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**NOT SOME BRITISH COLONY IN AFRICA:
THE POLITICS OF DECOLONIZATION AND MODERNIZATION IN
SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA, 1955–1964***

In 1956 the Soviet Union was in the early stages of a sustained push to win allies among the newly independent states. Tashkent, and Central Asia in general, was going to play a crucial part in demonstrating the power of Soviet economic modernization, its commitment to equality, and respect for national traditions.¹ That year, the Uzbek party organization decided to build an “Exhibition of Achievements of the National Economy” in the old, precolonial part of Tashkent, and to use that opportunity to develop the old city along more modern lines, expanding transport, housing, and services.

* The work presented here is part of a broader research project on the politics and practice in Soviet Tajikistan supported by the Dutch Research Organization NWO (project number 275-52-011). Much of the research for this article was conducted in Tajikistan in the summer of 2011 with the help of an IARO grant provided by the International Research Exchange Board, and on subsequent trips to Russia and Tajikistan in 2012 and 2013. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Cold War research seminar at the London School of Economics in February 2012. The author would like to thank the participants of that seminar, as well as Serguei Oushakine, Luiza Bialasewicz, Michael Kemper, Masha Kirasirova, Daniel Beben, and the anonymous peer reviewers for their thoughtful feedback on earlier drafts of this article.

¹ On Tashkent’s transformation in the Soviet period, see Paul Stronski. *Tashkent: Forging a Soviet City*. Pittsburgh, 2010.

From the point of view of the Uzbek party organization, the aim was to eliminate the “colonial” dichotomy between the old city and the new, by making the former more recognizably “modern.” In the words of Nuritdin Mukhitdinov, then recently promoted to the position of first secretary of the Uzbek Communist Party, “starting from the middle of the nineteenth century, [Tashkent] was divided into an ‘old’ and a ‘new’ part. The construction and public services mostly took place in the new part of the city, while the old was developed less intensively, and this naturally evoked discontent among its residents.” The new construction was meant to “elevate the overall level of the old city, to liquidate the disproportion that had developed.”²

Drawing on materials from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, as well the State Archives of Tajikistan and the Archives of the Communist Party of Tajikistan, memoirs, and interviews, this article will argue that three of Nikita Khrushchev’s priorities in the 1950s and early 1960s, namely, consolidation of power within the party, de-Stalinization, and engagement with the Third World, provided unprecedented opportunities for Central Asian leaders to negotiate economic and cultural modernization in their republics. Focusing on Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, the article shows that the new generation of cadres promoted after Stalin’s death, by becoming Khrushchev’s allies in domestic power struggles and positioning themselves and their republics as crucial in the battle for the hearts and minds of the Third World, were able to negotiate the development of their republics away from agriculture (and especially cotton) toward industrialization, while simultaneously winning support for the preservation of cultural heritage. While Central Asian party leaders almost certainly did not think of their republics as “colonies” of Moscow or dream about political independence, they did feel material and cultural inequality not only relative to Moscow but to each other. In a sense, the wave of decolonization occurring beyond the USSR’s borders provided the impetus to complete the “decolonization” of the Central Asian republics within a Soviet framework.³

Since 1991, historians of Central Asia, whether looking at Soviet policies toward women, religion, nationalities, or economics, have focused primarily on the 1920s and 1930s. Although these efforts have yielded some excellent

² Nuritdin Mukhitdinov. *Gody provedennnye v Kremlе: vospominaniia veterana voiny, truda i Kommunisticheskoi partii, rabotavshego so Stalinym, Malenkovym, Khrushchevym, Brezhnevym, Andropovym*. Tashkent, 1994. P. 245.

³ Elsewhere in my research, I will examine the long-term consequences of the initiatives described in this article, but for now I am interested primarily in establishing how the politics of modernization was affected by de-Stalinization, decolonization, and the Cold War.

studies,⁴ in many ways the post-Stalin period was even more transformative than the Stalinist one, when efforts to transform Central Asian societies were often quite halting and where the resources for broader change and development were very limited. Several historians have begun to turn their attention to the postwar period,⁵ but for studies of Central Asia's development in the years after Stalin's death, we need to go back to the works of scholars such as Donald Carlisle, Gregory Massell, and Alec Nove, whose seminal *The Soviet Middle East*, coauthored with J. A. Newth, still remains a very useful reference today.⁶ Observing the transformation of Central Asia, Nove, Carlisle, Massell, and others posed some very important questions: what was the relationship of local elites to these developments? To what extent would economic modernization transform local elites and specialists into champions of their ethnic group, rather than model Soviet citizens? How would the Soviet state reconcile the championing of local interests with those of the Union as a whole? At the same time, these scholars lacked the access and opportunities to study the Central Asian elites as actors in their own right, while other observers of Central Asia tended to treat these elites primarily as puppets of the leadership in Moscow, and were generally concerned with exploring ways in which the region could provide a challenge to Moscow's rule.⁷

⁴ Marianne Kamp. *The New Woman in Uzbekistan*. Seattle, 2006; Benjamin H. Loring. *Building Socialism in Kyrgyzstan: Nation-making, Rural Development, and Social Change, 1921–1932* / PhD Dissertation; University of Chicago, 2008; Botakoz Kassymbekova. *Helpless Imperialists: European State Workers in Soviet Central Asia in the 1920s and 1930s* // *Central Asian Survey*. 2011. Vol. 30. Pp. 21-37. Kamp, Loring, and Kassymbekova highlight, in particular, the weakness of the state in this period.

⁵ For example, the forthcoming volume: Stephane Dudoignon and Christian Noack (Eds.). *Allah's Kolkhozes: Migration, De-Stalinization, and the New Muslim Congregations in the Soviet Realm, (1950s–2000s)*. Berlin, 2013. See also Adrienne Edgar. *Marriage, Modernity, and the "Friendship of Nations": Interethnic Intimacy in Post-War Central Asia in Comparative Perspective* // *Central Asian Survey*. 2007. Vol. 26. No. 4. Pp. 581-599; Jeff Sahadeo. *Druzhba Narodov or Second-Class Citizenship? Soviet Asian Migrants in a Post-Colonial World* // *Central Asian Survey*. 2007. Vol. 26. No. 4. Pp. 559-579. Sergey Abashin, writing on collective farms, emphasizes that the 1960s–1980s saw the fulfillment of Soviet ideas of economic and cultural modernization, whatever the broader failures of the Soviet system. See Sergei Abashin. "Idealnyi kolkhoz" v sovetskoi Srednei Azii: istoria neudachi ili uspekha? // *Acta Slavica Iaponica*. 2011. Vol. 29. Pp. 1-26.

⁶ Alec Nove and J. A. Newth. *The Soviet Middle East: A Communist Model for Development*. New York, 1966. See also the essays in Paul Cocks et al. *The Dynamics of Soviet Politics*. Cambridge, 1976.

⁷ Michael Rywkin. *Moscow's Muslim Challenge*. Armonk, NY, 1982; Alexandre Bennigsen. *The Muslim Threat to the Soviet State*. London, 1983.

As Stephen Kotkin argues in his influential *Magnetic Mountain*, historians of the USSR need to look not just at the limits imposed by Soviet rule, but at “what the party and its programs... made possible, intentionally and unintentionally.”⁸ While this article will not venture much into the world of the “ordinary citizen,” as Kotkin’s work does, it will shift our focus from Moscow to the republics and the aspirations and actions of the elites there, contributing to a political history of Soviet Central Asia by examining some of the practices of policymaking at the republic and all-union level.⁹ In doing so, it will also help us understand how the attempt to “relaunch the Soviet project” in the Khrushchev era played out in Central Asia by at least partially fulfilling the promise of cultural autonomy and economic development made at the time of the region’s incorporation into the USSR.¹⁰ Finally, it will show how the Cold War framework itself provided opportunities not just for Third World elites, but also for actors within the Soviet Union.¹¹

De-Stalinization and the New Elites

The political struggles that followed Stalin’s death in 1953 brought a new generation of Central Asians to power within their own republics, and, in some cases, to positions of influence in Moscow. This was the third generation of party leaders to emerge since the revolution. The generational change is an important starting point for understanding the broader political changes of the 1950s. The new generation represented people who had spent their entire adult lives within the Soviet system and were fully socialized within it. Speaking of this generation’s intellectuals and writers, the literary historian Rasul Khodzoda wrote that their “service in the building and strengthening of the Soviet state, in the propaganda and agitation of communist thought and belief was sincere and self-sacrificing. To the end

⁸ Stephen Kotkin. *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as Civilization*. Berkeley, 1995. Pp. 22-23.

⁹ Sheila Fitzpatrick. *Politics as Practice: Thoughts on a New Soviet Political History // Kritika*. 2004. Vol. 5. No. 1. Pp. 27-54. On approaching the study of Soviet modernization in the periphery, see also Alex Marshall. *The Caucasus Under Soviet Rule*. London, 2010. Pp. 1-6.

¹⁰ Juliane Furst et al. *The Relaunch of the Soviet Project, 1945–64. Introduction // Slavonic and East European Review*. 2008. Vol. 86. Pp. 201-207.

¹¹ The past ten years in particular have seen an explosion of works on the Cold War in the Third World, focusing not just on Soviet and U.S. foreign policies but looking at the way the Cold War and its superpower politics, ideologies, and development programs were engaged by local elites. The best known of these remains Odd Arne Westad. *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*. Cambridge, 2005.

of their lives they were firmly grounded in this thought and spirit.”¹² The same could be said of their counterparts in the political arena. At the same time, both the intellectuals and the politicians continued to champion their republics’ cultural and economic interests (at least as they understood them) and, as we will see, could be dogged lobbyists for both.

Much of the first cohort of “indigenous” cadres in the 1920s emerged from the milieu of reformers and intellectuals who had been active in Bukhara and elsewhere in Russian-controlled Central Asia in the late tsarist period.¹³ Some of them were from among the *jadids*, who had responded to Russian colonialism by advocating for reform, particularly of education, and opening up to the European world so as to allow for as much cultural and technological borrowing as would be beneficial for their own societies. Those who joined the Soviet regime did so because, in Adeb Khalid’s words, “They saw themselves creating a new civilization – modern, Soviet, Central Asian, Turkic, and Muslim all at once. They hoped to co-opt the state to the work of modernization that exhortations alone had not achieved in the prerevolutionary era.”¹⁴ Other early indigenous communists, including the Tajik leader Shirinsho Shohtemur, had been educated in Russian native schools or had been radicalized laboring alongside Russian workers prior to the revolution. Both groups would perish in the purges of the 1930s.¹⁵

In the 1920s and early 1930s, the elevation of Central Asia to the level “of the most advanced districts of the Soviet Union” had been an ostensible goal, and party leaders criticized economists who wanted to limit the region’s industrialization, labeling calls to keep cotton mills within the RSFSR, for example, “counterrevolutionary” and an example of “great Russian chauvinism.”¹⁶ The period saw some major irrigation and infrastructure projects like Vakhstroi, the Great Ferghana Canal, and the Pamir Highway.¹⁷ The political upheavals of the 1930s, however, weakened the ability of local communists to define their republics’ development. By 1937, “elevating” the republic

¹² Rasul Khodzoda. *Khudoe va khudo bishinosam*. Dushanbe, 2006. P. 4.

¹³ See Adeb Khalid. *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia*. Berkeley, 1998. Pp. 286-289, 299-300.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* P. 299.

¹⁵ Adeb Khalid. *The Fascination of Revolution: Central Asian Intellectuals, 1917–1927* // Tomohiko Uyama (Ed.). *Empire, Islam, and Politics in Central Eurasia*. Sapporo, Japan, 2007. Pp. 137-152.

¹⁶ Quoted in Gerhard Simon. *Nationalism and Policy Toward the Nationalities in the Soviet Union: From Totalitarian Dictatorship to Post-Stalinist Society*. Boulder, 1991. P. 106.

¹⁷ On Vakhstroi, see Maya Peterson. *Technologies of Rule: Empire, Water and the Modernization of Central Asia, 1867–1941* / PhD Dissertation; Harvard University, 2011.

was well near a charge of treason: one of the accusations against Faizullah Khojaev was his attempt to industrialize Uzbekistan, so that Uzbekistan would be “more economically independent than ever of the Soviet Union, at the end of the first Five Year Plan.”¹⁸

The elimination of the “old” communists made way for a younger group, which Donald S. Carlisle has called the “class of ’38.”¹⁹ This was a generation raised primarily in Soviet institutions: educated in Soviet schools, in Soviet factories, or within the Red Army. The careers of the “class of ’38” overlapped with those of the former “jadids” and other communists of the 1920s and 1930s, but whereas the latter were in positions of real power and responsibility, the former were cutting their teeth in the *Komsomol* organizations. They survived the purge and benefited greatly from it, assuming senior positions in the republic while still in their early thirties or even late twenties.²⁰ At the same time, their ability to shape policy and negotiate for resources was limited. Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan were all led by Europeans, sent from the center to execute the party line, for at least part of this period. No Central Asian was present on the Politburo or had access to Stalin’s inner circle. Stalin’s unwillingness to seriously engage the anticolonial struggle from the early 1930s until his death, and his suspicion of leaders of anticolonial movements, further limited the Central Asian republics’ importance.²¹

The point here is not to suggest a neat boundary between the Stalin years and the period that followed. As we will see, the late 1940s and early 1950s did see some reindigenization, and the creation of institutions such as the Tajik Academy of Sciences and the Tajik State University. Nevertheless, as Adeb Khalid and others have pointed out, it was in the last thirty years of Soviet rule, meaning roughly from 1960 to 1991, that Central Asian societies took their contemporary shape.²² To understand that transformation, we first need to look at the changes of the Khrushchev period and the way local elites tried to redefine the place of their republics in the Soviet order.

As he consolidated control within the Politburo, Khrushchev sought to sideline the “class of ’38” and to replace them with yet a newer generation

¹⁸ Quoted in Simon. *Nationalism and Policy*. P. 106.

¹⁹ Donald S. Carlisle. *The Uzbek Power Elite: Politburo and Secretariat (1938–83)* // *Central Asian Survey*. 1986. Vol. 6. P. 100.

²⁰ *Ibid.* Pp. 101-102.

²¹ Westad. *Global Cold War*. Pp. 51-67.

²² Adeb Khalid. *Islam After Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia*. Berkeley, 2007. P. 84.

of cadres. The motives for the changes varied. Some of the people removed in the 1953–56 period were suspected of resisting the de-Stalinization drive. Among the charges against the Uzbek first secretary Usman Yusupov, for example, was that he had continued to praise Lavrentii Beria, whom Khrushchev had helped sideline and then arrest, try, and execute in 1953.²³ Khrushchev’s “secret speech” and the campaign against the “cult of personality” was not universally welcomed – by March–April of 1956, it was becoming clear that rank-and-file party members were at best ambivalent about de-Stalinization, as were many segments of the Soviet population.²⁴ Khrushchev thus particularly needed reliable people who would be able to mobilize support behind the broader transformation of Soviet society that he envisioned.

At the time of the Twentieth Congress in February 1956, the Tajik party was still led by Bobojon Gafurov, a former journalist and party activist who had written on Tajik history and thus played a role in the articulation of a Tajik identity starting from the late 1940s.²⁵ Even during the Stalin period Gafurov had been a strong advocate for his republic’s development, assembling cadres, and pushing for resources to develop its cultural, intellectual, and economic potential.²⁶ He had risen to the top post in the republic

²³ Another was that he was speaking out against corn as “food for poor people” just as Khrushchev was beginning his campaign, which would turn into an obsession to plant more corn throughout the USSR. The Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI). F. 5. Op 31. D. 12. Documents on Yusupov case. Ll. 148-149.

²⁴ See Iurii Aksiutin. *Popular Responses to Khrushchev* // William Taubman et al. (Eds.). *Nikita Khrushchev*. New Haven, 2000. Pp. 185-194.

²⁵ Bobodzhan Gafurovich Gafurov. *Istoriia Tadzhijskogo naroda v kratkom izlozhenii*. Moscow, 1949. The book was expanded many times and published in a number of languages. I am indebted to Hanna Jansen at the University of Amsterdam, who is writing a dissertation on the Institute of Oriental Studies in Moscow, for opening the fascinating world of Gafurov studies to me. On Gafurov’s career and influence, see also Lisa Yountchi. *The Politics of Scholarship and the Scholarship of Politics: Imperial, Soviet, and Post-Soviet Scholars Studying Tajikistan* // Michael Kemper and Stephan Connerman (Eds.). *The Legacy of Soviet Oriental Studies*. Abingdon, UK, 2011. Pp. 217-240; Marlene Laruelle. *The Return of the Aryan Myth: Tajikistan in Search of a Secularized National Ideology* // *Nationalities Papers*. 2007. Vol. 35. No. 1. Pp. 51-70.

²⁶ Although a detailed discussion of Gafurov’s role is beyond the scope of this article, the statement above is attested to by memoirs of intellectuals and artists from that period, as well as archival evidence pointing to Gafurov’s personal role in establishing the institutions mentioned here (some of which is cited below). In terms of memoirs, one has to sift through the dozens of hagiographical works that make up the burgeoning field of “Gafurov Studies” (*Gafurovedenie*) in Tajikistan, but even the more reflective memoirs confirm Gafurov’s personal role. See, for example, Khodzoda. *Khudoe va khudo bishinosam*. P. 170; Mirsaid Mirshakar. *Edi eri mekhrubon*. Dushanbe, 1993. Pp. 69-70.

in 1946 and oversaw the formation of a Tajik Academy of Sciences and Tajik State University.²⁷ It has been suggested, not without reason, that his identification with the Stalin period and slowness to change (in April 1955 he was still praising Stalin in *Kommunist Tadzhikistana* as Lenin's "most loyal coworker") motivated his transfer several months after the Twentieth Congress.²⁸ At the same time, there is evidence that Khrushchev and Gafurov actually had a favorable relationship in 1954 and 1955, with Khrushchev backing Gafurov in several disputes and praising Gafurov for agricultural experiments in the republic.²⁹ Moreover, the record of the Tajik plenum where Gafurov resigned, as well as the Politburo meetings that preceded it, show no criticism of Gafurov. E. I. Gromov, the central committee representative sent to attend the plenum, explained that Gafurov was needed in Moscow. Gafurov was going to take charge of Soviet oriental studies and develop the academic expertise necessary for Soviet foreign policy.³⁰ Even if it is true that Khrushchev did not want Gafurov in Stalinabad, he nevertheless promoted him to a position of some importance. Gafurov was a member of the Central Committee, and, as we will see, played an important part in developing Moscow's Third World policy.

Gafurov's replacement, Tursun Uljabayev, had risen through the ranks of the Komsomol (which is also where he was working during the war), and his party career had already taken off during Stalin's last years. By the time that Khrushchev was consolidating his power, he was acting as Gafurov's main troubleshooter, earning praise for management of the southern Kulyob region, running the Agitation and Propaganda sector, the economically productive Leninabad region in the north of Tajikistan, and becoming chairman of the Council of Ministers of the republic in 1955.³¹

Among the people who benefited most from Khrushchev's promotions was the Uzbek politician Nuritdin Mukhitdinov. Mukhitdinov's political career had begun after World War II, and by 1953 he was well placed in the Uzbek leadership to be tapped by Khrushchev. In 1955, Khrushchev returned

²⁷ See the correspondence on the creation of a university in Dushanbe and other matters related to education and culture from February–March 1947 in The State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF). F. P 5446. Op. 49a. D. 3649.

²⁸ Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone. *Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia: The Case of Tadzhikistan*. Baltimore, 1970.

²⁹ *Ibid.* Pp. 159-160. See also my discussion of the June 1957 plenum, below.

³⁰ See minutes of the 2nd Plenum of the Communist Party of Tajikistan, 24 May 1956 in Archive of the Communist Party of Tajikistan (ACPT). F. 3. Op. 101. D. 118. L. 94.

³¹ Usmonjon Gafurov. Tursun Uljabayev. Dushanbe, 1999. Pp. 30-42; Rakowska-Harmstone. *Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia*. P. 161.

from his Asian tour via Tashkent, where he removed one of the '38ers, Niyazov, and promoted Mukhitdinov in his place.³² Mukhitdinov, of course, also came from the generation raised under Stalin's rule, and confesses in his memoirs to having been in awe of the leader, but growing disillusioned by 1953. Within several years Mukhitdinov was brought to Moscow and became a member of the Presidium, the first Central Asian to belong to the inner circle of party leadership. As Khrushchev told him, he was being promoted to help correct for Stalin's destruction of the Central Asian communists and his failure to promote anyone since. Considering Moscow's new foreign policy ambitions, such a state of affairs was unacceptable:

In the Center we do not have enough people from the East, or even enough people who know it. You are an Uzbek, an Asian, from a Muslim background, which means you understand these questions. Who else, if not you, should handle our Eastern policy?³³

Mukhitdinov was also promoted so that he could play a role in Khrushchev's de-Stalinization campaign. Following the Twentieth Party Congress, Mukhitdinov was assigned to help party ideologist Mikhail Suslov prepare a resolution "on overcoming the cult of personality and its consequences."³⁴ Mukhitdinov was encouraged by Khrushchev to think of himself not only as an Uzbek leader but an all-Soviet one, and to take active part in Presidium discussions. He also lobbied for the rehabilitation of the leaders shot in 1937–38, and was able to announce progress on this front at the First Congress of the Uzbek Intelligentsia in October 1956. Indeed, Uzbek communists Akmal Ikramov and Fayzullah Khodzhaev were rehabilitated thirty-two years before the rest of the Bukharan group.³⁵ (Shirinsho Shotemur, one of the Tajik leaders who perished in the purges, was not rehabilitated until the early 1960s.) As we will see, Mukhitdinov also used his position to promote the study of national histories and Central Asia's role in the Soviet Union's battle for hearts and minds in the developing world.

Window to the Developing World

Khrushchev's attempts to revive the Soviet project without reverting to the repression of the Stalin years changed the way center–republic relations were conducted, with more emphasis on mobilization, participation, and

³² Carlisle. *The Uzbek Power Elite*. P. 107.

³³ Mukhitdinov. *Gody provedennyye v Kremlе*. P. 312.

³⁴ *Ibid.* P. 237.

³⁵ Carlisle. *The Uzbek Power Elite*. P. 109.

equality in development across the USSR. At the same time, the shift of Cold War competition from Europe to the newly independent states of Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America, made it all the more imperative for the USSR to shed any appearance of colonial relations with its republics.

These were connected processes, as the freedom created by de-Stalinization and the centrality of anticolonial rhetoric and policies in the 1950s threatened to highlight the Central Asian republics' own unequal status within the USSR. As elsewhere in Soviet Union, the loosening of cultural and political controls and the revelations in Khrushchev's speech at the Twentieth Party Congress led intellectuals and cultural figures to question certain aspects of the Soviet system that went beyond the criticism of the "cult of personality" and the excesses of Stalinism. Although they rarely attacked the system directly, they openly criticized aspects of cultural and intellectual life that they most disliked. In Tajikistan a group of intellectuals attacked the obsession of "harmonization" in music, a keystone of the Soviet cultural project in the periphery.³⁶ The Union of Writers saw "Jadidism" discussed as a positive movement for the first time since the 1930s.³⁷ In some cases, apparently, intellectuals even questioned the nature of the region's relationship to Moscow:

Some called their region a colony, others talked about its capture [*zakhvat*], a third group about its military conquest, a fourth about its attachment [*prisoedinenii*] and a fifth about a voluntary union with Russia. Now it all came to the surface, and people started looking for the truth. They cited V. I. Lenin's statements on the Russian Empire being the prison of nations, that the national politics of tsarism was the worst form of colonial oppression.³⁸

These positions reflected a long-standing challenge for Soviet historiography and ideology: how to justify the incorporation of areas that had been conquered under the Russian Empire. While describing the Russian

³⁶ Notes from the Second Congress of the Union of Composers of Tajikistan, 8–9 February 1956 // Russian State Archive of Literature and Arts (RGALI). F. 2077. Op. 1. D. 1207. Ll.148-206; Zastoi v Tadzhijskom soiuze kompozitorov // Sovetskaia muzyka. 1960. No. 2. P. 165.

³⁷ Record of the 4th Congress of the Union of Writers of the Tajik SSR. 20–21 February 1959 // State Archive of Tajikistan. F. 1505. Op. 1. D. 148.

³⁸ Mukhitdinov. *Gody, provedennye v Kreml'e*. P. 243. This was part of a wider problem of "nationalism" emerging during "de-Stalinization," although the specifics varied widely from republic to republic. See Jeremy Smith. *Leadership and Nationalism in the Soviet Republics, 1951–1959* // Jeremy Smith and Melanie Ilic (Eds.). *Khrushchev in the Kremlin: Policy and Government in the Soviet Union, 1953–1964*. London, 2011. Pp. 79-93.

takeover of Central Asia in the nineteenth century as imperialist was tolerated and even promoted at certain points, it had been sidelined from the late 1930s in favor of a narrative that emphasized the progressive nature of Russian conquest.³⁹

Mukhitdinov and the other Central Asians promoted by Khrushchev were expected to oversee the process of de-Stalinization in their republic and manage the consequences. As part of his contribution to de-Stalinization in the republic, Mukhitdinov organized a congress of the Uzbek intelligentsia, where he (and other speakers) highlighted the achievements of the republic, criticized Stalin, and discussed the process of rehabilitation of pre-1938 communists. But while in his speech at the congress he criticized British and American commentators who compared Uzbekistan to the “colonial states of Africa,”⁴⁰ in his own memoirs he admitted that among the delegates at the congress plenty of people made the comparison as well.⁴¹

One way to dispel the notion that the Central Asian republics were still colonial subjects was to win over intellectuals, as Mukhitdinov was doing, and to give them room and resources to develop national histories and cultures, restoring some of the freedoms eroded since the early 1930s.⁴² Another was to change the economic terms of the region’s participation in the Soviet project. Recent Cold War historiography has highlighted the importance of economic development as a battleground chosen by the superpowers to demonstrate their superiority, particularly in the 1950s. To take one example, Nick Cullather argues that strategic considerations played a much smaller role in U.S. relations with India in the 1950s; by contrast, “By the beginning of the Kennedy administration the United States had staked its reputation as a nation builder on its ability to eradicate hunger in India.”⁴³ Leaders like Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana sought to “jet-propel” their countries into modernity, and the United States and Soviet Union strove to show that they could help the postcolonial states achieve those goals more efficiently and more equitably.⁴⁴ In Afghanistan, both superpowers would

³⁹ Lowell Tillet. *The Great Friendship: Soviet Historians on Non-Russian Nationalities*. Chapel Hill, NC, 1969, especially Pp. 222-273.

⁴⁰ *I s’ezd uzbekskoi intelligentsii*. Tashkent, 1957. P. 10.

⁴¹ Mukhitdinov. *Gody, provedennnye v Kremlе*. P. 243.

⁴² On history writing in the Khrushchev period, and the rehabilitation of scholars, see also Alfrid Bustanov. *Settling the Past: Soviet Oriental Projects in Leningrad and Alma-Ata* / PhD Dissertation; University of Amsterdam, 2012. Pp. 156-172.

⁴³ Nick Cullather. *Hungry World: America’s Cold War Battle Against Poverty in Asia*. Cambridge, 2010. Pp. 134-135. This is also a central thrust of Westad. *The Global Cold War*.

⁴⁴ Westad. *The Global Cold War*. P. 91.

commit to major dam-building, irrigation, and road projects.⁴⁵ The revival and acceleration of modernization projects within Central Asia could thus solve two dilemmas for Moscow. Rather than being a “cotton colony” and a backwater, Central Asia would become a center of the Soviet project. It would serve as a demonstration to the USSR’s own citizens that they were beneficiaries of and *participants* in the Soviet drive for material achievement and modernization and show the world that whereas the “imperialist powers” offered only domination, the Soviet model offered development without domination and inequality. At the same time, successful modernization projects would demonstrate the superiority of the Soviet economic system and technological power over its American alternative.

Three shifts in the 1950s made it possible for republic leaders to have a greater voice in defining their republics’ development. The first, already mentioned, was the result of Moscow’s growing involvement in the Third World. Khrushchev was critical of Stalin for ignoring colonial and postcolonial countries. At the 1955 Bandung Conference of nonaligned states, a group of countries gathered in opposition to the east–west paradigm of the Cold War and in solidarity against all forms of colonialism, challenging the claims to leadership of both the USSR and the United States. Being lumped together with the imperialist powers was frustrating to Soviet leaders.⁴⁶ Khrushchev understood that Soviet Central Asia would have to play a part in Moscow’s relationship with the Third World, and that outreach to countries like India could be much stronger if they came via Tashkent and Dushanbe rather than Moscow. In 1925, at the time of Central Asia’s delimitation, Stalin had urged the Tajiks to “Show the whole East that it is you, vigorously holding in your hands the banners of liberation, who are the most worthy heirs of your ancestors.”⁴⁷ Stalin had curtailed engagement with the “east” by the 1930s, and neither Uzbekistan, much less Tajikistan, ever became much of a model in the period.⁴⁸ But in the 1950s, this vision would finally be (partially) fulfilled.

⁴⁵ See Nick Cullather. *Damming Afghanistan: Modernization in a Buffer State* // *Journal of American History*. 2002. Vol. 89. No. 2. Pp. 512-537; Antonio Giustozzi, Artemy Kalinovsky et al. *Missionaries of Modernity*. London, forthcoming.

⁴⁶ On Bandung, see Christopher J. Lee. Introduction // Christopher J. Lee (Ed.). *Making a World after Empire: The Bandung Moment and its Political Afterlives*. Athens, 2010. Pp. 1-42; Westad. *The Global Cold War*. Pp. 97-109.

⁴⁷ Rakowska-Harmstone. *Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia*. P. 73.

⁴⁸ Although some foreign travelers were taken to Tashkent and other parts of Soviet Central Asia to show off Soviet achievements. See Langston Hughes. *A Negro Looks at Soviet Central Asia*. Moscow, 1936.

For Khrushchev, whose understanding of non-Slavic cultures was hazy at best, it was not the specific shared cultural heritage of the Central Asian republics with decolonizing states that was important, but rather a shared history of oppression and underdevelopment.⁴⁹ At a meeting in Uzbekistan in January 1957, Khrushchev told party members: “Your republic must play an important role in developing friendly relations of our government with the peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America liberating themselves from colonial oppression.”⁵⁰ As we will see, Uzbek and Tajik leaders would also use the language of national liberation to highlight the Soviet Union’s positive contribution to the development of less developed nations and to mobilize their own people behind economic projects.

The second shift followed from Khrushchev’s consolidation of power, which, along with his broader reform effort, involved the decentralization of control and the granting of greater autonomy to regional party organizations. Khrushchev’s tenure saw a number of attempts to reorganize party and state control over the economy, most of them disastrous. The creation of economic councils (*sovmarkhoz*) had a political as well as economic purpose. Decentralization gave local authorities more control over their own fiefdom, and in raising the profile of individual leaders it made it easier for them to request projects and have a voice in planning decisions made in Moscow. The *style* of politics Khrushchev practiced was arguably even more important than the substance of his reforms. The profile of local leaders was elevated by Khrushchev’s practice of traveling widely across the country, something that Stalin had never done. His (relatively) frequent visits to the republics helped local leaders feel more connected and also gave them the opportunity to lobby him on individual projects.⁵¹

Khrushchev elevated the prestige and responsibility of those individuals whom he promoted, and thus bound them closer to him.⁵² In Central Asia and other former “colonial areas” decentralization helped demonstrate the political equality of these regions within the Soviet Union. This may have

⁴⁹ Masha Kirasirova. “Sons of Muslims” in Moscow: Soviet Central Asian Mediators to the Foreign East, 1955–1962 // *Ab Imperio*. 2011. No. 4. Pp. 114–115.

⁵⁰ Mukhitdinov. *Gody provedennye v Kremlе*. P. 257.

⁵¹ On the changing culture of regional party networks in the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras, see Oleg Khlevniuk. *Regional’naia vlast’ SSSR v 1953 – kontse 1950-kh godov: Ustoichivost’ i konflikty // Otechestvennaia istoriia*. 2007. No. 3. Pp. 31–49; Yoram Gornitzki. *Too Much Trust: Regional Party Leaders and Local Political Networks under Brezhnev // Slavic Review*. 2010 Vol. 69. No. 3. Pp. 676–700.

⁵² *Regional’naia politika N. S. Khrushcheva. TsK KPSS i mestnye partiinye komitety. 1953–1964 gg.* / Ed. O. Khlevniuk et al. Moscow, 2009. P. 10.

been a secondary consideration, but, in the context of the emerging battle for the postcolonial world, it was an important one. None of this is to deny the agency of the elites dealt with in this article; rather, it is to emphasize changes in the center that created room to exercise that agency.

The third shift was the promotion of leaders who were loyal to Khrushchev but felt free to promote their ideas and get his support. What made these Central Asian leaders valuable was not simply that they could be paraded around as “token natives,” but that they understood the stakes and were capable of offering their own proposals and driving the process. They in turn used their new importance to redirect the place of their own republics and societies (and indeed, their own political careers) in the Soviet context.

One example of this comes from the career of Sharof Rashidov, an Uzbek writer and party member whose rise in the 1950s tailed Mukhitdinov’s, and who would eventually become one of the longest-serving republic first secretaries in the USSR. From 1955 onward Rashidov began taking part in the various diplomatic missions to the Third World that followed the Khrushchev–Bulganin tour. After one of these early trips to Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, and Burma, Rashidov drafted a memo outlining the problems the USSR faced in these countries. Everywhere they went, Rashidov said, the effect of Anglo-American propaganda could be felt; people were under the impression that the USSR repressed religion, ignored national culture, and trampled on people’s rights. One of the best ways to counter this would be to open Central Asia to people from these countries, to show them mosques, madrasas, and other religious institutions, and to revive publications about Soviet Muslims such as the outlet of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan and Central Asia, suspended in 1948.⁵³

As Rashidov pointed out, making the propaganda work also meant changing the reality. One of the ways to do this was to restore buildings that were part of Uzbekistan’s cultural and religious heritage. “Many mosques, tombs, and religious monuments are in a state of neglect and are being used for purposes other than those they are intended for,” he wrote.⁵⁴ Indeed, as elsewhere in the USSR, religious buildings had been repurposed, sometimes for industry, schools, or storage. Rashidov insisted that these be turned over

⁵³ See a memo to Uzbek Party Secretary N. A. Mukhitdinov, date not provided, but most likely late 1955 or early 1956 in S. Rizaev. *Sharaf Rashidov: Shtrikhi k portretu*. Tashkent, 1992. The book is an attempt to defend Rashidov against many of the charges against him that had emerged during perestroika. The book’s greatest value is that a number of documents from the Uzbek party archives, which are almost completely closed to researchers, are provided in full.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

to the spiritual administration, restored, and made ready to accept international visitors. He also proposed reopening a madrasa in Tashkent – not to increase the overall number of places for religious students, but rather at the expense of the Mir-i-Arab, the only madrasa still active. The point was not simply to show that religious freedom and practice survived in the Soviet context (something that could in any case be more easily done in Bukhara) but rather that it *thrived* in Tashkent, among and as part of everything Soviet modernity had to offer.⁵⁵ In the following years, the Soviet Union invested in central and republic-based academic institutions studying local cultures.⁵⁶ The state also became directly involved in the preservation and restoration of historical buildings, from the madrasas of Samarkand to older fortresses in the desert. Although the Stalin period had also seen plans for the restoration of some monuments, in the 1950s and 1960s the restoration of monuments was undertaken on a much greater scale.⁵⁷ The importance of outreach to the Muslim world meant that religious institutions gained greater visibility even as Moscow began a renewed campaign against religion at home.⁵⁸

Rashidov's international involvement catalyzed his career. Initially, he had only been promoted to chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Uzbek SSR – a largely ceremonial post. But Rashidov was one of several Central Asian politicians who was becoming the face of the Soviet Union to the Third World. These trips afforded younger communists like Rashidov an opportunity to get extended “face time” with crucial Kremlin leaders like Anastas Mikoyan, who in turn relied on Central Asian communists to help him navigate (and look legitimate in front of) postcolonial politicians and crowds. Their participation in these international junkets also raised their profile at home. In 1959, when Kamalov (an old Yusupov ally) was removed, and Rashidov was considered for the post of first secretary, he pointed to his busy international schedule in the past year. He had attended the Afro-Asian Solidarity Conference in Cairo, accompanied the King of

⁵⁵ CC Uzbek CP resolution, based on Rashidov's proposals, in Rizaev. Sharaf Rashidov. Pp. 26-28.

⁵⁶ Among them, the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tajikistan. B. I. Iskandarov identifies this period with the institute's expansion as well as its internationalization in terms of hosting scholars and sending its researchers abroad. B. I. Iskandarov. *Trudnyi put' k znaniu*. Moscow, 1999. Pp. 95-113.

⁵⁷ Bustanov. *Settling the Past*. Pp. 314-320.

⁵⁸ Eren Tasar. *Soviet Policies Toward Islam: Domestic and International Considerations* // Phillip Muehlenbeck (Ed.). *Religion and the Cold War: A Global Perspective*. Nashville, 2012. Pp. 168-169.

Nepal on a month-long tour, and helped host a conference of writers from Asia and Africa.⁵⁹

The contest came down to Rashidov and Samarkand oblast first secretary Arif Alimov. Of the two, it was clearly Alimov who had the most experience running the core of Uzbekistan's economy, namely, cotton. In fact, he had been assigned to Samarkand two years earlier as a troubleshooter to replace a weak predecessor.⁶⁰ But it was Rashidov who had the larger national and even international profile, and, as several speakers at the Uzbek bureau pointed out, "knew ideology." (The outgoing Kamalov, by contrast, had to admit that he had spent too much time thinking about cotton and thus failed as a first secretary.) In summing up the debate, R. E. Melnikov, who had been chairing the discussion, pointed out that as competent as Alimov was, it was Rashidov who had the broader horizon and popularity in the republic.⁶¹ No doubt, that popularity stemmed in part from his work raising Uzbekistan's importance within the USSR and internationally, as well as from what he had done to champion the "restoration" of Uzbek culture.

No one was better at this game than Bobojon Gafurov, a figure known primarily for his publications on Tajik history and role in promoting Oriental studies, but who was in fact a career politician and continued to be one even after he moved from Dushanbe to head the Institute of Oriental Studies in Moscow. His historical work, *The Tajiks*, was one of many similar "national histories" written during the Soviet period, but was notable for connecting Tajikistan's own history to broader Persian and South Asian culture.⁶² In his scholarly publications and in his political work he sought to "recenter" Tajikistan, taking some glory from Tashkent and positioning Dushanbe as the key Soviet capital for outreach to the Third World.

Gafurov fulfilled the hopes of the party leadership by becoming one of the most articulate proponents and organizers of Moscow's engagement with

⁵⁹ One of the reasons Rashidov highlighted these travels was to point out that he was in good health following some heart problems the previous year.

⁶⁰ RGANI. F. 5. Op. 31. D. 84. L. 15.

⁶¹ The minutes of the meeting are reproduced in Rizaev. Sharaf Rashidov. Pp. 31-45.

⁶² See footnote 26. Gafurov is promoted as a cult-like figure in contemporary Tajikistan, and suggestions by former colleagues that they actually wrote parts of the book have led to a number of strident responses from Tajik intellectuals. See, for example, Akbari Turson. *Dodi ta'rikhī va bedodii ta'rikhnigori*. Dushanbe, 2012. As in the Soviet period, historical writing today is used in various contests between the independent republics. See Mohira Suyarkulova. *Statehood as Dialogue: Conflicting Historical Narratives of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan* // John Heathershaw and Edmund Herzig (Eds.). *The Transformation of Tajikistan: The Sources of Statehood*. London, 2013. Pp. 161-176.

the Third World. He organized meetings to discuss the Bandung Conference and invited ambassadors from countries represented there; he himself provided the keynote speech on Bandung's significance. These meetings, which had the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the international department of the CPSU central committee, became a yearly affair.⁶³ In 1958 he drafted (at Mukhitdinov's request) a Central Committee document that would serve as the basis for a comprehensive program of engagement with the developing world through scholarship, and in particular Orientalist scholarship. The changing world situation, Gafurov wrote, made the training of qualified Orientalists imperative. Soviet researchers needed to coordinate their work, engage with the international community of Oriental scholars, and participate in Soviet outreach efforts. He proposed a number of measures, which included the creation of Oriental studies departments in the Tajik and Uzbek Academies of Sciences, the creation of a publishing house with all "eastern" typesettings, and the development of expertise on Africa.⁶⁴ Elsewhere, he proposed ideas for engaging with India, Vietnam, and other countries. And he used his academic perch to point out the ways in which less-developed Soviet republics compared favorably with former colonies like India, both in terms of the development of national cultures and the growth of their economies, underlining in particular the transition from an agriculture and resource-based economy to industrial production.⁶⁵

When it came to articulating the link between Soviet domestic development, its nationalities policy, and its engagement with the Third World, perhaps no one could match the eloquence of Tajik poet Mirzo Tursunzoda (1911–77). Tursunzoda, a poet of some international renown, played an important role in the formation of Soviet Tajik literature through his work in the Union of Writers, and his writing about the anticolonial struggle, became the head of the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee, established in November 1956 in response to Bandung. Tursunzoda and Gafurov most

⁶³ RGANI. F. 5. Op. 35. D. 118. L. 38 (Gafurov's note to Central Committee on organizing a meeting to commemorate the fourth anniversary of the Bandung conference, 4 March 1959).

⁶⁴ RGANI. F. 5. Op. 35. D. 78. Ll. 1-7 (Draft Resolution on the Further Development of Oriental Studies, 21 February 1958).

⁶⁵ Babadzhan Gafurov. *Uspekhi natsional'noi politiki KPSS i nekotorye voprosy internatsional'nogo vospitaniia* // *Kommunist*. 1958. No. 11. Pp. 10-24. For more on the way the Soviet Union employed the cultural heritage of Central Asia in its relationship with the Middle East, see Masha Kirasirova's excellent article, "Sons of Muslims" in *Moscow: Soviet Central Asian Mediators to the Foreign East, 1955–1962* // *Ab Imperio*. 2011. No. 4. Pp. 106-132.

likely had a hand in having the first international congress of the committee in 1961 hosted in Dushanbe.⁶⁶

Light onto the Nations

In January 1956 an Indian delegation came to Tajikistan. The party newspaper, *Kommunist Tadjikistana*, featured an essay by Tursunzoda as part of its coverage of the visit. Tursunzoda waxed lyrical about the newfound freedom of Britain's former colony and the aid that the Soviet Union was providing, and the engagement of its specialists in the construction of Indian dams. With the goals of the sixth five-year plan about to be announced at the party congress, the Soviet Union had the opportunity to surpass the "most advanced capitalist countries" in production, and thus serve as a model for countries like India.

The Tajik people [*narod*] is proud that it is one of the peoples of the Asian part of the great multinational Soviet Union. Along with all the peoples of the Soviet Union, building socialism and moving now to the heights of communism, it understands its great responsibility – to be a pioneer in relation to the peoples of the entire East, which is now waking from many centuries of confusion and rising toward freedom, to the battle for a happy life.⁶⁷

Tursunzoda's article contained an interesting contradiction. When he talked about the Tajiks' role in relations with the newly decolonizing states, he put the republic on the front lines; but when he talked about Tajikistan's role in the Soviet economy, he was less ambitious. After discussing the great accomplishments that would take place under the sixth five-year plan in *general*, he went on to say that Tajikistan would also play its part, and the evidence of this was the success of the cotton workers in the previous five-year plan! "This confirms," he concluded "the enormous growth of our culture, national in form, socialist in content."⁶⁸ Yet, producing agricultural products and exporting a commodity like cotton for processing outside the country was not the kind of achievement leaders on the subcontinent and other emerging nations wanted for themselves. In the 1950s the leaders of developing countries thought in terms of modernization in education, agri-

⁶⁶ GARF. F. 5. Op. 1. D. 50 (First conference of the Committee for Solidarity with the Peoples of Africa in Asia in Stalinabad, 1960). For more on the development of the Committee, see Kirasirova. *Sons of Muslims*.

⁶⁷ M. Tursunzoda. *Nash velikii drug i sosed*// *Kommunist Tadjikistana*. 1956. 26 January.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*.

culture, and industry, and accomplishing this in the shortest time possible. India was in the midst of constructing the Bhakra Dam that Nehru would eventually call the “new temple of a resurgent India,” Kwame Nkrumah was dreaming of Ghana’s transformation with a dam on the Volta River, and the United States was already helping Afghanistan construct a major hydroelectric and irrigation complex in the Helmand Valley. In all three cases, industrialization was associated with successful decolonization.⁶⁹

In fact, Tajik politicians would use precisely that argument, with some success, in support of industrialization in their republic. The necessity of demonstrating development at home, dictated by the spread of the Cold War to the newly decolonizing world, gave them an opportunity to push projects that planners in Moscow had previously rejected. The best example of this is the Nurek Dam. The Tajik party leadership had been trying to sell Moscow on the idea since at least the late 1940s, but was constantly rebuffed: it was too expensive, too difficult, and, in any case, what would an agricultural republic do with all that electricity?⁷⁰ Uljabayev continued where Gafurov left off and became a tireless advocate for the construction of this powerful hydroelectric dam.

Uljabayev argued that it would become a catalyst for the industrialization of the republic, and that it would irrigate much new land. He lobbied leaders privately and in public appearances, for example at the Twenty-First Party Congress in 1959, where he said that in a republic with little coal, such a powerful hydroelectric dam was the best hope for propelling industrialization, and would have the additional benefit of helping to irrigate virgin lands in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan.⁷¹ But like Gafurov before him, Uljabayev had trouble getting the project through Gosplan (the state planning organization), and even Khrushchev himself was skeptical at first. Tajikistan, after all, had little industry to speak of, and neither the resources for such a project nor, seemingly, the need. Finally, Uljabayev won Khrushchev’s support for the dam by convincing the Soviet leader that the dam would make it possible to sell electricity to Kabul and also serve as an

⁶⁹ Westad. *The Global Cold War*. P. 91. In the case of India in the 1950s, U.S. officials wanted to focus on agricultural modernization and were skeptical about the prospects for industrialization, but Indian leaders used U.S. food aid to subsidize their industrialization program. Cullather. *Hungry World*. The United States would also eventually support the Volta River project. See Thomas J. Noer. *The New Frontier and African Neutralism: Kennedy, Nkrumah, and the Volta River Project // Diplomatic History*. 1984. Vol. 8. Issue 1. Pp. 61-79.

⁷⁰ GARF. F. P 5446. Op. 81. D. 4242.

⁷¹ XXI (vneocherednoi) s’ezd KPSS, 1959. Moscow, 1959. P. 170.

example to the Indians and Afghans. “The East,” he told Khrushchev, “needs such light.”⁷² Nevertheless, it would take several more years of lobbying to win over the Council of Ministers and various agencies whose approval was needed before the project could get under way. Besides convincing skeptical officials in Moscow, the Tajiks also had to overcome the opposition of other Central Asian leaders, who feared that investment in Nurek would deprive them of resources for their own major projects.⁷³

The unequal relationship of republics within Central Asia, and particularly that between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, would become a part of the battle to renegotiate the republics’ place within the Soviet Union. National delimitation had left Tajikistan with little productive land, virtually no major cities, and poor infrastructure.⁷⁴ Samarkand and Bukhara, two cities that were identified with the Persian-language culture meant to unite the Soviet Tajik nation, remained in Uzbekistan. Tashkent, a major city even before the Russian conquest, was the seat of the Central Asian Bureau in the 1920s and the most important city in Central Asia. The transfer of industrial plants during the war and the revival of construction in the 1950s put further distance between the two republics. In 1957 Khrushchev was warning Mukhitdinov that Tashkent and Uzbekistan’s much more rapid development compared to the other Central Asian republics over the previous several years was causing much jealousy.⁷⁵

Thus, anticolonial arguments could be invoked to improve Tajikistan’s position vis-à-vis Uzbekistan, as Uljabayev did to secure the construction of a mining and processing plant within Tajikistan. Explorations for mercury had begun in the Leninabad region in the 1940s, and ore was already being excavated by the mid-1950s. When the question of developing a plant to process that ore came up, the Tajik leadership insisted it be located within Tajikistan, rather than near Samarkand. According to Nazarsho Dodkhudoev, he told the visiting Central Committee secretary, Petr Rudakov, that it was wrong to mine the ore in Tajikistan but send it out for processing

⁷² Gafurov. Tursun Uljabayev. Pp. 75-82; “Obodi kardem...” // *Adabiët va san*”at. 1990. 1 November.

⁷³ Nazarsho Dodkhudoev. *Vlast’ vremeni*. Almaty, 2001. Pp. 33-35. Dodkhudoev served as chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Tajik SSR at the time. See also: Norakro u oghoz // *Sadoi mardum*. 1997. 20 December; *Dar pai sharaf...* // *Adabiët va san*”at. 1991. 31 January.

⁷⁴ Arne Haugen. *The Establishment of National Republics in Soviet Central Asia*. New York, 2004; Paul Bergne. *The Birth of Tajikistan: National Identity and the Origins of the Republic*. London, 2007.

⁷⁵ Mukhitdinov. *Gody provedennyye v Kremle*. P. 312.

to Uzbekistan. When Rudakov would not budge, Uljabayev told him that “This manner in which you conduct your relations is similar to the manner in which Great Britain conducts its relations with Africa.”⁷⁶ Finally, the plant was built in Tajikistan (it is now owned by an American company).

The construction of hydroelectric stations also provided the opportunity to carry out modernization by creating demands for enterprises to provide crucial materials or parts for the dams, as well as to create planned cities for personnel and their families. These were “model” urban Soviet cities, with grid-line layout, tree-lined streets, schools, clinics, stadiums, and clubs. Yaakov Fligelman, an official who worked on various construction projects and would be involved in Nurek as well, boasted about the transformations brought by one of these cities in 1960: “Many of the deputies remember well what the area of the beautiful, green city of builders of the Kairakkum GES, once looked like. It was a barren, windy valley dried out by the sun. By the will of the party and the people, there emerged, over several years, a modern, comfortable city, supplied with the necessary communications and a full complex of facilities for culture and everyday life.”⁷⁷ The most impressive of these new cities would be the city of Nurek, built for the workers brought from around the USSR to build the dam, and simultaneously to attract Tajiks from the countryside to the Soviet vision of modernity.

In fact, Tajik Party leaders envisioned dam construction as the catalyst for a broader transformation of the republic, and echoed anticolonial arguments to justify their plans. Soon after his election as first secretary, Uljabayev, speaking to a group of Tajik intellectuals and professionals, exhorted them to do more to make Tajikistan self-sufficient in consumer products and in industry. Why were so many products being imported from other republics, he demanded – did Tajikistan not have the human resources to produce things domestically?⁷⁸ Uljabayev saw the republic’s dependence for consumer goods as evidence of *otstalost’* (backwardness) that had still not been liquidated. The dams, he argued, were the best way to accelerate the republic’s development. This theme was carried by other Tajik politicians. At a plenum in 1962, Jabbor Rasulov, who by then had replaced Uljabayev, also spoke about the changes dam-building would bring, promising that the completion of the Nurek Dam would be followed by electronics factories,

⁷⁶ Gafurov. Tursun Uljabayev. P. 46; “In qofilai umr ajab miguzorad...” // Sadoi mardum. 1995. 11 October.

⁷⁷ Central State Archive of Tajikistan. F. 1605. Op. 1. D. 14 (Draft of Y. Fligelman’s speech to Tajik Supreme Soviet deputies, 6 July 1960).

⁷⁸ RGANI. F. 5. Op. 35. D. 29. Ll. 74-75.

chemical plants, aluminum plants, and other enterprises. These in turn would provide an opportunity to create more model cities and transform existing cities like Kuliab and Kurgan-Tiube, which, he promised, would “grow beyond recognition.”⁷⁹

The construction of the Nurek Dam could thus simultaneously advance the republic’s development, promote a vision of Soviet modernity to locals, and serve as a demonstration to the outside world. In 1961 the conference of the Soviet Committee for Solidarity with Asia and Africa was held in Dushanbe and attended by delegates from Afghanistan, India, and other countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East. Uljabayev, one of the keynote speakers, highlighted Tajikistan’s industrialization and electrification, especially as compared to countries like Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan, and of course spoke about the promise of the Nurek Dam for Tajikistan’s development.⁸⁰ As the city of Nurek grew, it became a major destination for tourists, especially from the Third World, who were taken by bus from Dushanbe to observe construction, visit the dam, and enjoy lunch in a café set up along the water. Several full-time interpreters and guides worked in the city to deal with the stream of visitors.⁸¹

Inevitably, this approach to modernization had its limits and consequences. It caused large-scale displacement, as projects like the Nurek Dam flooded some areas, forcing migration to other parts of the republic, and turned pasturelands into farmland for cotton, wheat, and other crops.⁸² At the same time, the complexity of these projects and the need to construct

⁷⁹ ACPT. F. 3. Op. 177. D. 41. Ll. 18-19 (June 1963 Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Tajikistan).

⁸⁰ GARF. F. 5. Op. 1. D. 50.

⁸¹ Author’s interviews with Murod Erov, April 2013, and H. Abdullaev, May 2013, senior party and state officials, respectively, who worked in Nurek from the 1960s until 1990. Tourist authorities also printed colour brochures about the city and the dam, some of which can still be found in Dushanbe’s gift shops.

⁸² Much has been written about the social effects of population transfers in Tajikistan. Some were caused by Nurek and other dam projects in Tajikistan, others were an attempt to move labor from mountain areas to cotton-growing lowlands. See, for example, Christine Bichsel. “The Drought Does Not Cause Fear.” *Irrigation History in Central Asia through James C. Scott’s Lenses // Revue d’études comparatives Est-Ouest*. 2012. Vol. 43. No. 1-2. Pp. 73-108; Olivier Ferrando. *Soviet Population Transfers and Inter-ethnic Relations in Tajikistan: Assessing the Concept of Ethnicity // Heathershaw and Herzig (Eds.). The Transformation of Tajikistan*. Pp. 35-48; Alexander Sodiqov. *From Resettlement to Conflict: Development-Induced Involuntary Displacement and Violence in Tajikistan // Ibid*. Pp. 35-48; R. Abdullaev. *Ta’rikhi muhojirat dar Tojikistan (solhoi 1924–2000)*. Dushanbe, 2009.

them relatively quickly meant importing most of the skilled labor required, with the result that cities like Nurek, with their grid-lined streets, modern buildings and facilities, and complete electrification, became “islands of modernity,”⁸³ dominated heavily by people from outside the republic, at least in their early years.

Central Asian Politicians and Khrushchev’s Power Struggles

By the late 1950s, a number of Tajik and Uzbek politicians had achieved a level of power, visibility, and influence unprecedented for people from their region of the USSR. During a conversation with New York Governor Averell Harriman, then visiting the Soviet Union, Khrushchev listed Mukhitdinov as one of the younger communists who would play a leading role once he and Anastas Mikoyan passed from the scene.⁸⁴ But Uljabayev, too, was waiting in the wings, and apparently was being considered for the Politburo,⁸⁵ Gafurov and the poet Tursunzoda were helping shape Moscow’s Third World policy, and Jabbor Rasulov served as USSR deputy minister of agriculture in 1955–58 and was appointed ambassador to Togo in 1961. Khrushchev had promoted these people, listened to them, taken them along on his international visits, and helped them get the resources they needed for projects like the Nurek Dam. They repaid him with support in his political battles, including during his confrontation with the “anti-party group” in 1957.⁸⁶

In 1957, Khrushchev was confronted by Vyacheslav Molotov, Lazar Kaganovich, and Georgy Malenkov, allies who had helped Khrushchev get rid of Beria and even supported Khrushchev’s rise since 1953 but now felt he had concentrated too much power in his hands. They first tried to remove Khrushchev in a session of the presidium, but he was able to outmaneuver them, take his case to the plenum, and eventually have the three labeled the “anti-party” group and expelled from the leadership and party. The support of central committee members, spread out around the country but many of

⁸³ Comparable to the “autonomous enclaves of middle class modernity” in Egypt that Timothy Mitchell describes in *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*. Berkeley, 2002. P. 242.

⁸⁴ Dispatch from the Embassy in the Soviet Union to the Department of State, 26 June 1959, Conversation between N. S. Khrushchev and Governor Harriman, June 23, 1959 // *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958–1960*. Vol X. Part 1: Eastern Europe Region; Soviet Union; Cyprus. P. 278.

⁸⁵ This was claimed by Uljabayev’s daughters: author’s interview, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, July 2011.

⁸⁶ William Taubman. *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era*. New York, 2004. Pp. 318-319.

whom were protégés of Khrushchev, were gathered in Moscow to defeat the conspirators. Mukhitdinov was inspecting sheep in the Ferghana valley when he was called to Moscow, and other secretaries were similarly gathered up and brought to speak on Khrushchev's behalf. A Khrushchev aide compared it to a "crash campaign to bring in the harvest."⁸⁷

In his memoirs, Mukhitdinov gives himself a central role in forcing the discussion out of the Politburo to a plenum of the central committee, and turning the debate against the three conspirators and in favor of Khrushchev. This is almost certainly an exaggeration, and to the extent that any one individual was crucial in this turn of events it was Georgii Zhukov, the hero of the Great Patriotic War, who made it clear that the military did not support the actions of Molotov, Kaganovich, and Malenkov. Nevertheless, Mukhitdinov clearly did play a role, and it is interesting to look at what he, Gafurov, and Uljabayev said during the plenum.⁸⁸ At the presidium meeting, he praised Khrushchev for his support of the republics' industrialization. At one point he addressed Kaganovich:

You are accusing Nikita Sergeevich of giving away factories and enterprises to the republic, thus weakening the government. But we think of that as one of the great reforms that was immediately and with great satisfaction received by the republics. There are communists working there, and this elevated their role and responsibility for affairs. Is it not clear that the stronger the republics, the greater the Soviet government becomes as a whole? Instead of slowing down we should be speeding up this work, following it through.⁸⁹

During the Plenum itself (for which there is a record), Mukhitdinov spoke up repeatedly against the "anti-party" group. During his own speech, he criticized them for wanting to roll back Khrushchev's distribution of power to the republics. He praised Khrushchev for paying attention to the republics, for visiting Uzbekistan, meeting with party leaders and traveling to collective farms and enterprises, listening to suggestions, and providing resources to improve not just cotton, but meat and milk production as

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ There was no record of the presidium meeting, but when the plenum began, Suslov and others several times mentioned Mukhitdinov as one of the Presidium members who rejected Molotov, Kaganovich, and Malenkov's attempts to have the issue decided without convening a plenum. Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich. 1957. *Stenogramma i iunskogo plenuma TsK KPSS i drugie dokumenty* / Ed. Aleksandr Yakovlev et al. Moscow, 1998. Pp. 26-27.

⁸⁹ Mukhitdinov. *Gody provedennyye v Kremle*. Pp. 268-269.

well.⁹⁰ Malenkov, Kaganovich, and Molotov were criticizing Khrushchev for spending too much time traveling to the republics, but “we, the local workers, believed that one of the most valuable qualities of Nikita Sergeevich is that he is directly connected to the people.”⁹¹

Uljabayev praised Khrushchev for helping to elevate the standard of living in the republic, but when he compared him to the conspirators it was to point out that Khrushchev showed he genuinely cared about Tajikistan and was willing to listen and learn from its own specialists. Molotov had never been to Tajikistan, but Khrushchev had already visited the republic twice since becoming first secretary. Malenkov, Uljabayev said, had ignored new methods developed on Tajik farms for the seeding of cotton, but Khrushchev came out to Stalinabad and insisted on going to see these experiments for himself:

On a weekend he came to Stalinabad from Moscow by plane. He asked comrade Gafurov (back then I was a [Tajik central committee] secretary): “What’s the plan?” We said: “Take some rest.” He said: “I came here to see the republic, and I’ll rest when it gets dark, let’s do some work.” These were the words of Comrade Khrushchev... [after visiting state and collective farms where these methods had been implemented] he rated them highly. Now these advanced methods are being used in all cotton-producing republics.⁹²

Nor was it fair to criticize Khrushchev for paying too much attention to agriculture, Uljabayev said, when it was clear that Tajik industry had grown substantially since Khrushchev took over, and the standard of living was much higher than it had been in 1953.⁹³ Gafurov, too, threw his support behind Khrushchev, as did Kyrgyz party secretary Razzakov.⁹⁴

Khrushchev’s Central Asian allies were not the most important factor in his political successes of the late 1950s, but they played a role. Their spirited defense of Khrushchev is interesting not so much for how it affected Khrushchev’s tenure, but for what it revealed about their priorities and how center–republic relations were changing. Khrushchev had elevated

⁹⁰ Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich. 1957. Pp. 259-261.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* P. 261.

⁹² Uljabayev speech at June 1957 Plenum in Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich. 1957. Pp. 434-435.

⁹³ *Ibid.* This claim in particular needs to be taken with a grain of salt, but the point here is how Uljabayev chose to defend Khrushchev and his policies in the republics.

⁹⁴ Gafurov did not speak at the plenum but he did submit a statement in support of Khrushchev. Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich. 1957. P. 601.

the importance of Uljabayev, Gafurov, Mukhitdinov, Razzakov, and others, giving them real authority, power, and resources. He had given them the space to define their republics' economic development and the resources to see it through. Not surprisingly, they repaid him with enthusiastic political support. But the alliance was not to last.

The Tajik Cotton Scandal and Its Aftermath

Khrushchev's drive to "catch up and overtake" America in agricultural production had a number of perverse effects, which included the confiscation and slaughter of livestock to fulfill meat quotas. But it also led to downright fraud: kolkhoz managers embellished the volume of goods they were sending to the district, the district secretary might add a bit more, and so forth. The republic or region could then claim to have met or surpassed its target, and get more money invested in return.⁹⁵ The discovery of this practice in Tajikistan led to a major shake-up in the republic party and may have contributed to the breakup of Khrushchev's Central Asian coalition.

The practice had begun soon after the Twentieth Party Congress, and increased year by year as the benefits of the practice grew and there seemed to be no negative consequences. Everyone benefited: the republic received a 10 million ruble bonus in 1960 alone for surpassing its quota, the benefits of which trickled down in various ways to the people involved.⁹⁶ At the same time, livestock numbers were actually falling, and, as in Riazan and elsewhere, much had been confiscated from farmers to meet quotas. The farmers often received no compensation, while the actual availability of meat and milk in the republic had dropped.⁹⁷

The year of the Tajik scandal also saw Mukhitdinov lose his spot in the Presidium. Gafurov lost his position on the Central Committee, although he remained head of the Oriental Institute and continued to play an influential role in Moscow's Third World policy through that institution and through the Society for Solidarity with Asian and African Countries. Of course, the Tajik party had the biggest shake-up; several hundred people ultimately lost their positions because of the affair.

It soon became clear that Tajikistan's negotiating power was limited, especially after Khrushchev's enthusiasm for helping the republic started

⁹⁵ See Oleg Khlevniuk. *The Economy of Illusions: The Phenomenon of Data Inflation in the Khrushchev Era* // Smith and Ilic (Eds.). *Khrushchev in the Kremlin*. Pp. 171-189.

⁹⁶ ACPT. F. 3. Op. 157. D. 49. Ll. 2-3.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* L. 10.

to fade. Party leaders and planners in Moscow had been won over to the Nurek project in part because it provided the cheap electricity needed for major aluminum and chemical plants.⁹⁸ Yet Tajik leaders preferred a more diversified development that would employ the rapidly growing working-age population. Drawing on work by Tajik economists (the discipline had started to grow in the mid-1950s, and by the mid-1960s Tajik economists would be playing an increasingly important role in debates about planning⁹⁹), they tried to lobby Moscow for a reorientation toward light industry and “machine building,” which could be more broadly placed around Southern Tajikistan. The response from Gosplan reads almost like a caricature of Soviet planning:

To use the electricity that would be freed up in case the aluminum factory was not built, it would be necessary to construct more than ten large machine-building plants. However, the necessary prerequisites for such construction – raw materials, a qualified workforce, and consumers – are currently lacking in Central Asia.¹⁰⁰

In other words, the aluminum factory would have to be built because nothing else was going to use up all the cheap electricity. At the same time, the region lacked the consumers and labor force necessary for light industry. This was precisely the situation the Tajik leaders were trying to rectify, but by 1964 their ability to negotiate development had declined considerably. Although Nurek would become the center of the Southern Tajikistan Territorial Production Complex, it was not until the late 1970s that planners in Moscow began to seriously respond to Tajik concerns about the shape that industrialization was taking and the related problems of labor, training, and cadres.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Dodkhudoev. *Vlast' vremeni*. P. 35.

⁹⁹ Their publications appeared primarily in the *Biulleten' Akademii Nauk Tadzhikskoi SSR – otdelenie obshchestvennykh nauk* starting in 1956, as well as special volumes and monographs. A crucial figure in developing the discipline and in these early debates on the significance of the Nurek Dam and the proper path for planning was I. K. Narzikulov. See Kh. M. Saidmuradov. *Vidnyi uchenyi-ekonomist Srednei Azii (k 70-letiiu so dnia rozhdeniia I. K. Narzikulova)*. Dushanbe, 1981.

¹⁰⁰ GARF. F. 5446. Op. 101. D. 574.

¹⁰¹ I. K. Narzikulov. *Problemy razvitiia proizvoditel'nykh sil Tadzhikistana i formirovanie iuzhno-tadzhikskogo territorial'no-proizvodstvennogo kompleksa*. Dushanbe, 1975. Pp. 17-35; Nazarali Khonaliev. *Razmeshchenie promyshlennosti i problemy effektivnogo ispol'zovaniia trudovykh resursov / Candidate of Sciences Dissertation*. Alma-Aty, 1976; Idem. *Ekonomicheskaia istoriia i kontseptsiiia razvitiia Tadzhikistana*. Dushanbe, 2010. Pp. 97-102. These issues were taken up in the debate surrounding Gosplan's “General

Khrushchev had encouraged leaders like Uljabayev to claim industrial and other development projects for their republics; they in turn used this opportunity to elevate their own status. Yet economic planning could not work on such narrow principles, and it led to a number of obvious distortions. Uljabayev may have won the day by securing the construction of the ore-processing plant inside Tajikistan, but it probably would have made more sense to build it near Samarkand, as planners originally envisioned: the city was only a few hours away and had a larger existing industrial base and pool of workers to draw on.

“Localism” in development had already been attacked before 1961, but between the Tajik affair and Khrushchev’s ouster in 1964 it became a particular focus of concern.¹⁰² Khrushchev was troubled, on the one hand, by the uneven pace of development in the Central Asian republics, and on the other, by republic leaders’ insistence that new enterprises be located within their own borders. The former was upsetting the political balance and complicating Khrushchev’s political alliances, while the latter led to waste and corruption. In a lengthy memorandum prepared between two trips to the region in 1962, Khrushchev complained that the search for “independence” had gone too far: “in the industry of these republics there is a great deal of unnecessary parallelism... each one would rather do something poorly as long as they can do it themselves.” Khrushchev proposed instead the creation of a single coordinating body for Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan.¹⁰³ This idea was taken up with the creation of a Central Asian party bureau, headquartered in Tashkent, at the end of 1962, and a Central Asian economic coordinating council (*sovmarkhoz*) the following year.¹⁰⁴ Similar structures were also created for the Caucasus; all were abandoned within months of Khrushchev’s ouster in 1964. Perhaps not surprisingly, a Tajik economist emphasized that the Central Asian *sovmarkhoz* had been

Scheme for the Placement of Production for 1976–1990.” See, for example, Russian State Archive of Economy (RGAE). F. 4372. Op. 67. D. 130 (Comments by E. P. Vorodin, labor sector, May 1976).

¹⁰² For example, Gafurov, while praising the importance of local control, also warned about overdoing it, both in selection of cadres *strictly* on “national” principles and in the use of resources for local needs when wider projects were at stake. Gafurov. *Uspekhi natsional’noi politiki*. P. 18.

¹⁰³ See Khrushchev’s note to the Presidium of the CC CPSU in connection with a trip to Turkmenistan, 29 September 1962, in Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev: *Dva Tsveta Vremeni. Dokumenty* / Ed. N. G. Tomilina et al. Moscow, 2009. Pp. 686–687.

¹⁰⁴ See Resolution of the CC CPSU on the creation of a Central Asian Bureau of the CC CPSU in Regional’naia politika N. S. Khrushcheva. Pp. 484–487.

“contradictory to the principles of Lenin’s nationality policy.”¹⁰⁵ Khrushchev’s attempt to depoliticize economic management and development in Central Asia, after politicizing it so heavily in the 1950s, caused resentment on the part of local elites. Return to the pre-1962 status quo was presumably part of Brezhnev’s alliance-making and consolidation of power.

Conclusion

The research presented here is part of a broader investigation into the implementation of Soviet modernization in Tajikistan in the period between World War II and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Although it was the Brezhnev period that saw the fruits of many of the changes described here (the Nurek Dam, for example, was completed in the 1970s), the actual pivot took place between Stalin’s death and Khrushchev’s ouster in 1964. It was in this period that local elites won the ability to define their republics’ development.

Neither Mukhitdinov, nor Uljabayev, nor any other republic leader thought in terms of “independence” the way those terms have been understood since 1991. But they did think of themselves as champions of their republics’ interest, and this in itself had interesting implications, both positive and negative. One was that they became lobbyists for projects that in fact made little economic sense either from the point of view of their own republics’ needs or the economic interests of the USSR as a whole. Another was that it led to interrepublic rivalry, which could be managed within the Soviet context but would eventually lead to nearly open conflict in the post-Soviet period.¹⁰⁶ But it is important to remember that the Soviets were *not* playing divide and rule; rather, these problems emerged as an *unintended* consequence of shifting Soviet approaches to managing the vast, complicated, multiethnic state.¹⁰⁷

Historians have been paying increasing attention to the links between the Cold War, decolonization, and development over the past decade. Those looking at U.S. development projects, in particular, have produced fascinating studies showing the way that American experiences like the New Deal

¹⁰⁵ Saidmuradov. *Vidnyi uchenyi-ekonomist*. P. 26.

¹⁰⁶ Consider the current tensions between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan over the Rogun Dam.

¹⁰⁷ See Gregory J. Massell’s useful discussion of the possible destabilizing effects of Soviet modernization for Central Asia, including the elevation of expectations that elites have about their own role: Gregory J. Massell. *Modernization and National Policy in Soviet Central Asia* // Paul Cock et al. (Eds.). *The Dynamics of Soviet Politics*. Cambridge, 1976. Pp. 265-290.

and projects like the Tennessee Valley Authority were translated for newly independent states.¹⁰⁸ Less is known about Soviet and Eastern Bloc projects.¹⁰⁹ This article suggests a number of possible connections that could be explored between Soviet development at home and abroad. In 1965, the Soviet leadership instructed the Academy of Sciences and its affiliates in Central Asia to “study the experience” of Central Asia’s development, in order to produce lessons that could be applied in the Third World.¹¹⁰ The parallels between the kind of development projects undertaken domestically and internationally, as well as the connections between Soviet foreign policy and domestic politics outlined in this article, suggest that further analysis in this direction can be fruitful. We would be wise to pay attention to how Soviet expertise was exported and how Cold War development experience was brought home.

Finally, trying to understand Soviet Central Asian elites and the institutions in which they operated can help to inform the ongoing debate about the nature of Soviet rule in the periphery. While Soviet rule in the periphery undoubtedly had features in common with imperial rule elsewhere, we cannot begin to understand its specific contours, particularly in the post-Stalin period, without a deeper appreciation of the local elites who emerged from

¹⁰⁸ David Ekbladh. “Mr. TVA”: Grass-Roots Development, David Lilienthal, and the Rise and Fall of the Tennessee Valley Authority as a Symbol for U.S. Overseas Development, 1933–1973 // *Diplomatic History*. 2002. Vol. 26. No. 3. Pp. 335–374.

¹⁰⁹ For a state of the field, see David Engerman. *The Second World’s Third World* // *Kritika*. 2011. Vol. 12. No. 1. Pp. 183–211. Engerman, who is writing on Soviet economic aid to India, is one of several scholars who have been working in this direction. Elizabeth Bishop’s dissertation, for example, deals with the Cold War origins of the Aswan Dam and with the export of Soviet production culture on that project. See Elizabeth Bishop. *Talking Shop: Egyptian Engineers and Soviet Specialists at the Aswan High Dam* / PhD Dissertation; University of Chicago, 1997. Konstantin Sevenard, who led the first phases of the Nurek construction project, had previously worked on the Aswan Dam.

¹¹⁰ Massell. *Modernization and National Policy*. P. 267. I have thus far found little evidence that the Soviet experience in Central Asia was actually studied or used extensively, although hundreds if not thousands of engineers and other specialists from Central Asia did work in Afghanistan, India, and elsewhere on Soviet aid projects. One example of a study that tried to use the Central Asian experience as a guide for the industrialization of newly independent states is G. Ia. Kurzer. *K voprosu ob ispol’zovanii razvivaiushchimisia stranami opyta sotsial’isticheskoi industrializatsii respublik Srednei Azii* // *Izvestiia Akademii Nauk Tadzhikskoi SSR*. 1965. No. 2. Pp. 45–59. One of the article’s conclusions is that primary commodity-exporting countries like Cuba, with its export of sugar, will proceed along the pattern the Central Asian republics followed in moving from cotton to industrialization.

the system and the institutions they helped to create and in which they functioned.¹¹¹ The Soviet Union may have been an empire, but it was almost certainly unique in promising not just civilization or modernization (which other European empires also did, particularly in their final decades) but in having an anticolonial message and purpose at its core. While this article has dealt with only a small group of party leaders, I hope it has nevertheless demonstrated that such elites were not simply products of the system, but were part of its ongoing definition and reshaping.

SUMMARY

This article examines the way that de-Stalinization and Soviet engagement in the Third World provided Central Asian elites with an opportunity to redefine the terms of their republics' cultural and economic participation in the Soviet Union. Drawing on archival materials, memoirs, and interviews, the article traces the careers of a number of key figures and examines their efforts to negotiate cultural and economic modernization by positioning themselves as Khrushchev's allies in de-Stalinization and the struggle for the Third World. The wave of decolonization occurring beyond the USSR's borders provided the impetus to complete the "decolonization" of the Central Asian republics within a Soviet framework.

РЕЗЮМЕ

В статье рассматривается, как десталинизация и активизация советской политики в Третьем мире предоставили среднеазиатским элитам возможности для переопределения культурной и экономической роли среднеазиатских республик в Советском Союзе. Основываясь на архивных материалах, мемуарах и интервью, автор прослеживает карьеры ключевых представителей республиканских элит и анализирует

¹¹¹ On the empire debate as it applies to Central Asia, see: Deniz Kandiyoti. *Post-Colonialism Compared. Potentials and Limitations in the Middle East and Central Asia* // *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. 2002. Vol. 34. No. 2. Pp. 279-297; Adeeb Khalid. *Introduction: Locating the (post)-colonial in Soviet History* // *Central Asian Survey*. 2007. Vol. 26. No. 4. Pp. 465-473; Idem. *Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization: Early Soviet Central Asia in Comparative Perspective* // *Slavic Review*. 2006. Vol. 62. No. 2. Pp. 231-251.

их усилия для культурной и экономической модернизации региона. Самопозиционирование как союзников Хрущева по десталинизации и борьбе за влияние в третьем мире способствовало успеху этой политики. Автор заключает, что волна деколонизации, поднявшаяся за пределами СССР, способствовала завершению “деколонизации” советских среднеазиатских республик.