v krest'ianskoï voine pod rukovodstvom Pugacheva v 1773-1775 gg.)* (Alma-Ata: Kazakhstan, 1968); Ibid., *Mnogonatsional'noe naselenie Kazakhstana i Kirgizii v epokhe kapitalizma (60-e gody XIX v. – 1917 g.)* (Moscow: Nauka, 1986). Throughout the 1970s she produced updated school textbooks on Kazakh history which her father had originally written. My thanks to Alexander Morrison for pointing this out.

Among Soviet women there are representatives of one hundred and thirty nations and *narodnosti* populating the USSR. Linked with the names of Soviet women are all of the accomplishments (*sversheniia*) and victories of our motherland (*rodiny*). They participated in the Great October Socialist Revolution, overwhelmed their opponents (*srazhali*) for the power of Soviets, built socialism, evinced bravery and firmness on the front and on the home front (*tylu*) of the Great Patriotic War, reconstructed the destroyed war economy, and today they are actively participating in communist construction.⁵³

Bekmakhanova here makes no distinction between metropolitan (Slavic) and colonial (Asian), or urban and rural woman in the history of the Soviet experience, elides the huge differences in the Soviet experience (nomads, settled peoples, mountain peoples) by making the October Revolution a pan-Eurasian event. All women, regardless of their nationality, participate in the course of Soviet history. This pageant, she tells us further, is progressive, defined by action rather than moral development: the women in question actively 'participate' in the Revolution, 'overwhelm' their opponents, they build socialism, and so on, until they are on the road towards building communism and, with it, an end to history.

But Bekmakhanova's tone shifts as she turns her attention to the 'Eastern' (*vostochnye*) women⁵⁴ of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, a topic that occupied much interest in postwar Soviet historiography:⁵⁵

But only after the October Revolution did women occupy a position of equal rights in society. In Tsarist Russia the female worker and the female peasant underwent cruel

53 N.E. Bekmakhanova, 'Razvitie obschestvenno-politicheskoi aktivnosti zhenshchin,' GARF f. 7928, o. 3, d. 5583, l. 54.

54 This language raises another issue: even as the CSW women presented themselves as part of an Third World women's liberation front with an internationalist agenda, they still appear to have thought very much in terms of a 'Soviet East' or 'Orient' (*Sovetskii Vostok*) that implied an otherness between a progressive West and backwards East. My thanks to an anonymous reviewer for raising this point.

55 For some examples of Soviet scholarship on the *zhenskii vopros*, see: Iu. Dzgurova, in P. and Z.A. Astapovich (Eds.), *Velikii Oktibr' i raskreposhchenie zhenshchin Srednei Azii i Kazakhstana (1917-1936 gg): sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Moscow: Mysl', 1971); I. Finkel'shtein (Ed.), *Probuzhdennye velikim Oktabrem* (Tashkent: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo Uzbekskoi SSR, 1961); Murshida A. Bikhzhanova, *Sem'ia v kolkhozakh Uzbekistana na materialakh kolkhozov Namanganskoii* (Tashkent: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk Uzbekskoi SSR, 1959); N.A. Kisliakov, *Sem'ia i brak*, Trudy Instituta Etnografii, New Series, Volume 44 (Moscow: Akademia Nauk, 1959); R. Kh Aminova, *The October Revolution and Women's Liberation in Uzbekistan*, trans. B. M. Meerovich (Moscow: Nauka, 1977); Rohat Nabieva, *Zhenshchina Tadzhikistana v Bor'be za Sotsializm* (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1973); Bibi Pal'vanova, *Emansipatsiia Musul'manki: opyt raskreposhcheniia zhenshchiny Sovetskogo Vostoka* (Moscow: Nauka, 1982); M.K. Gafarova, *Dukhovnyi oblik zhenshchiny Sovetskogo Vostoka* (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1969); Ibid., *Zhenshchiny Sovetskogo Vostoka* (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1987); Kh. T. Tursunov, V.G. Chebotareva, R. Ia. Radzhapova, and S.A. Dmitrieva (Eds.), *Khudzhum – znachit' nastuplenie* (Tashkent: Uzbekistan, 1987).

exploitation, were deprived of their civil, political, and economic rights, their position within the family was severe (*tiazhelym*). But especially severe was the fate of women of the Eastern outskirts of the country – Kazakhstan, Central Asia, the South Caucasus. These were colonies of Tsarism, here both among the settled denizens (*zhitelei*) as well as nomads there prevailed a natural economy in which along with the man the women worked much, too. They raised children, carried out the domestic tasks (*domashnee khoziastvo*), looked after the livestock, worked in the fields, worked in the orchards, brought the goods to market, prepared carpets and felts, textiles, and sewed clothing. But only the male master of the house (*khosiain doma*) could guide the domestic economy, own property, sell it, and control the money. The man also controlled the fate of the woman. He received up to 40 livestock as ransom, '*kalym*', when giving his daughter away in marriage.⁵⁶

Here, Bekmakhanova insists on a disjuncture in history between, effectively, the European and Muslim women of early 20th century Eurasia. Clearly, both groups of women – those on the 'Eastern outskirts' versus those not – were exploited under the Tsarist regime. But her choice of words here is telling. The women *not* in the Eastern rim of the empire may have been exploited both within the family as well as in the farm and factory, but not in the same way as the Russian Empire's Muslim women. She describes 'Eastern' women as exploited, but she uses the term 'natural economy' (*natural'noe khoziastvo*), a Marxist term, to get to that point.⁵⁷ For Marx, an example of the natural economy lifestyle would be 'an old-fashioned small peasant on the Continent [who] consumes the greater part of his product directly, buys and sells as little as possible, fashions tools, makes clothing, etc., so far as possible himself.'⁵⁸ It is in light of this context that we can fully understand Bekmakhanova's statement: even if the Tsarist order exploited 'Western' subjects, they were still in some sense developed insofar as they were exploited by capitalism. 'Eastern' subjects, meanwhile, remained not only exploited by their husbands and society, etc., but also stuck in an objectively backwards phase of economic history. October, within this historical narrative, catapulted these Asian women across centuries of backwardness, into the era of socialism.

⁵⁶ Ibid., I. 54-55.

⁵⁷ See in particular Karl Marx, *Capital*, Volume 2, Chapter 4: "The Three Formulas of the Circuit," available online at: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1885-c2/ch04.htm>

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Bekmakhanova's narrative about whether these women could take this step by themselves was more ambiguous. She emphasized how 'women – Russians, Ukrainians, Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, Kazakhs, Turkmen, and Tatars fused with (*vlivalis'*) the ranks of the Red Army in the capacity of enlisted soldiers, political workers, and sanitary workers' in her discussion of the Civil War.⁵⁹ But in describing de veiling campaigns she ascribes much less agency to the Central Asian woman.

For example, in the Soviet East basmachism had been liquidated, a national-governmental land division had been carried out in Kazakhstan and Central Asia and the first socialist republics formed here; a land and water reform had been effected, in result of which the woman received land and water on equal terms with the man; more and more women started to work in a system of cooperation. But working under the *paranja* or veil (*pokryval*) was difficult. And in the families of workers, poor peasants (*dekhan*), communists, Komsomol workers, and among the studying youth, women with the agreement of their family were the first to take off the veil. The *bais* wages a cruel struggle against this. In 1927 in Uzbekistan alone 203 women activists died. But Soviet power had dared to defend the rights of the women of the East, which granted them new strengths and the desire to participate in the building of socialism.⁶⁰

The Soviet government, she says, had to carry out a huge range of policy reforms – providing local security, drawing borders, devising national institutions, implementing land and water reform – for women to begin to work the fields, and still wearing *paranjas* at that. Not even the discomfort of sweating under a horsehair veil is enough for the Central Asian woman to unveil herself. Only with 'the agreement of her family' does she de veil, and this only among certain social groups. The real actor at the end of the day in Bekmakhanova's narrative is 'Soviet power,' which – unlike the women – dared to declare and protect the rights of Eastern women.

We find, then, in Bekmakhanova's presentation, the *hujum* presented as the only historical event relevant to the problems of Afghan women in a revolutionary situation fifty-five years later. Those campaigns, are moreover related not as a tale of indignant women taking up their fight against oppressive men, or even cooperating hand in hand with a helpful communist intervention.⁶¹ In

⁵⁹ Bekmakhanova, GARF f. 7928, o. 3, d. 5583, l. 57

⁶⁰ Ibid., l.64

⁶¹ I would like to thank Benjamin Sawyer (Michigan State) for emphasizing this point to me. Even as scholars of the

Bekhmakanova's narrative, Central Asian and Muslim women act only tentatively. They may share the goals of Soviet power, but they have to be nudged to progress forward in history. Soviet 'Western' women have to bring the gift of socialism the 'East' to move it forward in historical time.⁶²

Other CSW speakers at the seminar offered similar tacks to explain the place of Central Asian women in Eurasian and human history. In the talk 'The Recruiting of Women Into Societal Production' by S.Ia. Turchaninova we learn about the movement of Central Asian women into European Russia in the 1920s:

Such methods of work among women such as an exchange of the experience of female workers of the various republics proved a great help for the recruiting (*privlechenie*) of women of the East into production, for their instruction in professional mastership, and in the growth in political consciousness. Having begun the construction of enormous socialist enterprises for the cotton and silk industries in Central Asia, the Soviet government (*gosudarstvo*) sent a large group of local women for industrial training in the textile centers of the country – to the factories of Moscow, Ivanovoi, Vladimir, and other *oblasts* of the RSFSR and the Ukraine. Here were created all the necessary conditions for the raising of the cultural level (*povyshenie kul'turnogo urovnia*), for the successful mastery of modern technology, and for the achievement of professional mastership for the female workers and trainees. This training in the center of the country became a school of rich revolutionary and life experience as well as international education (*vospitanie*) for the women of the East. Returning from Moscow and other cities of Russia and the Ukraine, they became the initiators of socialist execution, while in conversations with young female workers, they told the young girls about the life of Russian women, about their kindness and friendly, brotherly (*bratskoi*) help, about their active participation in the construction of a new life. In the long term, these qualified national cadres of female textile workers played a large role in the instruction of many thousands of women – Uzbeks, Turkmen, and Tajiks – in professional mastership at the newly constructed enterprises in the republics of Central Asia.⁶³

In Turchaninova's view, Central Asian women had to be recruited into a process of state-sponsored feminist evolution to move forward in History.⁶⁴ She describes the event as an 'exchange of

hujum such as Northrop and Kamp disagree on the long-term efficacy of the *hujum* in altering social relations in Central Asian, all of the Soviet women at the seminar give an unambiguously positive assessment of the experience and view it as a policy with successful long-term results.

62 For more on the notion of gift-based relationships in Russian and Soviet rule, see Bruce Grant, *The Captive and the Gift: Cultural Histories of Sovereignty in Russia and the Caucasus* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

63 S. Ia. Turchaninova, "Vovlechenie zhenshchin v obshchestvennoe proizvodstvo," GARF f. 7928, o. 3, d. 5583, l. 46.

64 For more on the history of this work exchange program, see: *Voprosy istorii Uzbekistana* (Tashkent: 1975), 54.

experiences' (*obmen opytov*) between Soviet women, but she focuses entirely on what Central Asians learned by coming to the 'center of the country' – the Central Economic Region and the Ukraine. Once moved from the backwards (natural economy, pre-feudal, feudal) periphery to the more advanced center, Central Asian women improve both their technical skills (allowing them to move from the natural economy to the socialist economy in state enterprises) as well as their level of culture and class consciousness. By coming to Moscow, centuries of historical backwardness are annihilated in a few months. And as the Central Asians returning home will emphasize to their daughters and the next generation of female workers, this soteriological leap forward is the gift, specifically, of Western Soviet women (Russians and Ukrainians here) to their Eastern sisters.

How unique was this kind of rhetoric? If we compare it with other moments of CSW interaction with Third World women, some differences stand out. CSW held two comparable conferences in the 1970s, one in Moscow and Tashkent from November 22 – December 2, 1977 for Mongol women's organizations entitled 'The Participation of Women in Labor and Social Life,' the other in Srinigar, India on March 10 and 11, 1988, with Indian women's organizations. At neither of these conferences did the Soviet representatives focus on the *hujum* as crucial for Asian women's development to the extent they did at the Afghan conference. Instead, they focused more on the founding of women's *artels*, the liquidation of literacy, and cooperation with UN forums for women's issues. They spoke, in other words, in the present not the past tense. The emphasis with the Mongol and Indian women, moreover, lay on Soviet-Mongol and Soviet-Indian coöperation, with few traces of women's rights as a 'gift' given by Russian women to their Asian counterparts.

If we look at those moments where the *hujum* did appear, the telling of the experience differed. At the Srinigar conference, Z.E. Timofeeva, an editor with the CSW's journal *Soviet Woman* (*Sovetskaia zhenshchina*), spoke of how the revolution changed a Turkmen woman's life.

At the time, our magazine told about one Turkmen women from Ashgabat – Kurban-

Guzel Alieva. She subsequently became an important Party worker. But then she was an illiterate woman, fearing everything. She came to the women's club. They selected her for the Presidium of the group. She refused to go there if her husband didn't come with her. Her husband was a communist and knew that he had to strengthen in this woman the belief in herself as a person. And only when her husband sat down beside her did Alieva sit calmly in the Presidium. This woman became an important Party worker. That's how it started.⁶⁵

This anecdote contrasts with the CSW message at the Afghan conference. In their descriptions of Central Asian women, CSW speakers at the Afghan conference saw women as able as men – competent, if given the chance, to participate in labour just as effectively as their husbands or brothers. Alieva, however, is almost the opposite. Her story is less about Soviet power intervening in history to free Eurasian women from male oppression than about the imperative of male Eurasian communists to push their wives forward on a journey to self-realization. While there is no evidence in either seminar stenogram to suggest whether this was a conscious rhetorical move or accidental, the Afghan seminar is remarkable for the fact that it never mentions Afghan men. Only very late in the course of the seminar events did an Afghan delegate ask a CSW representative on her opinion of the role men could play in the revolution. The response? The question was tabled for a follow-up seminar, which never took place.

Speaking Soviet, Speaking Out?: Afghan Women at the Conference

The DOWA representatives at the conference did not buy into the *hujum*-centric plan of history that their CSW counterparts were offering them. Even as many of them could speak in terms close to those of the seminar organizers, in their unscripted remarks they offered their own ideas on what the Revolution meant to them, as well as what role Soviet women would play in its enactment.

Before unpacking these women's voices, we should make some methodological disclaimers. One has to do with how representative these voices are for 1980s Afghanistan. On one level, we should

65 Z.E. Timofeeva, Untitled Talk, GARF f. 7928, o. 3, d. 7033, l. 28-29.

feel lucky to find any transcripts of this sort. But indeed, while pre-war Afghanistan boasted a small female intelligentsia, this was the exception. 80% of the general population was illiterate, among women, some 99%.⁶⁶ So while the voices of the Afghan women at the seminar offer a rare window into a world of Afghan women at the time, they are unrepresentative of the illiterate, not to mention anti-Communist women. Such is the peril of writing on non-literate societies.

As far as geography is concerned, not all of the women at the conference were Kabul-based intelligentsia: Norsî Hussein was from Laghman Province; Sarvorsultan Abdulrahim from Badakhshan, in the northeast; Mamlakat from Khost, a city in Paktia, in eastern Afghanistan not far from the border with Pakistan; and Anisa, from Deh Sabz, a rural district in Kabul Province.⁶⁷ Curiously, none of the documents mention the women's ethnicity – perhaps a telling sign of Soviet attitudes towards 'passport nationalities,' whereby one could be an Uzbek, a Turkmen, an Afghan, or a Pashtun, but never more than one at the same time.⁶⁸

On top of this, the DOWA women were not necessarily free to speak their mind in the context of a seminar hosted in the USSR, and may very deliberately have changed their language to tell their

66 RGAKFD, Account No. 26364, *Novyi den' Afghanistana* (1978). This figures, though slightly exaggerated, are nonetheless accurate: according to the US Country Studies program, in 1978, the last year for which reliable data on Afghan society exists, the overall illiteracy rate was 88.6%, while among women this was 97.2%. However, this masks a larger urban-rural divide: if in cities women's literacy rates were approximately 15%, in the villages less than one percent of women were literate. For more, see 'Afghanistan-Literacy,' *Country Studies*, available online at: <http://countrystudies.us/afghanistan/72.htm>

67 GARF f. 7928, o.3, d. 5583, l. 5. The full list of women at the conference and their capacities is as follows: 'Jamilia Nakhid – Head of Delegation, Member of the Executive Committee of DOWA. Chair of the International Commission. Sultana Omid. Deputy Chair of DOWA, Member of the Executive Committee of DOWA. Zainab Bakhidi – Chair of the Kabul Provincial Committee of DOWA. Del'dzhon Abdulkhafiz – Chair of the Kabul City Committee of DOWA. Shakhlo Shadzhimi – Chair of the 4th Kabul City Committee. Nasrii Khusein – Chair of the DOWA Committee in Lagman Province. Sarvarsultan Abdulrahim – Chair of the DOWA Committee in Badakhshan Province. Mamlakat – Chair of the DOWA Committee in Paktia, Khost *uyezd*. Aziza Dodmanesh – Chair of the DOWA Committee in Jowjzan Province. Anisa – Member of the Cooperative *Uyezd* of Deh Sabz.'

68 By 'passport nationalities' I am referring to the system that emerged in the Soviet Union whereby Soviet citizens had to indicate their ethnicity in their internal passports. One could only mark down one choice ('Russian' or 'Kazakh' if one had Russian or Kazakh parents, but not 'Russian-Kazakh'), and ethnicity often played an important role in the appointment of persons to jobs or Party assignments. But the occupation of Afghanistan and the construction of communist institutions in a country with a bewildering assortment of ethnicities, tribes, and sub-tribes stood at loggerheads with a system that thought in terms of Soviet nationalities. Adrienne Edgar elaborated more on the confusion this system created in everyday life in a talk at the University of Oxford in spring 2010 as part of her current research on interethnic marriage in postwar Soviet Central Asia. Thanks to Alexander Morrison for emphasizing this point.

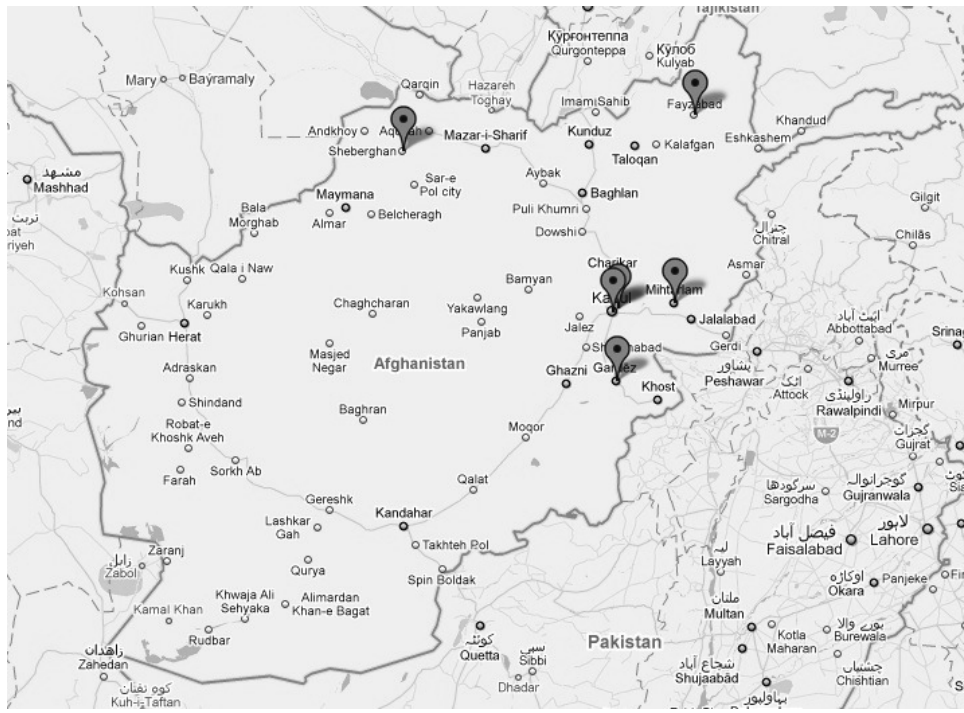


Figure 4: Origins of DOWA Women at the Moscow Conference. Based on GARF f. 7928, o.3, d. 5583, l. 5.

counterparts what they were wanting to hear. As criticism of Robert Crews' readings of Tsarist-era Muslim petitions underlines, one has to remain mindful of this fact without dismissing what can still be valuable records.⁶⁹ Language is another issue: as far as the documents attest, all of the Afghan women at the conference spoke in Russian, not Dari or Pashto, which, at least in the case of one of the women, Anisa, limited her ability to fully express herself.⁷⁰

Still, we find in the voices of the Afghan women a curious interplay between, in their scripted speeches, something like the official narrative, and yet, in their unscripted statements, a more complex attitude towards women's rights and Soviet assistance. For an example of the former kind of speech, consider what Jamilia Nakhid, the head of the Afghan delegation, had to say about DOWA:

The Democratic Organization of Women of Afghanistan should exert all of its efforts towards the actualization (*osutschestvlenie*), realization, and preservation of the rights of Afghan women that were envisioned by the revolutionary order of the country.

The National Democratic Party of Afghanistan is a party of the working class, a party of all the laborers of the country. With great interest it proceeds towards the resolution of the women question in Afghanistan and exerts all of its energies towards the further engagement (*vovlechenie*) of women into the national (*natsional'nuiu*) life of the country.

To the women of Afghanistan has fallen the enormous honor of, with the entire nation, and with a resolute step, to go along the road that has opened up before them and solve the questions standing before the country, and, along with that country, overcome all difficulties.⁷¹

Here we have an example of 'speaking Bolshevik,' Afghan style: the NDPA as the vanguard party of the working class and of all laborers of the country, the 'revolutionary order' as the major force

⁶⁹ Robert Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Alexander Morrison, Review of *For Prophet and Tsar*, *The Slavonic and East European Review* 86:3 (July 2008): 553-557; Jeff Sahadeo, Review of *For Prophet and Tsar*, *Central Asian Survey* 27:1 (March 2008): 105-106.

⁷⁰ All of the documents in the stenogram for the seminar are in Russian, save for one press released in Dari prepared by the DOWA. Most of the DOWA women at the conference appear to have spoken fluent Russian, or at least prepared their presentations to a high linguistic standard, but in the sections of the seminar where they were speaking freely, they often employ unidiomatic linguistic constructions, which suggests to me that they were speaking in Russian (rather than through a translator) at these moments. I have not been able to track down where or how these women learned Russian, although this certainly remains a topic to investigate during future trips to Moscow. As at least one of the photographs in the piece indicates that Russian courses were offered in Afghanistan during the 1980s. Several researchers have pursued projects on Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow, but to my knowledge none of them has focused on South Asian links.

⁷¹ GARF f. 7928, o.3, d. 5583, l. 129.

that will lend the women of Afghanistan their rights, and a typically Soviet rhetorical flourish ('the road that has opened up before them' [*po shirikoī otkrivsheisia pered nimi doroge*]) to finish it off.⁷² At other moments in their scripted statements, DOWA women adopted a more hysterical tack that still strayed clear of reflection on the real meaning of the Revolution. Consider this excerpt from the Sultana Omid, the Deputy Chair of DOWA:

The woman of Afghanistan is very courageous (*muzhestvenna*), very brave, very capable. Women have strengths, they carry out the hardest jobs, but the oppression of feudal and pre-feudal conditions, the general economic backwardness of the country, the totally rotten (*prognivshie*) social conditions and traditions, which themselves were resulting from the general economic backwardness of the country, hindered the wide participation of women in the economic life of Afghanistan.

The life of an Afghan woman was bound by the four walls of her home, and her participation in the societal life of her country was paltry. An absolute majority of women in Afghanistan, not having the opportunity to take charge of their fate, were occupied in back-breaking labor and worked for their masters – the landowners.

In our country there never existed such a region where there prospered shameful, utterly backwards conditions and customs, there the order was perhaps even pre-feudal. There the husband sat at home, or in the garden, and had no other work other than relaxation, while at the same time the woman fulfilled agricultural work, other geponic (*zemledel'cheskie*) work, gathered brushwood, and gathering brushwood in our country is one of the hardest kinds of work. They carried potable water for dozens of kilometers. They did the housework and raised the children.⁷³

As opposed to the virtuous communist husband of Timofeeva's Srinigar anecdote about Turkmenistan – or even the absence of men in CSW women's examples in Moscow – Omid presented Afghan men as decadent despots who enslaved their wives. The Revolution has to be carried out less *for* Afghan women than *against* Afghan men to achieve justice. Still, she never strayed far from the CSW line about the point of the Revolution. Her description of Afghan conditions stays within the bounds of Soviet discourse about Asia in its hysteria ('totally rotten social conditions ... perhaps even pre-feudal'). Her implications on the end goals of the Revolution – get women out of the house and into the economy, encourage their participation in society (including deveiling) – are much in line with what

72 For more on 'speaking Bolshevik,' see Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 215-225.

73 Sultana Omid, 'Razvitie obshchestvenno-politicheskoi aktivnosti zhenshchin,' GARF f. 7928, o.3, d. 5583, l. 130.



Figure 5: Women's clothing as progress or backwardness: a photograph of three Afghan women. Given the diversity of Afghan society, it is important to underline – in spite of the value of the 1982 stennogram – how unrepresentative it can be. Photograph from *Afghanistan Emruz* (Kabul: Bihqy, 1981).

the CSW women expressed. Her categorization of Afghanistan as a land before time, still in feudal or pre-feudal history, neatly fits the CSW representatives' vision of the place.

Still, towards the end of the conference, CSW activists asked their DOWA counterparts to tell more about their lives. As Valentina E. Vavilina, the head of the Soviet delegation and editor of the magazine *Woman Worker*, asked them:⁷⁴

We were very touched by your gratitude in your address to Soviet warriors, thank you. But you didn't say anything about yourself. How did you become an activist? It would be very interesting for us to find out. Perhaps someone will say something about themselves in the next presentations?⁷⁵

As the seminar shifted to an open question-and-answer format, some DOWA women opened up. The contrast between the two kinds of statements could be striking. Consider the following extemporaneous remarks of Aziza Dodmanesh:

In the name of the women of the province located in the north of our country – Afghans, Turkmen, Uzbeks, female peasants and those engaged in the production of hides – allow me to pass on to Soviet women our very best wishes.

I'd like to tell you a bit about the life of women living at home (*domashnikh khoziaek*), about the life of women who go around in the *chador*, about the conditions of their lives.

The provincial soviet in the province of Jowjzan was able to organize work among women who are employed in housework, in other words, among the most backwards parts of the female population. The members of our provincial soviet go out into the further removed corners of the province, get to know the lives of women of these regions (*raionov*), and tell them about the activity of the organization. We tell them about the events that are going on in Afghanistan, about the real course of all of the events, about what the enemies of the April Revolution are up to. We tell them about the activity of Soviet women.

Now our women, including our female peasants, are getting to know the work experience of Soviet women and consciously take active part in those events that the DOWA is carrying out. They consciously fight for the foundation of a new social order in the country.

Among our women there are also representatives of the Uzbek nationality, Uzbek women who wear the veil (*pokryvalo*), who cover their face with the *chador*. Together with other women, with representatives of other nationalities, united in the ranks of the provincial section of our organization, and they, too, give all of their strengths towards the defense of the gains of the April Revolution. They say, 'We'll never fall under the influence of the enemy propaganda, since we've already listened for thousands of years to

⁷⁴ Ibid., I. 4.

⁷⁵ Ibid., I. 269.

what they say – we know the essence of their propaganda perfectly well.'

And they really understand the role and the meaning that the enormous contact with Soviet comrades had, the help of Soviet warriors in warding off the aggressors, in putting pressure on all of the hearths (*ochagov*) of the counter-revolution in the country, and in part in the province of Jowjzan. Afghan women meet with Soviet warriors, and they are grateful for the help that they have provided on the ancient land of Afghanistan.

In our province the women, the majority of whom are peasants, support the policy that our party and government is carrying out. Carrying their weapons with them (*s oruzhiem v rukakh*), they defend the gains of the April Revolution, they are grateful to the women whose sons arrived in Afghanistan in order to defend the Afghans against the aggression of imperialism.⁷⁶

Dodmanesh's division of the women of northern Afghanistan is peculiar, speaking of 'Afghans' among other nationalities and of a division between homemakers and peasants. Given our focus on gender, her tale about the women of Jowjzan is remarkable. She associates female backwardness with housework rather than the *chador*.⁷⁷ If the Soviet Uzbek women of the 1920s were admired within CSW as vanguards towards the first generation of professional Central Asian women, Dodmanesh specifically admires Afghan Uzbeks who wear the *chador* (although not *because* they wear the veil). She argues that these veiled women in particular are the most effective agents for women's liberation. According to her, they are especially effective because of their deep familiarity with counter-revolutionary, anti-women's liberation ideology. Dodmanesh, in other words, is arguing for quite a different conception of the relationship between *hijab*⁷⁸ and women's liberation. Wearing the veil may not make her Afghan Uzbek heroines *more* effective as revolutionaries, but she certainly views the issue of the veil as discrete from winning the revolution and securing women's liberation (primarily through getting women out of the house). The *burqa*, she implies, remains separate from 'the essence'

76 GARF f. 7928, o.3, d. 5583, l. 263-265.

77 Katharine Holt, in her criticism of this paper, has argued that she sees Dodmanesh here as arguing within a Marxist tradition insofar as her analysis of backwardness is primarily socio-economic. While I obviously agree with the fact that Dodmanesh is basing her analysis around socio-economic factors, I am less sure that I would describe her analysis here as structured in Marxist terms. Discussions of objective backwardness owe something to Soviet debates about Central Asia, but Dodmanesh abstains from using terms like 'natural economy' or 'feudalism.' In this sense, her analysis is not radically different from that of contemporary Western critics who write about the plight of Asian women without legitimate opportunities for work, even prostitution. Nonetheless, I am grateful to Holt for highlighting this tension.

78 By *hijab* here I mean not the specific garment worn by Muslim women, but rather the concept of covering, veiling, and the importance of separation of men from women in Islamic jurisprudence more generally.

of counter-revolutionary propaganda.

One of Dodmanesh's colleagues, Narsiy Hussein, spoke on the relationship between the Revolution and unveiling. We have more information on this twenty-one year old young woman than we do her colleagues:

I was born in the province of Laghman, in a family of middle income, not a wealthy family. I was born in 1961. In the province of Laghman the dejection, the tyranny was very visible, all of the class contradictions were immediately obvious (*byli nalitso*).

The squalor, the dismal conditions of life among the residents of the providence of Laghman, the outrage, the suffering that the people (*narod*) tolerated, convinced me of the fact that I should fight for a better future for them.

I have ten brothers. They belong to the NPDA party. One of them died during the period of the fascist dictatorship of Amin. We want to fight for a bright future of the nation (*narod*) of Afghanistan.⁷⁹

Hussein, a DOWA activist in Laghman, told her counterparts about her work in Kunar Province, a Pashtun-majority area nearby in the northeast of the country.

I myself am from Laghman Province. I want to say a few words about another province, Kunar Province, where I go for work among the women of this province.

The women's movement of Laghman Province began before the victory of the April Revolution, during the period of the dictatorship of Amin. The movement was paralyzed, since women could not carry out meetings or any other different forms of work.

Many representatives of the women's organization were liquidated, as were the representatives of other social organizations.

Many of our women, prior to the revolution, spent their time on the whole sitting at home and never left home for anyway. Fortunately, after the second stage of the Saur Revolution we could carry out great work in Laghman Province. The conditions in which our organization formed were difficult, but we could organize, and now in Laghman Province 210 women belong to our organization, 143 of whom are illiterate. They participate in literacy courses that were formed for them, they participate in special clubs. We could organize special women's clubs with the help of Party organs, clubs where women actively participate in the work of our organization.

We succeeded in carrying out successful work among the women of this province, and the representatives of Party organizations helped us. Several women left their own families and declared that they want to give their lives for the just cause (*pravoe delo*) of the Revolution.

Our province is located next to Pakistan, where the gangs of bandits (*bandy*) gather, and women take an active part in the provision of security, they staff the posts

⁷⁹ Ibid., I. 270.

along with the armed forces of Afghanistan, they carry out controls and monitoring of cities and the countryside. [...]

I'd like to say a few words about the work among the women of Kunar Province. In our province the percent of literate women is not great. The living conditions in this province are very difficult. Even in a *chador*, a woman does not have the right to go out far from her own home. In spite of this, 95 women living in Kunar Province are members of the NPDA, are Party activists.⁸⁰

For Hussein, as for Dodmanesh, the real issue is less the veil itself than Afghan women being forced to sit at home. The 'just cause' here is comparatively modest compared to the historic mission of the CSW women: literacy classes, women's clubs, and Party work. And in Hussein's discussion of her work in Kunar, the point is that 'even' with the *chador* on, women are deprived of the more important right to leave their homes. And none of this is phrased in the language of Marxist world history of the CSW delegates used.⁸¹ Just like Dodmanesh's veiled Uzbeks, Hussein's DOWA workers in Kunar do not need help from Soviet women in defending the Revolution as they carry out anti-*mujahideen* patrols in eastern Afghanistan. To understand what Hussein was doing as a mere echo of Soviet Uzbek women's emancipation would cheapen her deeds. Indeed, as Hussein spoke about the Soviet invasion of Kunar, she reversed the concept of the gift that CSW women had played with in their speeches. 'I have to say,' she said,

that the members of our organization were carrying out great preparatory propagandistic-agitational work among the population. Immediately prior to the entrance of a limited contingent of Soviet forces into Afghanistan, we were advised to undertake additional measures, but ran out of time (*ne uspeli*). The population of this province [Kunar] went out towards the Soviet forces and brought them everything that they had at home. They did this according to the tradition of hospitality – one always has to give one's best items to the guest, one has to offer the finest delicacies to him – Afghan walnuts, walnut cookies (*oresunki*) which resemble cedar cones. The warmest reception that I ever saw given to Soviet soldiers was given [i.e. by the DOWA women] to these Soviet forces.⁸²

Here we see a contrast between the Soviet activism of the 1920s and 1980s. In the 1920s, the 'gift' of 'Western Soviet', in particular Russian, women, was to bring Central Eurasian women to the

80 GARF f. 7928, o.3, d. 5583, l. 266-268.

81 See the footnote above about Katharine Holt's position on whether the Afghan women were arguing within a Marxist tradition.

82 Ibid., l. 268.

Slavic core to witness economic development, the sign of gratitude of the Uzbek women to extol this gift of western Soviet women for generations to come. But as Hussein presents the invasion of Kunar, Afghan women had become the gift-givers, treating the sons of Soviet women with local delicacies. In doing so, she refigures the gift exchange going on here. True, the gift of Pashtun hospitality is, in effect, going to Soviet young men who have, in a sense, been 'gifted' to the Afghans by their mothers. But in Hussein's telling of the story, it is the local Pashtuns who give the boys 'the warmest reception' Hussein ever saw, 'bringing them everything they had at home' and so on, but nonetheless recognizing them as guests: no kidnappings, no hostages. Unlike the captive/gift dynamic common to the Caucasus arena, in Hussein's telling of the story we instead have a guest/host dynamic: the Soviets are welcome as temporary visitors, as foreign men in support of the Revolution, but they nonetheless are temporary intruders and will not be taken up long-term in Kunar. The generosity of the feast implies its exceptional nature.

Women like Dodmanesh and Hussein were flipping the table on the CSW members' vision of the Afghan-Soviet women's relationship. If the CSW women's tales emphasized the gift of development and progress that Soviet women had granted to Central Eurasians, their Afghan colleagues basically saw their counterparts as mothers. They glorified the Russian woman less as a revolutionary messiah than as the bearer of Soviet soldiers. Consider Dodmanesh's comments:

In the name of all of the women of the Province of Jowjzan, the members of the provincial soviet, I want to sincerely express our gratitude to all Soviet women, those mothers whose sons are in Afghanistan, for their help, their motherly help – thank you from Afghan women.⁸³

We are far from the vision of Soviet-Afghan relations articulated by Bekmakhanova in the first speeches we considered. Rather than Russian women inviting Central Asians to the Slavic core to vault forward in time, in Dodmanesh's narration, Afghan women are quite capable of helping themselves win

⁸³ Ibid., I. 265.

their liberation – a concept of liberation unconnected to Marxist notions of time and history. Soviet women can help, but first and foremost as mothers, as mothers whose sons – and not daughters – will help the women of Afghanistan in their struggle. Dodmanesh's statement was in part posturing, but it also revealed some of the letdowns of late Soviet socialist feminism.⁸⁴ The days when Soviet women could have legitimately seen them as a historical vanguard, a collective class of Leninist feminists intervening themselves to help advance women's rights in the Second or Third World, were past. Soviet women could talk and talk about the accomplishments of their mothers, but they had ceded their mothers' dynamism to merely speak about women's emancipation and mother the men who would defend that cause. Their Afghan counterparts, unimpressed by the CSW women's notions of historical development, would carry on with their own Revolution.

Who was fooling who here? Even if there was a coincidence of interests on the part of the CSW and Afghan women, the latter had found rhetorical devices to sell their Revolution to the former, even as their real plans differed, often greatly, from that of their Soviet teachers. We need further investigation into how representatives of RAWA, the secularist anti-communist option, or, for example, Jamiat-i Islami, articulated their vision for women in Afghanistan to understand the dance between DOWA and CSW portrayed here in full. But here we have the communist angle on women's liberation early in the war: Soviets (none of whom had actually fought in a war or been veiled themselves) and Afghans (as opposed to Uzbeks/Pashtuns/Tajiks/Hezara), each trying to explain to the other what the liberation of women meant, each trying to subjugate the other – whether as backwards or as mothers – in their speeches and discussions, all in a socialist key.

⁸⁴ This shift from women as revolutionaries to women as mothers is a major theme that sociologists and anthropologists have explored, and I do not want to suggest that the Afghan women alone were imposing this gender model on Soviet women. The shift from revolutionary to mother, in other words, was in large part a Soviet identity shift that the Afghan women seem to have been appropriating for their own use here. For more on Soviet women less as activists than as child-bearers, particularly in the late Soviet Union, see Sergei Alex Oushakine, 'The Politics of Pity: Domesticating Loss in a Russian Province,' *American Anthropologist* 108:2 (June 2006): 297-311. Oushakine has also further developed these themes in a recent book, *The Patriotism of Despair* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

Concluding Thoughts

In this chapter, I examined how Soviet and Afghan feminists tried – and largely failed – to communicate with one another at a moment when it appeared possible to advance Communist development in Afghanistan. The Soviet women at the conference, while not quite articulating a *mission civilisatrice* towards Afghanistan, spoke in a language that emphasized a 'Soviet East' apart from the Slavic core that had to be catapulted forward in time some half-century ago. But they saw nothing exploitative in suggesting that, just as a historically confident 'Soviet West' had pulled Central Asia forward in time in the 1930s, so could the USSR of the 1980s bring socialist development to Afghanistan. Their speeches spoke to a tension behind the entire Afghan venture: how could a superpower that claimed to act in the interests of the Third World justify importing Enlightenment values, in the form of Marxism-Leninism, to an unwilling host?

This vision failed. As the *mushavery* files we will examine in Chapter 3 testify to, building effective, popular local women's organizations and encouraging women beyond an intelligentsia vanguard to unveil and attend communist institutions remained difficult across Afghanistan throughout the 1980s. As concerns the non-communist side of the story, while RAWA succeeded in building some institutions (hospitals, schools, orphanages) both in Afghanistan as well as Pakistan that catered to the shattered female population, the movement's leader, Meena, was (according to RAWA) assassinated in a joint KhAD (the Afghan KGB) and Hezb-e Islami operation financed and approved by the Pakistani ISI.⁸⁵ The treatment of women under the Taliban, as well as the current problems facing Afghan women, are well-known. The vision of a secular socialist development for South Asia, with a place for educated working Muslim women in it, was erased, replaced by military dictatorship and theocracy.

Within the next twenty to thirty years, the last generation of Eurasian women trained within this

85 For more on this side of the story, consult RAWA website, available online at: <http://www.rawa.org/index.php>

Soviet professional system – an echo of this vision – will die. What set of values for women will dominate then remains unclear. In recent years, some young Central Asians – in the thousands, but still far more than in the Soviet period – have opted to pursue Islamic higher education in Egypt, Pakistan, and the Gulf Arab States, while the latter, particularly Saudi Arabia, provides scholarships for students to study at Wahhabi seminaries. Recent scholarly research as well as observations of everyday life suggests that more and more young women are wearing headscarves in Central Asian capitals, while the *niqab* can be found in parts of the Ferghana Valley.⁸⁶ Based on my own encounters with female students and professionals in Dushanbe – which is vastly different from rural Tajikistan – most are interested in scholarships that will remove them from a failing state to the the rich world, whether that means Saudi Arabia, the USA, or Germany.

Older women, mostly Slavs who had lived their entire life in the periphery but retained a sense of ownership towards Tajikistan, had more complex feelings. One neighbor, a Russian-Ukrainian who had gone to medical school in Kiev but lived in Dushanbe her entire adult life, emphasized that while one could get along with Uzbeks – again, a civilized, settled people with respect for women – coexistence with 'dirty' Tajik, Afghan, and Iranian men who veiled their women, much less the listless women who consented to this practice and in doing so gave up their humanity was out of the question.⁸⁷ Dushanbe had once been 'one of the cleanest cities in the Soviet Union' with an excellent opera, an emergent Tajik professional class and professional Tajik women, but the departure of much of the city's Russian population had erased all of that. Tajiks and Afghans were – after the interlude of Soviet modernity – 'on the road back to the 14th century.' At the same time, a Tajik cleaning lady herself insisted that Afghans 'did not know how to respect women,' that they were a 'wild nation' (*dikiĭ narod*), lacking civilization compared to Tajiks.⁸⁸

86 James Pickett, a PhD student at Princeton, pursued research on this dynamic in Tajikistan in the summer of 2009.

87 Author's Personal Conversation, November 12, 2010.

88 Author's Personal Conversation, November 20, 2010.

No one can say what the new directions in Eurasian women's lives will be like over the next decades, with Afghanistan's fate unclear, many hands in the Central Asian republics for the foreseeable future, and a lack of clear visions in the region for how Muslim women ought to live their lives. Moscow in 1982 represented a moment of promise, that there could be an alternative to the hardline Islamist alternative emerging in the region in those years, but as we have seen in this piece, the lack of understanding between two worlds of feminism – and the eventual collapse of the economic system that underwrote this vision – doomed the fate of the secular socialist Muslim woman as a vision for development in Afghanistan and Central Asia. The Soviet attempt to give Central Eurasians – first Uzbeks and Tajiks, later Afghans – the gift of socialist development, to vault them forward in history, remains very much a gift unreciprocated, a work in progress.



Figure 6: Excavating the Present in communist Afghanistan? A photograph of a Russian school in Afghanistan, betraying the dream of a literate, educated, developed Afghanistan, in some ways not far at all from current Western ambitions for Afghan girl's education.

Chapter 2:
Getting Reacquainted With the 'Muslims of the USSR':
Staging Soviet Islam in the Muslim World

If one fine day the iron gates of the Soviets opened, wouldn't you want to flee the country?

Question asked '8-10 times total' during the course of the 1982 Izmir Exhibition.⁸⁹

Iranian women asked me whether Soviet women and girls have the right to dress in modern clothing and wear high heels. One young woman (an Azeri) said with tears in her eyes, 'I surely will not see this free life, but I wish only that my children will not live under these hellish conditions!'

A. Akhadov, CRA Bureaucrat, Report from Tehran Exhibition, 1982.⁹⁰

In summer 1982, Muhammadjon, an Uzbek living in Saudi Arabia, left home in Ta'if to travel to Izmir. He was visiting his brother in the suburbs, but the real reason for his trip was to meet more Uzbeks – in Turkey. His brother, a 57-year old pensioner, knew a Soviet Uzbek interpreter on a business trip to the port city, and he had arranged a meeting. Muhammadjon's venture was frustrated – the interpreter brought him two Soviet Azerbaijanis – but the visitors nonetheless told him of life in his Uzbek 'Motherland' and gave him an outlet to vent about life in Saudi Arabia: nepotism, a brutal police state, and xenophobic Saudi Arabs. Even Uzbeks born in the Kingdom longed to return 'home' to Uzbekistan, he told them. But while these two could provide him with more details about the Uzbekistan of his dreams, they soon had to excuse themselves, off for a stop in Istanbul before returning home to Baku.⁹¹

Muhammadjon would have to return to Saudi Arabia, but his trip was hardly unsuccessful, not least from the perspectives of his guests, a mullah and a bureaucrat on a business trip to Izmir that September to provide Turks with an 'objective picture' of the conditions of Soviet Muslim life. Muhammadjon's meeting with the two men, Akhadov and Mikhailov, represented just one of tens of thousands of encounters between Soviet and non-Soviet Muslims across Southwest Asia: international

⁸⁹ Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF), Moscow, Russian Federation, f. R-6991, op. 6, d. 2475, l. 13

⁹⁰ Ibid., l. 18.

⁹¹ Ibid., l. 7.

exhibitions like the one in Izmir, conferences between Soviet and Afghan *ulema*, and high-level visits by Soviet Shia *mujtahids* to the Islamic Republic of Iran.⁹² In these encounters, Muslims on both sides of the Soviet border could imagine what Muslim life could be under different political orders. This process of getting re-acquainted with the Muslims of the USSR reflected the complex and evolving relationship between the Muslim world, the USSR, and, more deeply, the latter's vision for development.

The 1970s and 1980s were times of new contingencies and political directions across South and Southwest Asia. From the Soviet perspective, much of the region went from being positively inclined towards a project of socialist development in an Islamic context to crisis. As Ayesha Jalal notes, 'at the onset of [the 1970s] there was little to portend a specifically Islamic revolution or instances of state-sponsored Islamization across broad swaths of the Muslim world by decade's end. In the 1970s the cafés of Kabul were vibrant hubs of cosmopolitan social and political discourse.'⁹³ South Asian leaders such as Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Indira Gandhi, Mujibur Rahman, and Mohammed Daoud Khan, while not seeking to build Soviet-style clone regimes, spoke a language of socialist populism: *roti, kapra aur makan* (bread, clothing, and housing) was the chant of Gandhi's Congress Party.⁹⁴

In Southwest Asia (Iran and Turkey), the situation was different. The Shah attempted to build a *montazh* (mish-mash) of Western capitalist modernity within an authoritarian monarchy backed by a brutal secret police, oil exports, and the pretension to act as a successor to the Achaemenids.⁹⁵ If the

92 For examples of other encounters, see, for DUMZak mullahs in post-revolutionary Iran, GARF, f. R-6991, op. 6, d. 1970, l. 1-9, 'Otchet o poezdke Zam. Predsedatelia ZAKDUM Sheikha Pashaeva A. I. Zav. Mezhdunarodnym otdelom etogo zhe DUM Gasanova S.v Islamskuiu Respubliku Iran na torzhestve po sluchaiu vstrechi XV veka khidzhri I I-oi godovtschiny Islamskoï Respubliki, sostoiavsheisia v Tegerane s 4 po 11 fevralia 1980,' for Afghan *ulema* visiting DUMZak in Baku, GARF f. R-6991, op. 6, d. 1970, l. 44-66, 'Spravka o prebyvanii v Azerbaidzhanskoï SSR delegatsii predstavitelei obschestvennoï DRA.'

93 Ayesha Jalal, 'An Uncertain Trajectory: Islam's Contemporary Globalization, 1971-1979,' in Niall Ferguson, Charles S. Maier, Erez Manela, and Daniel J. Sargent (Eds.), *The Shock of the Global: The 1970s in Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 319.

94 Ibid., 'An Uncertain Trajectory,' 323.

95 Roy Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985); Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 419-449.

Iranian Left was suppressed by the Shah in his own country, the Shah's project to build a technocratic, Western-style state obsessed with its Persianness was unlikely to have much appeal across the region.⁹⁶ In Turkey, meanwhile, throughout the 1970s the country was ruled by coalition governments headed by the Republican People's Party, a Kemalist political party with tendencies towards democratic socialism. But looking at South Asia and the Middle East in, say, 1977, one could conclude that the region was on its way towards becoming a constellation of, if not socialist, then secular, stable states that happened to have Muslim populations. Iran might claim regional leadership as a bastion against communism after British withdrawal from the Gulf in 1971. Still, there was a regional order in which Soviet answers to questions of social justice, economic development, and governance remained relevant.

The late 1970s and early 1980s saw the bottom fall out of this trajectory. The 1973 oil crisis cut the bottom out of South Asia's already anemic oil-dependent economies, forced secularist governments to pander (Bhutto declared Ahmadis non-Muslims and curtailed their rights), and fueled Saudi donations to extremist Islamist parties to spread their message in mosques. Pakistan saw Bhutto overthrown, arrested, murdered, and replaced by a Sunni fundamentalist military dictatorship. Iran saw the Shah forced to flee, replaced by an ayatollah returning from fourteen years in exile. In Turkey, the coalition governments of the 1970s were overthrown in a coup that ushered in a period of market liberal reforms at odds with any Soviet-inspired visions of the economy. The coup's leaders sponsored the idea of a 'Turkish-Islamic synthesis' (*Türk-İslam sentezi*) – the idea that 'Islam held a special attraction for the Turks because of a number of striking similarities between their pre-Islamic culture and Islamic civilization' – so as to promote an Islam friendly to the state.⁹⁷ Only Afghanistan followed the script of secularizing planned economies within a Muslim country. Even there, the April Revolution

⁹⁶ The best known example of this trend was the 2,500th anniversary of the founding of the Persian Empire at Persepolis in 1971; the Shah also unilaterally changed the official calendar of Iran from the Hejiric to one that used the birth of Cyrus as the starting date.

⁹⁷ Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1997), 303; Hakan Yayuz, 'Political Islam and Welfare Party in Turkey,' *Comparative Politics* 30:1 (October 1997), 67; Sena Karasipahi, 'Comparing Islamic Resurgence Movements in Turkey and Iran,' *Middle East Journal* 63:1 (Winter 2009), 97.

had ushered into power an infighting communist party governing a state now surrounded by two radical Muslim states.

This paradigm shift shocked Foggy Bottom and Langley, but it was especially devastating to Moscow.⁹⁸ The Soviet vision of secular Islamic modernity, once relevant, had been transformed in a few years from a role model to an outlier. What if the clerics in Qom, the generals in Rawalpindi, or the businessmen of Anatolia could offer answers about the way forward equally valid to those of the bureaucrats and planners in Tashkent and Baku? Here was the arena in which bureaucrats and mullahs like Akhadow and Mikhailov appeared, trying to advertise the Soviet model of development that they themselves represented: *khrushchy* apartment buildings, three-line metro systems, and cosmonauts, all within the reach of Muslims.

Still, the difficulties of re-asserting the Soviet Union as *the* vision for development for Muslim Third World countries soon became clear. In early February 1980, when an Azerbaijani sheikh visited Tehran, the 'Afghan question' dominated his weeklong trip. At one meeting with an Iranian minister and several other Islamic representatives from New Zealand, South Africa, Romania, Pakistan, and Turkey, the Turks and Pakistanis made 'attacks on Soviet policy not only on the Afghan question but also on the USSR itself as a country of Communist ideology.'⁹⁹ Later, in a meeting with Ayatollah Mohammad Beheshti,¹⁰⁰ the sheikh was reminded about the 'Soviet incursion' and told that Iran had opened its border to Afghan refugees. 'The Afghan spiritual leadership (*dukhovenstvo*) has,' his Iranian counterpart told him, 'requested us to provide help against the intervention of the Russians, and we are ready to provide it to them.'¹⁰¹ On the evening of February 8th, the sheik's trip coordinators informed him that

98 Given the huge complexities of American involvement in Turkey and Iran during the 1970s and early 1980s, it is not possible to devote detailed attention to this subject in this chapter along with the Soviet material. Beyond similar public diplomacy files at the National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, MD, one might also consider the U.S. relationship with the Turkish Counter-Guerilla or, of course, the Shah's regime.

99 GARF R-6991, op. 6, d. 1970, l. 2.

100 Seyyed Mohammad Hosseini Beheshti (1928-1981) was an Iranian ayatollah and revolutionary who was a major player in the early years of the Islamic Revolution. He was assassinated in a bombing organized by the People's Mojahedin of Iran in 1981.

101 Ibid., l. 3-4.

both Afghan refugees and Iranian protestors were running loose in the streets of Tehran and that he could 'expect anything.' Later, while attending a speech by President Abulhassan Banisadr,¹⁰² he was dismayed to hear: 'We want to see Afghanistan as an "Islamic Republic." But I think that if we can manage (*sumeem*) to form an Islamic bloc and unite all of our strengths, we can force the Soviet leaders to pull their forces out of Afghanistan.'¹⁰³

Following his trip to the Iranian capital, the sheikh wrote that 'the simple people of Iran know little about our activity' and that it would be desirable to provide them with more detailed information about the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁴ How the Soviet Union sought to do so across the Middle East following the shifts noted above is the focus of this chapter. In particular, I examine several reports from the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults (1943-1965) / Council on Religious Affairs (1965-1991) [CRA], a Union-level institution whose employees monitored the religious activities of Soviet citizens.¹⁰⁵ CRA also liaised extensively with the four Soviet muftiates.¹⁰⁶ It put on several exhibitions throughout the world to give an 'objective' account of the state of Islam in the Soviet Union. CRA employees staffed these exhibitions, conversed with visitors, answered their questions, kept records of the highlights of an exhibit's run, and, in some cases, maintained a list of visitors' questions. Several of these reports have been kept in CRA's archival *fond* at the archives in Moscow. They do not represent the complete scope of such exhibits: research in Uzbek archives has shown that bureaucrats at SADUM, the Central Asian Muftiate, constructed a similar exhibit for a Soviet fair in Kabul from April 18 – May 24, 1979, visited by over 100,000 Afghans.¹⁰⁷ No such files exist in the Dushanbe archives, while graduate students

¹⁰²Abulhassan Banisadr (1933-present) is an Iranian revolutionary who was President of Iran from 1980-1981. He was impeached under accusations of conspiring against the clerics, and has lived in exile in France since 1981.

¹⁰³Ibid., I. 6, 7.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., I. 9.

¹⁰⁵The current standard work on CARC/CRA is Yaacov Ro'i's *Islam in the Soviet Union: From the Second World War to Gorbachev* (London: Hurst, 2000). For a learned critique of Ro'i's work, see Devin DeWeese, 'Islam and the Legacy of Sovietology: A Review Essay on Yaacov Ro'i's *Islam in the Soviet Union*,' *Journal of Islamic Studies* 13:3 (2002), 298-330.

¹⁰⁶Eren Tasar, 'Muslim Life in Central Asia 1943-1991' (PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, 2010).

¹⁰⁷Eren Tasar, 'The Central Asian Muftiate in Occupied Afghanistan, 1979-1987,' *Central Asian Survey* (Forthcoming); Central State Archive of the Republic of Uzbekistan, f. R-2456, o. 1, d. 611, l. 19-24.

working in Baku have confirmed that the Caucasian muftiate never handed over its internal files to the Azerbaijani archival bureaucracy.¹⁰⁸ The archival situation in other former Muslim SSRs, ASSRs, or AOs¹⁰⁹ remain unclear.

This chapter focuses on three exhibitions, two in Tehran and one Izmir, both because of their timing (the only CRA exhibitions in the Middle East around the late 1970s conjuncture) as well as their richness, with detailed narrative accounts and long lists of the questions visitors asked. (The latter are included in an appendix.) CRA also sent an Uzbek employee to a trade fair in Baghdad in November 1982, but his account is far less detailed than the Turkish and Iranian episodes, and would expand this chapter beyond appropriate length guidelines, too.¹¹⁰ Needless to say, these reports were written for a specific audience – CRA bureaucrats in Moscow – and often describe Turks and Iranians through the prism of Soviet religious jargon. But read with care, they give us insight into the mutual perceptions of development and progress in southwestern Eurasia at a crucial conjuncture.

They also tell a story of Muslim encounters across the Iron Curtain. In Middle Eastern Studies today, one of the conventional themes in the history of the Muslim world of the 1970s and 1980s is that of Islamic revival. After the wane of Pan-Arabism after 1967 (until 2011, it appears) and the limited appeal of pan-Turkism, events such as the 1970s oil crisis, the Islamic Revolution, greater ties between Gulf Arab money and Islamic endowments, and the rise of the *mujahideen* all led to a greater sense of pan-Islamic identity.¹¹¹ Specialists on Islam and the Middle East have shown how complex this story

¹⁰⁸My thanks to Krista Anne Goff (University of Michigan) for this information regarding Azerbaijan.

¹⁰⁹ Autonomous *oblast'*.

¹¹⁰Otchet starshogo inspektora otdela mezhdunarodnoi informatsii Soveta Asnanova Iu. N. o rabote v kachestve stendista razdela "Islam v SSSR" na mezhdunarodnom iarmiarke v Bagdade v noiabre 1982 g.', GARF f. R-6991, o. 6, d. 2224, l. 48-50.

¹¹¹I stress the word "arguable" here, for this remains a keen controversy among current scholars of the 20th century Arab world. For one view emphasizing the decline of Pan-Arabism by the late 1970s, see Fouad Ajami, 'The End of Pan-Arabism,' *Foreign Affairs* (Winter 1978/1979), available online at: <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/30269/fouad-ajami/the-end-of-pan-arabism>. However, exceptions to this thesis are easy to point out: in Syria and Iraq, for example, the Baath Party gained in influence towards the late 1960s, and in both countries dictators with some Arab nationalist pretensions ruled for close to thirty years. There has also been some quantitative work done, whose value may be limited due to the poverty and stark rural/urban divide in many Arab countries. Saad Eddin Ibrahim carried out a survey in 1977-1979 that concluded that some 80% of Arabs "believed in the existence of a greater Arab nation and wanted

was.¹¹² But these CRA files offer a small window onto the interest of ordinary Muslims – at least those ordinary enough to go to trade fairs – in their Soviet Muslim 'brethren.' While political scientists produced a distinguished literature on Soviet strategy in the Middle East, since the end of the Cold War there has been a dearth of revisionist literature, particularly among historians and especially on the micro-level, on this aspect of the Cold War.¹¹³ True, these sources from Moscow tell only one part of this story, and a fuller account would require research in the archives of Ankara or Cairo – or Beijing or Islamabad, for that matter: a life's project.¹¹⁴ Still, I hope here to point at a broader story of how *non*-Soviet Muslims on the other side of the Iron Curtain sought to re-establish ties with these 'lost' Muslims.¹¹⁵ I do not want to attempt to demolish a straw man of 'total' isolation across the Iron Curtain. The virtual re-acquaintance between Soviet Muslims and their Turkish and Iranian counterparts was, after all, only the renewal of a long tradition of intercourse across Southwest Asia.¹¹⁶ Instead, I aim

increased cooperation among Arab countries." See *The New Arab Social Order: A Study of the Social Impact of Oil Wealth* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1982). At the same time, one has to remember that pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism were by no means mutually opposed concepts; Pan-Arabism might be seen as only an initial stage in a sort of *sblizhenie* of the entire *ummah*. More recently, Fawaz Gerges has argued that 1970, the year of Sadat's ascendancy in Egypt, marks the real turn, when persecution of the Muslim Brotherhood abated and Islamist thugs were turned against Egyptian Nasserite socialists. Gerges' article on this thesis is apparently forthcoming. I am grateful to Kyle Haddad-Fonda for making me aware of much of this material.

¹¹²See, for example, Jalal, 'An Uncertain Trajectory,' 333-334.

¹¹³For some examples of this literature, see: O.M. Gorbатов and L. Ia. Cherkasskii, *Bor'ba SSSR za obespechenie prochnogo i spravedlivogo mira na Blizhnem Vostoke, 1967-1980* (Moscow: Nauka, 1980); Robert O. Freedman, *Soviet Policy Towards the Middle East Since 1970* (New York: Praeger, 1982); Mark V. Kauppi and R. Craig Nation (Eds.), *The Soviet Union and the Middle East in the 1980s: Opportunities, Constraints, and Dilemmas* (Lexington, MA: LexingtonBooks, 1983); Yaacov Ro'i (Ed.), *The USSR and the Muslim World: Issues of Domestic and Foreign Policy* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1984); Robert O. Freedman, *Moscow and the Middle East: Soviet Policy Since the Invasion of Afghanistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Aleksei Vasil'ev, *Rossiiia na Blizhnem Vostoke: ot messianstva k pragmatizmu* (Moscow: Nauka / Vostochnaia Literatura, 1993).

¹¹⁴For links between Egypt and China, Kyle Haddad-Fonda's work has focused on high-level diplomacy, with some moments of Chinese Muslims' lives in the Middle East as pawns of 1950s Chinese diplomacy. See 'The Anti-Imperialist Tradition and the Development of Sino-Egyptian Relations, 1955-1956,' A.B. Dissertation, Harvard University (2009). For the memoirs of a Hui Muslim who traveled to Egypt during the 1950s, see Li Zhenzhong, 'Niluo hepan,' *Yisilan wenming yanjiu*, Henan Province Social Science Academy Center for Islamic Cultural Studies (2006): 12-21.

¹¹⁵I first heard this expression from Götz Berggraf, a German scholar of the Soviet Union who has traveled extensively throughout Central Asia. He maintains an idiosyncratic web presence at: <http://goetz.burggraf.de/>

¹¹⁶For more on Azerbaijani links across the Russian-Persian-Ottoman border, see: Raoul Motika and Michael Ursinus, eds., *Caucasia between the Ottoman Empire and Iran, 1555-1914* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2002); Touraj Atabaki, *Azerbaijan: Ethnicity and Autonomy in Twentieth-Century Iran* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993); James D. Clark, *Provincial Concerns: A Political History of the Iranian Province of Azerbaijan, 1848-1906* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 2006); Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905-1920: The Shaping of National Identity in a Muslim Community* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Eva-Maria Auch, *Muslim-Untertan-Bürger: Identitätswandel in gesellschaftlichen Transformationsprozessen der muslimischen Ostprovinzen Südkaukasiens (Ende 18.-Anfang 20.*

more to map Middle Easterners' imagination of the Soviet Union as presented through their questions and the CRA bureaucrats' reports.

What we find is our picture of late Cold War socialism flipped on its head. Unlike Eastern Europe, where Communism had been discredited in large part owing to its proximity to a booming capitalist Western modernity (most on display in West Berlin), the reports of visitors to CRA's international exhibitions suggest something rather different in the Middle East.¹¹⁷ Even as both Turkey and Iran had begun to chart their own new paths to late 20th century modernity, many of the citizens of both states still found the Soviet socialist alternative appealing. True, not many people at the exhibitions could actually coherently articulate what socialism was. Few thought that it had to do with the planned economy. For some, it had to do with full employment, the abolition of the family, low prices for bread, or better stipends for students than those on offer in Istanbul or Tehran. The one thing that people were mostly clear on, however, was that Soviet socialism, was hostile to Islam. This feeling was the product of a mix of half-truths, impressions, and real Soviet policies, primarily the war in Afghanistan and (in Iran) historic Soviet support for Iraq. But in spite of beliefs that fueled the idea of the USSR as anti-Islamic – mosques turned into museums or the abolishment of the family – this melange remained an interesting alternative to the generals' or Khomeini's vision of modernity. To examine this picture further, let us enter CRA's first Tehran exhibition.

Jahrhunderts. Ein Beitrag zur vergleichenden Nationalismusforschung (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2004); Jörg Baberowski, *Der Feind ist überall: Stalinismus im Kaukasus* (Munich:Verlags-Anstalt, 2003); A. Holly Shissler, *Between Two Empires: Ahmet Ağaoğlu and the New Turkey* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003); and Firouzeh Mostashari, *On the Religious Frontier: Tsarist Russia and Islam in the Caucasus* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006). For several recent dissertations on the shared worlds across the Russian-Ottoman border, see: Eileen Kane, 'Russian Hajj: Imperialism and the Muslim Pilgrimage to Mecca, 1801-1917,' PhD Dissertation, Princeton University (2005); Jim Meyer, 'Turkic Worlds: Community Leadership and Collective Identity in the Russian and Ottoman Empires, 1870-1914,' PhD Dissertation, Brown University (2007); Mustafa Tuna, 'Imperial Russia's Muslims: Inroads of Modernity,' PhD Dissertation, Princeton University (2009). Florian Schwarz is currently at work on a project entitled 'Between Empires: Muslim Dragomans and the Transformation of Central Asia, 1850-1930.' Sam Hirst, a graduate student in the History Department at the University of Pennsylvania, is working on a dissertation entitled 'Struggle Against Empire: Anti-Liberalism in the Soviet Union and the Turkish Republic, 1917-1937.'

¹¹⁷For more on Eastern European socialism being discredited, see: Stephen Kotkin with Jan Gross, *Uncivil Society: 1989 and the Implosion of the Communist Establishment* (New York: Modern Library, 2009).

The 'Muslims of the Soviet Union' in Tehran, 1980

Following a visit of several Iranian officials to visit DUMZak officials in Baku in June 1980, CRA put together an exhibit titled 'Muslims of the Soviet Union' to be presented at Soviet Pavilion of the Fall 1980 Tehran International Trade Fair: interesting times to be putting on a trade show. Tensions between Iran and Iraq had remained high since April after Iranian-backed Iraqi Shias attempted to assassinate Tariq Aziz, the Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq and a close advisor to Saddam Hussein. On September 17, two days before the commencement of the trade fair, Saddam Hussein declared his intention to capture both the Shatt al-Arab waterway as well as Khuzestan in Southwest Iran. Shortly thereafter, on September 22-23, the Iraqi Air Force launched several strikes and destroyed Iranian airplanes on the ground, while the Iraqi Army invaded Khuzestan and northern Iran. At the same time, tensions were high between the United States and Iran since the takeover of the U.S. Embassy and the botched U.S. rescue attempt. The exhibition also took place at a time when the Islamic Revolution was being consolidated through the purges and shutdown of universities, the banning of leftist Islamic political parties, and the expulsion of Khomeini's political rivals from the country.

The man tasked to oversee the exhibit as the 'stand-assistant' (*stendist*) was M.I. Ibragimov, a CRA plenipotentiary for Azerbaijan already on an official trip to Iran from September 11 to October 1.¹¹⁸ A Soviet interpreter of unstated nationality 'from Tashkent' accompanied him.¹¹⁹ Ibragimov did not explicitly explain the goals of the exhibit, but he considered it a success, noting that 'almost every one of the visitors to our section tried to ask as many questions as possible about the life of Soviet Muslims, about the freedom of conscience, about studies in institutions of higher education as well as in schools, about the availability of products of mass consumption and food products, about pay.'¹²⁰

Even though 'The Muslims of the USSR' represents only one case in the Iranian reception of the

¹¹⁸GARF R-6991, op. 6, d. 2221, l. 78.

¹¹⁹Ibid., l. 82.

¹²⁰Ibid., l. 78-79.

Soviet Union after both the Islamic and April Revolutions, we can read Ibragimov's extensive notes to develop a picture – however small – of both how CRA bureaucrats wanted to present the 'Muslims of the Soviet Union' as a unified group, as well as the reception of the exhibit. Ibragimov took close notes on the dimensions and content of the exhibit:

In the Soviet Pavilion of the Tehran Trade Fair, the exhibit 'The Muslims of the Soviet Union' occupied an area of 36 square meters in space, and consisted of the following exponents: slides (31), two photographs of Mufti Babakhanov (1 meter by 1.5 meters), a model of the Baku Taza Pir mosque, two exemplars of the Koran published in Moscow and Tashkent, two works of the famous Uzbek scholar-theologian of the 13th century Al-Bukhari, 'Al-Adab Al-Mufrad' and 'Sakhikh Al-Bukhari,' an album 'Historical Monuments to Islam in the Soviet Union,' an album 'Muslims in the USSR,' Mufti Babakhanov's book 'Islam and Muslims in the Country of the Soviets,' A. Bakhabov's book 'Islam in the USSR,' and an issue of the magazine 'Muslims of the Soviet East.' It is worth mentioning that Babakhanov's and Bakhabov's, as well as the magazines, were assigned for distribution amongst the visitors to the fair. However, the local guards hindered this in every way possible, and further the visitors reluctantly requested to take literature in Arabic. Many of the visitors requested literature in Farsi or in English on the Soviet Union. In the layout of the Soviet pavilion, the exhibit 'The Muslims of the Soviet Union' had a G-shape, while the floor was covered with rugs, the facade and the interior walls had baskets with slides hanging on them, the arc-shaped entrance to the exhibit were banded with Oriental ornamentation (engraving), the floors were covered with hand-woven carpets, all belonging to 'Vostoktrade's' exhibit at the trade fair. Thanks to the excellent lighting, the exhibit noticeably stood out for its beauty and idiosyncratic appearance, which aided the attraction of a great number of visitors.¹²¹

The hodgepodge nature of the items presented provided several different possible interpretations of the Soviet Islamic tradition. Exhibit A: dozens of photographs of mosques and Islamic architecture from within the Soviet Union (Islam as a cultural-architectural heritage); Exhibit B: the works of one of the greatest Islamic jurists of the 9th century re-imagined as an Uzbek national scholar (Islam as textual interpretation carried by national *ulema*); Exhibit C: the two copies of the Koran, presumably in Russian and Uzbek (Islam as textual orthodoxy mediated by the imperial and Soviet Muslim centers of Moscow and Tashkent); Exhibit D: Babakhanov and Bakhabov's books, which are nonetheless merely about Islam in the USSR rather than works of original scholarship or

¹²¹Ibid., I. 78.

jurisprudence (Islam as a distinctly Soviet institution, with primacy accorded to the Central Asian muftiate); Exhibit E: all of this media framed by a pavilion decorated with 'Oriental ornamentation' and 'hand-woven carpets' (Islam as 'Oriental' [*vostochnyi*] material cultural tradition, reproduced and distributed by the Soviet economic apparatus in Vostoktrade). Nothing in the files provides us with any information about the logic of this selection of 'Islamic' items, but this array fits into a pattern that would be followed at further 'Muslims of the USSR' exhibitions. Far from essentializing Islam as coming down to 'belief' or 'believers' as did CRA bureaucrats inside the USSR, the CRA pavilion emphasized the multiplicity of meanings to 'Soviet Islam'.¹²² Still, perhaps the strongest impression one gets here is of tired CRA designers merely going through the motions with the stock images and motifs of late Soviet Muslim culture.¹²³ Islam had been reinvented as something between a material culture, a Soviet institution, a jurisprudential school, a religion, all with its own history, true, but still very much integrated into the Soviet system.¹²⁴

No wonder that the 'great number of visitors' approaching the pavilion could have such diverse responses. On the day of the opening of the exhibit, President Banisadr visited the exhibit and expressed an interest in the location of the Baku mosque as well as the Chair of DUMZak, Mufti A. Pasha-Zade, whose portrait was depicted on one of the slides hanging from the walls. According to Ibragimov, further, 'the President was interested in where I had been born, my nationality, in what language I spoke, and whether I was a Turk or not (*ne turk li ia*).' Even as Ibragimov was trying to present a picture of Soviet Islam that emphasized the continuity of the Muslim tradition across Cold War borders, this was not the first time that his Iranian counterparts would focus on nation, language, and Turkicness as the defining qualities of this supposed Muslim ambassador's identity. Ibragimov also

122A theme explored at greater length in Adeeb Khalid's *Islam After Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

123My thanks to Avner Offer (Oxford) for this observation.

124For an eloquent discussion of these issues, see Paolo Sartori, 'Towards a History of the Muslims' Soviet Union: A View From Central Asia,' *Die Welt des Islams* 50 (2010): 315-334.

noted that 'among the visitors to the exhibit were people with antagonistic intentions towards the Soviet Union. They tried to attract as many people as possible to an argument in our exhibit, as well as to build up a crowd around themselves.' Still, they were no match for Ibragimov – at least as he saw it. 'In my view, these were specially prepared young people who constantly referred provocative questions to me, tried to force me into an awkward situation. Not having reached their goals and, as a result of my answers, having put themselves in an awkward position, they often resorted to straightforward insult.'¹²⁵

Most visitors had more benign intentions. Ibragimov took copious notes on the questions that regular visitors asked him.¹²⁶ One group of questions consisted of vaguely hostile questions about Soviet Islam. With the exception of one question phrased in the terms of categorical anti-Communism ('Doesn't the section seem to you like Red propaganda?'), many of these more hostile questions implied that some sort of Muslim solidarity ought naturally to exist, both across the Shi'a-Sunni divide as well as national borders. One series of questions went:

'How do Soviet Muslims relate to the Iranian Revolution?
 'How do believers in the USSR relate to Ayatollah Khomeini?
 'Are there well-known religious authorities in the Soviet Union?
 'Can any of these authorities play the same role in the USSR that Khomeini did in Iran?
 'What was the mood like among the Soviet people, especially among Muslims, after the Revolution in Iran?'

According to these questions, Khomeini would serve as a pan-Islamic leader; the Soviet Sunni religious establishment necessarily occupied a similar role to that of the Iranian ayatollahs; the entire Soviet Union was at a stage where it was susceptible to a popular-clerical coup as in Iran; and Soviet citizens and Soviet Muslims would necessarily have an opinion about the Islamic Revolution. All of these questions suggest both an expectation that Islamic Revolution would necessarily impact Soviet Muslims across the border as well as a curiosity as to whether Eurasian Muslims' religious affiliation

¹²⁵Ibid, I. 79.

¹²⁶See Appendix 1 at the end of this article.

could in some way be co-opted to overthrow Soviet institutions. That Soviet identity could go hand-in-hand with Muslim identity, or that Muslim 'authorities' could be coöpted by Soviet institutions went missed.

These assumptions echo in the questions concerning Afghanistan. 'Why are Soviet soldiers killing the peaceful inhabitants of Afghanistan and exterminating mosques?' asked one visitor. 'When are Soviet forces leaving Afghanistan?' followed this question. And finally, 'Why are Soviet Muslims not helping their Afghan brothers in faith?' Unarticulated here is the possibility that Soviet Muslims might have wanted to extend Communism to Afghanistan as a socio-economic system in which Islam would not necessarily be suppressed, or that Soviet-style Muslim institutions might even be a preferable form of Islamic modernity to the Iranian alternative.¹²⁷ Questions, in other words, like 'Doesn't the Soviet Union fear the unrest that could occur among the Muslims living in the USSR?' betrayed an understanding of Islamic identity as something that had to be inherently opposed to the Communist system.¹²⁸

Others had more genuinely curious queries on Soviet Muslim life. Still, many assumed that Islam in the Soviet Union was necessarily oppressed and that it was alive only in spite of government persecution. 'How many mosques are open in the USSR?', asked one visitor. 'Are the mosques in the USSR allowed to operate freely?' 'Why did they turn mosques into museums?' 'Are Muslims in the USSR allowed to adhere to all of the demands of the Sharia?' asked another. Or: 'Why isn't the Koran published on national languages?' These questions demonstrated, if not total ignorance of the CRA-muftiate nexus, an assumption that the Soviet state was actively suppressing Muslim life and the fulfillment of religious duty – expressed by adherence to 'all' of the demands of the Sharia.

¹²⁷The subject of Eren Tasar's current project, 'The Vanguard Muftiate: A Modernizing Vehicle for Muslim Eurasia.' This was also the subject of a talk of the same name at Harvard University's Davis Center on November 30, 2010.

¹²⁸For more on this problem, see Adeeb Khalid, *Islam After Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007); Eren Tasar, 'Muslim Life in Central Asia, 1943-1991,' Ph.D Dissertation, Harvard University (2010).

Others offered a more subtle, legalistic criticism of the USSR's perceived treatment of Muslims. 'Is it true that there exists freedom of conscience in the USSR?' asked one visitor. Another asked, 'Are there instances of violations of the Article in the USSR Constitution about freedom of conscience committed on the part of the organs of power?' Even as virtually every question asked by visitors to the Pavilion assumed that Soviet power – distinctly separate from Muslims – was suppressing mosques and believers, the framework of assumptions through which they asked the questions differed. Some took for granted that repression would be arbitrary, while others took the system and the Constitution at its word and demanded that the Constitution be respected.

Others asked about everyday life in the Soviet Union. Confusion about what socialism actually meant was rife, echoing earlier debates inside the Soviet Union as to questions like whether unemployment, the family, or the police would exist.¹²⁹ 'Do Soviet people have families and their own homes?' asked one visitor. 'Are Soviet citizens allowed to carry on conversations on political themes?' 'What kind of pay do Soviet citizens receive?' 'What is the deal for the receipt of apartments?' 'Are there unemployed people in the USSR?' 'Are there a lot of factories in the USSR?' 'Are there political demonstrations in the Soviet Union?' Many of these kinds of questions were interspersed with more suggestive questions about minority rights, particular among Soviet Azeris, but they spoke to a general ignorance as well as curiosity about what socialism actually looked like. Many visitors were interested in studying in the USSR, entering the country, or receiving citizenship: 'I am a foreign student, may I continue my instruction in the USSR?' asked one person. 'Do students receive a stipend and in what size?' was the natural follow-up question.

In other words, socialism remained amorphous to those outside of the Soviet Union, at least to those outside of the Western capitalist world. Even as the Islamic Revolution was offering its own answer to what late 20th century Islamic modernity could look like – and raising its own questions, such

¹²⁹For more on this dynamic, see Stephen Kotkin, 'The Search for the Socialist City,' *Histoire Russe* 23:1-4 (Spring-Summer-Fall-Winter 1996): 231-261.

as what the family or employment would look like in an 'Islamic Republic' – the Soviet experiment, perhaps precisely because of its ambiguity, retained its appeal. No one inquired as to the key feature of socialism – no private property – even as people asked questions like: 'Haven't the Soviet people gotten fed up with the monotony of the food (the kind they receive with their coupons)?' The broader point, however, is that even though *glasnost* would soon 'involve a proliferation of comparisons between socialism and capitalism on all the big questions keyed to notions of social justice' *inside* the USSR, for many visitors in Tehran at least, socialism still evidently had a reason to exist, not only in comparison with capitalism but also in comparison with theocratic republicanism.¹³⁰

Ibragimov underlined this mix of suspicion and interest. Throughout the exhibition, Iranian special services were on hand. Ibragimov noted that many of the young people asking him about visiting the Soviet Union seemed hesitant, as if they were being spied on.¹³¹ Several of the comments left in the exhibit's comment book declared 'that the prepared exhibits were nothing else than Red propaganda.'¹³² At other moments, the environment was even more tense, with protestors storming the Soviet exhibition and decrying the Iraqi invasion as a joint American-Soviet-Israeli plot.¹³³ But Ibragimov's conversations with visitors captured not only these idiosyncratic positions but also insights into how Iranians viewed their own Revolution:

Prices are rising in the country. According to the anecdotes of local residents, in the course of the last two years alone prices for groceries and the most basic household needs have gone up by several times. The student youth also accuses the religious leaders and the existing regime of incompetence at developing the revolution further. In one of our conversations, they said that more democratic groups are developing (they regard 'Tudeh' as too passive), which will aid the next stage of the development of the revolution.¹³⁴

In spite of the moments of chaos, Ibragimov regarded the exhibition as a success. Betraying

¹³⁰Ibid., 247.

¹³¹GARF R-6991, op. 6, d. 2221, l. 85.

¹³²Ibid. Unfortunately, the comment book for this exhibition is not included in the *delo*, and there is no indication of where it may be held, if it still exists.

¹³³Ibid., l. 82.

¹³⁴Ibid., l. 82-83.

some of his own – or at least the bureaucracy's – notions about the state's relationship with Islam, he wrote, 'in my opinion we succeeded in helping the Iranian visitors to the Soviet pavilion get to know the life of Soviet Muslims, their customs, traditions, religious and cultural memorials of Islam, to understand that in the Soviet Union all citizens are guaranteed freedom of conscience and profession of belief in accordance with Article 52 of the Constitution of the USSR.'¹³⁵ There were still kinks to be worked out. Ibragimov explained some of his frustrations with certain photographs as well as how his job had been planned:

Some photographs, such as the mosque closed with a lock, the photograph portraying the restoration of a mosque without any workers in the picture, the tall minaret of the Dagestani mosque without a *muezzin* in it, the portrait of Babakhanov in a tie and with government awards on his ritual dress, etc. – all of these brought forward some level of doubt on the part of the visitors as to the reality and authenticity of the photographs.¹³⁶

'Islam in the USSR' – Izmir, 1982

The CRA exhibits next came to the 51st International Izmir Trade Fair, from August 20 – September 9, 1982. This time, A.F. Akhadov, an Azerbaijani CRA bureaucrat, and Dz. M. Mikhailov, an Azerbaijani mullah, manned the exhibit, titled 'Islam in the USSR.' (The pavilion employed also several Soviet interpreters for translation into Anatolian Turkish). But more than taking questions from visitors to the exhibit, both would strike off on adventures around Izmir and Turkey, themselves re-acquainting a wide variety of inhabitants of Anatolia with two 'Muslims of the USSR.'

As in Tehran, the exhibit took place at a tense moment in Turkish history. Starting in the late 1960s and early 1970s, extra-parliamentary politics in Turkey took on a heated and often violent key. Within the Turkish left, factionalism and radicalism grew as it supported the Kurds and Alevi religious minorities, students seized the Istanbul universities, and Marxist-Leninist inspired terrorists kidnapped U.S. soldiers stationed with the Sixth Fleet in Istanbul.¹³⁷ On the right, ultranationalist groups formed

¹³⁵Ibid., I. 86.

¹³⁶Ibid., I. 85-86.

¹³⁷Carter V. Findley, *Turkey, Islam, Nationalism, and Modernity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 315.

'Hearths of Ideals' and commando squads and assassinated leftists at counter-protests. Turanist ideas gained in influence with the rise of Alparslan Türkeş and the Nationalist Movement Party. A specifically Islamic politics took shape in the late 1960s with Necmettin Erbakan's *Milli Nizam* Party. Throughout the 1970s, political coalitions between Süleyman Demirel's pro-NATO Justice Party and Bülent Ecevit's Republican People's Party could not resolve the tensions within Turkish society. The Turkish left remained split between independent, Maoist, and pro-Soviet groups, and throughout the country political violence between left and right, Kurds and Turks, Sunnis and Alevis, and different tribes led to several massacres and 2,812 people killed in the twelve months prior to September 1980.¹³⁸

In that month, a military coup led by Kenan Evran overthrew Demirel's government and placed the country under a military dictatorship for three years. Many members of extremist parties either on the socialist left, the ultranationalist right, or ethno-religious separatist groups (the PKK and Alevis) were arrested and tried, and in some cases executed. A new constitution with restrictions on freedom of the press, organized labor, and the political representation of smaller parties was promulgated. Turkey was soon on its way towards a blend of neoliberal economics and global integration on the one hand, and a 'Turkish-Islamic' synthesis on the other. Hence the challenge for the CRA employees: how to market their vision of Islam and socialism in a multiethnic country to a population increasingly exposed to ideas of mono-ethnicity, a specifically Turkic Islam, and free market economics and global trade?

The exhibit began inauspiciously. CRA had told Akhadov that they were sending 11 large poster-size photographs of Soviet Muslim life to Izmir, but of these, only 6 actually arrived, and the directors of the Soviet trade pavilion, Akhadov reported, nixed displaying one of them, which 'depicted the praying of school-age children.'¹³⁹ One of the photographs depicting a *muezzin* caused some problems. 'It's absolutely necessary that qualified co-workers, along with the help of specialists, from the section for the Muslim religion on the Council select the exponents. Showing photographs of a

¹³⁸Ibid., 320-321.

¹³⁹GARF R-6991, op. 6, d. 2475, l. 1.

muezzin calling out the *azan* (the call to *namaz*) from the roof of a half-destroyed mosque, or a mosque under reconstruction, brings forth skepticism.¹⁴⁰ Nor did photographs of depressed Uzbek old men in disheveled outfits listening to the imam at the Tashkent Telyashayakh mosque help. Akhadov suggested bringing in students from the Tashkent Al-Bukhari Islamic Institute to be photographed, and added, 'there's no reason why we have to only show photographs of the mosques of Central Asia – it might be possible to photograph and show the process of collective *namaz* of respectably dressed believers from Moscow, Kazan, Ufa, Baku, and the mosques of other cities.' (Akhadov suggested bringing photographs of 'one of the Bukhara mosques,' the Baku Taza-Pir and Ajdarbey mosques, Derbent's Mosque, Ufa's Central Mosque, and Kazan's Dzhuma Mosque as examples of Muslim architecture.)

Beyond the photographs, eight works of 'religious literature' made it to the exhibit, along with several issues of *Muslims of the Soviet East*. Akhadov noted that 'of the expected 50 copies of the Koran [published in the Soviet Union] only 18 were ever received at the exhibit.' Finally, two enormous posters, one of Article 52 of the Soviet Constitution¹⁴¹ and the other of Lenin's November 24, 1917 message to the 'Toiling Muslims of Russia and the East,' hung on the walls of the exhibition space in both Russian and Arabic. Unfortunately, the model of the Baku Taza-Pir mosque, while intended for delivery, never arrived in Izmir, nor did two short films 'of religious content' intended for viewing. Here was what Akhadov and Mikhailov had to work with: a visual reinvention of Soviet 1920s pro-Islam anti-colonialism reinvented for a fundamentally different Cold War landscape– all in languages that few people at the exhibition could actually read.¹⁴²

In spite of these difficulties, Akhadov viewed the exhibit as a success. Thousands of Turks came

¹⁴⁰Ibid., l. 8.

¹⁴¹The Article in question read: "Citizens of the USSR are guaranteed freedom of conscience, that is, the right to profess or not to profess any religion, and to conduct religious worship or atheistic propaganda. Incitement of hostility or hatred on religious grounds is prohibited. In the USSR, the church is separated from the state, and the school from the church." Akhadov noted, however, that "for some unknown reason" the second part of the Article (the sentence about the separation of church and state) was missing from the poster. GARF R-6991, op. 6, d. 2475, l. 1.

¹⁴²Akhadov himself noted that 'one after the other, visitors to the exhibit told us that that they could not understand the meaning of the poster's message [...] it would be desirable to depict this message in the Turkish language.' Ibid., l. 9.

to visit. 'Some of the visitors,' noted Akhadov, 'regarded the photographs of mosques, the servants of cults and those praying, with a certain disbelief, and they listened to the stand-operator with doubt. It became clear that the majority of visitors have deceitful information about the Soviet Union, about its citizens, and especially among the place of religion in our country. Almost all of the visitors were surprised by our information about how mosques operate freely in the Soviet Union, that believers have the right to visit mosques for the exercise of their religious demands, and that Muslims execute their religious funerals, execute the *nikah*, and celebrate religious holidays, etc.'¹⁴³ As in Tehran, many visitors thought that the basic questions about what socialist society would look like – which had basically been resolved by the era of stagnation – had been resolved in the most extreme variant possible: 'Do you have a family?' 'Is the *nikah* read at marriages?' 'Doesn't Communism not recognize the family?', and 'They say that the government takes away your children in order to educate them in the Communist spirit, what do you have to say about that?'¹⁴⁴

While the Turkish police kept a low profile around the Soviet exhibit, many roving bands of youth gave Akhadov and Mikhailov a hard time. Akhadov wrote:

Several people behaved themselves balefully – brazenly manipulating untruthful information, they tried to awaken in the visitors to the exhibit feelings of distrust to the theme of the exhibit, contesting the information of the stand operator. Groups (around 10-15 people) of young people (20-25 years of age) were occupied with this indecent business, gathering in front of the exhibit 'Islam in the USSR,' attempting to argue with the stand operator about 'the Afghan Question,' 'the Iranian Question,' 'the Crimean Question,' and other invented political 'Questions.' For example, one of these groups demanded to tell to everyone about the fate of the Tatar nationalists Mustafa Abdülcemil Qırımoğlu¹⁴⁵ and Faizulla Kari, calling these criminals the leaders of the Muslims of the Crimea. The stand operator gave the necessary response to the lovers of 'truth' about the indecent activity of the indicated nationalities which had endured their well-deserved punishment. I should point out that these groups of youth were, as a rule, directed by middle-aged men who were suggesting provocative questions and directing these groups to yell again and again: 'Afghan refugees coming to us from Pakistan tell us about the

¹⁴³GARF R-6991, op. 6, d. 2475, l. 2.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., l. 11.

¹⁴⁵Mustafa Abdülcemil Qırımoğlu (1943 - present) is a Crimean Tatar who was best-known in the Soviet Union as a dissident protestor for the right of return of the Crimean Tatars. He remains a leader of the Crimean Tatars today and is a representative in the Ukrainian parliament with *Nasha Ukraina*.

horrors forced on them by the Soviet occupants! How can you, as a Muslim, *not* protest against these evil deeds?"¹⁴⁶

This encounter shows the limits of pan-Islamism on both sides of the exhibit. The Turkish youth, or at least the older men who provoked the youth, expected that a Soviet Muslim would *ipso facto* oppose the war in Afghanistan, support the Islamic Revolution, or demand the return of the Crimean Tatars – not because the deportation was unjust, but because they were oppressed Muslims. Islamic identity (and perhaps pan-Turkic solidarity), they assumed could not overlap with Communist identity. While we can only speculate on the exact identity of these hooligans, their behavior largely fits in with the increased influence of Pan-Turkism on the Turkish Right since the late 1960s.¹⁴⁷ Contrast this with Mikhailov's response to the question: the Tatars are a 'nationality,' not Muslims, and he approves of their collective deportation, even though this charge was officially retracted in 1967. Mikhailov may have just been trying to do his job here, but his choice of concepts through which to be a good CRA stand operator is telling: nationality not religion marks communal identity. The Soviet Azerbaijanis would manage to ward off these groups of hooligans, who repeated 'their desire to found a global state of Turkic-speaking nations with its head in Turkey, or, alternatively, their desire for a political union and action of the Turkic-speaking nations of the Soviet Union against, as they see it, Russian hegemony.'¹⁴⁸ The crowd was on their side. 'Every time,' wrote Akhadov, 'after the departure of the latest provocative group, several visitors to the Soviet Pavilion came up to the stand operator, advising him not to pay attention to the actions of these, as they called them, 'bad people among the neo-fascists and nationalist groupings.'¹⁴⁹

Between the commemoration of Soviet Union Day (August 20) and the giving of several

¹⁴⁶Ibid., I. 2-3.

¹⁴⁷Needless to say, Pan-Turkism was not invented only during the Cold War (think Nihal Atsız, Enver Pasha, as well as Jim Meyer's work on Turkic networks across late 19th and early 20th century Eurasia), but I am thinking here in particular of Alparslan Türkeş and his Nationalist Movement Party.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., I. 8.

¹⁴⁹Ibid., I. 3.

Korans as gifts to Turkish and foreign dignitaries, Akhadov, Mikhailov, explored Izmir.¹⁵⁰ Prior to the trade fair, Mikhailov attended the August 20 *namaz* at Izmir's Alsancak Mosque, where he was surprised by the fact that 'about 50% of those praying (around 500-600 people) were young people from 16-30 years in age, among them dozens of children of school age.' Even as he had come to Turkey to extol the vitality of Soviet Muslim life, the number of young practicing Muslims stood out. (Remember that Akhadov had *vetoed* the exposition of a Soviet poster depicting school-age children in a mosque as too propagandistic.) Akhadov, writing of Mikhailov's experience, noted:

At the end of the prayer, the mosque's imam, Khalid Gorkusuz, delivered a sermon in the spirit of Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism, with attacks on imperialism and Communism, several accusations of the policies of the Turkish leaders, including their supposed diversion from Islamic principles in domestic and international politics. The imam called on the believers not to step away from the Islamic demands in life, to be brave in their defense of their Muslim faith. After *namaz*, Dz. Mikhailov introduced himself with Imam Khalid Gorkusuz, the imam-*khatib* Karim Bati, and the *muezzin* Shiukriu Rawdelen, who all were surprised to find out that their conversational partner was an educated mullah from the Soviet Union and announced this to those praying, who were also surprised and greeted their guest.¹⁵¹

Mikhailov may have been taken aback by the content of Gorkusuz's *khutbah*, but he promised to return to Alsandac shortly. Soon, he was back (with, Akhadov emphasized, 'the permission of the leadership of the Pavilion,' just as with the first visit).¹⁵² There he participated in the morning prayer with '30-40 believers,' after which 'in the name of the Muslims of the Soviet Union and the believers of Azerbaijan,' he gave Karim Bati a Soviet Koran. This gift, Akhadov recounted, 'gave rise to great excitement in the mosque.' Mikhailov then took questions, surprising the visitors with his emphasis on the freedom of conscience in the USSR. All in all, Akhadov concluded, Mikhailov's inadvertent public diplomacy had proven most useful, as 'someone's objective word about Soviet reality was brought into

¹⁵⁰Among the famous visitors to 'Islam in the USSR' were Mehmet Turgut, the Turkish Minister of Industry and Commerce (given a Moscow edition of the Koran, but also giving the Soviet exhibit a Koran printed in Turkey); Ismail Kilkiç, the Commander of the Turkish Fleet (given a Moscow edition of the Koran); the Mayor of Izmir, Dzhakhis Gunai, and the Director of the Izmir Trade Exhibition, Hamdi Asena (also given a Moscow edition of the Koran, a copy of Babakhanov's *Islam and Muslims in the Soviet Country*, as well as a record disk with a recording of the Koran on it).

¹⁵¹Ibid., I. 4-5.

¹⁵²Ibid., I. 5.

the middle of those praying, along with real material proof (*veschestvennoe dokazatel'stvo*) about the freedom of conscience in our country, about which a not-insignificant portion of the population of Turkey possessed a false imagination.'

Other kinds of re-acquaintances followed the visit. On August 20, only the second day of the exhibition, Akhadov and Mikhailov accompanied one of their Turkish interpreters, M.M. Khalmatov, out into Izmir. With him, they visited a 60-year old Soviet Uzbek, Shirmuhammad Karabaioglu Ishyk, who had served in the Red Army in World War II, fallen into German captivity, but, 'not having returned to the homeland after military imprisonment,' had made his way to Izmir, where he had been living for the previous thirty-five years.¹⁵³ In this one encounter, shared Soviet experiences, seem to have been more important than pan-Turkic sentiments. Still, nine days later, on the 29th, Akhadov and Mikhailov, accompanied by another interpreter, E. Alekserov, visited Erdrun Keskin, an Azerbaijani young man living in Camdibi (in the Izmir suburbs):

Keskin's father complained about the fact that Turk-Sunnis get along poorly with the Azerbaijanis and Iranians professing Shiism. The local powers don't recognize their Shia *madhhab*, don't pay anything to the *akhund* of their Shia mosque, which was built with the donations of the Shia of Izmir in the village of Bairakly on the side of the city closer to Garshyiakin. In the meantime, all of the imams of the Sunni mosques receive their pay from the government. As far as discrimination based on school (*madhhab*) goes, the Shia *akhund* of his mosque was stripped of this right, which meant that the Shia believers were forced themselves to collect donations for paying for the services of their mullah. At the end of our visit to Keskin's family, the stand operator Dz. Mikhailov read several excerpts from the Koran and read out several lines of poetry ('gasida') about the Prophet Muhammad and about Imam Ali. Listening to the touching words and the pleasant voice of the mullah, all of Keskin's family began to weep. Upon our departure, we gave this family a Koran published in the Soviet Union, books and brochures exhibited in our exhibit of the Soviet Pavilion, ballpoint pens brought in from Baku, and a block of chocolate.¹⁵⁴

What Akhadov and Mikhailov were finding, or at least what their report intended to underline, was that there was a serious disjuncture between perception and reality across the Muslim world when it came to Muslims' rights in the Soviet Union and elsewhere. Even, they seemed to suggest, as Turks

¹⁵³Ibid., I. 4.

¹⁵⁴Ibid., I. 6

disparaged them for being stooges for atheist propaganda and being brainwashed into Communism instead of subscribing to pan-Turkism, there was more than enough discrimination against Muslims to be found in Turkey itself. Shia Turks and Sunni Uzbeks outside of the Soviet Union, meanwhile, looked to the Soviet Union as a land of relative religious and ethnic tolerance. Elite Soviet Muslims like Akhadov and Mikhailov were open to interacting with the other inhabitants of the Middle East on their own terms: whether as Muslims, Turkic-language speakers, Uzbeks, Soviet citizens, or otherwise. Given an award of 1,000 Turkish liras each, they left with their translator Khalmatov for Istanbul where, after a short outing for 'obtaining souvenirs, which lasted about 5-6 hours,' they were back to the Soviet Union. Next stop, Tehran.

Return to Tehran: 'The Muslims of the Soviet Union,' 1982

Shortly after his trip to Izmir, Akhadov was called upon again to be the stand operator for the exhibit 'The Muslims of the Soviet Union,' held at the 1982 Tehran Trade Fair from September 20 – October 1, with 23 nations participating.¹⁵⁵ It was the most catholic CRA display yet:

In the exhibit we displayed 28 photographs: 6 of active religious organizations in Uzbekistan; 8 memorial complexes of the Muslim architecture of the cities of Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva; 2 buildings of old Christian churches; 5 of industrial enterprises; 6 of public buildings in Baku, Rostov-on-the-Don, and Riga, as well as photographs showing Soviet and Czech cosmonauts.¹⁵⁶ The exhibit also had a model of the Tashkent Telyashayakh Mosque.

The photographs that had arrived were more a mix of the generic triumphs of late Soviet socialism – industrialization, the space program, urbanism – with only half the photos focusing on Muslim life in the Soviet Union. But Akhadov appreciated this decision. '... it played its positive political and propagandistic role. The exhibition was a good arena for the demonstration and

¹⁵⁵Ibid., I. 16.

¹⁵⁶The Soviet and Czech cosmonauts pictured were (respectively) Alekseĭ Gubarev and Vladimir Remek, who happened to be the first participants in the USSR's 'Intercosmos' program, a socialist internationalist side project of the Soviet space program that paired Soviet cosmonauts with (among other nationalities) North Vietnamese, Bulgarian, Mongolian, Cuban, Syrian, and even Afghan cosmonauts to fly missions to the Mir space station.

propagandization of Soviet reality, about which the Iranian population has very limited information and a false presupposition.¹⁵⁷ There were actually two more serious problems. One, in his mind, was the overwhelming focus on Uzbekistan: 'in this case, all 14 photographs [about Islam] were from Uzbekistan. Several visitors pointed this out and expressed their opinion that in different parts of the Soviet Union, religious sites were destroyed, while only Uzbekistan was left standing for foreigners.' Related to this was that 'in Iran, where the official form of religion is Shiism, it's absolutely necessary to show the socio-economic life of the Muslims of the Soviet Caucasus, especially Azerbaijan.' It was true, and reflected a real deficiency at the exhibits: even though Akhadov himself was an Azeri, and even though the Soviet Shia Muslim establishment made serious attempts to reach out to international journalists and present itself as flourishing, Uzbekistan dominated the official international picture of Soviet Islam.¹⁵⁸

As at the other exhibitions, visitors came to ask questions, but this time in Tehran there was a uniquely Azerbaijani flavor to the proceedings. Akhadov, who knew some Persian, noted that more than half of the visitors to the exhibit spoke Azeri, and while many of the questions concerned issues like the Iran-Iraq War, Israel, 'the Afghan question,' and the Islamic Revolution, 'the majority of the visitors were interested in the life of the Muslims of the Trans-Caucasus, in other words, Shias.'¹⁵⁹ Many of the visitors were fascinated by Heydar Aliiev, at that time the dynamic First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party.¹⁶⁰ 'Many visitors (soldiers and private citizens)

¹⁵⁷Ibid., l. 22.

¹⁵⁸This is particularly striking given the rich examples of intercourse between Azerbaijan and the rest of the Muslim world in the CRA files. R-6991, op. 6, d. 1971, l. 67-90, for example, documents a week-long conference hosted by DUMZak for Afghans in Baku from August 28-September 5, 1980. d. 2224, l. 45-52 documents another Afghan conference held in Baku by DUMZak, as does d. 2223, l. 44-66. The latter example, covering a visit in August 1981, was more complicated, as it involved a visit of not only Afghan *ulema* but also several ministers from the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. Finally, one other file, d. 1970 l. 5-9, includes a striking interview done for *Time* magazine by the American journalist Strobe Talbott of several Azerbaijani CRA / DUMZak authorities including Akhadov himself. Covering these materials would, however, demand more discussion that would exceed the boundaries of this piece.

¹⁵⁹GARF R-6991, op. 6, d. 2475, l. 16, 17.

¹⁶⁰Heydar Aliiev (1923-2003) was an Azerbaijani political figure who dominated Azerbaijani politics from the 1970s until his death. His son, Ilham Aliyev (1961-) is the current President of Azerbaijan as of 2011.

asked,' wrote Akhadov, 'that I pass on their greetings and kind wishes to Aliiev, since, as they said, 'Aliiev is the head of the Azerbaijani nation (*narod*).' They also requested (several times) that Heydar Aliievich see to the increasing of the mega-wattage of the radio and television from Baku, since at the present moment not all Iranians (Azerbaijanis) living far from the Soviet border can listen and watch the Baku radio and television programs.'¹⁶¹ Here one had not only the belief that Azerbaijan was, in effect, an Aliiev-run despotism, but also something close to the opposite of the Cold War media landscape in parts of Europe. If in East Germany the mountainous regions around Dresden unable to receive West German television broadcasts were dubbed 'the valley of the clueless,' in this Southwest Asian case, Iranians were demanding while in their own country that the Iranian 'valleys of the clueless' be filled in.¹⁶²

Compared with 1980, Iranians' attitudes towards the Revolution had taken a sharply critical turn. True, on the one hand, there were still several incidents of anti-Soviet protests. On the eight day of the exhibit, a group of school-age boys went by shouting out 'religious slogans and denunciations addressed to America, Israel, and occasionally the Soviet Union.' Later that day, a group of teenage girls in hijab ran through the hall screaming '*Allāhu Akbar, Khomeini rahbar*,' ('God is the greatest – Khomeini is the leader'), 'Death to America!', 'Death to Israel!', and – only once, Akhadov noted – 'Death to the Soviets!' Bizarrely, while Akhadov was responding to one young man in his 20s who had asked about 'the Soviet educational system, health care, and especially about the pension system for workers and vacations for pregnant women,' the young man went berserk, 'loudly yelling that I was carrying out Communist propaganda and that I would have to undergo death for this.'¹⁶³ Telling here

¹⁶¹Ibid., I. 17.

¹⁶²The German term is *Tal der Ahnungslosen*, although in reality there were at least two major regions of the DDR where access to Western broadcasts were difficult, the other being in what is today northeastern Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. Given the presence of the island Rügen in that region of Germany, the major West German television institution, ARD, was sometimes jokingly called '*Außer Rügen und Dresden*' ('besides Rügen and Dresden'). In 2005 a German filmmaker team, Ute Bönner and Gerald Endres, produced a short documentary film on this theme, *Im Tal der Ahnungslosen*. For more, see: <http://www.boen-end.de/ahnungslos.htm>

¹⁶³Ibid., I. 19.

was which claims of the young man used as the basis of his accusation: not the Soviet Union as the wrecker of capitalists, or as a superpower with international ambitions, but as a welfare state.

But many of the Iranians in the crowd were now on Akhadov's side: following the outburst, 'those present did not support this provocation, but rather supported me,' cursing out the young man from the exhibition. Other times, on 8-10 separate occasions, groups of Persian-speaking young men approached Akhadov to engage in heated conversation with him about 'the position of religion in the USSR, the constitutional rights of Soviet citizens, about the equal rights of Soviet citizens regardless of religion, race, gender, and nationality.' After these conversations, several visitors approached him to tell him that these men 'with a reactionary outlook' were indeed Afghan refugees 'supported by American imperialism.'¹⁶⁴ Akhadov's report suggested that exhaustion with the revolution had caused this shift. Even as 'the official authorities' at the trade fair notified the Soviet pavilion several times regarding the undesirable 'political character' of Akhadov's answers, he continued to engage in conversation with Iranians who had grown tired of post-1979 life in Tehran. 'The people,' wrote Akhadov,

Have grown tired of the religious demagoguery expressed by the faux-revolutionary phraseology. Orthodox Islamic ideology and the antiquated demands of the Sharia have transformed the everyday life of Iranians into systematic torture and humiliation. Iranian women asked me whether Soviet women and girls have the right to dress in modern clothing and wear high heels. One young woman (an Azeri) said with tears in her eyes, 'I surely will not see this free life, but I wish only that my children will not live under these hellish conditions!'

Concluding Thoughts

In this piece, I argued that when we look at the reports of these Azerbaijani CRA employees, we find a complicated picture. Plenty of visitors to the exhibits came to Ibragimov, Akhadov, and Mikhailov with questions about how the Turkic peoples of the USSR had been 'deprived of equal rights to life and freedom with the Russians.' One Turkish visitor could candidly ask Akhadov 'under whose supervision [his] wife had been placed' during his absence from the Soviet Union: since extended

¹⁶⁴Ibid., I. 18.

families had been abolished, to whom would Akhadov give his wife? Still, the Soviet vision of modernity and development remained attractive to different groups in Turkey and Iran for different reasons. Some of the Iranian Azerbaijanis in Tehran, as we have seen, viewed Aliyev's Azerbaijan as a place of national refuge. Keskin, the Shia Turk in Izmir, saw Azerbaijan as a place of confessional rather than national refuge from the Turkish Sunni establishment. Muhammadjon imagined Uzbekistan – 'even' a Soviet Uzbekistan – as his real motherland. Other visitors simply viewed the Soviet Union as a place where bread prices weren't doubling, where, even if the family had been abolished, they could study for a diploma, have a job, or have an apartment.

It is true that for many of these groups, the USSR's long-worn reputation as a country hostile to religion lent skepticism to many of these visitors otherwise curious about life in the Soviet Union. And we have to be mindful of the very narrow window that these CRA reports give us. Dozens of anecdotes out of tens of thousands of visitors to a trade exhibition in Tehran and a large provincial Turkish city does not begin to describe the diversity of opinion towards the Soviet plan for modernity in these two countries during the 1980s. The kind of people willing to harass, or make a confession, to a Soviet public diplomacy bureaucrat, can only give us glimpses into broader mentalities.

But the discussion here has attempted to shed light on Ankara's, Tehran's, and Moscow's interrelated paths to the future since the late 1970s. Following the oil shock, the emergence of the Islamic factor, and the increasing sluggishness of the Soviet vision, the rules of the game changed. In spite of the best efforts of dedicated employees like Akhadov (if not his photo preparation team), the Soviet path to development would become increasingly irrelevant as Iran survived to become the major power in the Middle East and Turkey entered decades of economic growth. But mutual copycatting, observation, and anxiety would remain commonplace among these regional powers in Eurasia. More than a key dynamic of the Cold War, regional cooperation and rivalry between Turkey, Iran, and Russia remain a key point for regional stability in Eurasia today.

To pursue this story in greater detail requires further – and difficult – research. Serious work on post-1979 Iran remains challenging, and disciplinary ossification may hamper students from plunging into Russian, Persian, and Turkish languages. But students of the Russian Empire have shown great creativity in exploiting the Ottoman archives.¹⁶⁵ Why not follow their lead into the Cold War?¹⁶⁶ Yes, we may find that Akhadov's, Mikhailov's, and Ibragimov's thoughts on their travels across the Middle East were largely hallucinatory, unrepresentative of a majority of Muslims in West Asia. We may have scratched an unrepresentative surface here in examining these late Cold War re-acquaintances with the 'Muslims of the USSR.' But if we want to understand the broader picture, we must, like the Uzbek Muhamadjon leaving his home in Ta'if, strike out.

Appendix: Questions Asked at the Various Exhibitions

a) Questions Asked at the 1980 Tehran Exhibition

1. How many mosques are active in the USSR?
2. Are all the mosques open?
3. Are the mosques in the USSR allowed to operate freely?
4. Is it true that there exists freedom of conscience in the USSR?
5. How many Muslims do there live in the Soviet Union?
6. How many Shiite Muslims are there in Azerbaijan?
7. Are there any instances of harassment of believers on the part of the organs of power?
8. Are Muslims in the USSR allowed to adhere to all of the demands of the Sharia?
9. May Soviet Muslims visit the holy sites of Islam located abroad?
10. Why does a relatively small number of pilgrims leave the Soviet Union for Mecca in Saudi Arabia?
11. How do Soviet Muslims relate to the Iranian Revolution?
12. How do believers in the USSR relate to Ayatollah Khomeini?
13. Are there well-known religious authorities in the Soviet Union?
14. Can any of these authorities play the same role in the USSR that Khomeini did in Iran?
15. What was the mood like among the Soviet people, especially among Muslims, after the Revolution in Iran?
16. Can Soviet citizens consummate religious marriage?
17. Do religious authorities appear on radio or television?
18. May religious authorities occupy leading governmental posts?
19. What is the Soviet Union's relationship to Iraq?

¹⁶⁵See, in particular, the work of Eileen Kane, Jim Meyer, and Mustafa Tuna, whose work is cited above.

¹⁶⁶One example of fruitful work in this direction is Odd Arne Westad's *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

20. Are there religious schools or medreses in Azerbaijan?
21. May the Muslims of the Soviet Union receive a religious education in Muslim countries abroad?
22. How many servants of Islam are there in the Soviet Union?
23. Is the cult of religious taxes adhered to in the Soviet Union or has the government forbidden it?
24. How many times in the course of a day do Soviet Muslims pray?
25. Do conditions for the execution of religious holidays exist in the USSR?
26. Why did they turn mosques into museums?
27. Do the mosques receive government grants?
28. Why isn't the Koran published on national languages?
29. Why is an insufficient quantity of religious literature published in the USSR?
30. Why is the mosque separated from the government?
31. Why did mosques in the USSR open only after the Iranian Revolution?
32. Why was there no section "Islam in the USSR" at the previous exhibitions?
33. Does not the section seem to you like Red propaganda?
34. Doesn't the Soviet Union fear the unrest that could occur among the Muslims living in the USSR?
35. Do Soviet people have families and their own homes?
36. Do Soviet Azerbaijanis speak in their native tongue?
37. In which languages are Soviet children taught?
38. Are there national schools and institutions of higher education in Azerbaijan?
39. Are Soviet citizens allowed to carry on conversations on political themes?
40. Can Soviet citizens criticize those working for government power?
41. Is there creative and other literature in the Azerbaijani language?
42. What kind of pay do Soviet citizens receive?
43. Can Soviet people buy light automobiles?
44. Can Soviet citizens travel beyond the border?
45. Can Soviet citizens change their place of residency within the USSR?
46. How are food products allotted?
47. How much does a kilogram of bread cost?
48. Haven't the Soviet people gotten fed up with the monotony of the food (the kind they receive with their coupons)?
49. Why are the children educated in kindergartens? Isn't that harmful to them? Can't we educate them at home?
50. Why are Soviet soldiers killing the peaceful inhabitants of Afghanistan and exterminating mosques?
51. When are Soviet forces leaving Afghanistan?
52. Why are Soviet Muslims not helping their Afghan brothers in faith?
53. How do the Soviet people relate to the events in Poland?
54. Why is the USSR helping Iraq?
55. Why is the Soviet MIG violating the aerial borders of Iran?
56. Why is the Soviet Union supplying ammunition to Iraq?
57. How is it possible to cross the border?
58. I am a foreign student, may I continue my instruction in the USSR?
59. Do students receive a stipend and in what size?
60. Do students have a right to living space?

61. What is the deal for the receipt of apartments?
62. What kind of institutions of higher education are there in the USSR?
63. Are there political demonstrations in the Soviet Union?
64. Would you like to visit Iran again?
65. How is it possible to receive Soviet citizenship?
66. Do foreign students study in the USSR?
67. What kind of stipend is there for students?
68. Are there unemployed people in the USSR?
69. Are there a lot of factories in the USSR?
70. Is Islam oppressed by other religions or organs of power?
71. What kind of repression do people expect for their religious convictions?
72. Are there instances of violations of the Article in the USSR Constitution about freedom of conscience committed on the part of the organs of power?

b) Questions Asked at the 1982 Izmir Exhibition (Number of Times Asked)

1. Do mosques really exist in Russia? How many mosques remain in your country? (Asked dozens of times).
2. As we know, the Russians destroyed (*razrushili*) and closed Muslim mosques in order to spiritually wear out and subordinate Muslims – how is it possible under such conditions that religious organizations can exist?
3. Are they building new mosques in the Soviet Union? (5-6 times overall).
4. Is the Koran and other Muslim religious literature published in the Soviet Union? (Often).
5. Is political and atheist pressure exerted on religion and on Muslims? (Dozens of times).
6. Where and how do Soviet Muslims study Islam? Do you have religious schools? (Dozens of times).
7. Do your Muslims observe the ceremony of the *sünnet* (circumcision)? (Every day).
8. Do families exist? Are religious 'nikaks' read? After all, doesn't Communism not recognize the family? (Often).
9. They say that in the USSR, the government takes away your children in order to raise them in the Communist spirit (*v kommunisticheskom dukhe*). What do you have to say to this? (Several times).
10. On what principles is a Muslim family in the Soviet Union founded? Aren't Muslim traditions forgotten? (Every day).
11. Do your Muslims observe the fast of 'Ramadan' and ceremonial *mawlid*s? Does one there have the right to observe Islamic holidays? (Every day).
12. How many believers of your country go on *hajj* annually? How is this done? (Every day).
13. Which *mazhabs* of Islam exist among the Muslims of the Soviet Union? Do representatives of different *mazhabs* marry among themselves? (Every day).
14. What forms of religion are common (*rasprostraneny*) in modern Russia?
15. Does the Christian religion take advantage of privileges? (Infrequently).
16. Do mullahs receive pay from the government? What sorts of financial opportunities do religious organizations have? On the basis of whose support do mosques exist? (Every day).
17. What is the situation with religious taxes? Is the *humz*, *zakat*, or other religious taxes collected? (Every day).
18. What is the structure of interaction between the government and religious organizations? (Every day).
19. Does the government control life inside the mosque (*vnutrimechetskuiu zhizn'*)? (Every day).

20. Why is it that, among those praying depicted on the walls of your exhibit, there hardly aren't any young people? (Every day).
21. When Soviet people receive jobs or are promoted, is attention paid to their religious affiliation? (Almost every day).
22. Is it possible to freely visit mosques in the Soviet Union? Don't the organs of power obstruct the observance of *namaz* in mosques or in the workplace? (Many, many times).
23. How is it possible to permit the coexistence of an anti-religious government with the free observance of religious on the part of the citizen? (Every day).
24. Your Lenin called religion an opium of the masses and called for a struggle with religion. How is it possible to speak about the freedom of conscience under these conditions?
25. How are the mullahs of mosques elected and appointed? (Every day).
26. Who precisely directs the mosques, if not the organs of power? (Every day).
27. Is religion studies in Soviet schools? (Every day).
28. Why do so few Soviet tourists travel to Turkey? (Every day).
29. What explains the fact that many artists and athletes who have gone on professional trips to the West refuse to return to the Soviet Union? (4-5 times overall).
30. Do you have the right to freedom of movement within the Soviet Union? (Every day).
31. Does private property exist? Is private enterprise possible in your country? (Every day).
32. Which forms of property exist in the Soviet Union? (Every day).
33. Are you satisfied with your life in the Soviet Union? (Every day).
34. If one fine day the iron gates of the Soviets opened up, wouldn't you want to flee the country? (8-10 times overall).
35. If a general world war were to begin, would you defend the Soviet motherland? (10-12 times overall).
36. If Russia starts a war against Turkey, how will the Turkic-speaking nations (*narody*) of the Soviet Union act? (Once).
37. Why do you so vehemently (*ria'no*) support Soviet construction? What did Soviet power give you concretely? What did it bring for the Azerbaijanis? (4-5 times overall).
38. Where does Baku oil get sent off to? Who uses its energy? (Once).
39. Do the Muslims of your country have equal rights with Russians? (Every day).
40. Do you have the right to speak in your native tongue? (Every day).
41. In which language is radio and television broadcasted in the Muslim republics? (Every day).
42. Do there exist newspapers, magazines, and books in the languages of the Muslim nations? (Every day).
43. Do there exist *mujtahids* in Azerbaijan who also recognize the Shia authorities? What do they think about Khomeini? (8-10 times overall).
44. What do you think about the Iranian events? Did they have any effect on religious life in your country? (8-10 times total).
45. Why did Soviet forces occupy Afghanistan? What do you think about this aggression? (Every day).
46. Afghan refugees arriving in Turkey from Pakistan tell about the terrors of the prisons run by the Soviet occupants. Why don't you act out against these evil deeds? (Almost every day).
47. Is it true that the Soviet army consists of illegitimate children educated by the military organizations of your country? (3-4 times total).
48. Does Azerbaijani youth drafted into the ranks of the Soviet Army serve in the motherland, or are they held in the interior territories of Russia? (4-5 times total).
49. Do any mosques remain in the Crimea? How many of them are currently active? (10-12 times

total).

50. Why did the Soviet organs of power exterminate the Muslim leaders of the Crimea: Mustafa Jamil Ogly and Faizullah Kari? (5-6 times total).
51. Do the Muslim Soviet Republics have the right to self-determination? If they do, why were they deprived of the possibility to conduct their own foreign policy? (5-6 times total).
52. Are there representatives of the Muslim regions in the central Moscow administration? (5-6 times total).
53. How many millions of Muslims live in the Soviet Union? Among which territories are they spread out? (Several times every day).
54. How many millions of people of Turkic-speaking nations live in the Soviet Union. Aren't they deprived of equal rights to life and freedom with the Russians? (Several times every day).
55. During the time of your absence from the motherland and your home, under whose supervision has your wife been placed? After all, according to Communist morality, family ties are not especially strong or hopeful. (2-3 times total).
56. What was the point of the exhibit 'Islam in the USSR' in the Soviet pavilion? It wasn't here at previous trade fairs. (10-12 times total).
57. Did you get to know the Izmir 'brother Muslims'? (Once).

Chapter 3:
From Pashtunwali to Socialism?: Komsomol Mushavery – From a Globalized Second World to Eastern Afghanistan

Sometime in 1985, a motley group of Soviet advisers and translators touched down in Tashkent and were driven to the nearby city of Chirchiq to begin a month-long intensive boot camp prior to being deployed to Afghanistan.¹⁶⁷ It was a cosmopolitan group. Along with their 17 Tajik translators, the team of 23 advisers (13 engineers, two agronomists, and five educational experts) included 11 Russians, seven Ukrainians, and a Belorussian, an Azerbaijani, a Kazakh, an Ingushetian, and an Uzbek. For the next thirty days, the team would listen to lectures on Afghanistan's history, geography, economy, lifestyle (*byt*), religion, and historical relations with the Soviet Union, take twenty hours of Dari classes, learn about the 'morals and customs of the Afghans,' and go through paramilitary training organized by the Turkestan Military District of the Soviet Army. Training in 'maximally similar conditions' to Afghanistan in and around Chirchiq, the advisers gained expertise in 'unexpected encounters with adversaries in populated areas,' how to conduct mass events (*massovykh meropriatiĭ*), and how to bunker down inside of buildings against attackers. Following a number of excursions to Tashkent's Old City, the Chorsu Bazaar, mosques, the botanic garden, the zoo and a specially arranged visit with Uzbek *ulema*, the team, christened 'Komsomol-5,' flew to Kabul to disperse to their assignments across the country, their mission to build Soviet-style youth and Communist Party institutions.¹⁶⁸

Komsomol-5's members were just some of hundreds of so-called *mushavery* (a Russian-Persian calque for 'advisers') who worked in occupied Afghanistan from 1979 to 1988. They primarily worked with the Afghan equivalent of the Komsomol, DOYA (Democratic Organization of the Youth of Afghanistan / *Demokraticheskaia Organizatsiia Molodëzh Afghanistana* / *Sazman-i Demokratik-i*

¹⁶⁷*Mushavery* (Moscow: Izdatel'stkii Tsentr 'Nauka, Tekhnika, Obrazovanie,' 2005), 7.

¹⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 8. For more on Tashkent as a premier Soviet city for the Third World, see: Paul Stronski, *Tashkent: Forging a Soviet City, 1930-1966* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010).

Javani-yi Afghaniestan) the youth wing of the PDPA founded in May 1976. Following the April Revolution, DOYA began to look to Komsomol for guidance and personnel exchanges so that Afghan Communists could learn from Soviet institutions and that Soviet Komsomol agents could educate Afghans 'in Komsomol work, philosophy, and political economy.' In 1978, the first groups of *mushavery* arrived.¹⁶⁹ But as N.I. Zakharov, a chemical engineer from Ivanovo recalled, the initial period of his deployment, from May 1979 to January 1980 in Kabul, was complicated.¹⁷⁰ Sent to work in Kabul with Viktor Korgun, a scholar and Dari speaker from the Institute for the Countries of Asia and Africa who would be his interpreter (and incidentally go on to become the major Russian Afghanist of his generation), he felt that he was being exploited to abet the 'establishment in Afghanistan of an Islamic Republic of nowhere near pro-Soviet character' and to aide the repressive Amin regime. Working on an exhibition entitled 'Soviet Youth' in November 1979 with Amin's son Abdurrahman, he was distressed to hear Abdurrahman boast that he was prepared to walk over the corpses of any internal dissenters within the PDPA.¹⁷¹

Following the Soviet invasion and the assassination of Amin, this particular problem was gone, but the *mushavery*'s workload only increased. In the first quarter of 1980, a core team in Kabul helped organize DOYA into a Komsomol clone organization whose Central Committee was staffed half by Khalkists, half by Parchamists.¹⁷² By the end of the year, DOYA had 26 provincial committees, 23 city committees, 35 *raion* committees, 80 *uezd* committees, and over 22,000 members across Afghanistan, a country whose population then was around 34 million.¹⁷³ That fall, Komsomol-1, the first class of *mushavery*, arrived in Afghanistan to commence their work with provincial DOYA committees in

169 Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii (RGASPI), f. M-3, op. 13, *Putevoditel'*.

170 N.I. Zakharov, 'Kak eto nachinalos', in S.L. Tkachenko and L.A. Koroleva (Eds.) *Mushavery. Assotsiatsia molodyezhnikov sovetskikh* (Moscow: Izdatel'skii Tsentr 'Nauka, Tekhnika, Obrazovanie', 2005), 12-17.

171 Ibid., 13.

172 The first *mushavery* in Kabul were Viktor Korgun (the Afghanist mentioned above), N.I. Zakharov (also mentioned above), and Zakharov's Tajik translator. (Korgun spoke Dari and could therefore get on in Kabul without special help.)

173 CIA World Factbook, Entry for 'Afghanistan – Population,' Available online at:

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>

Nangarhar, Ghazni, Kandahar, Farakh, Balkh, Kunduz, and Herat.¹⁷⁴ This was no mean feat: the story of modern Afghanistan was the struggle of Kabul to exert its influence in the provinces and modernize in line with the fashionable development theories of the day. In the Helmand Valley in southern Afghanistan, American contractors had built the city of Lashkar Gah almost from scratch and attempted to dam the Helmand River to redevelop the entire region along the lines of the Tennessee Valley project in the USA.¹⁷⁵ The Peace Corps was active in Afghanistan from 1962-1978. And throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the Soviets built roads, universities, and agricultural cooperatives, and invited thousands of Afghans to study in the USSR. But the presence of the *mushavery* and other nation-builders in Afghanistan represented the biggest effort yet.

The *mushavery* produced an extensive and publicly available documentary trail of their work in Afghanistan. This documentation allows us both to trace the process of institution-building in this unfamiliar milieu, as well as to reinvigorate debates about the nature of the Soviet occupation and the nature of late Soviet socialism. Since 2005, much of the *mushavery's* files, which cover all of Afghanistan, have been available at the Komsomol outlet of RGASPI in Moscow. The files, which total several thousand pages, consist of several kinds of documents: annual reports (*otchëty*) of the *mushavery* in the nine DOYA zones addressed to the Moscow Komsomol offices, including long narrative reports on the situation in the province as well as membership statistics for local DOYA organs; *mushavery's* workbooks (*rabochie tetradi*) containing their work notes, broken down by year and DOYA zone; personnel documents on the *mushavery* and their translators (currently inaccessible due to privacy rules); and several assorted files such as lecture notes, a newspaper article from a

¹⁷⁴Komsomol-1 consisted of the following individuals: B. Tivanov (Nangarhar), a Russian from Kalinin, T. Dzhumaev (Gazny), an Uzbek from Bukhara; I. Kolodko (Kandahar), a Russian from Lipetsk who was also the youngest *mushaver* at 27; P. Kulichenko (Farah), a Don Cossack from Romanovskii (near Rostov); Iu. Alekseev (Balkh), a Russian from Vilnius; Sh. Begbudiev's (Kunduz), a Tajik from Dushanbe; G. Kulazhenko (Herat), a Russian from Vitebsk.

¹⁷⁵Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); Nake M. Kamrany, *Peaceful Competition in Afghanistan: American and Soviet Models for Economic Aid* (Washington, DC: Communications Service Corporation, 1969); Ben Arnoldy, 'In Afghanistan Operation, Marines Return to "Little America,"' *Christian Science Monitor*, July 3, 2002, available online at: <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/2009/0703/p06s36-wogn.html>

Jamiat-i Islami newsletter, a Dari-Russian dictionary for Komsomol use, and many photographs, both group and individual, of *mushavery* and their translators. The files span the period 1981-1988, with some documents from 1989 describing professional reunions of *mushavery* in Moscow. The archive also possesses a copy of a retrospective book produced by former *mushavery*; I was able to make a copy of this book while in Moscow, but have not been able to find it at any libraries in Russia or the West, and the publisher has either gone out of business or moved since then.¹⁷⁶

Blessed with this material base, in this chapter, I pose two questions. First, what does the *mushavery*'s network tell us about the nature of career networks and how the Soviet project zipped up vast Eurasian spaces? As Stephen Kotkin has pointed out, for all of the talk on how the USSR was an oppressive empire, the lack of persuasive alternative concepts to the 'Eurasia' that now graces the letterheads of former Soviet research centers (Harvard's Davis Center, Columbia's Harriman Institute, etc.) may be suggestive of one of the Soviet system's great accomplishments – unifying Eurasia.¹⁷⁷ Like the Ottomans or the Romanovs, the Soviet regime created infrastructure (railways, postal systems) and institutions (the Soviet Army, Komsomol, the CPSU) that linked together vast lands.¹⁷⁸ Shared cultural experiences like childhood cartoons and songs, newspaper formatting conventions, and the unchanging structure of *sup*,¹⁷⁹ *garnir*,¹⁸⁰ and *vtorye bliuda*¹⁸¹ that persist in the menu of nearly every post-Soviet restaurant (save for McDonald's) were made possible by massive synchronization of television stations

176S.L. Tkachenko and L.A. Koroleva (Eds.) *Mushavery. Assotsiatsia molodyezhnikh sovetnikov* (Moscow: Izdatel'skii Tsentr 'Nauka, Tekhnika, Obrazovanie', 2005). According to the book, the publishing house is located in Dom 64, Stroenie 2 at 64 Zemlianoi Val in Moscow; I personally attempted to find this address while in Moscow and could not locate the office at this address. The publishing house has an e-mail address, PCSTE@yandex.ru, but has not responded to any of my requests as of February 2011.

177Stephen Kotkin, 'Mongol Commonwealth? Exchange and Governance Across the Post-Mongol Space,' *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 8:3 (Summer 2007), 487-531.

178Scholars in fields beyond Russian or Eurasian history have also engaged in similar questions. At Cambridge, for example, Tim Harper has written on globalization and networks in Southeast Asia and Malaysia, while Sunil Amrith's work has focused on Tamil diasporas in the Bay of Bengal and Malaysia.

179Russian for 'soup.'

180Russian for 'garnishes,' i.e. boiled or mashed potatoes, *kasha*, or other starch accompaniments to a main course, typically at a very low price.

181Russian for 'second course,' i.e. the main course of a meal.

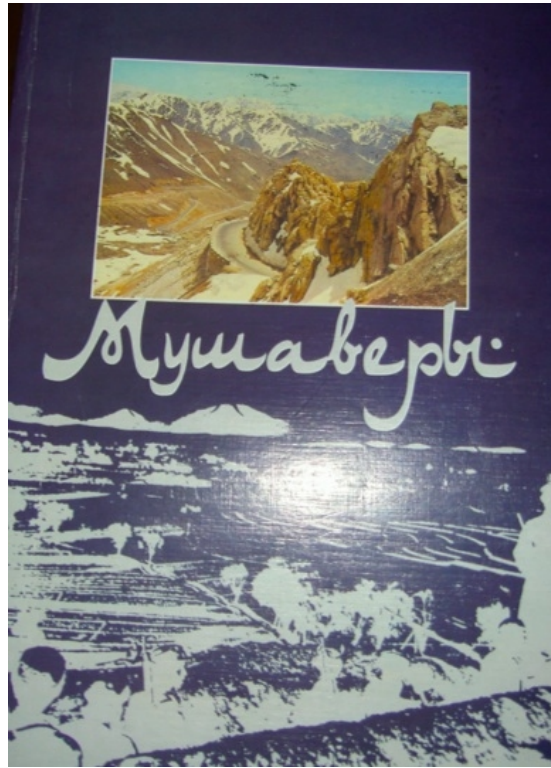


Figure 7: The cover of *Mushavery* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo 'Nauka, Tekhnika, Obrazovanie,' 2004). A rare nostalgic volume produced by the alumni of the *mushavery* program, I use it in this chapter to answer questions about the connectedness of Eurasia under the Soviet system.

and signals, journalism courses, and institutional cooking dictates – all enforced by All-Union or Republican level clone institutions. Universal procedures for installing electrical systems from Tirana to Vladivostok, or the shared experience of surviving *dedovshchina*¹⁸² while improving one's Russian on a tour of the imperium on military service, unified Eurasia.¹⁸³

The *mushavery* are relevant here because they allow us an insight into a genuinely pan-Eurasian institution. Their files allow us to see the career networks that zipped up the continent close to the moment of the whole system's demise, before pan-Union networks based on shared ideology collapsed in favor of rule by ethnic or regional mafia. (True, Komsomol and the CPSU were hardly uncorrupt institutions, but it is unfathomable today that a boy from a place like Chormogzakonitadzhik, Tajikistan, could become a respected philologist, study in Moscow, and become a bureaucrat in an institution with as much reach and power as Komsomol.)¹⁸⁴

The second question I want to pose is, what did building socialism concretely mean in this context? Bringing 'the Revolution' to Pashtun or Nuristani tribes in the Hindu Kush was, after all, a very different responsibility from being the secretary of a youth league committee in middle of nowhere, Russia. True, some of the *mushavery*, like Korgun, had prior knowledge about Afghanistan. Others, like the Tajiks and Uzbeks, were intuitively familiar with the challenges of bringing socialist development to a Central Asian context. But these were mostly men who had grown up in the USSR of the late 1950s and early 1960s, quite a different place from Faisalabad or Kandahar in the 1980s. Most of them were trained in technical fields, not Oriental Studies. What precisely were they and their Tajik translators supposed to be doing with these Afghans in out-of-the-way, dangerous places, precisely? In

¹⁸²*Dedovshchina*, literally meaning something like 'grandfathering' (called *godkovshchina* in the post-Soviet navies) is an elaborate informal system of hazing and rank for new recruits that has historically led to hundreds of young men a year being beaten to death or depressed to the point of suicide within the Soviet & post-Soviet military.

¹⁸³Eelidor Mëhilli, an Albanian graduate student at Princeton, is working on the former theme in a dissertation: 'Building the Second World: Postwar Socialism in Albania and the Eastern Bloc.'

¹⁸⁴The career path for Abuzuzaid Kodirovich Zakirov, a *mushaver* who worked as an adviser to the DOYA provincial committee in Kabul from 1985-1987. See *Mushavery*, 97.

order to attempt to answer this question (which, varies hugely region to region), I investigate the activity of some of the *mushavery* operating in DOYA's 'East' zone, encompassing Kunar, Laghman, and Nangarhar provinces, from approximately 1980-1982.

I focus on this region in these years for several reasons. I was only in Moscow for a month while gathering materials for this chapter, and only learned of the *mushavery* files close to halfway through my visit. The total size of the corpus is enormous (tens of thousands of pages), and the Komsomol RGASPI center permits only limited photocopying (1-2 pages per day). Recognizing that any initial piece based on my research would have to be preliminary, I elected to transcribe as much as I could of the files from the 'East' zone, starting from the beginning of the file (the early 1980s).

I selected this zone because the Pashtun and tribal areas of Eastern Afghanistan near the border with Pakistan (as well as the Helmand Valley) were often featured in news analysis of the NATO occupation of Afghanistan as a particularly challenging region for provincial reconstruction. No modern state has managed to assert its sovereignty in this region, and the lack of a commonly-recognized border between Afghanistan and Pakistan further complicated the situation for any Afghan government or occupying power. This made it seem like an ideal region to examine how the last generation of Soviet advisers tried to build socialism: how, when the system is beginning to appear weaker, does it attempt to extend its institutions to one of the most challenging regions on earth? By focusing on Eastern Afghanistan, we might come closer to understanding the limits of the Soviet system. Indeed, by comparing how the system sought to pursue development in this context with similar projects like the Peace Corps or USAID, we might come to broader conclusions about what made Soviet development of this period unique.

The Second World, Globalized: *Mushavery's* Lives in Eurasian Networks

What did the Komsomol network look like? Which vertices in the imperial network touched other vertices, and via which nodes? Given the privacy restrictions of the Russian Federation (which

are actually much more lenient than those of Western archives), I was unable to order Komsomol personnel files at RGASPI, which would have provided more detailed information into the *mushavery* and their translators.¹⁸⁵ But creative use of the autobiographies in *Mushavery*, the volume that the *mushavery* 'alumni' produced in 2004 can provide us with substantial data about 152 of the *mushavery* who wrote in with information about themselves.¹⁸⁶

In this section I hope to provide some provisional answers to the questions raised above using information from the *mushavery's* self-reported autobiographies. First, to give some background to the focus on Eastern Afghanistan here, I will provide some qualitative analysis of the six *mushavery* who worked in the region from 1980-1988. Then, second, to make the transition to some more systematic analysis, I will examine the geography of the *mushavery's* careers with the use map overlays. I will examine which regions of the USSR or socialist bloc were well-connected with other sectors throughout the career span of the *mushavery*. Finally, I perform analysis on the data set in SPSS to answer some basic questions about over- or under-representation of certain regions, the connectivity of certain oblasts in the USSR to Moscow, Tashkent or other Union centers, and any systematic biases towards non-Slavs in the program.

This kind of analysis has its limits. More often than not, this kind of quantitative analysis serves to confirm rather than overturn pre-existing suspicions about the nature of career networks in the USSR. Many of the autobiographies are concise, and they omit mentions of short trips to Moscow, personal connections in the Union, Republican, or *oblast'* capitals, and other exogenous factors with an effect on peoples' career paths in ways that the best quantitative models cannot capture. Only a

¹⁸⁵The files in question that prospectively might have provided more information are: 'Ankety, kharakteristiki na perevodchikov,' RGASPI f. M-3, op. 13, d. 184 (1986), 176 pages; 'Spiski gruppy sovetnikov TsK VLKSM pri DOMA, perevodchikov; ankety, kharakteristiki,' RGASPI f. M-3, op. 13, d. 184 (1987); 'Spiski, ankety, kharakteristiki gruppy sovetnikov TsK VLKSM pri DOMA, perevodchikov, razresheniia na prodleniie komandirovki. Spisok gruppy sovetnikov TsK VLKSM i ikh perevodchikov 1980-1988 gg.,' RGASPI f. M-3, op. 13, d. 184 (1988), 184 pages; 'Fotografii sovetnikov TsK VLKSM pri DOMA, perevodchikov,' RGASPI f. M-3, op. 13, d. 230 (No date), 117 photographs.

¹⁸⁶*Mushavery*.

systematic program of hunting down the *mushavery* and interviewing them will capture the nuances of how the Soviet system worked.

The next-best thing we can do may be to walk through the biographies of the men who served in the Eastern zone. While coming from a wide range of places, their careers before and after both Afghanistan as well as the collapse of the USSR gives us a sense of the institutions one had to pass through to make a successful career in the Soviet space. Nodari Kuchukovich Giorgadze is the *mushaver* whom we will encounter most in what follows.¹⁸⁷ A Georgian born in Tbilisi in 1952, he graduated from Tbilisi Polytechnic Institute in 1975 and became an electrical engineer, working at a Scientific-Research Institute (*Nauchno-isslevodatel'skiĭ institut*) for three years until he began to work in the Division for Working and Agricultural Youth of the Central Committee of the Georgian Komsomol, which he directed through the late 1970s and early 1980s. From 1981-1982, at the age of 29, he was sent to Jalalabad, where he penned the majority of the reports that I rely upon in this article. His colleagues thought highly of him. One of them, writing to his Komsomol superior N.I. Ianina, wrote sycophantically:

Thanks for Nodari! This guy is becoming my best friend for life! An amazing person (*prekrasnyiĭ chelovek*). Everything that he managed, in the course of a mere year, to accomplish (*natvoril*), in the very best sense of that word, you can't begin to imagine. You've got to see Nodari at work ... I (and not only I) think that a big future awaits him. Our country really needs these kinds of guys.¹⁸⁸

The author of this note was Aleksandr Viktorovich Lunev, officially based in the DOMA 'Center' Zone but also worked in Eastern Afghanistan and wrote several reports which appear in the record, had a less cosmopolitan route to Afghanistan than others. Born in Novomoskovsk in Tula *oblast'* on May 11, 1952, he graduated from Tula Polytechnical Institute at age 22 and worked as an engineer and electrician for a short period before working as a senior engineer in the Soviet Army. Following his Army service, in 1977, he began to work for Komsomol in Tula, and within two years, at

¹⁸⁷*Mushavery*, 77.

¹⁸⁸A. Lunev, Letter to N.V. Ianina, November 1982, reprinted in *Mushavery*, 77.



Figure 8: Nodari Giorgadze



Figure 9: Aleksandr Lunev, Then and Now



Figure 10: Yuriĭ Kopeĭkin

age twenty-seven, he became the First Secretary of the Tula City Committee of VLKSM. After several years of work there, he followed Giorgadze by working in Afghanistan from 1982-1983. From 1985-1986, Lunev worked as the main constructor (*vedushchii konstruktor*) for a subsection of TsKBA, an arms manufacturing firm, and held numerous leadership posts in the provincial Komsomol in Tula. Since the collapse, he has worked for the private pension fund Inbak and the energy firm Promstroigaz, has been a trustee for a private foundation maintaining Kulikovo Field¹⁸⁹ near Tula, and, since 1997, has been a member of Tula's executive council.

Giorgadze and Lunev were accompanied by several others. Working in Eastern Afghanistan at approximately the same time as Lunev was Yuri Kopeikin, a Russian born in 1954 in what was then Stalingrad.¹⁹⁰ After completing secondary school, he worked as a carpenter at a truck refurbishing plant and, later, as a fixer (*naladchik*) at a ball bearing plant, following which he served in the Soviet Navy. At age 24, he began to work for Komsomol, studying for a correspondence degree at the All-Union Juridical Institute. From 1981-1982, at age 27, he worked as the First Secretary of Komsomol for the October *Raion* in Vologda. From 1982-1983, he followed Giorgadze to work as the Komsomol *mushavery* in Kunar.

Ivan Maslov was born in Mesmiakino, a small village in Kursk *oblast'*, in 1956.¹⁹¹ He stayed within the Kursk region for most of his life, working as a 'scholar-agronomist' until 1980, when he began to work for the Komsomol, and as of 1981, at age 25, he became the First Secretary for the Khomutovskii *raion* (a district next to the Ukraine-Russia border) All-Union Komsomol. From 1984-1985, however, he was drafted to work in Laghman.

Also active in Eastern Afghanistan at the same time as Maslov was Oleg Mordasov, born in

¹⁸⁹Kulikovo Field is a field near Tula where the Battle of Kulikovo took place on September 8, 1380. That battle pitted off a number of Slavic principalities led by Dmitry Donskoï (who were victorious) against the Tatar Golden Horde, helping to begin to break Mongol-Tatar domination of Western Eurasia.

¹⁹⁰*Mushavery*, 107

¹⁹¹*Mushavery*, 123.



Figure 11: Ivan Maslov

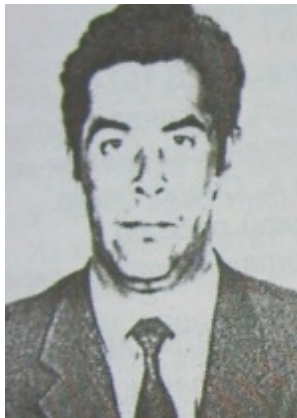


Figure 12: Oleg Mordasov



Figure 13: Mayrbek Mamaev

1952 in Tambov.¹⁹² Mordasov, who never went to college or a technical institute, instead worked as a history and social sciences teacher in Tambov until it was time for army service, after which point (at age 23), he worked in the Tambov *oblast'* Komsomol committee. He worked in Tambov for the next nine years as the director of Komsomol organs on the *oblast'* committee, and in 1984, at the age of 32, he arrived in Nangarhar for a one-year stint as the *mushaver* there.

About Mayrbek Mamaev we have less information, although in some ways his path through the Soviet system was the most unusual. Born in the tiny village of Shubar-Kuduk, outside of Aktobe, Kazakhstan in 1957, he worked as a freight handler for approximately the first twenty years of his life, before moving to Grozny to complete his university studies at Grozny Gas Institute in 1981.¹⁹³ For the next five years, he worked as the First Secretary of the Urus-Martanovskii *Raion* Komsomol Committee (a small town to the southwest of Grozny in Chechnya-Ingushetia), but from 1986-1988, in his late 20s, he was sent to Kunar and Nangarhar Provinces.

As Figure 14 shows, for most of these *mushavery*, the road to Nangarhar, Kunar, or Laghman, even as it started from points all over the Soviet Union, typically followed a similar path: childhood in a provincial town in the early 1950s, university or a technical institute in the provincial capital by the late 1960s, army or navy service in the 1970s glory days of the Brezhnev-era military-industrial complex, Komsomol work close to home throughout the late 1970s, and finally Afghanistan throughout the mid-1980s.

This small map of these six individuals' career paths leads us to the broader question of what the career networks for the entire *mushavery* class looked like. Let us start by considering a map, below, of the entire Union. Careers were globalized, but only within the (still enormous) second-world space of the Soviet Union and Afghanistan. *Mushavery's* careers concentrated around Moscow and Ukraine, with little activity to the east of Novosibirsk and the Kuznetsk Basin. But there were some outliers:

¹⁹²*Mushavery*, 127.

¹⁹³*Mushavery*, 123.



Figure 14: The career paths of mushaverry to Eastern Afghanistan.



Figure 15: *Mushaverry* networks in Europe and Eurasia, c. 1950 – 1991.
 All data points derived from *Mushaverry* (Moscow: Nauka, Tekhnika, Obrazovanie, 2005), and overlaid onto Google Maps.

Viktor Zhogaliev, who was born in Sakhalin and later studied and worked in Rostov and Tula before working with DOYA in Herat from September 1986 – September 1987; Sergei Golubiev, born in Bialogard, Poland, who studied and worked in Minsk and Leningrad before working for the Norilsk Komsomol for two years (1982-1984) before working in Kabul and, later, Narva, Estonia; and Viacheslav Nekrasov, who, after an early youth in Ozhgikha (in Sverdlovsk *oblast'*) and studying economics in Sverdlovsk, went to Glasgow from 1977-1980 to attend a '*spetskurs*' at the University of Strathclyde. Another ethnic Russian, Vladimir Pozdniakov, grew up in a small village, Zhatai, Yakutia, but gradually became more and more integrated into the main networks of Komsomol careers (Irkutsk, Moscow, BAM, Kandahar, and Moscow again). Still, for all of the different origins of the *mushavery*, it remains remarkable how many of them passed through common nodes – Moscow, above all, but also centers like Minsk, Rostov, Sverdlovsk, Volgograd, and Donetsk.

If we examine the map more closely, some curious trends emerge. Ukraine, for example, is strikingly polycentric. It is true that Kiev was the ultimate point of departure for many *mushavery* who originated from the region, but it appears to have been far less of a gathering center for the region than, for example, Minsk was for Belarus, or Moscow was for the entire Union. The density of career paths drops significantly once one moves east of the Dnepr. Urban centers like Lviv, Chernovits, Zhitomir, and Odessa served as gathering nodes for Komsomol operatives who came from the countryside, but they remained far less plugged-in to Union-wide networks than did cities like Donetsk, Dnepropetrovsk, or Zaporozhye. Work in Lviv or Ivano-Frankivsk led, at least for the *mushavery*, as often to Kabul, Kandahar, or Kemerovo as it did to, for example, Krakow, Bucharest, or even Chisinau. The primacy of the Dnepr industrial complex appears to have played a role in the development of Komsomol workers' careers.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁴For more on the postwar history of Dnepropetrovsk, see Sergei Zhuk, *Popular Culture, Identity and Soviet Youth in Dnepropetrovsk, 1959-1984* (Pittsburgh, PA: The University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008); Ibid., *Rock and Roll in the Rocket City: The West, Identity, and Ideology in Soviet Dnepropetrovsk, 1960-1985* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

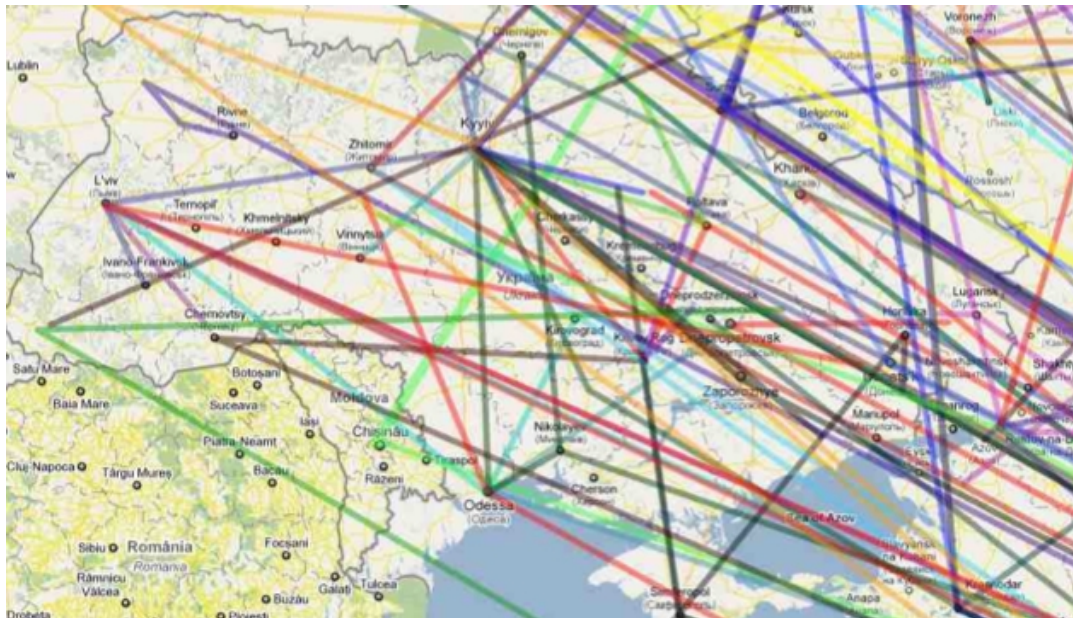


Figure 16: Eastern Ukraine as poly-centric, and the relative unconnectedness of Western Ukraine. Map derived from *Mushavery*.



Figure 17: Minsk and Moscow as concentrating republican and All-Union nodes in *mushavery's* networks. Map derived from *Mushavery*.

Looking to different regions, some interesting career patterns also emerge. Almost none of the *mushavery* who ended up in Afghanistan came from or through the Baltic during their careers. Yuriĭ Alekseev, an ethnic Russian from was born in Vilnius, was the secretary of the Kaunas Komsomol organs for some time before training as a diplomat, and worked in Northern Afghanistan and later, for the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Prague, Bratislava, and Krakow, where, according to *Mushavery*, he was directing the Russian Consulate as recently as 2005.¹⁹⁵ As for Central Asia, if far more Komsomol *mushavery* came from the region, there was less of an organizing logic to which cities and institutions they passed through. Sometimes, it seemed that at least for the ethnic Central Asians, the system provided a certain degree of mobility, but only *within* and not *out* of Central Asia. Consider Shohruh Behbudiev, a Tajik born in 1945 who, after a career of working in the student department of the Tajik Komsomol based in Dushanbe and with a wife and three children, learned about the Komsomol deployment to Afghanistan and volunteered to join.¹⁹⁶ He worked first as a translator in Kabul and later as a *mushaver* in Kunduz from 1980-1981. Whether Behbudiev's relative lack of mobility was owing to his family, his national origin, or other considerations, remains unclear. But the Soviet system still provided him access to institutions through which he could professionally go places – albeit war-torn Kabul and a dusty Afghan border town – outside the reach of most Tajiks before or since.

Another story that illustrates the possibilities the Soviet system gave Central Asians is that of Yusuf Abdullaev, born in Samarkand in 1947.¹⁹⁷ He pursued an academic career in the Uzbek Oriental Institute, first as a student and later as a professor, moved to lecture on history for Komsomol in the 1970s, worked as a propagandist for the Uzbek Komsomol, and from 1980-1983 worked as the Director of Propaganda for Komsomol in Afghanistan. The experience apparently served him well, for

¹⁹⁵*Mushavery*, 60.

¹⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁹⁷*Ibid.*, 52.

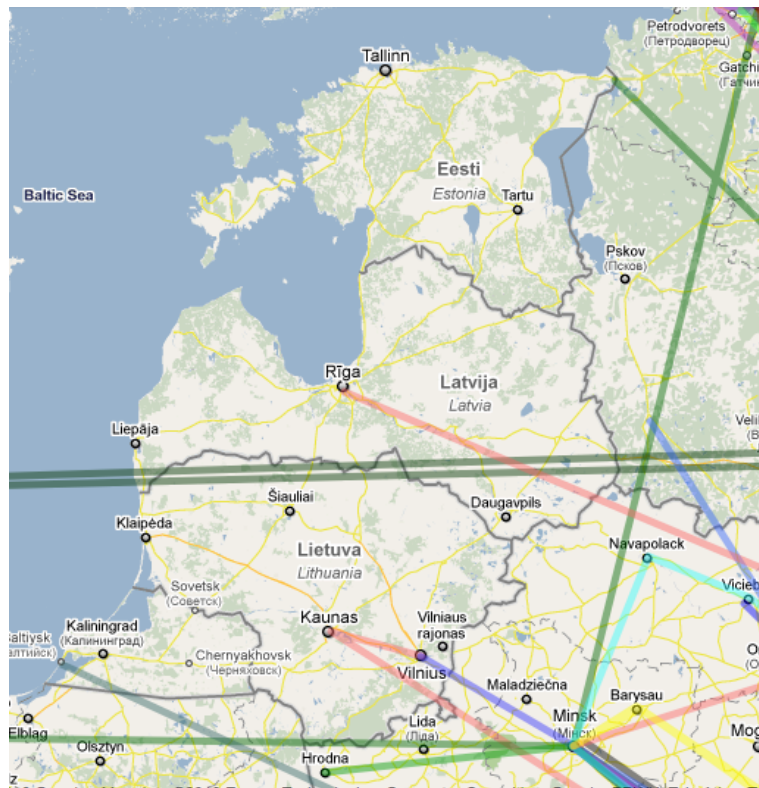


Figure 18: The Baltic in *mushavery* networks. Derived from *Mushavery*.

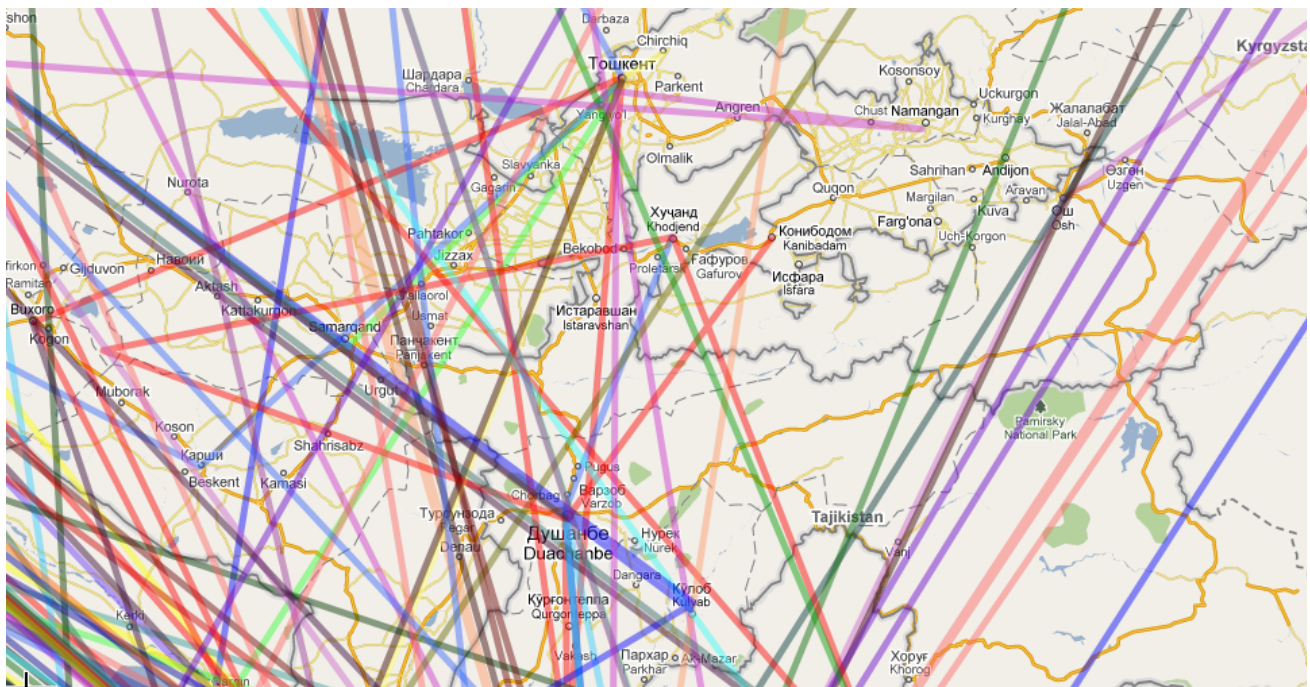


Figure 19: Southern Central Asia (Uzbekistan and Tajikistan) in *Mushavery's* networks.

afterwards he worked for the Central Committee of the CPSU until 1991, when, from 1991-1996 he was the Uzbek Ambassador to Russia. Since then, he worked as, until 2003, Rector of Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages.¹⁹⁸ (He was forcibly retired as the Rector of the Institute after a tenure that saw increased Internet access, more international programs, and less integration of the Uzbek police state into the academic world.)¹⁹⁹ Abdullaev's career shows, on the one hand, the mobility (within limits) that the Soviet system gave Central Asians who bought in: the ability to move between academia, Party work, republican-level government, and sometimes a post in Moscow. For this last cosmopolitan generation, independence, while traumatic, had its benefits. 'When the Soviet Union was dissolved, it was replaced by ... the Soviet Union, only with more border guards, more customs posts, more "tax" collectors, more state "inspectors."' ²⁰⁰ The same elites remained in place, only now with sovereignty, and someone like Abdullaev was free to return to the networks of Uzbek academia from which he emerged, exploiting his network of contacts in Moscow and across Eurasia which anybody born after 1980, more or less, lacked, trapped in 'Trashcanistan.'

Consider, too, the career of another Central Asian *mushaver*. Grigoryĭ Ivanovich Semchenko was born in Dushanbe in 1950 and completed his juridical training in Leningrad in 1978, but only after working as an auto mechanic in Gur'ev *oblast'*, studying in the Astrakhan Nautical Academy, serving in the Caspian Sea Flotilla, and, finally, working as a criminal inspector in Leningrad for much of the 1970s.²⁰¹ His career became even more erratic after graduation: he worked for an international Communist youth tourist operation, 'Sputnik,' in Leningrad for two years before working in Kandahar from 1981-1982 and 1983-1985. His career exemplifies, in part, the logic of the Soviet system of institutions: provided one had requisite training in the major Eurasian institutions (law, the army, youth

198'Student Protest Unsettles Authorities in Uzbekistan,' March 31, 2003, EurasiaNet.org, available online at: <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/civilsociety/articles/eav040103.shtml>.

199'Student Protest Unsettles Authorities in Uzbekistan.'

200Stephen Kotkin, 'Trashcanistan: A Tour Through the Wreckage of the Soviet Empire,' *The New Republic*, April 15, 2002, 26-38.

201*Mushavery*, 160.

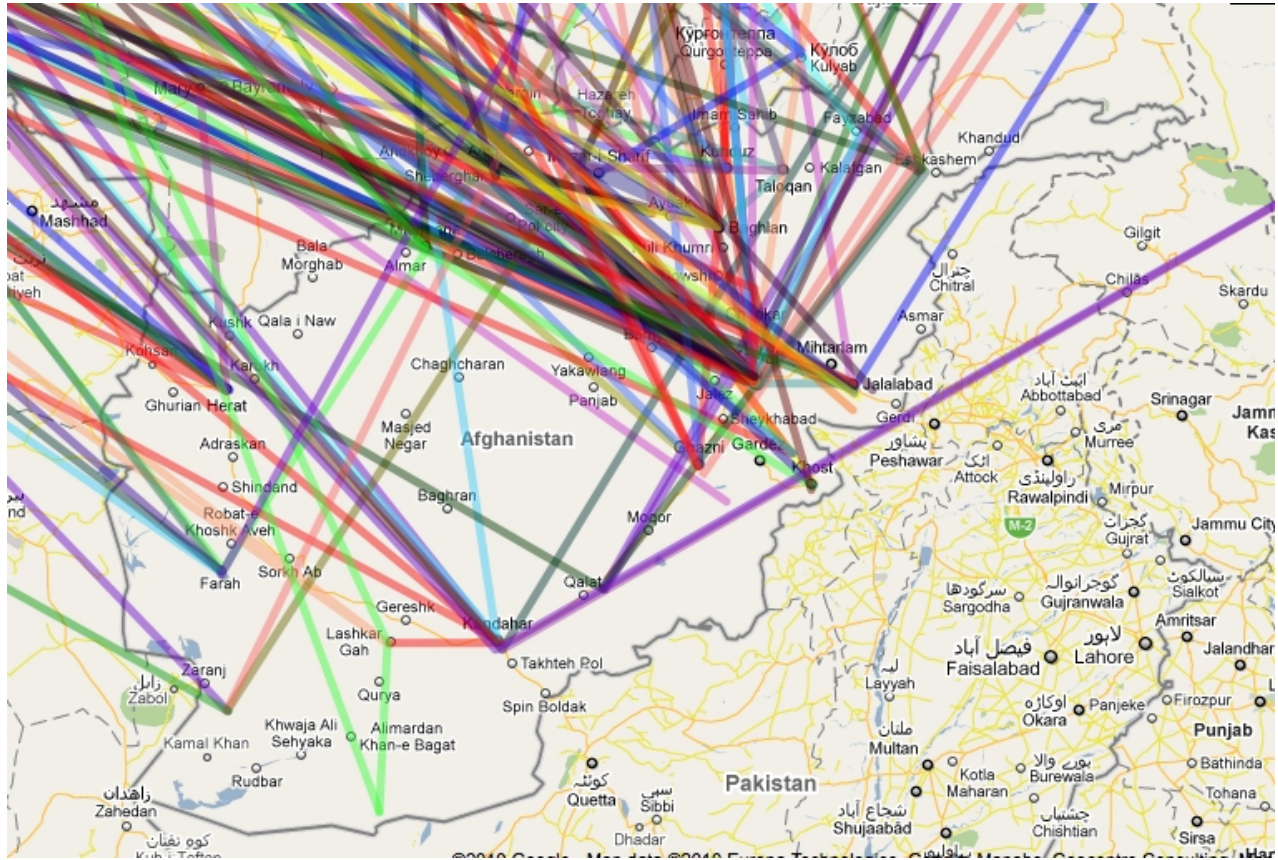


Figure 20: Afghanistan in *mushavery's* networks.

organizations), neither the place of one's employment, or, in some cases, even the specific task mattered greatly. The real difference was less between being a Komsomol worker in Leningrad versus Kandahar than being a Tajik peasant versus working as a bureaucrat in Dushanbe. Even if the system promoted people with mediocre backgrounds, ill-suited for bringing 'civilization' to Afghanistan (engineers, carpenters, and mechanics with zero background in Afghan culture or the language), it provided a degree of mobility across Eurasia.

The second-world globalization that Semchenko's career exemplifies was less dynamic than that of Davos Man's today – but if we compare it to the level of mobility across Eurasia under the Russian Empire, or even the post-Soviet situation, it represented an impressive achievement of the Soviet system. Life, for some, was one long *komandirovka*²⁰² around the imperium. Today different networks are forming, with students seeking scholarships to the UK, Germany, the USA, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. But look today to Central Asia, or even Ukraine and Russia, to the small, *neperspektivnye*²⁰³ villages and *kishlaks*²⁰⁴ from whence many of the *mushavery* came - Chormogzakonitadzhik, Tajikistan (Abuzzazid Zakirov) or Zhatai, Yakutia (Vladimir Pozdniakov) – and one finds not a hint of even this Second World globalization in which the *mushavery* took part, but rather only rows and rows of dusty houses, with women selling sunflower seeds and young men in track suits sitting by the side of the road on their haunches.

We can perform statistical analysis on some of the *mushavery* data to get a better sense of this world. In order to analyze some features of the *mushavery*, I created an SPSS table including the names, city of birth, SSR or independent country of birth, 'region of birth',²⁰⁵ and *oblast'* of birth of the

202Russian for 'business trip' or 'assignment': a trip, typically to a big city, with a specific objective in mind.

203Russian for, literally, 'without a perspective,' this term is typically used to refer to small villages or post-industrial cities that are deemed to have negative population growth and economic activity to the point of non-existence in the future.

204A word of Turkic origin meaning 'wintering place' that was taken to mean 'village' or 'small settlement' in Russian with reference to Central Asia.

205I included this 'region of birth' category, a mix of generally accepted geographical concepts and the present (c. 2011) division of Russia into economic regions, in order to provide greater insight into where *in Russia* the *mushavery* came from, precisely because so many of them did originate from the RSFSR. The possible categories for this class were: Central Asia, the Baltics (not including Kaliningrad), Belarus, the Caucasus (Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia, plus the

SSR Name	# of <i>Mushavery</i>	% of <i>Mushavery</i>	% USSR Population in 1980	% Overrepresented or Underrepresented ¹
Russian SFSR	83	54.61	52.3	4.00%
Ukrainian SSR	27	17.76	18.93	-7.20%
Belorussian SSR	11	7.24	3.6	101.00%
Tajik SSR	7	4.61	1.5	52.00%
Uzbek SSR	6	3.95	6	-35.00%
Kazakh SSR	4	2.63	5.6	-53.00%
Azerbaijani SSR	3	1.97	2.3	-14.00%
Kyrgyz SSR	1	0.66	1.4	-53.00%
Armenian SSR	1	0.66	1.1	-40.00%
Georgian SSR	1	0.66	1.9	-65.00%
Lithuanian SSR	1	0.66	1	-34.00%
Latvian SSR	1	0.66	1	-34.00%
Moldovan SSR	1	0.66	1.5	-56.00%
Poland	1	0.66	N/A	N/A

Table 1: SSR of Birth for *mushavery*, Absolute and Compared to Population Size

Region of Birth	Number	Percent
Ukraine	27	17.76
Central Region	25	16.45
Central Asia	19	12.5
Siberia	14	9.21
Volga Region	11	7.24
Baltic (excluding Kaliningrad)	2	1.32
Belarus	11	7.24
Southern District	10	6.58
Russian Northwest (including Kaliningrad)	8	5.26
Caucasus (Russia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia)	8	5.26
Unknown	3	1.97
Russian Far East	2	1.32
Eastern Europe	1	0.66
Urals	1	0.66
Moldova	1	0.66

Table 2: Region of Birth for *mushavery*

¹ Column 2 (Percentage of *Mushavery* from a Given SSR out of Total Class Size) divided by Column 3 (Percentage of USSR in Given SSR in 1980).

<i>Oblast' Name</i>	<i>#</i>
Sverdlovskaiia (RU)	6
Moscow City (RU)	5
Dnepropetrovskaiia (UA)	5
Tambovskaiia (RU)	4
Stalingradskaia (RU)	4
Poltavskaiia (UA)	4
Leningradskaia (RU)	4
Kemerovskaiia (RU)	4
Novosibirskaiia (RU)	3
Leninabadskaia (TJ)	3
Krasnodar Krai (RU)	3
Gomel'skaia (BY)	3
Chuvash ASSR (RU)	3
Azerbaijan (AZ)	3
Altai Krai (RU)	3
Voroshilovgradskaia (UA)	2
Vitebskaia (BY)	2
Tatar ASSR (RU)	2
Tul'skaia (RU)	2
Vinnitskaia (RU)	2
Tashkentskaia (UZ)	2
Rostovskaiia (RU)	2
Riazanskaia (RU)	2
Permskaia (RU)	2
Bashkir ASSR (RU)	2
Brianskaia (BY)	2
Bukharskaia (UZ)	2
Cheliabinskaia (RU)	2
Donetskaia (RU)	2
Dushanbinskaia (TJ)	2
Khatlonskaia (TJ)	2
Kievskaiia (UA)	2
Mogilevskaiia (UA)	2

Table 3: *Oblast' of Birth for mushavery – Oblast's with More Than One mushaver*

mushavery. In addition to this, I also included dummy variables²⁰⁶ to indicate whether the *mushavery* in question had ever spent a part of his career in either Moscow, Kiev, Minsk, or Tashkent. The aim was to get a sense of how strongly being born in a given region or *oblast'* correlated with spending some time in one of these Soviet metropolitan centers.

The overwhelming majority of *mushavery* were from the Slavic Republics. Within those Republics, they tended to come from the major industrial centers: the Eastern Ukraine around Dnepropetrovsk, Sverdlovsk and the Urals; the Kuzbass Basin; and secondary centers in the Central District of Russia and Ukraine – the Tambovs, Ryazans, and Poltavas of this world. At the same time, lest one have the impression that the *mushavery* were coming from urban backgrounds per se, it is important to emphasize that the vast majority of them, while they made their careers in secondary cities like Stalingrad, Perm, or Vitebsk, were born in the provinces. Oleg Kulaiev was born in Alagir, a North Ossetian town that today has some 20,000 inhabitants, before being sent to Kapisa, Afghanistan; Makshulov Muboroksho came from Kalaikhumb, a border town on the Pamir Highway in Tajikistan, before making good in Dushanbe and working in Kabul; Zainutdin Okmazov was born in Burtunai, a small town whose population in 2002 was 3479 souls, before pursuing his career in Makhachkala. Such provincial boys made good represent the majority of the *mushavery*.

Pashtunwali to Socialism? On the Ground in Eastern Afghanistan, 1981-1982

Not long after their initial training at centers like that in Chirchiq, the *mushavery* were dispatched to various regions of the country to begin the task of building socialism there. In practice, this meant balancing the roles of a negotiator, a journalist, and, sometimes, a soldier. The first material

Russian Caucasus), the Central Black Earth Region, Eastern Europe, the Russian Far East, Moldova, the Northwest (Leningrad, Novgorod, and Pskov), Siberia, the Southern District, the Ukraine, Unknown, the Urals, and the Volga Region.

²⁰⁶In regression analysis, a dummy variable is a variable that takes the value of 0 or 1 to indicate the presence of a categorical effect (in this case, did the *mushaver's* career take him through Kiev? Through Moscow? Those *mushavery* whose biography indicated a stop in these cities were associated with a variable of KIEVDUMMY=1, MOSCOWDUMMY=1, and so on.

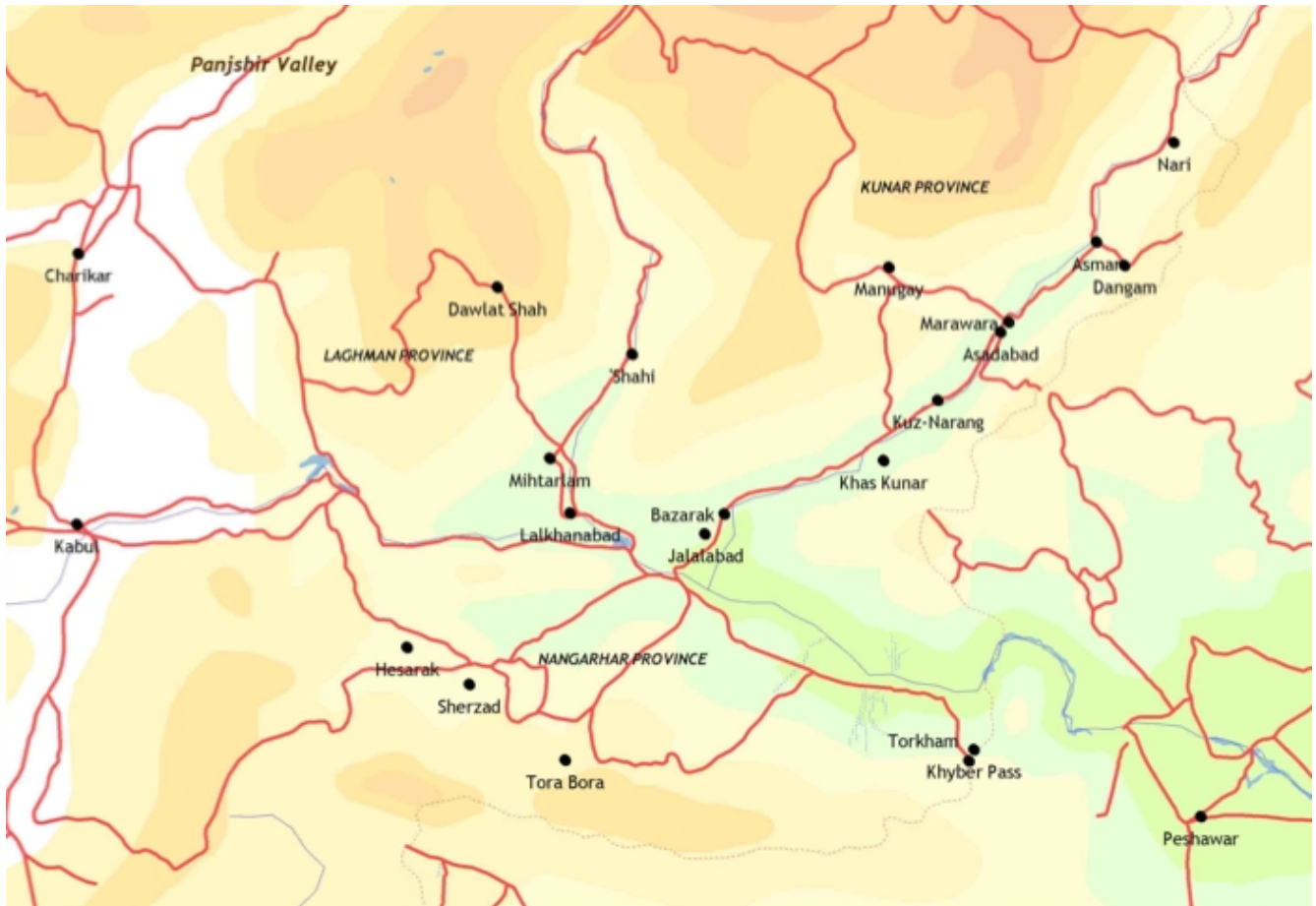


Figure 21: Map of Eastern Afghanistan and Northwestern Pakistan

that appears in the archives about the 'East' zone (Jalalabad, Nangarhar, and Laghman) comes from the pen of Giorgadze, the Georgian *mushaver* from Tbilisi whom we met earlier. He had shipped out to Jalalabad in 1981, and would write his first report in November 1982.²⁰⁷ In it, he proved an insightful ethnographer, cautious of the challenges any state-building force would face in the region. The 'East' zone, he noted, was a primarily agricultural zone (save for the Jalalabad Irrigation Complex, built by Soviet experts in 1963-1966), and aside from the three major cities of Jalalabad (50,000 people), Asadabad (27,000), and Mihtarlam (3,000), the majority of the population lived in small villages which rarely exceeded two hundred homes.²⁰⁸

88 percent of the zone's population were Pashtuns, although more specifically these broke down into tribes such as Mamandis, Shinwaris, Pashatis, Khugianis, Safis, Momokhilis, Amirkhilis, Shinwozis, Saziris, Gilazis, Sarkhoi, Shaikhoni, and Nosiris, many of whom lived on both the Afghan and the Pakistani side of the Durand Line. 'The idiosyncratic way of life here,' he continued, 'is regulated by the Muslim religion, the norms of the Sharia, and, in family life, the “Adat” or “Pushtunwali,” the right to interpret which belongs to the tribal “Jirga,” – a council of elders.'²⁰⁹ As Giorgadze saw it, this tribal form of life had proven adept at resisting the imposition of alien forms of sovereignty. The Pashtuns had been one of the leading forces in resisting 'the colonial expansion of British imperialism,' he wrote, but they also resisted assimilation into any Afghan or Pakistani state. 'It may suffice to note that since 1947 there have never been any Pakistani forces, police, or gendarmes on their territory. Pakistani laws and the criminal codex have never extended to this territory. [...] Practically speaking, the population of the zone never paid any taxes, customs, or any sorts of tolls to anyone. The only social stratum controlling any definite influence in the zone are the elders, as well as

207 *Mushavery*, 77; RGASPI f. M-3, op. 13, d. 24, l. 85-130, Nodari Giorgadze, 'Spravka TsK VLKSM pri TsK DOMA v zone “Vostok.” DOMA i natsional'no-demokraticheskaiia revoliutsiia v DRA. G. Dzhelalabad, noiabr' 1982 goda.'

208 Giorgadze, 'Spravka TsK VLKSM pri TsK DOMA v zone “Vostok.”', l. 86.

209 *Ibid.*, l. 87.

the mullas and *ulema*.' ²¹⁰ But not all of the historical precedents were discouraging. Zahir Shah, he reminded Moscow, had started to build the Jalalabad Construction Complex 'in order to transform Nangarhar – bordering on Pakistan – into a blooming region and, in doing so, solve not only the economic challenges of the region but also the political and social problems of the region, turning the Pashtuns to sedentary life. One has to note that the government succeeded to a certain extent in constructively solving this challenge.'

So here was the challenge for DOMA and the *mushavery*: how to transform a tribal population into a sedentary one, anchored in industry and Communist institutions – all with the Pakistani factor next door? In order for us to get a taster into the process of Communist institution-building in Eastern Afghanistan, let us walk through Giorgadze's notes on the three constituent provinces of the 'East' Zone for 1982-1983: a series of episodes indicative of *mentalités* and practices of the late Soviet Union and give us a more detailed look into institution-building than the traditional military history approach to the Soviet experience in Afghanistan. Along the way, I would like to compare Giorgadze's outlook with that of his other *mushavery* colleagues, as well as the attitude of the closest equivalent project to the *mushavery* – the American Peace Corps. This will help us understand the different attitudes towards development that underwrote the different projects.

Perhaps the best place to start are Giorgadze's comments on his Afghan colleagues. In Nangarhar Province, in the DOMA office in Jalalabad, Giorgadze found himself working with a diverse group of Pashtun Communists, most young. Giorgadze, twenty-nine himself, found himself blessed with a competent Pashtun counterpart, Maazudin Katak. Khatak, the twenty-one year old Secretary of the Nangarhar Provincial Committee, who rated highly in the Georgian's eyes. 'Even when Daoud was in power, he was a member of an underground PDPA Provincial Committee and the Secretary of the Youth Organization. They threw him in prison when he was still a minor for his

²¹⁰Ibid., I. 87-88.

political activity, for his work with the masses, and his loud statements against the Daoud regime. He's from the Pashtun tribes, single, educated to a twelfth-grade level, a member of the PDPA since age 12, from the intelligentsia, and born in Laghman Province.²¹¹ Khatak also seems to have been cut from the cloth of the regional power elite: 'I should mention,' Giorgadze added, 'that he was born in the same village as the PDPA Secretary for Nangarhar, the Governor of the Province, the Commander of the Sarandoï,²¹² and the Director of People's Education for Nangarhar.'

Khatak comes across as the ideal Afghan Communist to work with: 'Comrade Maazudin wields special respect and enormous authority. One can especially sense the respect towards his past. Even the leaders of the tribes and the members of the religious elite (*dukhovenstvo*) respect him. He's modest, brave, and devoted to the cause of Saur and Soviet friendship (you can sense this sincerity in him with every footstep), smart, completely open with his advisor (i.e. Giorgadze himself), a good organizer, an amazing orator, strives to study, reads literature, systematically acquaints himself with the press, improves himself at every opportunity, collegial, and is well-educated.' Giorgadze even recommended that Khatak be promoted in the future, noting that the main PDPA apparatus in Nangarhar (as opposed to DOMA) wanted to take him on as Deputy Secretary (again, to a Secretary from his village in Laghman). Giorgadze's only criticism of Khatak was that 'you have to work punctually and precisely (*akkuratno*) with him,' although he did go on to note that 'to one extent or another, this is an eccentricity of character of practically all the Pashtun tribes.'²¹³

Several other team members rounded out the DOMA team for Nangarhar. Salim, a twenty-four year old working-class medical student from Kabul studying in Jalalabad who had been invited to the Higher Komsomol School for a three-month seminar, rated highly as the Deputy Secretary and

²¹¹ Ibid., I. 109.

²¹² Sarandoï was the gendarme police force of Communist Afghanistan, controlled by the Ministry of the Interior. It was often larger than the Afghan Army itself and under the control of the Khalq faction of the PDPA, whereas the KhAD was controlled by Parcham.

²¹³ Ibid., I. 110.

Secretary for KGB Informants. 'Literate, energetic, and a smart worker,' Salim enjoyed respect for building up a DOMA cell inside Jalalabad University's Faculty of Medicine to twenty-three members at a time when KhAD²¹⁴ estimated the Hezb-i Islami cell in the same faculty to be 250 students.²¹⁵ But there were 'insufficiencies (*nedorabotki*) in his education.' Salim had a short fuse (*kharakterizuetsia vspyl'chivost'iu*), loved to argue, even with Giorgadze, and often interrupted Giorgadze in conversation. What Giorgadze was really doing here in his comments was ranking these young Afghans on their leadership potential. He could never get rid of Salim due to his underground credentials and contacts among the youth, but he noted that only in the event of 'systematic, methodological work' on developing the youth could one 'get out of him a good cadre worker.'

Less impressive was the Head Secretary for the Organizational Section, Comrade Shirahmad, a thirty-two year old Pashtun, educated to second-grade level and from a peasant family. Shirahmad, the father of three, had also gone to the Higher Komsomol School and rated as hard-working and active. But he was also 'very hot-blooded, uncomposed, exhibits elements of crudeness towards other members of the Provincial Committee, and is quick to take offense.' Given all of this – and Shirahmad's relatively advanced age at 32, Giorgadze 'raised the question of his further use in Party work.' Not that Giorgadze was the only one with complaints. He had lobbied the Nangarhar PDPA to force the DOMA members to 'volunteer' to build a DOMA Institute in Jalalabad, a proposal that was met, 'to put it lightly, without pleasure': many of Giorgadze's colleagues expressed to him that they didn't need further training and that 'they could handle themselves' (*ia sam mogu spravitsia*).²¹⁶

Similarly snippy comments dot Giorgadze's personnel files.²¹⁷ But perhaps the best way to distill Giorgadze's views of his Afghan colleagues are his patronizing 'Suggestions on Advisors' Work

214 KhAD (Khadamat-i Etela'at-i Dawlati / خدمات اطلاعات دولتی) was the main Afghan security agency, under the control of the KGB since the 1979 invasion.

215 Ibid. I. 110.

216 Ibid., I. 101.

217 For Giorgadze's full personnel comments, see Ibid., I. 108 – 125.

With Afghan Comrades.²¹⁸ Giorgadze insisted that future *mushavery*, while they simply had to take the initiative on all projects for anything to get done, also had to give their Afghan colleagues 'the chance to think for themselves and make decisions.' They had to feel for themselves 'in full the bitter taste and delight that comes from success or failure.'²¹⁹ How to actually do this? Giorgadze illustrated how with his own troubles in convincing the Jalalabad DOMA to build a Komsomol Youth Camp outside of the city. 'Working with the Afghans,' he wrote, 'I became convinced that it's better not to suggest anything to them and to simply keep silent than to try to convince them of something they're definitely not convinced of already. For every Afghan, a Soviet advisor is the holiest of holies, all-knowing and a universal person (*universal'nyi chelovek*), so any ill-thought-out or infeasible piece of advice could hit you in the face like a boomerang.' Once his Afghan colleagues had figured out the advantages of building the camp on their own and actually seen the construction materials, then they were ready to build the project, successfully.

What to make of Giorgadze's self-presentation here? How much of it was bluster? How much was Giorgadze *expected* to produce positive reports back to Moscow, regardless of real progress on the ground? While emphasizing that my readings into the *mushavery* files cover less than five percent of the overall corpus, I have the following impressions. For one, Giorgadze's reports are not those of a cynic but rather of an energetic, idealistic young man eager to build Communism in a difficult environment. While the *otchëty* that other *mushavery* filed are substantial (20-30 pages of analysis), Giorgadze's report goes into great detail on the history and demography of Eastern Afghanistan. His reports include several pages of detailed statistical breakdowns of the number of registered DOMA members in different districts, and several technical sketches of the DOMA Institute in Jalalabad that Giorgadze was eventually successful at constructing. He frames his relationship with his Afghan co-

218 RGASPI f. M-3, op. 13, d. 24, l. 123-125. Nodari Giorgadze, 'Nekotorye predlozheniia o rabote sovetnikov s Afganskimi tovarishchami,' in 'Spravka TsK VLKSM pri TsK DOMA v zone "Vostok." DOMA i natsional'no-demokraticheskaiia revoliutsiia v DRA. G. Dzhelalabad, noiabr' 1982 goda.'

219 Ibid., l. 123.

workers in a way that stresses his ability as a personnel manager, but he clearly views the Afghans as people to be worked *with*, not *in spite of*. One recent historian of the war describes Afghanistan 'as a convenient dumping place for people who were not making the grade back in the Soviet Union,' but when I compare the level of insight in Giorgadze's reports to internal Komsomol documents from the 1970s, or the language of the CSW or CRA associates in Chapters 1 and 2, I see less an incompetent than an insightful young idealist.

At the same time, Giorgadze's reports do appear to have conformed to what Moscow wanted to hear. The one piece of information that persists throughout his personnel reports are whether an Afghan colleague is qualified to move up within DOMA, whether he should be sent to the USSR for further training, or (for those too old or incompetent to make the cut) whether they should be shunted off to meaningless PDPA work, separate from DOMA. In this regard, Giorgadze was serving as a talent scout for Afghan Communists. More than that, Giorgadze and his fellow *mushavery* excelled at producing reams and reams of tables documenting the growth of DOMA membership throughout their regions, rarely placing this into more detailed context or providing specific examples of the improved influence of DOMA in their regions. Numbers had to be sent to Moscow, it seems, to 'prove' the growth of Communist institutions. We might also note that no correspondence from Moscow appears in the *mushavery* files – how feedback from the center to the periphery or the system of attracting and firing *mushavery* worked, remains unclear. To get a better idea of how the interplay of expectations and action worked between Moscow and the *mushavery* will require a longer, more panoramic, tour, of the *mushavery* files.

Back on Giorgadze's end, real work finally began in March 1982, when Maudzudin (the DOMA Secretary we met above) formed an expeditionary group of seven people outfitted with propaganda material as well as the most recent decrees of the Central Committee of the PDPA to visit

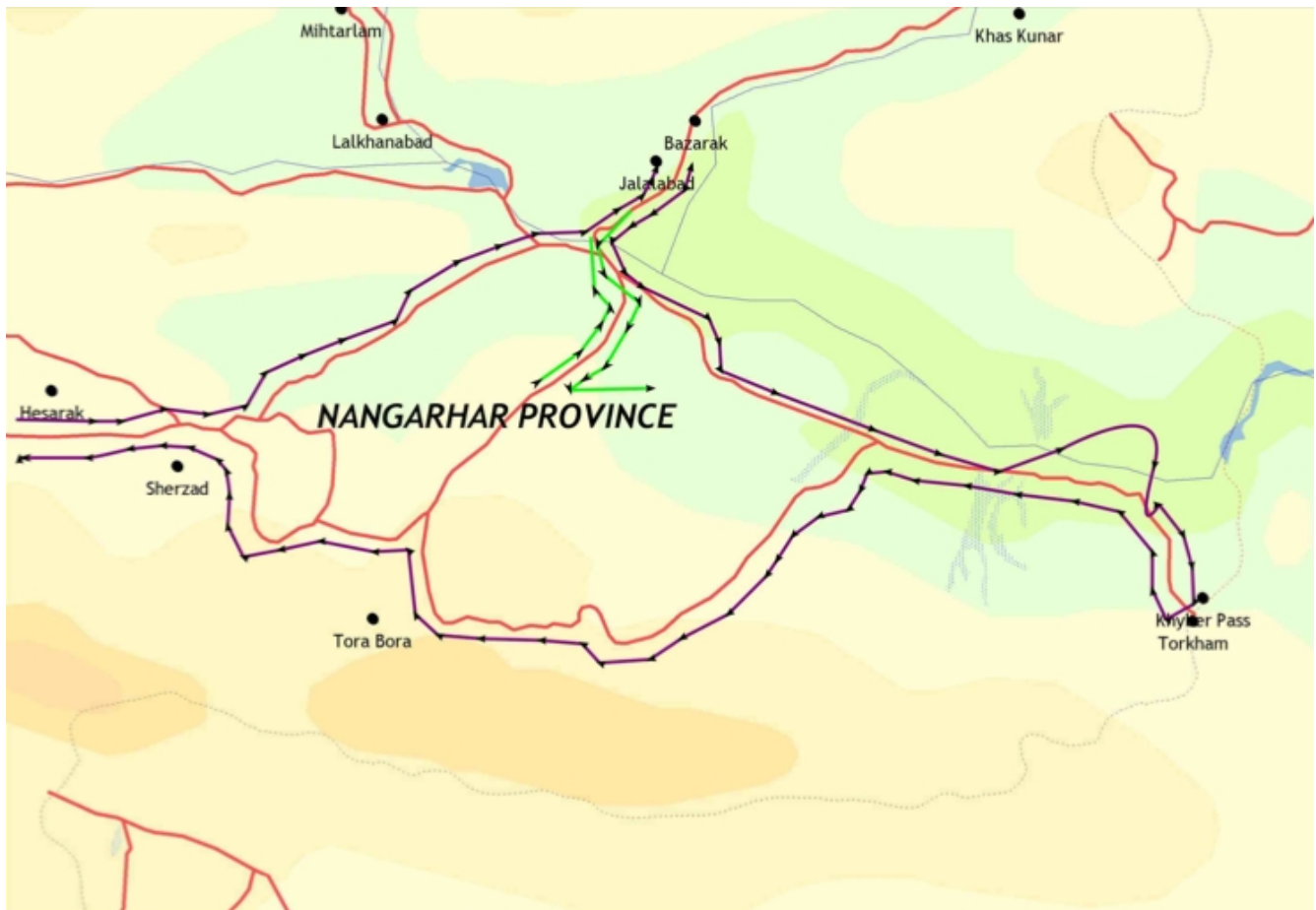


Figure 22: Maudzudin's Travels Around Nangarhar Province, Spring-Summer 1982
Green Line: March 1982 Trip – Purple Line: June 1982 Trip

Shinwar Province 'to form any (*kakikh-libo*) contacts with the local population.'²²⁰ Giorgadze, while he did not accompany the team, also chipped in by including, 'free of charge,' 'help and presents from the Komsomol of Georgia.' A first trip to visit Mamandis and Shinwaris involved meeting the tribes – nothing more – but, Giorgadze emphasized, at least contact had been made.

A second visit into the field proved more successful. The provincial DOMA committee sent out several of its members, an agitational group (*agitgruppa*), as well as an 'agitational automobile' (*agitatsionnaia mashina*) outfitted with a radio, tape cassettes of speeches by Babrak Karmal and two local Communist officials, Kishmaida and Laika, and several Pioneer-themed souvenirs and children's toys. On the recommendation of Giorgadze, the team also enlisted two Nangarhar mullahs, Shiahzamid and Gulamsarvar, who were said to be 'well-known and authoritative in Nangarhar.' This group's visits proved more successful. Over the course of a week, they visited the villages of Azoranu and Torkham and traveled throughout Nazyan, Lalpur and Jani Khel districts. 'Practically everywhere,' wrote Giorgadze, 'the group was received warmly (*serdechno*), the people listened to the concert program, songs, poems, the speeches of the leaders of the Party and the government, they were able to read (*gramotnye chitali*) newspapers and the leaflets, they gladly attended and listened to the events of our activists at popular meetings. Among the majority of the tribes, the members of the group were hosted overnight by the elders and leaders (*vozhdei*) of the tribes.'²²¹

As time went on over the summer of 1982, DOMA became bolder in organizing the tribes. According to Giorgadze, the Jalalabad DOMA office succeeded in gaining the support of ever more mullahs, who themselves helped to organize youth organizations in the fulfillment of 'as they themselves said, "a just, divine cause."' After obtaining the assent of the tribal elders, DOMA worked with local youth to create chapters among the Mamandis and Shinwaris (37 and 42 members in each, respectively). (Typically, however, for Giorgadze's reports, we are not told whether these chapters did

²²⁰ Ibid., I. 88.

²²¹ Ibid., I. 89.

anything besides fill up statistical tables.) Shortly after that, moreover, 'in spite of the fact that these tribes had been fully relieved from military service by the state, a group of 25 men enlisted from local DOMA groups were sent by the tribal elders into active border patrols on the border with Pakistan.' Giorgadze saw in this the seeds of a regional Afghan (as opposed to tribal or Pashtun) army: 'the fact that this group of soldiers did not tire out (*neoslablenie nachatoï raboty*) led to, on November 1, 1982, a group of 300 young members of DOMA from the tribes of the Mamandi and Shinwaris gathering with weapons in hand in the role of border patrol soldiers to dependably guard the border of the republic.' (Whether this actually happened we cannot verify, but one wonders how Giorgadze could have possibly monitored this activity, let alone what 'border-guarding' meant across hundreds of miles of mountains, especially when carried out by untrained twenty-somethings.)

Close work with local mullahs also underwrote these tentative attempts towards state-building. DOMA members visited local mullahs and invited them, as well as students at the local Nadzhmulnaduris *medreseh*, where the religious figures 'underscored their deep respect and gratitude towards them.' The mullahs were particularly satisfied with the 'activism of the youth of the province in restoring and cleaning the mosques.' By 1983, the DOMA headquarters for Jalalabad had even succeeded at creating a sub-organ for members of the religious orthodoxy, numbering thirty people total, ten of which were outside of Jalalabad. ('Each of them has a membership card,' Giorgadze underlined, again demonstrating how important boosting membership numbers was.)

In Laghman Province, to the west of Nangarhar, meanwhile, there were different issues to deal with. Unlike Laghman and Kunar, which were both dominated by ethnic Pashtuns, Laghman featured significantly more Pashais and especially Nuristanis, an Indo-Iranian people which converted to Islam in only the 19th century.²²² Here we can turn again to Giorgadze's description:

²²² For more on the region from the perspective of an early 20th-century British imperial officer, see: Sir George Scott Robertson, *The Kafirs of the Hindu-Kush* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974). A spiritual companion to Robertson's account of travels in the region is the Rudyard Kipling short story "The Man Who Would Be King," in which two Freemason British adventurers meet with the Nuristanis, who hail them as gods before turning on them. In 1960, a group

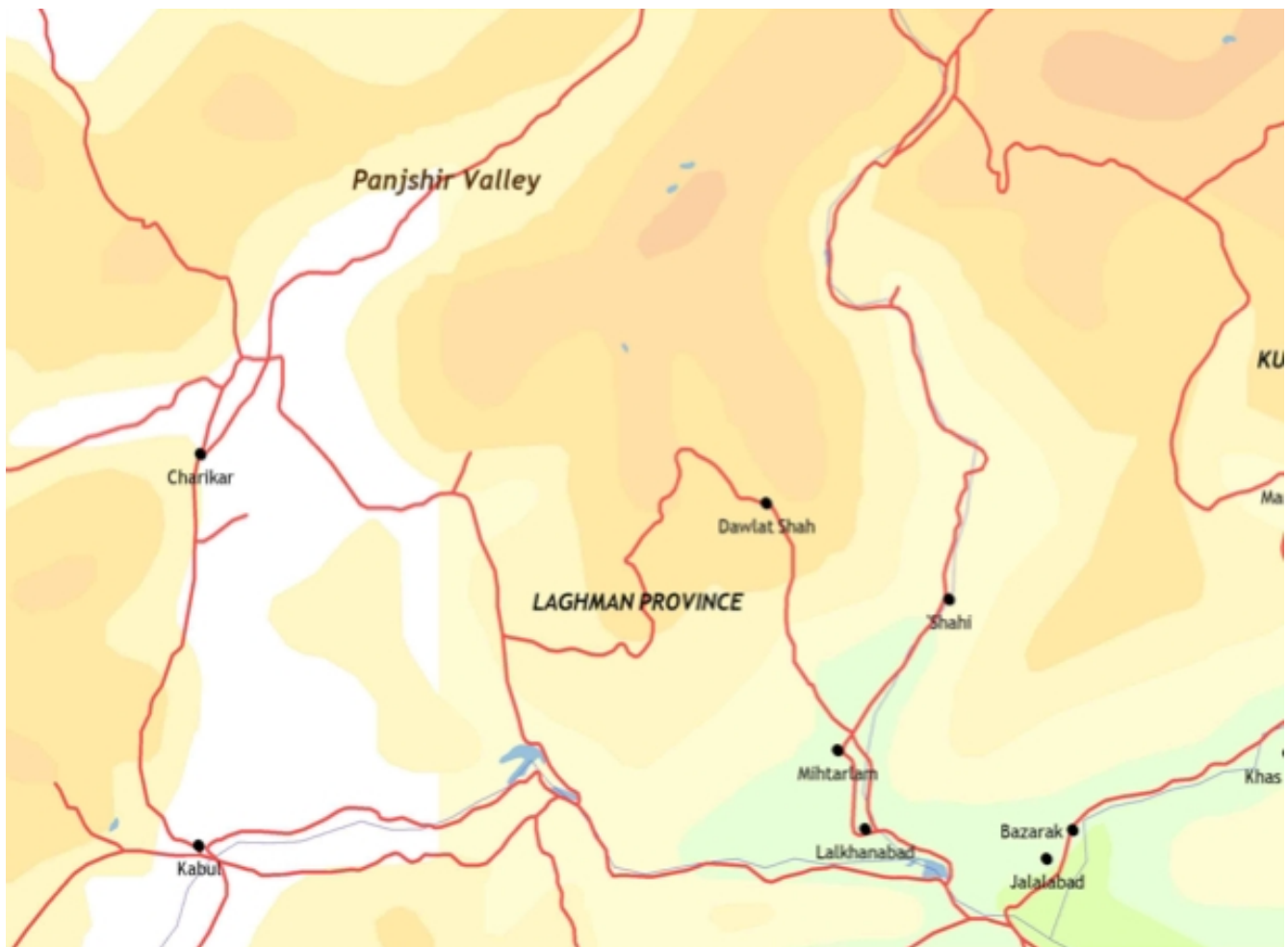


Figure 23: Laghman Province, Plus Kabul, Charikar, and the Panjshir Valley (All Outside of Laghman Province)

[...] the Nuristani tribes are sharply different from the other Afghan tribes not only due to their appearance, but because of their tribal customs. In their faces they are basically light-skinned, more civilized, with more modern customs, and they stand out due to the architectural construction of their habitations. They tend to build two-story wooden houses, which cannot be found among any other tribe. Not only this, the Nuristani tribes, like the Pashtuns, distinguish themselves with their honor, their bellicosity, their refusal to submit themselves to anyone (*nepokorimostiu*), and the great strength of their tribal relationships. They have formed and use specially armed detachments that, on the basis of their structure, very closely resemble modern army subunits (*podrazdeleniami*). They call themselves mountain people. One has to note here that never in history have any forces stationed themselves on Nuristani soil, considering it especially dangerous. According to certain historical documents, Nuristani tribes are the remnants of the tribes and forces of Alexander the Great, remaining from his well-known campaign through Middle Asia and the Near East. When you get to know the Nuristanis and their way of life, this history becomes real.²²³

On one level, the Nuristanis – only recently Islamized – seemed more 'civilized' to Giorgadze due to their light complexions and inclination towards complex sedentary housing (while still being 'mountain people'); in spite of the Pashtuns' own long history, Giorgadze had nothing to say about 'history becoming real' when working with them. But Laghman presented just as vexing challenges as did Nangarhar. Again, DOMA began by trying to establish contact with tribes who had been out of touch with any central authority for, in some cases, decades. Unfortunately for us, Giorgadze did not elaborate on his meetings, noting only that it 'resembled (with the exception of several nuances based on the customs of the tribes) the work in the province of Nangarhar.' The real concern was maintaining security in Laghman as insurance for Soviet logistics and operations in the Panjshir Valley. 'Given the importance of protecting the road from Mihtarlam in the direction of Nuristan, we carried out several meetings and negotiations with the leaders of the tribes of southern Nuristan, after which they took the initiative (especially on the part of the youth) to build two guardposts, at which there first were only members of DOMA, although now there are also Nuristan Pioneers. At the present moment, there are eight Pioneers serving these two posts along with older comrades.'

Kunar Province remained out of this picture entirely. Giorgadze was frustrated that, due to the Province's long border with Pakistan, 'groups of bandits cross the border intensively, practically without

of an American, a German, and a Briton visited the region, which was published recently as *A Passage to Nuristan: Exploring the Mysterious Afghan Hinterland* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006).

223 RGASPI f. M-3, op. 13, d. 24, l. 90.

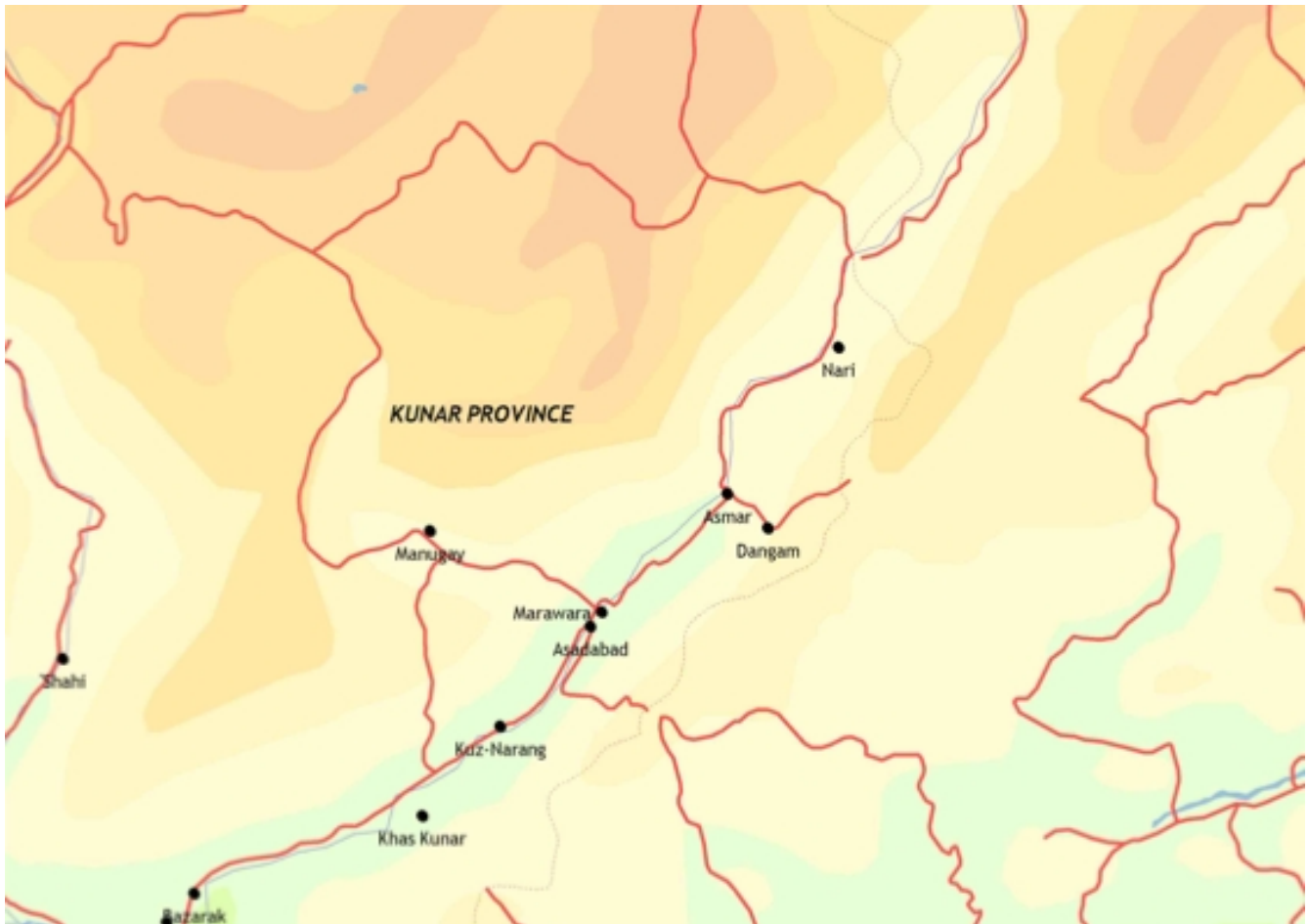


Figure 24: Kunar Province and Northern Afghanistan

any obstacles.²²⁴ Giorgadze had five men in the province, led by Abdu Kudus, a twenty-four year old Pashtun from a peasant family with an education whom Giorgadze did not know well. But he was encouraged by two young up and coming party members, Daoud Mahmad, a twenty year old who had studied at the Tashkent Komsomol School and was 'devoted to the cause of the PDPA and friendship with the USSR.'²²⁵ The Head of the Department of Finances and Accounting, meanwhile, the twenty-one year old Nur ul-Haq, also a Pashtun, had earned Giorgadze's respect by personally participating in several battles along the border against terrorists (*dushman*), and was eager to continue his education in the USSR.²²⁶ (Giorgadze underlined the latter point, again trying to communicate his top prospects to Moscow.)

Giorgadze painted, in other words, a picture of progress and optimism in the face of regions completely out of state-party control. Over the course of the year from November 1, 1981 – November 1, 1982, Giorgadze claimed to Moscow, the number of DOMA members in the entire 'East' Zone had increased. And by November 1982, Giorgadze could list 55 institutions or collectives that the Nangarhar DOMA or PDPA had founded: 'Housewives of the Localities of Keral'-1,' "'Patan"' Underground Organization,' Narang's Lycée, and so on.²²⁷ The obsession with listing institutions and membership numbers without further context on what these figures and institutions actually meant or did continued unabated.

Still, the presence of Islamist bandits remained troubling. As Giorgadze noted in detail in his report, groups of anti-Communist bandits had gathered in the region, based in Tora-Bora, Oga, Nartangay, M'ga, Sheva, and Oalau, and 'staged attacks on posts, villages, mined roads, shot at Soviet and Afghan units, columns, carried out diversions on communications, committed acts of terrorism,

224 l. 91.

225 Ibid., l. 112.

226 Ibid., l. 113.

227 A full list of the institutions in the "East" Zone follows as an appendix to this chapter.

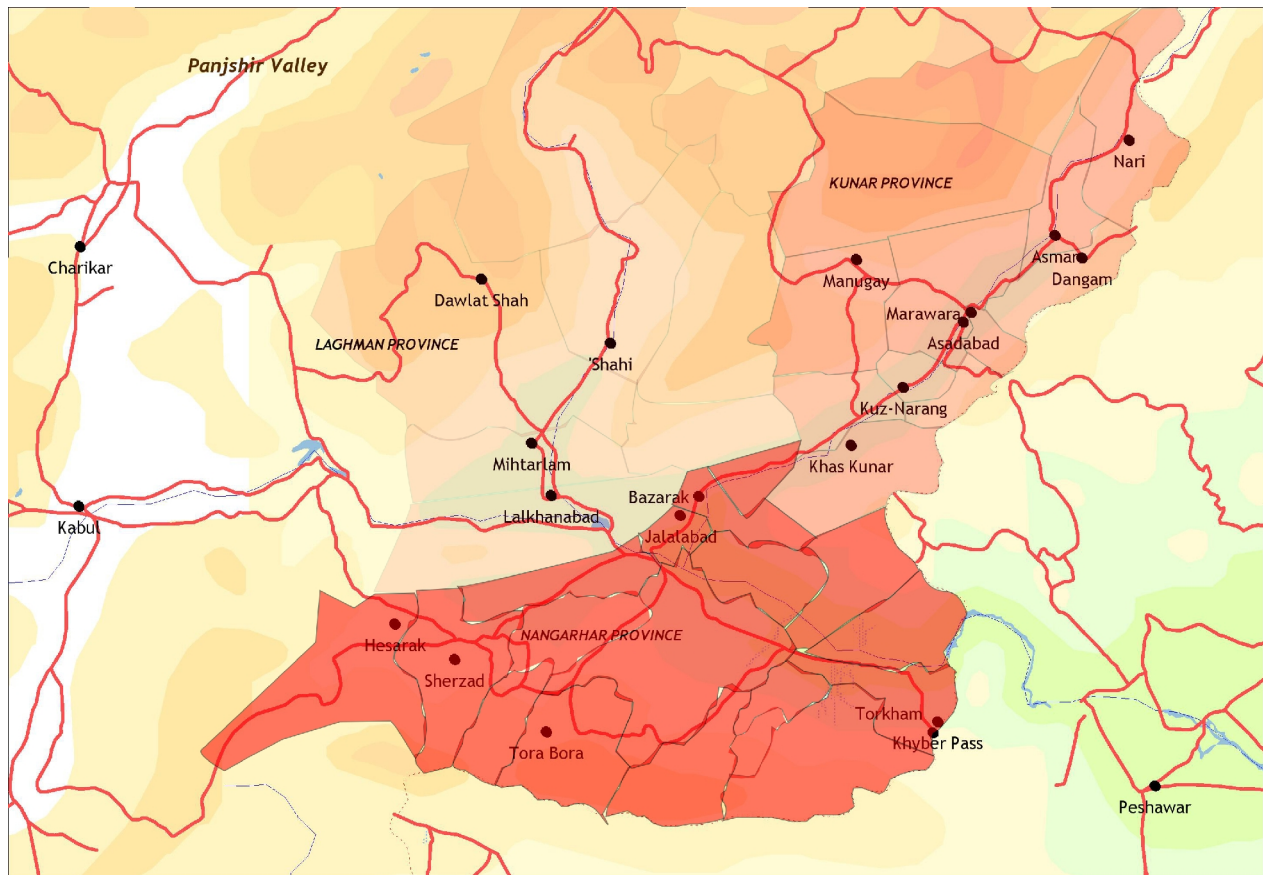


Figure 25: DOMA Membership Numbers in Nangarhar, Kunar, and Laghman Provinces in November 1981, according to Giorgadze. Higher Opacity Indicates Greater Percentage of Total DOMA Membership.

Province Name	1981 Membership	1982 Membership	Percent Increase
Nangarhar	1480	3970	168.24%
Kunar	720	1301	80.69%
Laghman	301	1167	287.77%
Total	2830	6438	127.49%

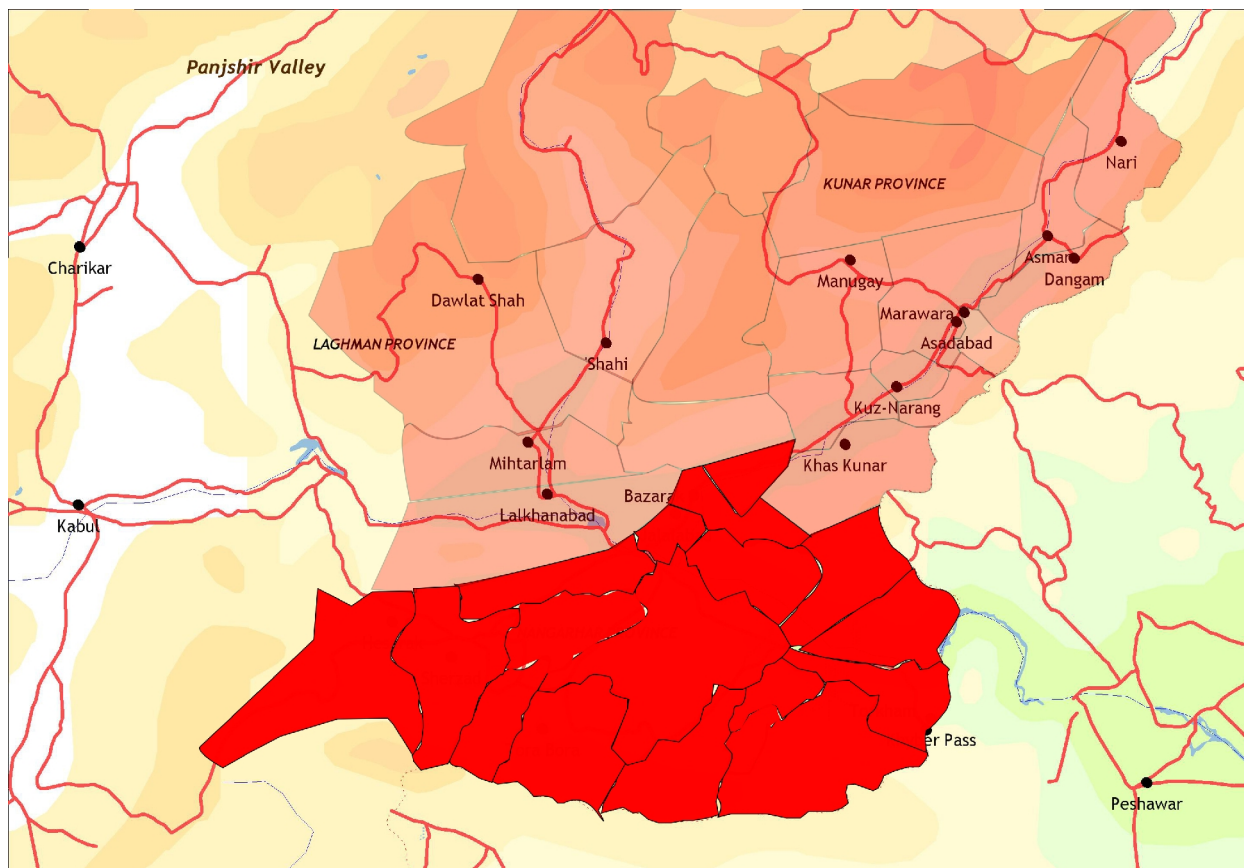


Figure 26: Doma Membership Numbers in Nangarhar, Kunar, and Laghman Provinces in November 1982, according to Giorgadze. Higher Opacity Indicates Greater Percentage of Total Doma Membership.

and carried out wrecking (*vreditel'stvo*).²²⁸ In the village of Marmasy, one terrorist killed all three sisters of a female DOMA activist. Already by the fall of 1982, Giorgadze could outline the bewildering array of groups, often times opposed to one another, but often jointly supported by Pakistan and the USA, that sought to undermine Communist rule: Hezb-i Islami, Harakat-i Islami, Jammat-i Islami, and others, often defined by allegiances to personalities rather than ideology. Frustratingly for Giorgadze, many of these groups not only formed but operated out of Pakistan, on the other side of the border.²²⁹ As he signed off on his first report, Giorgadze left detailed, if not entirely encouraging, notes on security in the region. Across most of the region (29 out of 41), only the center of the district was under control, and only five districts were 'under total control.' Across much of Nuristan, the districts were fully controlled by rebels (*miatezhniki*). I have transformed Giorgadze's comments into a map below.

Earlier in this chapter I wrote that I wanted to try to answer the question of what building socialism in Afghanistan meant. What has our reading of Giorgadze's reports from 1981 told us about the answer to this question? For one, at least at this stage, Giorgadze did not challenge the fundamentally tribal structure of Afghan society. In his notes back to Moscow, he stressed the importance for future training courses to focus more on 'questions of tribal relations, characteristics, as well as the norms and customs of the basic Afghan tribes.'²³⁰ Unlike the Soviet ethnographers and administrators of the 1920s and 1930s in Central Asia who rejected tribes as having 'a long-term future as building blocks of the Soviet state,' in Afghanistan Giorgadze and his Afghan colleagues accepted the existence of the tribes as a basic part of Afghan society and did not indulge in plans to forge a unified Afghan nation from Nuristanis, Mamandis, etc.²³¹ While aware of the divided nature of Afghan

228 Ibid., I. 91-92.

229 Ibid., I. 94-95.

230 Ibid., I. 124.

231 Adrienne L. Edgar, "Genealogy, Class, and 'Tribal Policy' in Soviet Turkmenistan, 1924-1934," *Slavic Review* 60:2 (Summer 2001), 267.

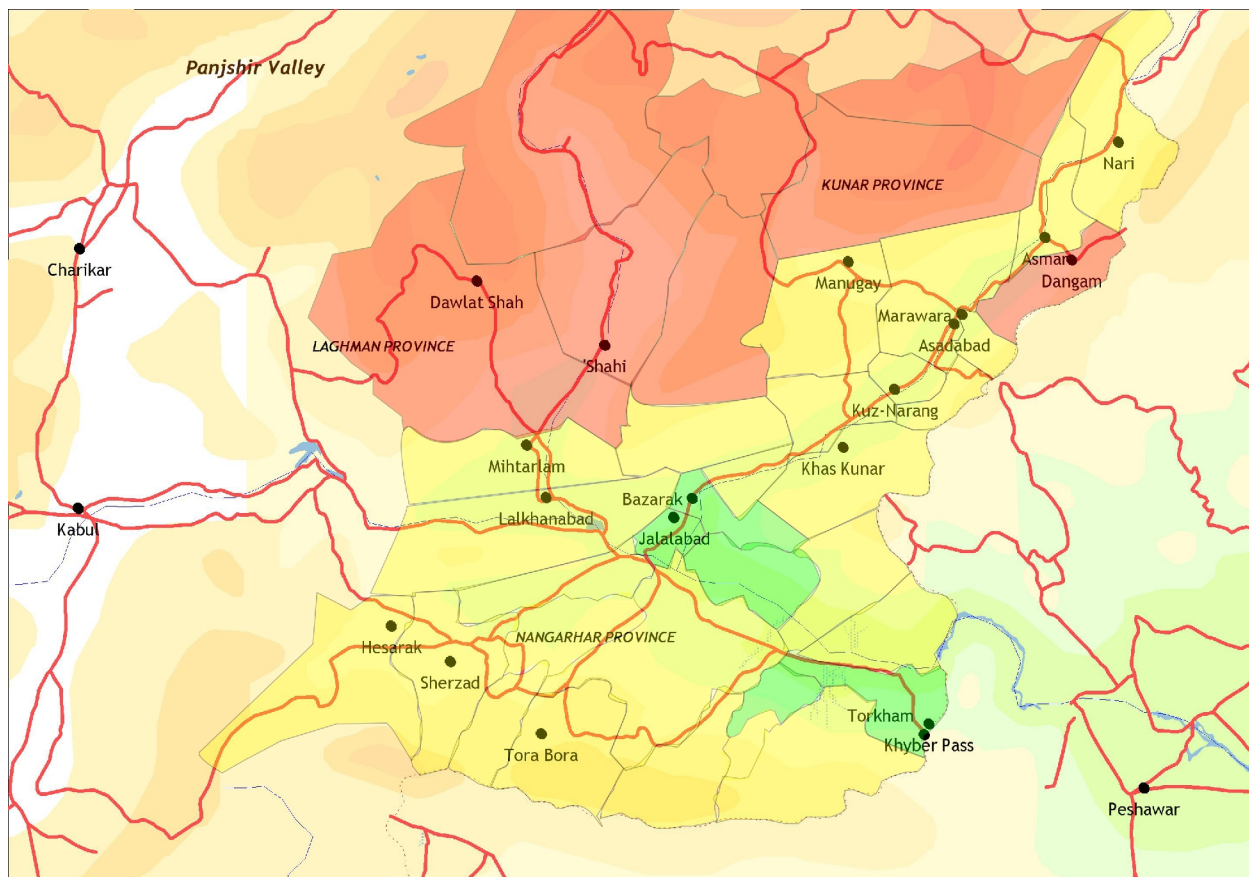


Figure 27: Security in the 'East' Zone c. November 1982. Green represents 'Under Total Control,' Yellow 'Center Under Control,' and red 'Controlled by Rebels.' Uncolored districts outside of Giorgadze's competency.

politics (both on the level of Pashtuns vs. Tajiks, Khalqists vs. Parchamists, and the domination of the Nangarhar PDPA by members of one village), Giorgadze did not see it as his place to resolve these conflicts. Not only that, Giorgadze put special emphasis, as we have seen, on how to work effectively and not be condescending to Afghan Communists. The twenty-nine year old Georgian viewed himself as in a position to judge not only Pashtuns and Afghans as entire peoples but also the work ethic, education, and manners of his colleagues, but all of this was important because he had to assemble and encourage a long-term working relationship with his partners, even as a *mushavery* he really was viewed as a 'holiest of holies.' As far as the tribes are concerned, what one had was less the destruction of mosques than glacial negotiations about the right to clean them. Regional ulema were enlisted to promote the Communist cause in a way that would have been unthinkable in the 1930s.

At the same time, these moves reflected more a pragmatism than any grand shifts in ideology. The *mushavery*, as noted earlier, were hardly the first development team to enter Afghanistan. Morrison Knudsen, USAID, and the Peace Corps were all parts of an American presence in the country throughout the Cold War. But like those groups of Pan Am employees who entered Afghanistan to build up Ariana Afghan Airlines and insisted that their flight attendants would wear Western dress while on the job, idealism had to meet with reality once on the ground.²³² True, unlike their Peace Corps counterparts from years past, the *mushavery* appear to have been pressured to place an emphasis on the *number* of institutions founded, the growth in membership numbers from month to month, and so on, rather than any vague notion of development through mere cultural exchange. But Giorgadze's actual work reports suggest that the practice of working as a *mushaver* in occupied Afghanistan resembled in some ways the actual work of Western NGO workers and Peace Corps volunteers: making deals with local leaders, small steps towards local projects that could actually be monitored and maintained, and building international understanding between the empire and the host country. The

²³² Jennifer Van Vleck, 'An Airline at the Crossroads of the World: Ariana Afghan Airlines, Modernization, and the Global Cold War,' *History and Technology* 25:1 (March 2009), 15.

real tragedy of Giorgadze's work was that he was pressed to produce such fantastic numbers and report such expansion of Communist institutions in his provinces, when in reality this could only be the work of decades.

Yet the fact that even idealistic young Communists like Giorgadze would accept pragmatism as a legitimate concern itself betrayed a larger cultural shift, less deliberate than unintended in Soviet culture. In the 1930s, under Stalin, the slogan had been 'there are no fortresses that Bolsheviks cannot storm.' Fanatical confidence in a historic mission underwrote massive, often murderous and hugely destructive – but still impactful social change under Stalin. Now, however, in the later USSR, even those people like Giorgadze with the most to gain psychologically by believing in the system, were keenly aware of their own limits and were conditioned to their role as idealistic volunteers in a far-away land – but still pushing reams of paper back to the Moscow bureaucracy all the same. Unlike his counterparts in CSW and CRA, Giorgadze was not just going through the motions in his reports; but that someone as competent as he would not dare to speak a language of radical Enlightenment betrayed a broader loss of confidence in the Soviet project.

Concluding Thoughts

In this chapter, I have tried to use one small corner of the *mushavery* files to answer two questions, one about how the USSR was tied together, the other about state-building in occupied Afghanistan. The *mushavery* files can only be taken as a very, very small subsection of all of the institutional personnel who floated around the Eurasian space under the Soviet system. But barring access to, say, the personnel files for the Soviet Army or Air Force, or Soviet Railways, they give us, as far as I have ascertained, one of the most detailed and robust looks yet into how the Soviet system stitched the continent together in a way that has not been replicated since 1991. We saw how the *mushavery* came from wide corners of the USSR, often from provincial villages, and were filtered

through provincial centers before heading off on their Afghan mission. And although the Tajik translators who accompanied the *mushavery* are not included in the data set, we saw how many Tajiks and Uzbeks made their way to Afghanistan, too. Knowing about how these networks worked is not just historical trivia: only by knowing about the extent of cross-border linkages and networks both within the USSR and across its borders can one have a starting point for discussions about concrete regional integration in the future.

On a more detailed level, we saw how contingent and how piecemeal, rather than revolutionary, Giorgadze's role in bringing the Revolution to Eastern Afghanistan was. His notes from that year would form only one part of a much, much larger story, for as he wrote, dozens of other *mushavery* were shuttling off to Kandahar, Herat, Mazar-i Sharif, and other locales with their own unique problems. Hopefully, future work at RGASPI can permit more exhaustive work into the *mushavery* files, allowing for a rich cross-sectional and longitudinal study of the *mushavery's* work across Afghanistan. Then, one hopes, can approach the history of the Soviet occupation from a perspective that goes beyond the focus on decisions made in Moscow to the concrete work on the ground. Until then, we remain something like Giorgadze as we sign off from him in November: with our feet on one corner of the ground, faintly aware of the challenges surrounding us, but not yet certain as to what lies beyond the next mountain.

Appendix: List of DOMA / PDPA-Sponsored Institutions in Kunar, Laghman, and Nangarhar Province, c. November 1982

1. Vorokhshab Repair Workshop
2. Vorokhshab Telephone Station
3. Vorokhshab Electrical Station
4. Vorokhshab Provincial Committee
5. Vorokhshab City Committee
6. Umarkhon Lycée
7. Sanai Lycée
8. Makhmadmin Eight-Year School
9. Novabad Eight-Year School
10. Fatima Lycée

11. Women of the *Kishlak* of Kalamar
12. Women of the *Kishlak* of Yorgol'
13. Housewives of the Localities of Keral'-1
14. Housewives of the Localities of Keral'-2
15. Women of the *Kishlak* of Damili
16. Peasants of the *Kishlak* of Yorgol'
17. Peasants of the *Kishlak* of Tesha
18. Provincial *Sarandoy*
19. Asmar Lycée
20. Eight-Year School, Asmar
21. Khoskunar Lycée
22. Eight-Year School, Khamunor
23. Eight-Year Women's School, Khamunor
24. Eight-Year School, Khakimabad
25. *Kishlak* of Tanar
26. Chaukai Lycée
27. Eight-Year School, Chaukai
28. Eight-Year Women's School, Chaukai
29. Women of the *Kishlak* of Kul'mani
30. Leading Organs of Chaukai
31. Marovar Eight-Year School
32. Peasants of Upper Marovar
33. Peasants of Lower Marovar
34. Peasants of Reinykali Marovar
35. Kandui Underground Organization
36. Savodi Underground Organization
37. DOMA Committee, Marovar
38. Varkariat Eight-Year School
39. Narang Lycée
40. Narang Eight-Year School
41. Lamatak Eight-Year School
42. Peasants of the *Kishlak* of Varkaran
43. Varikot Eight-Year School
44. Eight-Year Women's School, Varikot
45. Nurgal' Lycée
46. Nurgal' Eight-Year School
47. Nurgal' Women's Eight-Year School
48. Peasants of Lower Nurgal'
49. Peasants of Upper Nurgal'
50. 'Patan' Underground Organization
51. Sarkani Lycée
52. Aligul' Eight-Year School
53. Sarkani Eight-Year Women's School
54. Peasants of Sarkani
55. *Kishlak* of Pashat

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Rossiiskoi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Kinofotodokumentov (Russian State Archive of Film and Photographic Documents), Krasnogorsk, Russian Federation

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d. 26955 (*Afganistan. Utro respubliki*)

d. 26956 (*Pust' vseгда budu ia!*)

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