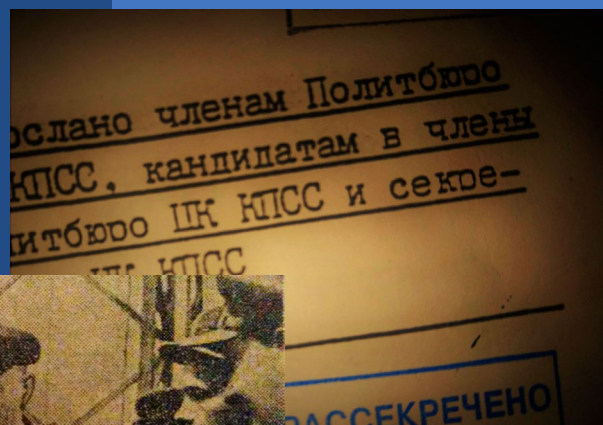


# Party Problems and Factionalism in Soviet Uzbekistan

Evidence from the Communist Party Archives



Nicklas Norling



*Central Asia - Caucasus Institute*  
*Silk Road Studies Program*

**Party Problems and  
Factionalism in Soviet  
Uzbekistan:  
Evidence from the Communist Party  
Archives**

Nicklas Norling

© Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program –  
A Joint Transatlantic Research and Policy Center  
American Foreign Policy Council, 509 C St NE, Washington D.C.  
Institute for Security and Development Policy, V. Finnbodavägen 2, Stockholm-Nacka, Sweden  
[www.silkroadstudies.org](http://www.silkroadstudies.org)

**“Party Problems and Factionalism in Uzbekistan: Evidence from the Communist Party Archives”** is a *Silk Road Paper* published by the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Program, Joint Center. The Silk Road Papers Series is the Occasional Paper series of the Joint Center, and addresses topical and timely subjects. The Joint Center is a transatlantic independent and non-profit research and policy center. It has offices in Washington and Stockholm and is affiliated with the American Foreign Policy Council and the Institute for Security and Development Policy. It is the first institution of its kind in Europe and North America, and is firmly established as a leading research and policy center, serving a large and diverse community of analysts, scholars, policy-watchers, business leaders, and journalists. The Joint Center is at the forefront of research on issues of conflict, security, and development in the region. Through its applied research, publications, research cooperation, public lectures, and seminars, it functions as a focal point for academic, policy, and public discussion regarding the region.

The opinions and conclusions expressed in this study are those of the authors only, and do not necessarily reflect those of the Joint Center or its sponsors. The opinions and conclusions expressed in this study are those of the authors only, and do not necessarily reflect those of the Joint Center or its sponsors.

Cover pictures: (Left to right) Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic Coat of Arms *Wikimedia Commons*, Usman Yusupov courtesy of the Uzbek Soviet Encyclopedia (Tashkent) and photo of archival document by Nicklas Norling.

© Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Program, 2017

ISBN: 978-91-88551-00-9

Printed in Lithuania

Distributed in North America by:  
Central Asia-Caucasus Institute  
American Foreign Policy Council  
509 C St NE, Washington DC 20002  
E-mail: [info@silkroadstudies.org](mailto:info@silkroadstudies.org)

Distributed in Europe by:  
The Silk Road Studies Program  
Institute for Security and Development Policy  
Västra Finnbodavägen 2, SE-13130 Stockholm-Nacka  
E-mail: [info@silkroadstudies.org](mailto:info@silkroadstudies.org)

Editorial correspondence should be addressed to Frank Esparraga, Editor, at the European offices of the Joint Center (preferably by e-mail.)

# Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	5
<b>Foreword</b> .....	6
<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	9
<b>Introduction</b> .....	14
<b>Soviet “Affirmative Action” and Uzbekistan’s New National Elite</b> .....	21
Pre-Soviet Central Asia.....	21
Soviet Nationality Policy and the National Delimitation .....	24
Conflicts and Solidarities in the New National Elite.....	27
“Empowering” the New Nationally and Career-Oriented Elite.....	33
End of the “Honeymoon”: The Power Transfer from Bukhara to Tashkent and Ferghana..	38
Centripetal and Centrifugal Forces.....	42
<b>Usman Yusupov: Stalin’s Strong Leader</b> .....	44
The Party Hierarchy: A Primer.....	44
The Nomenklatura System: A Skein, Not a Hierarchy .....	46
The Post-Purge Leadership Constellation: Tashkent and Ferghana Unscathed.....	48
Nationality Frictions and Power Usurpation in the Central Committee Bureau .....	50
Yusupov’s “Family Circle” .....	52
Party Violations in Yusupov’s Uzbekistan .....	55
Regionalism Reversed .....	58
Party Violations in Niyazov’s Uzbekistan .....	60
Leninabad Hegemony in Tajikistan.....	62
<b>Sharaf Rashidov’s National Orientation</b> .....	66
Uzbekistan’s Post-Stalin Leadership .....	66
Samarkand Plunges Back into Power .....	71
Crackdown on Zemlyachestvo and Party Problems in Central Asia and Elsewhere .....	73
The Khrushchev-Brezhnev Leadership Transition.....	79
Sharaf Rashidov: A Biographical Sketch.....	82
Rashidov’s Unrelated Relatives: The Tashkent Party Conference.....	85
The Primacy of Career-Based Loyalties .....	88

The Twilight of Rashidov's Rule .....	92
Zemlyachestvo in Rashidov's Uzbekistan: The Party Control Commission's Scoresheet in 1982.....	93
The Rashidov Era: An Evaluation.....	95
<b>Misreading and Mythmaking: The Cotton Affair.....</b>	<b>98</b>
The Cotton Affair Unfolds .....	98
Usmankhodzhaev and Rashidov's "Local Favoritism" .....	100
"Tribalizing" Central Asia .....	104
Gorbachev's Misreading of the Situation.....	107
Usmankhodzhaev's Credibility Questioned .....	110
Uzbekistan's Silent Rehabilitation .....	111
The Politics of Rehabilitation.....	115
"Clans" and Mythmaking.....	118
<b>Whither the Clan/Region Hypothesis? .....</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>Authors' Bio .....</b>	<b>130</b>

# Acknowledgements

This monograph builds on my doctoral dissertation, *Myth and Reality: Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University, 2014). I should like to express my gratitude to my faculty advisor, Bruce Parrott, as well as S. Frederick Starr, Svante E. Cornell, Brenda Shaffer and Stephen Blank. I am also grateful for the generous financial assistance that was made available to me through the SAIS Ph.D. Fellowship and the Zartman Fellowship. Lastly, I would like to thank Frank Esparraga for his valuable editorial remarks. Any errors or shortcomings are, needless to say, my own.

## Foreword

Central Asian history did not begin anew with the demise of the USSR. All those who built the newly sovereign states were born, educated, and formed as professionals under the ancient regime. When the Soviet system collapsed, some citizens strove to identify and master the techniques and habits that the new circumstances required. Most, however, like people everywhere, dealt with change by applying what they already knew to the transformed world around them. The history of the first quarter century of independence in Central Asia is the story of the interaction of these two approaches, e.g., of the interplay between continuity and change.

Those seeking to understand the new states of Central Asia have focused on the new laws, political and economic structures, and networks of elites that emerged after 1991. Given the extent and pace of change occurring before their eyes, this is quite understandable. Yet such an approach tends to shortchange the other side of the equation, namely, the forces of continuity. Indeed, many of the most important questions regarding the grip of history on the new states have not even been asked, let alone answered. It is all too easy to blame this on the unacknowledged hopes and expectations of those analysts who concentrated their attention one-sidedly on change. However, even had they chosen to deepen their studies by setting them in a longer-term context, it would have been extremely difficult for them to do so. True, during the last decades of the USSR Soviet institutions published masses of information on the system. But for these data to yield insights, they have to be analyzed with the methods of modern political and historical science. With rare exceptions this did not occur.

Blame for this must be placed squarely on the Communist Party of the USSR and Soviet Academy of Sciences of the USSR, which actively discouraged both Western and domestic studies of the Soviet system as it actually existed. As a result, western scholars lacked access to both people and printed sources that would have been

essential to such studies. But international scholars must assume some of the blame for this situation as well. Too often, they viewed the entire USSR from the perspective of just one point--Moscow—and on the basis of evidence from that one point. They neglected to study the political, economic, and social life of the other fourteen republics of the USSR, dismissing them merely as “the nationalities.” James Critchlow’s 1991 study, *Nationalism in Uzbekistan: A Soviet Republic’s Road to Sovereignty* was a notable exception, but it did not overcome the neglect of the non-Russian parts of the USSR, and especially Central Asia. As a result of this neglect, foreign scholars ended up painting a grossly simplified and hence distorted picture of the Soviet system itself. Worse, they left those seeking to place post-independence developments in a deeper historical context with practically nothing on which to base their comparisons.

This problem has affected equally the Baltic countries, Ukraine, the Caucasus, and the five new states of Central Asia. In the absence of careful research on the region during the Soviet period, many fanciful generalities on the politics and culture of post-Soviet Central Asia have been widely disseminated and taken root. Of these, none has been defended with greater earnestness and persistence than the notion that the basic component and key driver of Central Asian politics today are regionally-based networks or “clans.” Widely embraced by both Western and Russian analysts, the “clan thesis” has shed the character of a mere hypothesis and become instead the rock-solid foundation on which are erected studies of everything from political alignments to the processes of succession. It is tempting for the authors of such studies to buttress their thesis by claiming that this situation dates to Soviet times and is hence an element of continuity amidst superficial change.

This brings us to the great importance of Nicklas Norling’s study, *Party Problems and Factionalism in Soviet Uzbekistan*. He did not set out to examine the “clan thesis.” Indeed, at the start of his research he was quite prepared to invoke it to explain Uzbek politics in Soviet times if it accorded with the evidence. But it did not, and as his research progressed he found that the nature and genealogy of the “clan thesis” itself was increasingly claiming his attentions. This led him in turn into what had long been the closed world of archives from the late Soviet era. Access to this priceless source enabled him to identify the very human inter-relationships that



undergirded the structure of power in Soviet Uzbekistan and to offer his own hypotheses on their character.

Most striking, Norling discovered that the notion that regional clans were the basis of Uzbek politics has an important but neglected history of its own. Far from arising as a scholarly hypothesis, the “clan thesis” was originally put forth by Soviet propagandists who were eager to discredit what they considered the venal and corrupt political elite in Tashkent. Norling’s outstanding vignette of intellectual history, traces the peregrination of this slander from the pages of *Pravda* and similar papers to the scholarly tomes of Western and Russian scholars. More important, he details what he considers the negative impact of this idea on Western analysis of political and economic life in Uzbekistan and the region.

This book has the prospect of becoming an early contribution to what will hopefully become a larger body of research on Central Asia’s political culture in Soviet times. It also invites other researchers to plumb in greater detail the remarkable life and career of Sharof Rashidov, First Secretary of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan. History, after all, is not just a story of faceless groups and blind forces but of real people, and especially of leaders. It would not be amiss to say that Mr. Rashidov has had as great an impact on present-day Uzbekistan as anyone except Islam Karimov, who himself began his career under Rashidov’s umbrella.

Nicklas Norling’s monograph should be essential reading for any analyst, diplomat, or businessman seeking to understand Uzbekistan and Central Asia. By constructing a bridge between pre-and post-independence eras, it enables us to discern deep continuities in both the challenges facing leaders in Tashkent and their responses. It also helps us to understand the degree of compatibility between inherited habits and the needs of a modern and more open and participatory society. Finally, it helps us appreciate the very real changes that have occurred in recent years and that are taking place in the present.

S. Frederick Starr

Chairman, CACI/SRSP

# Executive Summary

This paper examines party problems and factionalism in Soviet Uzbekistan, covering the period from the creation of the republic in 1924-1925 to independence in 1991. More specifically, it focuses on the social basis of politics, the existence of place-based elite networks, faultlines of conflict within the Uzbek elite, the prevalence of national and/or regional solidarities, and centralization and decentralization of appointment power.

The prevailing theory on the subject is that politics in Soviet Uzbekistan was defined by indigenous “clans” or regional “solidarity networks”, resulting from traditionally strong family bonds and a clan-based social structure. This literature is not uniform but adherents share the assumption that the largely pre-modern Central Asia compelled strong loyalties directed to one’s place of birth, district, or province rather than to the nation or even the communist party. Thus, when given an opportunity, senior Uzbek officials stacked offices with individuals from their home-town or region of origin and ignored formal Soviet appointment rules. Moscow, on the other hand, had to maintain a delicate balance between these groups so as to prevent any one of them from becoming hegemonic, lest they challenge its authority.

Several books and dozens of articles have been published on Uzbekistan’s “clans” or solidarity groups but none of them, notably, build on primary archival sources. Still only contemporaneous archival documentation could, conceivably, shed light on Soviet authorities’ perception of patronage and whether it was viewed as distinct from that exercised elsewhere in the USSR.

This paper aspires to fill this gap. It draws on archival evidence from Moscow’s RGASPI and RGANI archives and documentation of the Party Control Commission which monitored party violations in the Soviet Union. The Commission neatly described and categorized forms of patronage, the presence of nepotism and

localism (*zemlyachestvo* or *mestnichestvo*), and tribal influences in each republic and is, as such, an invaluable resource on this subject. The focus is Soviet Uzbekistan although plenty of material has been drawn also from other Soviet republics. Whether locally based loyalties were more or less present in Uzbekistan than elsewhere in the Soviet Union can, needless to say, only be assessed comparatively. The main findings are: First, the archival record contains scant evidence that subnational loyalties were a major problem in Soviet Uzbekistan. While there were rifts these were mostly limited to antagonisms between Uzbeks and Russian/Slavs in the Central Committee, “groupism” in the agricultural sector on the specific technologies to be used, and oligarchic decision-making in obkom and republican bodies. Locally based loyalties were noted elsewhere in the Soviet Union, especially in Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, and several Russian oblasts but only rarely in Uzbekistan. This held true even during Khrushchev’s union-wide crack down on *zemlyachestvo* in the 1960s.

Soviet authorities did adopt a policy to balance the neighboring Turkmen tribes in the 1920s. But no such policy was ever considered for Uzbekistan, presumably because the social structure of the nomadic Turkmen was greatly different from the settled Uzbeks and Moscow shared this preconception. If anything, Uzbeks were considered highly capable and generally advanced and were therefore also dispatched to staff party and state apparatuses in neighboring republics.

That particular regions dominated politics in early Soviet Uzbekistan while others lost out owed to events coinciding with the Bolshevik conquest. Stalin decimated the disloyal Kokand autonomy and its elite, Bukhara was bought off, and the historical power center Khwarazm was too backward to compete for political power. Thus figures from Tashkent, Bukhara, and to a lesser extent Ferghana – the economically, demographically, and politically most important component parts of the republic – came to dominate the new republic.

Second, the supremacy of any one or two of these regions at later points in time could be explained by Moscow’s intricate “hierarchy of regions” in which cadres were drawn from the most important oblasts, the ranking of which varied over the

Soviet period; Minsk and Vitebsk filled analogous roles in Belarus, just as Vilnius and Kaunas did in Lithuania.

Notably, however, when power over cadre appointment was extensively decentralized, principally during the Brezhnev era, this hegemony dissolved. At no point in Soviet Uzbekistan's history did members of the Central Committee Bureau (the highest party organ) hail from more varied regions than during the zenith of Rashidov's powers, who served as First Secretary throughout the Brezhnev era.

Third, in Uzbekistan, as elsewhere in the USSR, coalitions of protégés formed at the oblast and republican-levels primarily among former co-workers and associates. Region of origin played a marginal role at most in this calculus, as archival documentation cited in this paper attests to. That the Uzbek elite typically served in several provinces during their careers diversified loyalties beyond home regions. Coalitions formed among figures of diverse origin, resulting in essentially non-territorialized factions. This diversity was arguably more pronounced than elsewhere, not less. This explains in part why *zemlyachestvo* was a marginal concern in contemporaneous archival documentation.

Fourth, the party violations pinpointed by the Party Control Commission in Soviet Uzbekistan were scarcely unique: Foot-dragging on policy implementation, nepotism at lower levels, embezzlement, theft, concentration of powers, misuse of state funds, low numbers of figures from working class backgrounds in governing positions, failure of plan fulfilment, wrecking and sabotage under Stalin, a lenient approach to national/religious sentiment, exclusion of local nationalities, "groupism", corruption, and speculation. These were to varying extents observable in the Western parts of the empire as well. The only special concerns in Central Asia appears to have been Uzbeks' "feudal attitude towards women" and, possibly, a high turnover of cadres.

Fifth, appointment power was not uniform over time in Soviet Uzbekistan. Apart from the lax Brezhnev era, noted above, the period in which the Uzbek leadership had greatest freedoms in selecting their associates was, paradoxically, under Stalin in the 1940s. During the pre-1937 era and under Khrushchev and Gorbachev the Uzbeks' room for maneuver was highly circumscribed. The notion of Uzbek "clans"

that alternated in power is thus a gross simplification since the center often exercised its prerogatives over the *nomenklatura*, leaving no or little room to fill the highest offices in the republic.

Sixth, Uzbekistan as a territorial entity only began to appear on maps in 1924-1925. Recent statehood has been viewed in the literature as one explanatory factor for strong pre-national regional loyalties. While this may make sense theoretically, archival documentation rather points to the opposite: National solidarities crystallized quickly among the elite, if for no other reason than that these officials owed their careers to Stalin's "affirmative action" policies and the creation of an Uzbek republic. Factionalism existed in the early days, doubtlessly, but this was rarely influenced by sub-regional loyalties.

Such national sentiments reached their heights during the Yusupov period, who ruled Uzbekistan from 1937 to 1950, and also under Rashidov. Rashidov was, in many ways, a product of Yusupov's Uzbekistan and the recovery of Uzbek history that took place under Yusupov's reign. Nationalism became a potent force in Soviet Uzbekistan, and the Uzbek elite coalesced around this idea. Noteworthy is that Stalin often sided with the Uzbeks against the Russian prefects stationed in the republic, thereby encouraging the emergence of an increasingly cohesive and nationalistic Uzbek elite.

Seventh, older readers may remember the "cotton scandal" in the mid-1980s, in which hundreds of Uzbek officials were purged following revelations of widespread corruption, embezzlement of cotton, and "mafia-rule". This, it seems, was also the catalyst of the clan/region hypothesis pioneered in 1985 by an article on Uzbek "regionalism". This theory of extensive nepotism and subnational loyalties corresponded seamlessly with the picture portrayed by the Prosecutor General's anti-corruption investigators, Telman Gdlyan and Nikolai Ivanov, as well as that of Rashidov's successor Inamzhon Usmankhodzhaev. In 1988 Soviet central media began referring to "clans" in Uzbekistan and shortly thereafter, in 1989, Western scholars too adopted this concept. This chronology raises the question whether the notion of "clans" in Uzbekistan was a genuinely scholarly finding or an appropriation of a propagandistic word used by Soviet authorities that took a life of its own.

This, in summarized form, is some of the evidence that compel a re-evaluation of politics in Soviet Uzbekistan. Of course, this paper does not portend to have said the final word on the topic. Other archival evidence or oral testimony may surface that challenge these findings. But on the basis of evidence examined by this author there are few reasons to conceive of factionalism and party problems as different from republics in the western non-Muslim parts of the empire. There were some distinctive features, to be sure, but “clans”, tightly organized regional solidarity groups and the like were not among them. Some may find this argument strange since most leading Central Asia scholars have affirmed the existence of these groups. Even so, a literature can easily be susceptible to mythmaking when authors cite each other as evidence and there is no original account, based on primary sources, from where claims stem.

# Introduction

Only a few minutes remained at the USSR's 19<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in early July, 1988, when an evidently frustrated Moscow representative rose to the podium. Yu.F. Surkov, a worker at the Moscow Special Alloy Plant, was reportedly unprepared but blunt: "I cannot sit here idly and watch as speakers literally squander our time. The reports by the First Secretaries are marked by a stereotyped approach." Striking at the core of party problems, Surkov addressed the delicate issue of nepotism in party ranks: "I am amazed by the robotization of the work of the party apparatus. Why is this happening?", he rhetorically asked, "Because one official can decide the fate of all others. Favoritism exists in our ranks when family ties determine who gets the top and middle-level jobs. This can be felt in all areas...and we are doing a poor job in the Party as regards the upbringing of leaders."<sup>1</sup>

The problem of nepotism and favoritism Surkov addressed was, of course, neither novel nor unknown. Beginning with Stalin's control of the *Orgburo* in the 1920s, few slots in the state machinery were more potent than controlling appointment lists, the *nomenklatura*, and the ability to place one's protégés in leading state and party positions.<sup>2</sup> Such favoritism had the added benefit of cultivating loyalties among those who were appointed, creating links of mutual dependence.

Thus, V. Kruzhkov and Yu. Zhdanov wrote in a confidential party report in 1950 how "cadres [in the Soviet system] are selected not on the basis of political qualities but on the basis of friendly relations...linked by mutual responsibility (*svyazannykh*

---

<sup>1</sup> "Vystuplenye t. Surkova, Yu. F.," *Pravda*, July 2, 1988, p. 9

<sup>2</sup> Robert Tucker, *Stalin in Power: The Revolution from Above, 1928-1941* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990), pp. 85-86.

*krugovoj porukoj*)”.<sup>3</sup> Stalin’s speech to the February-March 1937 plenum of the Central Committee perhaps captured this most authoritatively, lamenting that some party leaders had “dragged along large numbers of their protégés to serve under them in their new posts” when “transferred from region to region”.<sup>4</sup>

Not a problem of merely local excesses, such swarms of officials penetrated all levels of Soviet politics. In the Brezhnev Politburo and Secretariat, for instance, at least five territorialized factions could be distinguished: Brezhnev’s group from his native Dnepropetrovsk in Ukraine, the Suslov-Pelshe Ponomarev clique, a Kharkov faction headed by Nikolai Podgorny, a Belarussian group presided over by Piotr Masherov, and a Moscow group led by Ivan Kapitonov.<sup>5</sup>

A parallel development occurred in the republics. Because the First Secretaries of the republics, as a rule, had previously served in provincial organs, their former colleagues and clients in these provincial apparatuses tended to be favored. Cliques that formed in each republic at all levels therefore often took on the character of place-based networks, skewed towards appointees who had previously served in the same locale as their patron: National-level officials incorporated clients from the oblasts (provinces), oblast-level officials smoothed the way for former colleagues in the rayons (districts), and so on.<sup>6</sup>

While this source of regionalism has been recognized by most scholars of Soviet politics as valid in the Western parts of the empire, it has not been used as an explanation for regionalism in Soviet Uzbekistan. Instead, contemporary Central Asia analysts maintain that Uzbekistan’s politics was defined by indigenous “clans”

---

<sup>3</sup> RGASPI, f. 17, op. 119, d.183, l.185-186. “Otdel Propagandy i Agitatsii Ts.K. VKP (B) – v Sekretariat Ts.K. VKP (B) o Neobkhodimosti Zameny Rukovodstva Upravleniya Kadrov AN SSSR,” December 15, 1950.

<sup>4</sup> T. H. Rigby, “Early Provincial Cliques and the Rise of Stalin,” *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (January, 1981), p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> John B. Willerton, *Patronage and Politics in the USSR* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 53.

<sup>6</sup> See e.g. John B. Willerton, *Patronage and Politics in the USSR* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).



or a Central Asian regionalism fuelled by its “clan-based” history as opposed to general Soviet “career-based” regionalism.<sup>7</sup> In the words of Olivier Roy, “...kinship and clan networks were recomposed on the basis of the territorial and administrative structures put in place by the Soviets...”.<sup>8</sup> The belief in these cultural singularities is so firm that the alternative theory of Soviet career-based regionalism has largely passed unnoticed in this literature’s explanation of Central Asian regionalism.

Whether expressed as “clans”, “regional factions”, “regional strategy groups”, or “solidarity networks”, each of these concepts on Central Asian regionalism share the assumption that politics in Soviet Uzbekistan was distinct and contested between groups bound by identity and territory representing specific cities or provinces. Of these, Tashkent, Samarkand, and Ferghana have generally been regarded as the most powerful contestants even if other lesser ones such as Khorezm/Karakalpakstan and Kashkadarya also made their presence felt. An assumption of such region-based groups is that, if given a chance, they pursued a “winner takes all” policy and smoothed the way for their *rodstvoenniki* (relatives or people from the same place of birth) into governing positions.<sup>9</sup> Conversely, Moscow had to engage in a constant balancing act to prevent any one of the regional groups from shoring up too much powers.<sup>10</sup> National solidarities, it follows, are presumed to have been all but inexistent in Central Asia since strong regional identities among the elite transcended loyalties to the nation. The low degree of urbanization in Central Asia, pre-existing Central Asian solidarity groups (e.g. the Uzbek *mahalla* or the Tajik *qawm*), and the vertical chain of mutual support networks – starting in the

---

<sup>7</sup> The most thorough-going works are: Kathleen Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Pauline Jones Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in post-Soviet Central Asia: Power, Perceptions, and Pacts* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Kathleen Bailey Carlisle, *Clan and Politics in Uzbekistan*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Boston College, September 2000; and Olivier Roy, *Det Nya Centralasien* (Stockholm: Alhambra, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> Olivier Roy, *The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations* (New York: NYU Press, 2005), p. 85.

<sup>9</sup> For an assessment and critique, see S. Frederick Starr, “Political Power in Uzbekistan,” Unpublished manuscript, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> See e.g. Kathleen Collins, *Clans, Pacts, and Politics: Understanding Regime Transition in Central Asia*, PhD Dissertation, Stanford University, 1999, p. 168.

*kolkhoz* and moving upwards to higher levels of the state – all contributed to the formation of regional “clans”.

At least three problems can be distinguished with this hypothesis. First, if such entities as “clans” from Ferghana, Tashkent, and Samarkand exist – as has been argued – the question is how these can be meaningfully distinguished from other regionally based factions in the Soviet Union. Deferring this issue until later, it is worth noting at this point that patron-client relations elsewhere in the Soviet Union, even if different from those of Central Asia, may have had similar or nearly identical manifestations.

Second, the evolution of the clan/region hypothesis is suspect. The hypothesis emerged after the unfolding of the “cotton affair”, which from 1984 and onwards condemned Uzbekistan as the most corrupt, pre-modern, and nepotistic Soviet republic. Thus in 1984 Rashidov’s successor, First Secretary I. Usmankhodzhaev, at the 16<sup>th</sup> Plenum of the Uzbek Central Committee, accused his predecessor’s regime of staffing positions on the basis of “kinship, local favoritism, or personal devotion”.<sup>11</sup> Such accusations were novel since Uzbekistan had rarely been associated with the specific charge of kinship- or region-based promotions since its formation in 1924, as this paper will show.

The notion of Uzbek regionalism, emerging two years thereafter in a pioneering article by Donald Carlisle, in all likelihood emanated from Moscow’s portrayal of events.<sup>12</sup> In 1989 scholars reconceptualized this “regionalism” into Uzbek elite “clans”.<sup>13</sup> The timing is noteworthy since the Soviet press a year earlier, from mid-1988 and on, had begun proposing the existence of elite “clans” (*klany*) in

---

<sup>11</sup> “Uzbek CP Plenum Examines Local Problems,” *Pravda Vostoka*, June 26, 1984, pp. 1-3.

<sup>12</sup> The pioneering article was Donald Carlisle, “The Uzbek Power Elite: Politburo and Secretariat (1938–83),” *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 5, No. 3-4, (1986).

<sup>13</sup> The Western studies on Uzbek “clans” emerged almost simultaneously in 1989-1990. One of the first to speak of Uzbek elite “clans” was: Boris Rumer, *Soviet Central Asia: A Tragic Experiment* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, May 1989), p. 149 and p. 158.

Uzbekistan.<sup>14</sup> In other words, there are reasons to believe that the scholarly conception of regionalism and “clans”, its subsequent elaboration, and projection far back into Soviet history stems consciously or unconsciously from Usmankhodzhaev’s propagandistic judgments (or other related ones at the time) and Soviet central media.

Third, primary sources are nearly absent in the writings on Soviet Uzbekistan. Instead, the hypothesis of “clans” and regions has been derived from observations about Central Asian culture in combination with a reliance on other writings which also were not based on primary sources. Such chains of citations often ultimately trace back to Carlisle’s early article on the topic, creating a danger of reinterpretation and misinterpretation along the way.

This neglect of primary sources presents several other more specific problems beyond reification. Among them is that it is difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain without primary sources if a particular official was appointed by the center, local authorities, and what their respective influences were. Hitherto, the literature has rather simplistically assumed that appointment power was in the hands of the locals, which in turn led to the formation of Uzbek regional cliques. Some, for example, have compiled the origins of members of the Uzbek Central Committee Bureau and viewed the varying concentrations of individuals from Ferghana, Tashkent, and Samarkand as evidence of “clans”.<sup>15</sup>

The assumption is bold since the center kept the Soviet appointment system (*nomenklatura*) under strict controls, though at various levels of intensity. For example, members of the Uzbek Central Committee Bureau were appointed – formally at least – by the center. This is not to say that locals had no influence on nominations. They had influence, as we will see, but the idea that Uzbeks entirely controlled the process is a caricature. Archival material provides some insights and

---

<sup>14</sup> *Trud*, June 18 1988 in FBIS-SOV-88-125; *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, July 20, 1988 in FBIS-SOV-88-145; *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, August 17, 1988 FBIS-SOV-88-165. See also the untitled article by G. Ovcharenko and A. Chernenko in *Pravda*, August 30 1988, No. 243, p. 6 (under “Retrospektiva”).

<sup>15</sup> See Kathleen Bailey Carlisle, *Clan and Politics in Uzbekistan*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Boston College, September 2000.

specifics into this highly complex appointment system, which was centralized and decentralized at multiple occasions over the course of the USSR's existence.

This paper relies primarily on material gathered at the Russian State Archive for Social and Political History (RGASPI) and the Russian State Archive of Modern History (RGANI). Research was also conducted at the Lenin Library in Moscow and its Oriental Studies department. The paper reviews party problems and factionalism in Soviet Uzbekistan, starting in the mid-1920s to the disintegration of the USSR in 1991. Some readers may consider the chapters sweeping but this long stretch of time is necessary to account for how Soviet authorities perceived Uzbek politics at various points.

For example, to what extent were pre-Soviet tribal solidarities identified as a problem when the Soviet Union set up shop in the 1920s? Did Khrushchev, who more than anyone sought to transform the USSR through the family unit, pinpoint clans and kinship-solidarities in Uzbekistan? How did Soviet authorities react under Brezhnev, who engaged in similar favoritism taken to the extremes himself? Are there identifiable trends over the Soviet period as a whole? And were there variations in forms of patronage between the settled and nomadic areas in Central Asia, on the one hand, and the Soviet Union in its entirety, on the other? Reasonably, these questions cannot be answered without archival documentation that categorizes the nature of specific links between individuals.

Fortunately, Soviet authorities did just that. Some of this material is in the archives of the Party Control Commission (*Komitet Partiinogo Kontrolia*) held by RGANI and RGASPI. The Party Control Commission was an organ of the Central Committee tasked with ensuring that official rules and norms of party life were observed and that *nomenklatura* rules were adhered to.<sup>16</sup> As such, no material of any other individual agency in the Soviet Union is arguably as valuable for establishing the

---

<sup>16</sup> For a brief discussion of the Party Control Commission's function and mandate, see Bohdan Harasymiw, "The Soviet Communist Party's Leadership Recruitment System," *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue Canadienne de Science Politique*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (December, 1969), pp. 507-508.

extent of patronage, localism, and other violations of party rules as the evaluations of this agency. The Commission diligently described the presence of tribal (*plemya*) influences and the existence of factions composed of people from the same city, county or province (*zemlyachestvo* or *mestnichestvo*), and did so in a manner allowing for comparisons between republics.<sup>17</sup> An added benefit of this material is that it covered party problems at all levels – from the Central Committee Bureau (the highest party organ) in each republic down to the village level. In some respects, then, it allows for a litmus test of forms of patronage in the Uzbek polity as a whole.

It is to this fascinating material that this paper is devoted. Needless to say, other sources of evidence may eventually surface that challenge this paper's conclusions. Much of the archival documentation of the Brezhnev period, for example, remains classified. But I am convinced, still, that this unexamined material sheds new light on Uzbek politics during the Soviet era and that this is an alternative story that deserves to be heard.

The long temporal scope of this study inevitably imposes some limitations. A rough sketch of pre-Soviet Uzbekistan and its settled culture is provided, but for elaboration on Uzbek culture and Islamic society the reader could favorably consult Edward Allworth's *The Modern Uzbeks* (Hoover University Press, 1990) and other writings. The more limited ambition here is to convey to the reader how Soviet authorities in classified documents perceived party problems and factionalism in Soviet Uzbekistan, whether these perceptions correspond with existing theories on the subject, or if we should think anew.

---

<sup>17</sup> See entry "Mestnichestvo" in *Istoriya Otechestva, Bol'shaya Rossijskaya Entsiklopediya* (Moscow, 1997) and "Zemlyachestvo" in A. Kryukovskikh, *Slovar' Istoricheskikh Terminov* (Moscow: 1998). Similar definitions are in *Ruscha-Uzbekcha Lughat* (Moscow: Uzbekiston SSR Fanlar Akademiyasi, 1954), p. 244 and p. 362.

# Soviet “Affirmative Action” and Uzbekistan’s New National Elite

## Pre-Soviet Central Asia

Prior to Soviet rule there had existed no state, nation, or province named Uzbekistan and no other state had historically inhabited its borders. When Tsarist Russia annexed Central Asia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, these territories were ruled by three khanates – Khiva, Kokand, and Bukhara. By most definitions they could be considered “states” but there were no “nations” attached to them. The concept of nation and its corollary, nationality (Uzbek, Kyrgyz, Kazakh etc.), was only marginally present in these territories up until Soviet rule. However, a majority of the peoples of these three khanates would eventually become Uzbeks since Khiva, Kokand, and Bukhara all fell entirely or partially within Uzbekistan’s borders.<sup>1</sup>

Moscow’s early settlers encountered settled forms of life in Central Asia’s oasis-areas, comprising contemporary Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, and predominantly tribal territories surrounding them, in what are today Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan.<sup>2</sup> The less Islamicized, nomadic, Turkic-speaking, and tribal steppe-culture, it was quickly recognized, had shaped a civilization which was quite distinct from the settled, Islamicized, Persianized, city-culture of the oases annexed later. Dependency on irrigation as well as collection of taxes and tariffs had compelled strongly centralized forms of government in the settled parts in contrast to the decentralized authority structures of the nomads. In the desert and steppes

---

<sup>1</sup> N. Abduprakhimova, “Uzbekistan v Sostave Rossijskoj Imperii,” in *Očerki po Istorii Gosudarstvennosti Uzbekistana* (Tashkent, 2001), pp. 124-125.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Pipes, “Muslims of Soviet Central Asia: Trends and Prospects (Part II),” *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (Summer, 1955), p. 295.

life was a constant struggle against nature; in the densely populated areas of the oases, by contrast, man's primary struggle was with other men, requiring government to settle differences between them.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, St. Petersburg categorized the Central Asian population by both ethnicity (Kyrgyz, Uzbek etc.) and habitat (urban vs. nomadic or semi-nomadic). *Sarts* denoted the Turkic-Persian town-dwelling population that existed alongside "pure" ethnicities (Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, Turkmen, Karakalpak, the Persian Tajik, as well as Russians and Chinese), and were consequently a hybrid of habitat and ethnicity.<sup>4</sup> Habitat was a dichotomy of progress whereby the urban or settled were considered more advanced than the nomadic, in effect making *Sarts* the most "advanced" population of Central Asia.<sup>5</sup>

In light of these differences, administration of the hierarchically organized town dwellers required Imperial policies which were different from government in the sparsely populated nomadic and rural areas. The mix of assimilation and imposition of Russian institutions was determined by this distinction. Just as Western colonial powers commissioned reports about the characteristics of tribes in its imperial areas, the Tsarist government engendered a field of study on *Sarts*. In Russian government writings, the *Sarts* were portrayed as obedient to authority, susceptible to state administration, and placing order high in the hierarchy of values. Nomads, by contrast, were depicted as more malleable, primitive, inclined toward democratic values, and bound to another in tribes or clans.<sup>6</sup>

A new system of administration was promulgated in 1867 in which locals were preserved a marginal political role, especially in the higher echelons of power. Headed by Konstantin von Kaufman, the General-Gubernat of Turkestan put the politics of Turkestan under almost complete Russian control. Tsarist imperial

---

<sup>3</sup> Paul Kunhenn, *Die Nomaden und Oasenbewohner Westturkestans* (Langendreer: Heinrich Poppinghaus, 1926).

<sup>4</sup> A. I. Dobrosmyslov, *Tashkent v Proshlom' i Nastoyashchemi* (Tashkent: O.A. Portseva, 1912), Chapter 1.

<sup>5</sup> Alexander G. Park, *Bolshevism in Turkestan 1917-1927* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> *Sarty: Etnograficheskoe Materialy* (Tashkent, 1895), p. 32.

government divided Turkestan into oblasts and okrugs with town centers where Tashkent became the center of Syr Darya oblast and Samarkand that of Zerafshan.<sup>7</sup>

These were later reconfigured and redrawn with the adoption in 1886 of a general body of law on Turkestan, the *Svod Zakonov Rossiskoi Imperii* when three new oblasts were formed: Syr Darya, Ferghana, and Samarkand.<sup>8</sup> The Soviet government did not redraw these borders noticeably, and the core areas of Uzbekistan's Soviet Republic would be built from these administrative blocks.

It might be an exaggeration to say that "a native middle class and intelligentsia" had been formed at this time.<sup>9</sup> It is true, however, that a small but not insignificant group of Muslim reformers emerged. The Tatar *usul-i jadid* movement, propagating Western ideas of Muslim reform, self-government, reason over dogma, and nation (*millet* or *vatan*) gained a foothold in Turkestan during the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Building on discontent with Russian rule, the Jadids were to play a minor but not insignificant role when the Russian revolution of 1917 opened a temporary vacuum of authority in Central Asia.

The Jadids seized the opportunity and organized the 4<sup>th</sup> Extraordinary Conference of Central Asian Muslims in the Ferghana Valley. The Conference called for the election of a constituent assembly, autonomy in a federated Russian republic, and the setting up of a provisional government. This program was realized in part in 1917 with the establishment of the Kokand Republic, headed by Mustafa Chokayev. Squeezed between the feuding Tashkent Soviet and the Tsarist officials of the *ancien régime*, the Kokand Republic managed to remain afloat in the unfolding chaos for a year before it was crushed by the former in January 1918. Two months later, in March, the "Young Bukharans" headed by Faizullah Khodzhaev set up the

---

<sup>7</sup> N. Abduprakhimova, "Uzbekistan v Sostave Rossijskoj Imperii," in *Ocherki po Istorii Gosudarstvennosti Uzbekistana* (Tashkent, 2001), p. 125.

<sup>8</sup> Syr Darya oblast was created from Amu Darya and included five districts: Kazalinsk, Perovsk, Shimkent, Aulieatnisk, and Tashkent; Ferghana Oblast consisted of the districts of Kokand, Margelan, Namangan, and Osh; and Samarkand Oblast from the four districts of Samarkand, Katta-Kurgan, Khodzhent, and Dzhizzak. See *Svod Zakonov Rossiskoi Imperii* (St. Petersburg, 1892), Chapter 7, Articles 1-4.

<sup>9</sup> Alexander G. Park, *Bolshevism in Turkestan 1917-1927* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), p. 22.



Bukharan Republic, which was inspired by the same principles as the Kokand republic, but enjoyed support from the Bolsheviks.

The transitional period from Tsarism to Bolshevik rule had implications for the distribution of power in the future Soviet republic of Uzbekistan, depending in part on the nature and extent of opposition to Bolshevik rule in Turkestan's territories. The elite associated with the anti-Bolshevik Kokand autonomy were decimated by the Bolsheviks, in part because Kokand had become a symbol of the anti-Bolshevik resistance.<sup>10</sup> The restiveness of Ferghana initially precluded the remaining parts of its elite from an influential role under Bolshevik rule. Bukhara, by contrast, had succumbed to the realities of Bolshevik predominance, was effectively bought off, and its new leadership headed by F. Khodzhaev declared its loyalty to Soviet rule. This ensured the elite associated with Bukhara prominent positions in the Turkestan ASSR and later Soviet Uzbekistan. Bukhara, too, however was subsequently to be marginalized when the USSR had consolidated its rule in the region.

### **Soviet Nationality Policy and the National Delimitation**

In 1924 the Soviet Union divided the Turkestan ASSR (the successor of Tsarist Russia's Turkestan *krai*) into four republics and autonomous oblasts – the Turkmen SSR, Uzbek SSR with the Tajik ASSR (now Tajikistan), Kara-Kirghiz Autonomous Oblast (now Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan), and the Karakalpak Autonomous Oblast (now part of Uzbekistan). Uzbekistan's present nation-hood dates back to this delimitation, whose borders have only been modified by the detachment of Tajikistan in 1930.<sup>11</sup>

The national delimitation in Central Asia formed part of Soviet nationality policy for the empire as a whole. The Russian revolution of 1917 coincided with a rising

---

<sup>10</sup> Sergey Abashin, Kamoludin Abdullaev, Ravshan Abdullaev, and Arslan Koichiev, "Soviet Rule and the Delineation of Borders in the Ferghana Valley," in S.F. Starr (Ed.) *Ferghana Valley: The Heart of Central Asia* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2011), pp. 97-99.

<sup>11</sup> RGASPI, f.558, op.11, d.133, l.28-31.

tide of nationalism and Soviet nationality policy was adopted to disarm it by allowing “forms” of nationhood. The Nationality policy aspired to buttress Soviet rule by granting rights and privileges to the USSR’s diverse nationalities, actively promoting national consciousness among them, and giving them the institutional forms of the nation-state. Hence, a dozen large national republics were formed throughout Soviet territories alongside tens of national territories.<sup>12</sup>

Lenin and Stalin viewed the non-Russian nationalities in the Soviet Union as having justifiable distrust towards the Great Russians, resulting from the “Great Russian chauvinism” under Tsarist rule.<sup>13</sup> By granting the non-Russian nationalities equal status with the Russians, the Bolsheviks could gain the support among the formerly suppressed non-Russian nationalities.<sup>14</sup> “Nativization” (*korenizatsiia*), a crucial corollary of Soviet nationality policy, was to ensure that indigenous nationalities occupied prominent leadership positions in the party, government, industry, and schools in each national territory. Extensive training programs were implemented to this end, especially in the underdeveloped Eastern territories of the empire.<sup>15</sup>

In practice, then, Soviet nationality policy in Central Asia amounted to a de-Russification of the Russified Turkestan state apparatus the Bolsheviks inherited from Tsarist rule. Hence, already in November 1921 the Turkestan Central Committee declared its ambition to absorb more loyal natives and to purge disloyal elements, Russian and natives alike. The inclusion of committed native communists, particularly peasants, and prevention of those with “nationalist convictions” from entering were the new declared goals, even if it was acknowledged that Turkestan’s population “was behind the times” and uneducated. Oblast committees, for example, were to ensure that they had at least one voting member of the indigenous

---

<sup>12</sup> Terry D. Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-8.

<sup>14</sup> Terry D. Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10-13.

population and similar quotas were established elsewhere in the governing apparatus.<sup>16</sup>

The content of Soviet nationality policies and its “affirmative action” program was formally passed in the resolutions of the 12<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in April 1923 and at a separate conference of the Central Committee in June 1923. Encompassing the entire Soviet Union, Soviet nationality policy and its delimitations was obviously a central policy. Even so, Stalin initially portrayed the initiative to divide Turkestan as locally, not centrally determined, and left some room for local input on the process.<sup>17</sup> The regional organ of Moscow’s control, the *Sredazbyuro*, was sidelined in this process, the powers of which were usurped by representatives of the new nations.<sup>18</sup>

Uzbekistan was apportioned territories from all of the three post-17th century historical state-entities – the Khanates of Khiva and Kokand as well as the Emirate of Bukhara – and all of their capitals fell under Uzbekistan’s suzerainty. The new republic centered on the Bukharan Emirate whose borders were preserved more or less intact, including Uzbekistan’s present provinces of Samarkand, Bukhara, Kashkadarya, Surkhandarya, Syrdarya, and Navoi up to the Aral Sea. In recognition of national divisions, the delimitation commission declared that the “Uzbek parts of Bukhara” would belong to the Uzbeks, and the rest to Turkmenistan. The other parts of Uzbekistan comprised Fergana, Andijan, Namangan and Tashkent, which had been part of the Khanate of Kokand, as well as Khorezm oblast and the Karakalpak Autonomous Republic, remnants of the Khivan Khanate. Tajikistan was made an autonomous republic within Uzbekistan and Tashkent was declared to belong to Uzbekistan “because it was populated principally by Uzbeks”.<sup>19</sup> The commission

---

<sup>16</sup> RGASPI, f.558, op.1, d.5636, “Tezisy po Proverke i Ochistke Partii sredi Tuzemnykh Kommunistov” November 1921 in “‘Turkestan’ Sekretariata Narkomnata po Delam Natsional’nostej,” September 15, 1921 – January 9 1922.

<sup>17</sup> RGASPI, f.558, op.11, d.133, l.28-31.

<sup>18</sup> Adrienne Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 41-70.

<sup>19</sup> RGASPI, f.17, op.3, d.467, l.5, Dokument No. 22, “O Natsional’nom Razmezhevani Srednej Azii,” October 9, 1924; and Dokument No.10, “Zapiska Stalina I.V. ob Uzbekistane i Turkmenistane,” June 1, 1924.

left the issue of naming the new republic to the “Bukharans and Uzbeks” to be determined in a session between them, testifying to the Bukharans leading role in the new republic as well as the distinctions made between these two groups.<sup>20</sup> The Tsarist category of *Sarts* was decreed out of existence and replaced by “Uzbeks”, comprising the Turkic-speaking population of Tashkent, Samarkand, and Bukhara, and the more remote Pamir communities became “Tajiks”.<sup>21</sup> On May 13, 1925, at the Third Congress of Soviets of the USSR, Uzbekistan was officially incorporated into the Soviet Union.

### Conflicts and Solidarities in the New National Elite

Contemporary analysts have singled out *zemlyachestvo* as a predominantly Central Asian phenomenon. Yet it was a present concern throughout the USSR at this formative stage. For example, when the Orgburo of the Central Committee met in 1924 to evaluate secretaries for the country’s gubkoms (predecessor to obkoms) they considered not only the level of crime in the province in question, corruption in the provincial organ, but also the state of “localism” among the secretaries.<sup>22</sup> A letter from Felix Dzherzhinsky to V.V. Kuibyshev likewise singled out “localism” (*zemlyachestvo*) and “speculation” (*spekulyatsiya*) as the paramount management problems in the Union next to “labor discipline” and “cooperation”.<sup>23</sup> Another document dated five years later from the Secretary of the Ivanov obkom in Russia noted the widespread “patronage” (*pokrovitel’svo*) and localism in his oblast, other regions of Russia, as well as Kazakhstan but no mention is made of the other territories in Central Asia.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, Moscow lambasted the party leadership in

---

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Yuri Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism,” *Slavic Review*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (Summer 1994), p. 428.

<sup>22</sup> RGASPI, f.76, op.3, d.325, l.1, Dokument No. 874, “Zapiska V.P. Menzhinskomu o Podgotovke Materialov k Zasedaniyam Orgbyuro Ts.K. RKP (b)” March 1, 1924.

<sup>23</sup> RGASPI, f.76, op.2, d.270, l.29-30, Dokument No. 1141, “Pis’mo V.V. Kujbyshevu o Sovetskoj Sisteme Upravleniya,” July 3, 1926.

<sup>24</sup> GA Ivanovskoj Obl., f. 327, op.4, d.514, l.18-27, Dokument No. 510, “Doklad 1 Sekretarya Obkoma VKP (b) Ivanovskoj Promyshlennoj Oblasti I.P. Nosova v Svyazi s Zakrytym Pis’mom Ts.K. VKP (b) o

Siberia for *grupovshchiny* (“groupism”) and nepotism<sup>25</sup> and Kazakh authorities were called upon to speed up a “management plan...designed for a settled way of life...and the transition to a sedentary lifestyle”, a hint of existing “localism” among the tribally organized Kazakhs.<sup>26</sup> Yet no comparable requests were issued to Uzbeks whose “settled” cadres were depicted as capable professionals.<sup>27</sup> This is also why Uzbeks were sent to staff government agencies in Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

The only factionalism and indigenous conflict documented in earlier confidential correspondence, relating to the territories of Uzbekistan, was infighting among the hegemonic Bukharan elite. Even though Bukhara natives administered the Turkfronta (fighting the Basmachi insurrection against Soviet rule in Central Asia),<sup>28</sup> the Upolnarkomvoe (the main internal troops), and were best represented in the *Sredazbyuro*, Bukharans had trouble uniting among themselves.<sup>29</sup> Strains were seen with the most overt competition for leadership occurring between Khodzhaev, the head of Bukhara’s communist party, and Mukhitdinov, another communist whose loyalties were questioned in Moscow.<sup>30</sup>

In April, 1922, Moscow’s prefect in Bukhara relayed that this “crisis in the Bukhara government had reached its climax” and that the brief absence of Khodzhaev had thrust the government into “complete confusion”, with the “left communist” unwilling to take part in the struggle with the Basmachi revolt, the local Islamic

Zabastovkakh Rabochikh v Vichugskom, Lezhnevskom, Puchezhskom i Tejkovskom Rajonakh”, Not later than April 24, 1932.

<sup>25</sup> RGASPI, f.17, op.3, d.940, l. 34, 69-70, Dokument 154/138, “O Razbazarivanii v Vostochnosibirskom Krae Obshchegosudarstvennykh Fondov,” March 5, 1934.

<sup>26</sup> RGASPI, f. 17, op.3, d. 776, l. 6-7, Dokument No. 33, “O Kazakhstane” February 15, 1930.

<sup>27</sup> See for instance: RGASPI, f. 17, op.3, d.929, l.24, Dokument No. 111/90, “O Zernopostavkakh v Uzbekistane,” August 25, 1933.

<sup>28</sup> The Basmachi revolt against Soviet rule in Central Asia began in 1917. Often described as a fusion of “Muslim traditionalists and bandits”, the Basmachi movement threatened to reverse many of the territorial gains the Bolsheviks had attained in Central Asia. But the Bolsheviks proved to be much better organized and by 1926 the Basmachis had been suppressed. See Fazal-ur-Rahim Khan Marwat, *The Basmachi Movement in Soviet Central Asia: A Study in Political Development* (New Delhi: Emjay, 1985).

<sup>29</sup> RGASPI, f.17, op.3, d.485, l.6, Document No. 37, “Voprosy Sredazbyuro Ts.K.” January 15, 1925.

<sup>30</sup> Shoshana Keller, “The Central Asian Bureau: An Essential Tool in Governing Soviet Turkestan,” *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 22, No. 2/3 (June-September, 2003), p. 285.

uprising. Instead, what they had spent their time doing was to collect a dossier of the “criminal activities” of Khodzhaev’s government, forcing Stalin to recommend a thorough Sovietization of the Bukhara government, support of Khodzhaev, and a complete turnover of personnel.<sup>31</sup>

In December 1924, on the *Sredazbyuro*’s proposal, the Politburo in Moscow withdrew Islamov from Uzbekistan and sent him to Moscow as a consequence of “internal squabbles” among the local elite. The Politburo also warned that unless terminated, Abdulla Rakhimbaev, Fayzullah Khodzhaev, and Ishan Khodzhaev (all from Bukhara or in the case of Rakhimbaev, Khodjent, adjacent to the city of Bukhara) would be “immediately withdrawn”.<sup>32</sup> Stalin’s foremost concern in Uzbekistan was not localism but Bukhara’s feuding elite and internal disputes, which would leave a permanent mark of disloyalty and untrustworthiness.<sup>33</sup> In Moscow at least, this conflict was interpreted and portrayed as one between “leftist” and “rightist” communists and did not concern power disputes between cities, regions, or the Bukharan tribes.<sup>34</sup>

The contrast with the nomadic areas is illuminating. Soviet writings of the 1920s considered genealogy key to grasp the nomadic cultures of the Turkmen, Kazakhs, and Kyrgyz and the Bolsheviks also incorporated this element into policy.<sup>35</sup> Thus, by 1928 the republics and areas of the USSR defined by nomadism – principally the Kara-Kirgiz, Siberia, northern Caucasus, and the Turkmen – were endowed with native executive committees (*tuzriki*), native soviets (*tuzemnye sovety*), aul (*aul’nye*)

---

<sup>31</sup> RGASPI, f.558, op.1, d.2275, “Pometki Stalina I.V. na Pis’me Petersa,” 1922.

<sup>32</sup> RGASPI, f.17, op.3, d.481, l.4, Dokument No. 19, “O Doklade Zelenskogo,” December 16, 1924. For Abdulla Rakhimbayev’s biography see *Uzbek Sovet Entsiklopediyasi*, Vol. 9 (Tashkent: Uzbekiston SSR Fanlar Akademiyasi, 1977), p. 202.

<sup>33</sup> RGASPI, f.558, op.5, d.1, Untitled document, May 18, 1922.

<sup>34</sup> RGASPI, f.17, op.3, d.293, l.3, 9-10, Document No. 10, “O Turkestaniko-Bukharskikh Delakh,” May 18, 1922.

<sup>35</sup> VI. Kun, “Izuchenie etnicheskogo sostava Turkestana,” *Novyi Vostok*, No. 6 (1924), pp. 351-53; I. I. Zarubin, *Spisok Narodnostei Turkestanskogo Kraia: Trudy Komissii po Izucheniiu Plemennogo Sostava Naseleniia Rossii*, Vol. 9 (Leningrad: Rossiiskaia Akademiia Nauk, 1925), p. 10. Both cited in Yuri Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism,” *Slavic Review*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (Summer, 1994), p. 429.

soviets, clan (*rodovye*) soviets, and nomadic (*kochevye*) soviets.<sup>36</sup> However, with the exception of the mahalla's new role as an appendage to the soviets and the creation of mahalla committees, the fusion of soviets with kinship-based structures such as those above were not seen in Uzbekistan.<sup>37</sup>

Beyond the soviets, the Bolsheviks sought equitable representation of the rivalling Turkmen tribal groups in the future Turkmen republic. Hence, in 1924, a deputy head of the *Sredazbyuro*, stated: "If we promote someone from one tribe into an administrative post, we have to make sure that we give a similar promotion to the others. If we give an award to someone from one tribe, we have to do the same for the others as well. If we form a police force, then it must be with the calculation that we will take an equal number of people from each tribe, and that they all will have equivalent positions, and the same for those who work in the military, in the secret police, and so on."<sup>38</sup> This "tribal parity" proposal even went beyond balancing the major Turkmen tribes and prescribed equal representation for rivalling segments within each tribe. The *Sredazbyuro* protocols in which this issue was discussed contain no similar provisions for the sedentary Uzbek areas, which testify to the important differences between the settled and nomadic cultures.<sup>39</sup>

If this balancing served to acknowledge tribal rights, a second component of this policy aimed at defeating them. Collective land tenure was a primary factor undergirding descent group affiliation in Turkmenistan, and the Bolsheviks therefore proceeded to undermine this economic basis, principally with the 1925

---

<sup>36</sup> Yuri Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (Summer, 1994), p. 430. See also Irene Winner, "Some Problems of Nomadism and Social Organization of the Recently Settled Kazakhs," *Central Asian Review*, Vol. 11 (1963), pp. 355-356.

<sup>37</sup> This was expressed in the decree: "Postanovleniie ob utverzhdeniia o makhallinskikh komitetakh v gorodakh UzSSR." See David Abramson, *From Soviet to Mahalla: Community and Transition in post-Soviet Uzbekistan*, PhD Dissertation, Indiana University, 1998, p. 29.

<sup>38</sup> RGASPI, f. 62, op. 1, d. 20, April-June 1924, 46-48. Cited in Adrienne L. Edgar, "Genealogy, Class, and 'Tribal Policy' in Soviet Turkmenistan, 1924-1934," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 60, No. 2 (Summer, 2001), p. 266.

<sup>39</sup> Adrienne Edgar did neither find any similar provisions for Uzbekistan. Private correspondence, February 3, 2014.

Land-Water Reform program.<sup>40</sup> The land reform in Turkmenistan followed closely that of Uzbekistan, “apart from a number of distinctive features resulting from special forms of land tenure peculiar to Turkoman tribes”.<sup>41</sup> Similar deliberations of defeating descent groups were not present in the implementation of the program in Uzbekistan. Presumably, the Bolsheviks did not anticipate similar dangers with the land reform in Uzbekistan since the landowners of Uzbekistan were less entrenched than the tribal leaders of Turkmenistan, who had “a stronger grip on the loyalties of the people”.<sup>42</sup> Thus, confiscation of land could proceed more easily in Uzbekistan than in tribally organized Turkmenistan. This key distinction between the settled and the nomadic was mirrored in the way in which loyalties were expressed.

For example, when rumors were swirling that the capital of Turkestan would shift from Tashkent to Samarkand in 1921, the Chairman of the TurkTsIka, Abdullo Rakhimbaev – himself a native of Khodjent in Tajikistan, a Chairman of the Samarkand obkom in 1919, and later in 1923 secretary of the Central Committee of the Bukhara Communist Party – wrote of a state of “urgency” and inquired why this decision had not been coordinated with the TurkTsIka, noting that this decision (if correctly reported) would “stir up a lot of trouble”.<sup>43</sup> In other words, his loyalties do not seem to have been with this particular city, region, or with the Tajiks since the transfer of the capital potentially would have been a feather in the hat of this region and, hence, something which he should have welcomed. Instead, he resolutely questioned the transfer of the capital. This should be compared with the intense inter-tribal struggles between Tekes and non-Tekes that surrounded the discussions over the transferring of the capital in Ashgabat to Chärjev in the 1920s.

---

<sup>40</sup> Adrienne L. Edgar, “Genealogy, Class, and “Tribal Policy” in Soviet Turkmenistan, 1924-1934,” *Slavic Review*, Vol. 60, No. 2 (Summer, 2001), pp. 267-268.

<sup>41</sup> Alexander Park, *Bolshevism in Turkestan, 1917-1927* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), p. 346.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 348.

<sup>43</sup> RGASPI, f.558, op.1, d.5636, “Telegraf Stalinu Kreml’, Ot Predsedatelya Turtsika Rakhimbaeva,” Undated document in “‘Turkestan’ Sekretariata Narkomnata po Delam Natsional’nostej” September 15, 1921 – January 9, 1922; “Abdulla Rakhimbaev,” in *Uzbek Sovet Entsiklopediyasi*, Vol. 9 (Tashkent: Uzbekiston SSR Fanlar Akademiyasi, 1977), p. 202.



Unlike Rakhimbaev's national orientation, the non-Teke party official K.A. Böriev accused the Tekes of striving for "Teke hegemony" with the placement of the capital in Ashgabat.<sup>44</sup> In this abortive attempt to transfer the capital and others, sub-national loyalties among the settled population appear to have been subdued.<sup>45</sup>

The absence of a tribal policy in Uzbekistan suggests that the Bolsheviks viewed kinship- and other sub-national loyalties a lesser problem than in the nomadic areas. The policy did not exist in Uzbekistan not only because of the difference in social structure between Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan but also because of differences in Soviet perceptions about the social structures of these two republics. Similar to their Tsarist predecessors, they rather simplistically considered the Turkmen and Kazakhs as nomadic and tribal and the Uzbeks and Tajiks as sedentary and non-tribal.<sup>46</sup> But perhaps this was not all that surprising in view of the *mélange* of identities present in the settled areas. Even in the partially tribal territories of Bukhara and Khorezm, adjacent to Turkmenistan, individuals had difficulties comprehending their identity, at least in categories used by Europeans. This point came across an expedition of Soviet ethnographers when they, in 1924, departed for this remote region to bring clarity to the matter. When asked "to what tribe or clan

---

<sup>44</sup>Adrienne Edgar, *The Creation of Soviet Turkmenistan, 1924-1938*, PhD Dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 1999, pp. 100-101.

<sup>45</sup> In Terry Martin's words, "the formation of national republics not only increased ethnic conflict, but also turned local disputes [in Central Asia], often with a clan or regional aspect, into national ones." Terry D. Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 69.

<sup>46</sup> It is true that the Leningrad Academy of Sciences published a series in the mid-1920s speaking about "tribes" in the areas comprising Turkestan, Samarkand, Siberia, the Caucasus and other places. However, the meaning of this concept appears to have been loosely used since prior publications spoke about "tribes" in places such as Belarus, which ordinarily was not considered tribal at the time. See I. I. Zarubin, *Spisok Narodnostei Turkestanskogo Kraia: Trudy Komissii po Izucheniiu Plemennogo Sostava Naseleniia Rossii*, Vol. 9 (Leningrad: Rossiiskaia Akademiia Nauk, 1925); I. I. Zarubin, *Naselenie Samarkandskoi Oblasti: Trudy Komissii po Izucheniiu Plemennogo Sostava Naseleniia Rossii*, Vol. 10 (Leningrad: AN SSSR, 1926); and E. F. Karskii, *Etnograficheskaia Karta Bieloruskago Plemeni: Trudy Komissii po Izucheniiu Plemennogo Sostava Naseleniia Rossii*, Vol. 2 (Petrograd: Rossiiskaia Akademiia Nauk, 1917).

do you belong”, respondents in these areas reportedly were puzzled and “did not understand the question”.<sup>47</sup>

### **“Empowering” the New Nationally and Career-Oriented Elite**

Uzbekistan’s first entirely native leadership constellation was formed in 1929, before which the heads of the Uzbek Communist Party had been non-natives. Akmal Ikramov was named First Secretary of the republic in 1929 by the local *Sredazbyuro*<sup>48</sup>, holding this office until 1937 when he was executed in Stalin’s purges. Though a Tashkent native, Ikramov rose to power through party work in Namangan, Ferghana, and then Tashkent, serving first as deputy head of the Namangan revkom and Secretary of the Ferghana and Syr Darya obkoms. In 1925 at the age of 27 he was nominated as a member of Uzbekistan’s Central Committee.<sup>49</sup>

Slightly older was Faizullah Khodzhaev, the native leader of the People’s Republic of Bukhara before it acceded to the USSR. He was instated chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars in 1924 at the age of 26 and occupied this position until he too was shot in the purges of 1938.<sup>50</sup> The head of the central ispolkom (the “legislative” organ and predecessor of the Supreme Soviet) was a Ferghana native from Margelan, Yuldash Ahunbabaev. Ahunbabaev had previously served as Chairman of the Margilan (Ferghana) soviet and was its representative at the founding Congress of the Uzbek SSR in 1925, at the time of which he also was elected

---

<sup>47</sup> T. Zhdanko, “Natsional’no-Gosudarstvennoye Razmezhevaniye i Protsessy Etnicheskogo Razvitiya u Narodov Sredney Azii,” *Sovetskaya Etnografiya*, Vol. 5 (1972), p. 23. Cited in Robert Kaiser, *The Geography of Nationalism in Russia and the USSR* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 135.

<sup>48</sup> “Akmal Ikramov,” in *Entsiklopediyai Sovetii Todzhik*, Vol. 2 (Dushanbe: Akademiyai Fankhon RSS Todzhikistan, 1980), p. 552.

<sup>49</sup> RGASPI, f.17, op.3, d.494, l.6, Document No. 33, “Pros’ba Sredazbyuro Ts.K. RKP (b) ob Ikramove,” March 26, 1925.

<sup>50</sup> “Faizullah Khodzhaev,” in *Uzbek Sovet Entsiklopediyasi*, Vol. 12 (Tashkent: Uzbekiston SSR Fanlar Akademiyasi, 1979), p. 46.

to the Central Committee.<sup>51</sup> Khodzhaev was the most powerful of the three since political power initially rested with the head (predsovnarkom) of the Council of People's Commissars (sovnarkom) and not the First Secretary of the Communist Party.

Although Stalin had been perturbed by the infighting among the Bukhara elite, he sought to shield Khodzhaev from the party apparatchiks in Tashkent. In April 1926 Stalin telegraphed Ikramov, Zelensky, and Ivanov instructing them not to "depersonalize the sovnarkom [Council of People's Commissariat], isolate the predsovnarkom [Khodzhaev], and undermine his influence". "The party in Uzbekistan" he continued "should consider the authority of the sovnarkom...and make this an asset for the party".<sup>52</sup> That the capital of Uzbekistan at first was located in Samarkand, part of the Emirate of Bukhara and People's Republic of Bukhara, further enhanced the Bukhara/Samarkand region as the predominant center of power in the republic.

The empowerment of this native elite was paired with the establishment of direct links between the new national republics and Moscow, bypassing the regional organ of government, the *Sredazbyuro*. In part because of the *Sredazbyuro's* desire to undercut Moscow's authority, transform Central Asia into a federated entity akin to the federated organization of the South Caucasus, and the localism and favoritism of Ukrainians in this body, Stalin and Molotov in 1931 warned this group of employees and subsequently acted upon these warnings.<sup>53</sup> Chastised for several unsanctioned activities, the *Sredazbyuro* leadership was accused of "forcing the establishment of a Central Asian federation" through the creation of a number of

---

<sup>51</sup> "Yuldash Akhunbabaev," in *Kazak Sovet Entsiklopediyasy*, Vol. 1 (Almaty: Kazak SSR Gylym Akademiyasy, 1972), p. 618.

<sup>52</sup> RGASPI, f.558, op.11, d.34, doc.28, "Shifrotelegramma Stalina I.V v Tashkent," April 23, 1926.

<sup>53</sup> On "localism" and "Ukrainization" in this body, see: RGASPI, f.558, op.1, d.5636, "Iz R.S.F.S.R. Polnomochnyj Predstavitel' V.Ch.K na Territorii Turkestanskoj Respubliki," Undated document in " 'Turkestan' Sekretariata Narkomnata po Delam Natsional'nostej" September 15, 1921– January 9, 1922; RGASPI, f.558, op.1, d.5636, "Iz R.S.F.S.R. Polnomochnyj Predstavitel' V.Ch.K na Territorii Turkestanskoj Respubliki," Undated document in " 'Turkestan' Sekretariata Narkomnata po Delam Natsional'nostej" September 15, 1921– January 9, 1922.

institutions operating effectively “as agencies of a federation.”<sup>54</sup> Zelensky, Moscow’s proconsul in the region since 1924, was recalled the same year and the *Sredazbyuro* itself was abolished in 1934.<sup>55</sup>

The result was a more vertical relationship of authority between the center and the Central Asian national republics. Thus, in 1931 control over cotton production was transferred from the *Sredazhlopok* to national cotton boards and the *Narkomzem* in Moscow was reorganized to have direct links with the cotton producing Central Asian republics.<sup>56</sup> Ikramov’s powers grew correspondingly since he was put in charge of this. “It was decided”, minutes of the Politburo reveals, “to defer consideration of the cotton sovkhozes of Uzbekistan to Ikramov before the issue is brought to Moscow.”<sup>57</sup> A regional organ of government, the *Sredazbyuro*, had been useful as an interim body to maintain Soviet control but eventually turned into a source of opposition which had sustained other district and province-level pockets of local dissent.<sup>58</sup>

Whatever ulterior motives Stalin may have had national delimitation did catapult a local indigenous elite to power and degrade the influence of Russians and other Slavs in the *Sredazbyuro*. The native elite were the third-party beneficiaries of the revolution. The new nations became the vehicle to party careers for the native elite and thus something which was embraced by many however frail the Uzbek national identity was *per se*. *Korenizatsiia* allowed both qualified and unqualified Uzbeks unprecedented career opportunities and was, if not an ideological awakening, a bread-and-butter affair. The newly established Lenin University in Tashkent, to

---

<sup>54</sup> RGASPI, f.17, op.3, d.858, l.7, Document No. 33/10, “O Sredneaziatskoj Federatsii,” November 4, 1931.

<sup>55</sup> “Isak Zelensky,” in *Uzbek Sovet Entsiklopediyasi* Vol. 4 (Tashkent: Uzbekistan SSR Fanlar Akademiyasi, 1973), p. 469.

<sup>56</sup> RGASPI, f.17, op.3, d.871, l.17, Document No. 86/49, “O Reorganizatsii Khlopkovykh Organov v Srednej Azii,” February 8, 1932.

<sup>57</sup> RGASPI, f.17, op.3, d.937, l.15, Document No. 59/40, “O Khlopkovykh Sovkhozakh Uzbekistana,” December 26, 1933.

<sup>58</sup> RGASPI, f.558, op.1, d.3065, “Telegramma Stalina I.V.” March 13, 1934. See also: RGASPI, f.17, op.3, d.676-2, l.4-5, Document No. 14, “Predlozhenie Stalina po Telegramme Antonova-Saratovskogo i Kondurushkina”, March 2, 1928.

which the native party members were sent for training, acted as a melting pot and cemented new loyalties directed to the Communist Party.<sup>59</sup> Even if not entirely foolproof, the procedure of selection of non-Russian personnel into governing positions also tended to favor those individuals who were most committed and loyal to the revolution and Stalin's national program.

The rapid upward mobility of the Uzbek elite is likely to have presented them with a dilemma: To play by the new rules and stay loyal to the Bolshevik national idea or revert to old loyalties in their home regions. Archival evidence suggests that the former often took precedence, even if not always. Thus, a Soviet document remarked: "It is characteristic that groups which were in conflict within a given nationality before national division (*razmechevanie*) have not been united by general national interests."<sup>60</sup> This held particularly true for Uzbekistan since it emerged as a regional leader following the delimitation. More than half of the region's population found themselves within Uzbekistan's borders. The republic also contained 60% of Central Asia's agricultural lands and generated 70% of the region's total economic profits. This endowment prescribed that the republic's elite were to become "model leaders for Soviet Central Asian policies."<sup>61</sup> The most egregious forms of nepotism that Khodzhaev among others had engaged in could no longer be sustained under Stalin's watchful eye. With the creation of the Uzbek nation, the indigenous elite began to unite around this concept.<sup>62</sup>

The proposed transfer of ethnically Tajik territories to Tajikistan in 1930 is a case in point. That year Ikramov had an opportunity to dismember Khodzhaev's Tajik "power base" but did not do so. When the all-Union Presidium of the ispolkom

---

<sup>59</sup> Alexander Park, *Bolshevism in Turkestan, 1917-1927* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), p. 134.

<sup>60</sup> GARF 3316/64/26 (1925), pp. 42-43. Cited in Terry D. Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 69.

<sup>61</sup> Roger Kangas, *Faizulla Khodzhaev: National Communism in Bukhara and Soviet Uzbekistan, 1896-1938*, PhD Dissertation, Indiana University, 1991, p. 254.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 290. See also G. Fedtke, "How Bukharans Turned into Uzbeks and Tajiks: Soviet Nationalities Policy in the Light of a Personal Rivalry," in P. Sartori, and T. Trevisani (Eds.), *Patterns of Transformation in and Around Uzbekistan* (Reggio Emilia: Diabasis, 2007).

adopted a decision in 1930 to transfer Surkhandarya okrug (oblast) to Tajikistan, Ikramov filed a complaint and the ispolkom “decided to propose to temporarily reverse its decision”. This temporary reversal was later made permanent.<sup>63</sup> Surkhandarya remained in Uzbekistan and this is noteworthy since it was Ikramov and not Khodzhaev who objected, even though Surkhandarya was former Bukhara territory. If Ikramov wanted to reduce Khodzhaev’s clout he could have detached Surkhandarya. But he did not, which points to that national concerns trumped narrow local ones.

Such nationally oriented concerns were paralleled with career-based loyalties among the elite. An example is Abdulla Karimov’s replacement as Chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars (the predecessor of the Council of Ministers) in 1937.<sup>64</sup> Expressing their dissatisfaction with Karimov (“a member of the anti-Soviet group led by Khodzhaev”), Stalin and Molotov solicited the Uzbek First Secretary Ikramov to propose alternative candidates for this position.<sup>65</sup> Under pressure from the center Ikramov put forward two candidates, S. Baltabaev from Ferghana Valley and D. Tyuerabekov from Khodkent (Tajikistan),<sup>66</sup> both of whom were acquaintances from Tashkent. Baltabaev had been the First Secretary of the Tashkent gorkom since three years back and Tyuerabekov had “recently returned to Tashkent from Moscow”.<sup>67</sup>

Ikramov’s choice was Baltabaev with Tyuerabekov as deputy, but Stalin opted for Tyuerabekov, who would only serve two months, however, before he was executed in the purges.<sup>68</sup> Regionalism does not appear to have been part of Ikramov’s

---

<sup>63</sup> RGASPI, f.17, op.3, d.776, l.1, Dokument No. 4. “Protest Pravitel’sstva Uzbekistana,” February 15, 1930.

<sup>64</sup> “Abdulla Karimov,” in *Uzbek Sovet Entsiklopediyasi*, Vol. 5 (Tashkent: Uzbekistan SSR Fanlar Akademiyasi, 1974), p. 340.

<sup>65</sup> RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 56, l. 128–129, Document No. 906, “Shifrtelgramma I.V. Stalina i V.M. Molotova A.I. Ikramovu o Zamene v Sostave Trojki,” July 9, 1937.

<sup>66</sup> RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 65, l. 51., Dokument No. 1263, “Shifrtelgramma A.I. Ikramova I.V. Stalinu,” July 15, 1937.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 57, l. 19, Dokument No. 1167, “Shifrtelgramma I.V. Stalina v Ts.K. KP (b) Uzbekistana o Zamenakh v Sostave Rukovodyashchikh Kadrov,” August 2, 1937.

calculation since none of the figures recommended hailed from Ikramov's native Tashkent but were associates whom he had encountered in the capital. Stalin's primary concern was not that sub-national loyalties would split the republic apart but that "anti-Soviet" elements from different parts of the republic would unite and conspire against Stalin's rule. Jotting down a note on a cable, Stalin accordingly warned the local leadership not to place "Karimov, Baltabaev, and Tyurabekov together".<sup>69</sup> The intention was to isolate those perceived as anti-Moscow and eventually remove them, lest they challenge central control over the region.

Locals did evidently have some input into the *nomenklatura* process and they were often empowered to "recommend" figures for top state and party positions that were scrutinized and vetted in Moscow, as testified to by the appointment of Baltabaev. Proposing candidates, Ikramov discussed both their merits and party history, their intellectual abilities, their "reliability" (*solidnost'*), prior government work, and their devotion to the party and the Central Committee in Moscow.<sup>70</sup> When portrayed in Soviet media, however, responsibility for appointments rested exclusively with the local scapegoats. Tyurabekov, for example, was singled out as one who had "very cleverly bypassed all sharp corners" with the help of Ikramov.<sup>71</sup>

### **End of the "Honeymoon": The Power Transfer from Bukhara to Tashkent and Ferghana**

Uzbekistan's first generation of leaders may have coalesced around the nation but Stalin forcefully imposed a regionalization of political power upon them. Not soon after the establishment of Uzbekistan it became evident that the power awarded to figures from the Bukharan half of the republic was a Trojan horse. Early signs that their influence was being eclipsed were expressed already in 1925 when the composition of the *Sredazbyuro* shifted away from Bukhara and the Tajik areas with

---

<sup>69</sup> RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 56, l. 128–129, Dokument No. 123 "Shifrtelogramma I.V. Stalina i V.M. Molotova A.I. Ikramovu o Zamene v Sostave Trojki," July 9, 1937.

<sup>70</sup> RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 65, l. 51, Dokument No. 1263, "Shifrtelogramma A.I. Ikramova I.V. Stalinu," June 15, 1937.

<sup>71</sup> A. Aleksandrovskij, "Sobranie Partijnogo Aktiva Tashkenta," *Pravda*, September 11, 1937, p. 6.

the removal of Islamov and Rakhimbaev (Khodkent) and towards Tashkent-Ferghana with the incorporation of Ahunbabaev (Ferghana) and Tashmukhamedova, the Secretary of Tashkent city.<sup>72</sup> Capping this trend was the transfer of the capital itself from Samarkand to Tashkent in 1930.

Stalin had empowered Khodzhaev to ensure Bukhara's loyalty only to clip his wings when Moscow had consolidated its rule in the region. This conformed to Stalin's overall tactic to divide and rule among the Central Asian leadership, often defending the natives against the Slavic appointees. In 1928, for instance, First Secretary I. Zelensky telegraphed Stalin demanding an investigation of Khodzhaev, Abdulla Karimov, Burnashev, and others. Without pressing the point, Stalin considered such an investigation "certainly inappropriate" but offered Zelensky to refer the cases to "other higher non-judicial bodies...which you find most comfortable".<sup>73</sup> Stalin's tacit support of Ikramov was manifested in early 1929 when Zelensky and his predecessor Nikolaj Gikalo also sought the then 31-year old Ikramov's retirement. However, Stalin retorted that "retirement of Ikramov is unacceptable and politically and practically harmful. You cannot create the illusion that the Central Committee supports elements like Faizullah [Khodzhaev] against Bolshevik workers like Ikramov. The Central Committee considers it compulsory to support Ikramov and keeping him as secretary." The futile attempt to "isolate" Ikramov, as had been proposed, was also deemed "wrong."<sup>74</sup>

Seven months later Ikramov would cut into Zelenski's powers as Ikramov was appointed in his place, ostensibly at Zelenski's own initiative, making Ikramov First Secretary of the republic.<sup>75</sup> As the 1930s wore on, Ikramov would also figure as the most prominent source of policy initiative while many of Khodzhaev's proposals

---

<sup>72</sup> RGASPI, f.17, op.3, d.522, l.2, Document No. 8, "Ob Izmenenii Sostava Sredazbyuro Ts.K," October 3, 1925.

<sup>73</sup> RGASPI, f.17, op.3, d.679, l.5, Document No. 20, "Telegrammy Zelenskogo," March 23, 1928.

<sup>74</sup> RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d.37, Document No. 31, "Tashkent Zelenskomu, Samarkand Ikramovu i Gikalo," March 2, 1929.

<sup>75</sup> RGASPI, f.17, op.3, d.766, l.11, Document No. 77 "Ob Osvobozhdenii Zelenskogo ot Raboty Sekretarya Ts.K. KP (b) Uzbekistana," November 23, 1929.



increasingly fell on deaf ears.<sup>76</sup> Steadily accumulating power, Ikramov was selected Third Secretary of the *Sredazbyuro* in 1931, the highest position of any native nationality in this organ. Similar to his shifting support of Zelensky, Stalin pitted Ikramov and Khodzhaev against each other. By constantly reallocating the powers between them Stalin could play the role of arbiter all the while, in a piecemeal fashion, bolstering his own powers and centralization of policy making.

The “honeymoon” of Uzbekistan’s first generation of leaders ended with Stalin’s degradation of Bukhara. Consequently, five of the six native members of Uzbekistan’s Central Committee Bureau in 1937 hailed from Ferghana and Tashkent.<sup>77</sup> Thus, political forces associated with Tashkent and the Ferghana Valley were increasingly privileged at the expense of their counterparts in Bukhara, which since the early 1920s had dominated politics in the *Sredazbyuro* and later Uzbekistan itself. Moreover, political power tilted from the state to the party, empowering the First Secretary (head of the Communist Party) and disempowering the Chairman of the Council of People’s Commissariat (head of government).

Bukhara had been the most autonomy-minded of Uzbekistan’s parts, the most restive ever since the Tsarist era, and the site of the most severe internal power struggles. Transferring power from Bukhara to the more loyal part, Tashkent, was a means to strengthen Soviet control and halt the growth of autonomist sentiments. Ferghana initially lost out among the three because it was perceived as a source of opposition and Ferghana was marginalized in Kyrgyzstan for the same reason. Tajik Ferghana, by contrast, thrived because it was Uzbek and designated to control the new Tajik republic detached from Uzbekistan in 1930.

A second reason for this power transfer was the shifting importance of Tashkent and the Ferghana Valley in the late 1920s and the 1930s. The upgrading of Tashkent

---

<sup>76</sup> Refer e.g. to Ikramov’s proposal on the reconstruction of state farms: RGASPI, f.17, op.3, d.818, l.7, Document No. 34, “Ob Organizatsii Karakulevodcheskogo Khozyajstva,” April 5, 1931. Cf. Khodzhaev’s initiative to reorganize the handling of livestock: RGASPI, f.17, op.3, d.912, l.14, Dokument No. 51/33, “O Zhivotnovodstve,” December 22, 1932.

<sup>77</sup> Nicklas Norling, “Myth and Reality: Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan,” Ph.D. Dissertation, Johns Hopkins University-SAIS, April 2014, Appendix B, Table 2.

in 1925 to a “first rank” city along with Kharkov (Ukraine),<sup>78</sup> the subsequent transfer of the capital to Tashkent, and its history as the capital of Central Asia since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century ensured a prominent role for the elite associated with the capital region. Between the years 1926 to 1939 Tashkent’s city population nearly doubled, from 314,000 to 556,000,<sup>79</sup> thereby outstripping Samarkand’s more modest population increase from 105,000 to 136,000 during the same years.<sup>80</sup>

Ferghana’s ranking was similarly raised. By the mid-1930s Uzbekistan’s economy had overwhelmingly been oriented to that of a “cotton republic”, the production of which centered on the Ferghana Valley.<sup>81</sup> Cotton thrust the Ferghana Valley up in the hierarchy of administrative importance since the two foremost cotton-producing oblasts, Ferghana and Andijan, were located in the Valley. While the historical heart of Central Asia and of immense cultural significance, the areas associated with Bukhara and Samarkand could not boast equal administrative and economic importance. The transfer of political power from Bukhara and Samarkand towards Tashkent and Ferghana accorded with this changing economic and administrative significance; the latter two regions would also become the main cadre pools for the rest of the Soviet period. Such differential treatment of regions and cities as cadre pools was not unique to Uzbekistan, it should be said, but the rule in the Soviet system.<sup>82</sup>

Bukhara had been downgraded and Tashkent upgraded but the leaderships of both areas were eventually truncated. On March 15, 1938, both Khodzhaev and Ikramov faced the death penalty together with several others accused of “nationalistic” and

---

<sup>78</sup> RGASPI, f.17, op.3, d.533, l.5, Document No. 25, “O Stavke Pervogo Razryada po Kar’kovu, Rostovu-na-Donu i Tashkentu,” December 1, 1925.

<sup>79</sup> “Tashkent,” in *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, Vol. 25 (New York: Macmillan, 1980), p. 393.

<sup>80</sup> “Samarkand,” in *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, Vol. 22 (New York: Macmillan, 1980), pp. 574-575.

<sup>81</sup> RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 737, l. 65, “Ikramov k Stalinu,” June 12, 1935; RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 65, l. 14, “Ikramov k Stalinu,” June 4, 1936.

<sup>82</sup> See Geoffrey Hosking, “Patronage and the Russian State,” *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 78, No. 2 (April, 2000), pp. 314-315.

anti-Soviet activities e.g. Khodzhanov, Atabaev, and Karimov.<sup>83</sup> They were succeeded by a set of new leaders who also took charge of the execution squad, including Usman Yusupov (Ikramov's successor), Sultan Segisbaev (Chairman of SNK), B.B. Shejdin who survived the first round of purges, D.Z. Aprezyan (the new narkom), and A. Abdurakhmanov (Segisbaev's successor).<sup>84</sup>

### Centripetal and Centrifugal Forces

The "artificial" creation of Uzbekistan in 1924 portended strong local loyalties in the new state, but delimitation also acted as a centripetal force by solidifying the indigenous elite whether as a marriage of convenience or not. National loyalties gradually transcended pre-national ones, even if not supplanting them completely.

The Bolshevik revolution created fresh opportunities for a national elite with vested interests in the new republic. Thus, a new class of beneficiaries was created which, to quote Fainsod, "began to separate themselves from their neighbors and align their futures with the communist cause."<sup>85</sup> Such "national" solidarities had their foundation in the social organization of pre-Soviet Central Asia and the distinction between settled and nomadic society, where in the former the importance of kinship was much weaker. That *zemlyachestvo* was the "dominant principle of recruitment" as has been argued is doubtful since few of the *Sredazbyuro* documents discussed the matter.<sup>86</sup> What was discussed, at least in regards to Uzbekistan concerned merits, party history, intellectual abilities, reliability, prior government work, and loyalty to Moscow.

Soviet nationality policies may have leapfrogged a new nationally oriented elite but the Soviet hierarchy of regions in parallel spurred an artificial form of regionalism. That particular regions dominated early Soviet Uzbekistan and others lost out was

---

<sup>83</sup> RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 57, l. 19, Dokument No. 1167/sh, "Shifrtelogramma I.V. Stalina v Ts.K.(b) Uzbekistana o Zamenakh v Sostave Rukovodyashchikh Kadrov," August 2, 1937.

<sup>84</sup> Alexander Yakovlev Archives, "Sostavy Troek NKVD-UNKVD 1937-1938 gg., Sozdannykh dlya Rassmotreniya del Arestovannykh v Khode Mossovoj Operatsii po Prikazu NKVD SSSR No. 00447 ot 30 Iyulya 1937 g."

<sup>85</sup> Merle Fainsod, *Smolensk Under Soviet Rule* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1958), p. 452.

<sup>86</sup> Kathleen Collins, *Clans, Pacts, and Politics: Understanding Regime Transition in Central Asia*, PhD Dissertation, Stanford University, 1999, p. 167.

to be expected given the events preceding and coinciding with the Bolshevik takeover. The Kokand autonomy and its elite was destroyed, Bukhara was bought off, and the historical power center Khwarazm was too backward to be a contestant for political power. Thus political power was initially dispersed among figures from Tashkent, Bukhara, and to a lesser extent Ferghana – the economically, demographically, and politically most important component parts of the republic.

During the late 1920s and early 1930s, however, Stalin pulled the carpet out from underneath officials associated with Bukhara and strengthened Tashkent and later Ferghana. If the imposition of the Uzbek nation and regionalization of politics were the foremost external forces shaping politics in early Soviet Uzbekistan, Uzbekistan's settled society was the primary internal force. This social basis enabled elite loyalties to the Uzbek nation but was fettered by Stalin's regionalization of political power.

# Usman Yusupov: Stalin's Strong Leader

## The Party Hierarchy: A Primer

The structure of the party hierarchy in the republics had assumed a stable and institutionalized form by the 1940s and remained essentially the same thereafter. In Uzbekistan and the other Soviet republics, the Bureau of the Central Committee stood at the apex and served as the highest decision-making body.<sup>104</sup> Full and automatic membership in the Bureau was conferred upon the entire Secretariat of the Central Committee, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers and his deputy, the Commander of the Turkestan Military District, and the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet.<sup>105</sup>

The party-administrative organs below the Bureau included, in descending order of authority: the Central Committee Secretariat and its hierarchically ordered line organizations; the obkoms including, in Uzbekistan, Tashkent's gorkom; other gorkoms; and the rural and urban raykoms. At the bottom of the pyramid stood primary party organizations.<sup>106</sup>

The First Secretary was tasked with overall leadership, coordination, and supervision of the Uzbek party apparatus. These powers were not only symbolic but possessed the aura of a chief of state. Presiding over the Uzbek Bureau, the First Secretary served as the republic's chief policy implementer, acting within the constraints set by central directives.<sup>107</sup> Unlike the centrally appointed Second

---

<sup>104</sup> Irwin Steven Selnick, *The Ethnic and Political Determinants of Elite Recruitment in the Soviet National Republics: The Uzbek Soviet Elite, 1952-1981*, PhD Dissertation, Columbia University, 1984, pp. 95-153.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 153-154.

<sup>107</sup> John Miller, "Cadres Policy in the Nationality Areas: Recruitment of the CPSU First and Secretaries in the non-Russian Republics of the USSR," *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 29 (January, 1977), pp. 6-10.

Secretaries who maintained a low but powerful profile in terms of control, First Secretaries participated to some degree in policy debates on economic and other subjects.<sup>108</sup>

On party-organizational matters, however, the powers *formally* rested with a non-Central Asian central appointee, the Second Secretary, who controlled the *nomenklatura*. Overall, the dominance of non-Central Asians on questions relating to political-organizational matters, was one of the most prominent “ethno-political biases” in recruitment to the Uzbek state and party apparatuses, which was a calculated measure of control.<sup>109</sup> Beyond controlling appointments and dismissals, the Second Secretary was empowered to serve as a “mediator” between the non-Central Asian and Central Asians. In carrying out these functions, he was also obligated to keep tabs on the republican leadership and report them to central authorities.<sup>110</sup>

Usurping practically all authority of the other state organs at each level of government, the powers wielded by the First Secretary and the Second Secretary were substantial, though a Chairman of the Council of Ministers (or oblispolkom at the oblast level) could wield significant informal authority.<sup>111</sup> The division of labor between the First and Second Secretaries outlined above was mirrored at lower levels of government (oblast, rayon): the non-Central Asian Second Secretary acted as Moscow’s watchdog and formally kept control over the *nomenklatura*.

---

<sup>108</sup> See, for example, Institut Istorii Partii pri TsK KP Uzbekistana, *Ocherki Istorii Kommunisticheskoy Partii Uzbekistana* (Tashkent: Uzbekistan, 1964), p. 426. Cited in Irwin Steven Selnick, *The Ethnic and Political Determinants of Elite Recruitment in the Soviet National Republics: The Uzbek Soviet Elite, 1952-1981*, PhD Dissertation, Columbia University, 1984, p. 166.

<sup>109</sup> Steven Selnick, *The Ethnic and Political Determinants of Elite Recruitment in the Soviet National Republics: The Uzbek Soviet Elite, 1952-1981*, PhD Dissertation, Columbia University, 1984, p. 323.

<sup>110</sup> John Miller, “Cadres Policy in the Nationality Areas: Recruitment of the CPSU First and Secretaries in the non-Russian Republics of the USSR,” *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 29 (January, 1977), pp. 6-10.

<sup>111</sup> Merle Fainsod, *Smolensk Under Soviet Rule* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1958), pp. 62-67.

## The Nomenklatura System: A Skein, Not a Hierarchy

The appointment powers of the different levels of the party organs outlined above were defined in the *nomenklatura* system. One of the basic elements of the Soviet socio-political order, the *nomenklatura* regulated the appointments of hundreds of thousands of officials in the Soviet polity, some of them nominally elective, from the central government down to the village soviets. The *nomenklatura* lists were controlled by the Communist Party, directed from the center and at successively lower levels of the Communist Party apparatus.<sup>112</sup>

Although the system was modified over the Soviet period, the fundamentals remained the same. The *nomenklatura* contained two lists regulating the appointment and transfer of senior officials. The first included posts which could only change hands by a decision of the Central Committee and its bodies -- the Secretariat, the Orgburo, or the Politburo. The second list comprised posts needing approval of one of the Central Committee members.<sup>113</sup> Republican and provincial party organs were instructed to compile their own *nomenklatura* lists modelled on those of the central government in Moscow.<sup>114</sup>

The hierarchy of authority was similar. Positions on the two *nomenklatura* lists could only change through authorization of the Central Committee and its bodies at each level of government (central, republican, obkom), though this did not encompass the most senior posts. The appointment of Central Committee members and candidates and other "leading" party functionaries at the republican, obkom, and rayon levels was the prerogative of the Central Committee at the level above. Likewise, the job categories placed on the *nomenklatura* list on each level were

---

<sup>112</sup> Dvenadtsatyi s'ezd RKP (b), 17-25 Aprelya 1923 goda. Stenograficheskii Otchet, (Moscow 1968), pp. 704-5. Cited in T.H. Rigby, "Staffing USSR Incorporated: The Origins of the Nomenklatura System," *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (October, 1988), p. 530.

<sup>113</sup> Izv. TsK, No. 1 (122), January 18, 1926. Cited in T.H. Rigby, "Staffing USSR Incorporated: The Origins of the Nomenklatura System," *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (October, 1988), p. 530.

<sup>114</sup> T.H. Rigby, "Staffing USSR Incorporated: The Origins of the Nomenklatura System," *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (October, 1988), p. 531.

decided by the level above, which empowered that particular party organ to decide the influence of the party organ at the level below.<sup>115</sup>

The crux of the matter was twofold: First, the *nomenklatura* lists contained several instances of overlapping authority between bodies. For example, senior officials at the republican level were on the *nomenklatura* of both the Central Committee in Moscow and the Central Committee in the republic. Likewise, senior officials at the obkom level were on the *nomenklatura* of the republic's Central Committee as well as on the obkom Central Committee *nomenklatura*. Thus, the *nomenklatura* system set the main parameters in which appointments were regulated but the overlapping authority between bodies entailed that the prerogatives were fuzzy. It became unclear what bodies that initiated or merely ratified decisions since the system was a skein and not a strict hierarchy.<sup>116</sup>

Secondly, these overlapping authorities combined with inadequate administrative resources at all levels to monitor and control adherence to *nomenklatura* rules led to ubiquitous informal politicking over cadre appointments. This occurred both laterally between organs at the same level of government (e.g. the Central Committee Secretariat, the Central Committee Bureau, and the Orgburo) as well as vertically between levels of the party organs. In the case of the latter, each level of the party apparatus sought to shield itself from the influence of the one above by exploiting these loopholes and dual sources of authority in the system.

Thus, First Secretaries of raykoms, obkoms, or republics and the Bureaus at each level could use their authority over cadre appointments to designate their personnel: they made recommendations, smoothed the way for particular candidates by advancing their merits, and sometimes appointed personnel without approval from the level above to create a *fait accompli*. At times, the party organ at

---

<sup>115</sup> Bohdan Harasymiw, "The Soviet Communist Party's Leadership Recruitment System," *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue Canadienne de Science Politique*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (December, 1969), p. 498.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 533.



the level above struck back, recognizing the importance of controlling appointments below to “prevent local cliques from consolidating”.<sup>117</sup>

As the previous chapter hinted, control over the *nomenklatura* was not insignificant but rather probably the most potent and instrumental source of authority.<sup>118</sup> At the heart of political power in the Soviet system was the ability to maintain a following of loyal supporters. The key to maintaining loyal supporters was to control the *nomenklatura*. It is not surprising therefore that the First Secretary attempted to usurp some of the Second Secretary’s powers, lest he lose control over the placement of loyal supporters and thus compromise his ability to govern effectively. The post-purge Stalin period furnishes us, perhaps, with the most clear-cut evidence on how the formal distribution of power between Uzbekistan’s secretaries was upset by informal politics.

### **The Post-Purge Leadership Constellation: Tashkent and Ferghana Unscathed**

Having decimated the first generation of Uzbek politicians, Stalin installed a new Uzbek leadership in 1937 who looked squarely to him.<sup>119</sup> Yusupov, a native of Ferghana, succeeded Ikramov in 1938 and was thrust into the forefront as First Secretary of the Uzbek Communist Party at the age of 38. Though a native of Ferghana Valley, Yusupov had previously served as Secretary of the Tashkent okrug and head of the Tashkent Writers’ Union and was named secretary of the Central Committee in 1929 and Commissar of Food Industries in 1937.<sup>120</sup>

---

<sup>117</sup> For a more thorough elaboration, see Merle Fainsod, *Smolensk Under Soviet Rule* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1958), pp. 86-87.

<sup>118</sup> Thus, Fainsod noted: “Second only to matters of internal party administration in importance were the recurring problems of agricultural production...”. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>119</sup> For an example of the new leadership’s adulation of Stalin, see: RGASPI, f.558, op.11, d.1371, l.18-19, Document No. 14, “Privetstvennaya Telegramma Usmana Yusupova iz Tashkenta,” December 22, 1947; and RGASPI, f.558, op.11, d.1349, l.114-115, Document No. 82, “Privetstvie Ts.K. KP(b) Uzbekistana, SNK i Presiduma VS,” June 30, 1945.

<sup>120</sup> “Usman Yusupov,” in *Uzbek Sovet Entsiklopediyasi*, Vol. 13 (Tashkent: Uzbekistan SSR Fanlar Akademiyasi, 1979), p. 381.

If Ikramov was a Tashkent native who had built his career in Ferghana, Yusupov was the exact reverse – a native of Ferghana who plunged into politics in Tashkent. He owed his position to the patronage of Russia's new prefect, Andreev, appointed to Tashkent in September 1937 who introduced Yusupov to Stalin. Yusupov was portrayed as a figure detached from the Uzbek nationalist intelligentsia who had "always opposed Ikramov and Khodzhaev", which clearly worked to his advantage."<sup>121</sup> Declaring that he "was not opposed to the candidacy of Yusupov", Stalin instructed Andreev "to act at your own discretion and according to the situation," suggesting a degree of influence on the process of selecting a First Secretary to the Second Secretary. Yusupov's main quality was that he was anti-Ikramov and perceived as loyal. Evidence of this could be traced back to 1930 when, shortly after Ikramov's rise, Yusupov was demoted and penned several denunciatory letters on Ikramov directly addressed to Stalin.<sup>122</sup>

A Tashkent native, Abdudzhabar Abdurakhmanov, was chosen Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars in 1937 (later renamed the Council of Ministers in 1946). Abdurakhmanov, like much of the rest of the Soviet leadership, rose through the province and district apparatuses, having served prior to this appointment as the secretary of the Margilan, Ferghana, Kokand gorkoms, the Yangiyul raykom (Tashkent), and the Bukhara obkom – i.e. in all the three main historical power centers of the republic.<sup>123</sup> Being one of the few in the Uzbek ruling elite who survived Stalin's purges, the Ferghana native Yuldash Akhunbabaev remained as the servile head of the "legislative" branch but was now also Chairman of the recently established Supreme Soviet.

Stalin's bloodshed cut a deep gouge in Uzbekistan's elite. Even so, the supremacy of figures hailing from Tashkent and Ferghana continued after the great purges of 1937-1938. Only N. Ismailov from Samarkand came from elsewhere in the Central

---

<sup>121</sup> RGASPI, f, 558, op. 11, d. 57, l. 95, "Andreev k Stalinu," September 25, 1937.

<sup>122</sup> RGASPI, f. 82, op. 2, d. 154, l. 79-92, "Yusupov k Stalinu," January 25, 1931.

<sup>123</sup> "Abdudzhabar Abdurakhmanov," in *Handbook of Central Asia*, Vol. 3 (New Haven, CT: Human Relations Area Files, Inc., 1956), p. 883.

Committee Bureaus of 1940 and 1949.<sup>124</sup> In other words, even if an almost entirely new leadership was installed in power they reflected largely the same geographical origins as their disgraced predecessors. This attests to the robustness of the cadre hierarchy and that this “regionalism” was something which had intruded from without. Moscow also visibly reinforced its control by almost doubling the presence of non-Central Asians on the Uzbek Central Committee Bureau from five in 1937 to nine in 1940. *Korenizatsiia* had slowed down from the early 1930s, which in part was manifested in the Russification of the Uzbek Bureau after the great purges, but this did not imply that the powers of the native leadership were more curtailed as Uzbekistan entered the 1940s. Quite the contrary, as Moscow remained passive to an increasingly reassertive Uzbek leadership.

### **Nationality Frictions and Power Usurpation in the Central Committee Bureau**

Although Stalin’s Russification and centralization of policy in the post-purge period initially stifled local political influence, Yusupov’s clout was growing steadily during the 1940s and his policy initiatives often trumped those of powerful figures at the center. For example, when in the 1940s Yusupov and Kobulov reported increasing theft and embezzlement in the trading network of food, textile, and manufactured goods, proposing the establishment of a troika composed of themselves as well the Prosecutor Beljaev, this was rejected by the Central Committee secretaries Molotov and Mikoyan who wanted this to fall under the all-Union Prosecutor General. But Stalin sided with the locals, noting “I am against the proposal of Comrades Molotov and Mikoyan. I favor the proposal of Yusupov and Kobulov. Insist on that proposal”.<sup>125</sup>

A second example of Yusupov’s increasing authority was his lead role in the construction of the Great Ferghana Canal, a massive project begun in 1939 stretching 250 kilometers and employing 500,000 workers. Whereas Molotov in his speech to

---

<sup>124</sup> Nicklas Norling, “Myth and Reality: Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan,” Ph.D. Dissertation, Johns Hopkins University-SAIS, April 2014, Appendix B, Table 3-4.

<sup>125</sup> AP RF, f. 3, op. 58, d. 212, l. 211-12, Document No.231, “Zapiska V.M. Molotova i A.I. Mikoyana I.V. Stalinu o Sozdanii Trojki v Uzbekistane,” March 12, 1943.

the 18<sup>th</sup> party congress the same year used the rostrum to criticize the “gigantomaniia” of contemporary construction efforts and irrigation projects in the USSR, they as a whole were being scaled down, Yusupov confidently ignored this opposition with Stalin’s backing. Not only Molotov but also the Uzbek Second Secretary Alexander Kudriavtchev along with the other non-Central Asian members of the Uzbek Central Committee opposed the project.<sup>126</sup> Evidently, Stalin ceded policy initiative and political power to Yusupov and did so in part, as during the 1920s and 1930s, to maintain parity between the Central Asian and non-Central Asian secretaries.

The canal controversy and Yusupov’s transgressions of authority frayed relations between the indigenous and non-Central Asian centrally appointed members and candidates of Uzbekistan’s Central Committee Bureau.<sup>127</sup> Thus, the deputy Chairman of the Party Control Commission, Nikolaj Lomakin, reported in 1941 that he had “a more or less clear picture” of the situation in the Bureau. “Yusupov”, he noted, “distrusts Second Secretary Kudriavtchev and vice versa”. There is an “unhealthy climate in the Bureau” he continued, mainly fought out “between Russians and Uzbeks”. Accusing Yusupov and Abdurakhmanov for ‘anti-party’ activity and for having “adopted or strived for adopting the role of Second Secretary”, Kudriavtchev complained that they had precluded “an active role for himself”.<sup>128</sup> Comrade Zykov (in charge of the all-Union Central Committee’s cadre policy) corroborated this, writing to Malenkov (Secretary of the all-Union Central Committee) that: “On the question of cadres, the opinion of Kudriavtchev is not listened to.” Not heeding instructions, Yusupov “went ahead and appointed the

---

<sup>126</sup> RGANI, f. 6, op. 6, d. 662, l. 197–199, “Yusupov to Shkiriakov,” March 17, 1940; RGANI, f. 6, op. 6, d. 662, l. 235, “Protokol zasedaniia Biuro TsK UzSSR,” August 20, 1940.

<sup>127</sup> RGANI, f. 6, op. 6, d. 662, l. 235, “Protokol zasedaniia Biuro TsK UzSSR,” August 20, 1940; RGANI f. 6, op. 6, d. 667, l. 41–52, “Lomakin to Andreev,” August 7, 1941.

<sup>128</sup> RGANI, f. 6, op. 6, no. 667, Letter from N. Lomakin, “Upolnomochennyj KPK pri Ts.K. VKP(b) po Uzbekskoj SSR, 1941” to A. Andreev (“Informatsionnaya Zapiska”) in “Spravki rabotnikov komissii partijnogo kontrolya pri Ts.K. VKP (b) po dokladnym zapiskam upolnomochennogo KPK po Uzbekskoj SSR, informatsii i telegrammy upolnomochennogo, postanovleniya Byuro Ts.K. KP(b) Uzbekistan i drugie materialy o narusheniyakh ustava VKP (b)...” 1941-1943.

Chairman of the Workers Reserves, comrade Vostokov, the First Secretary of the Lenin raykom, Kotov, and comrade Makumbaeva (an NKVD official in Bukhara), against Kudriavtchev's objections".<sup>129</sup>

Appended to Lomakin's report was a long list of Kudriavtchev's other accusations against the Uzbek leadership, among which embezzlement, theft, and concentration of powers were among the more grave. Noteworthy is that this litany of errors contained no allegations of favoritism or nepotism. Lomakin, on the other hand, did note "one major shortcoming in Yusupov's work and that is his cadre policy". However, this did not refer to nepotism but rather the preferential treatment of Uzbeks in army conscription. Underscoring that the main acrimony was between Russians and Uzbeks, Lomakin even went as far as saying that these belligerent groups were conspiring against one another.<sup>130</sup> That Yusupov was safely under Stalin's thumb cannot be doubted but he apparently exercised significant powers locally, even sidelining Moscow's proconsul.

### Yusupov's "Family Circle"

These powers extended also to the delicate sphere of cadre appointment. When exercising these powers, "Yusupov was as a man," B. Reskov and G. Sedov contend, "who rarely listened to recommendations...when it came to selecting a person for a position". Rather, Yusupov surrounded himself with those outstanding figures "he had met and encountered in his work life."<sup>131</sup> One such "supporter" is described in greater detail, R.M. Ghulov, the example of which Reskov and Sedov view as emblematic of Yusupov's governing style. Deaf but ambitious, Ghulov began as a

---

<sup>129</sup> RGANI, f. 6, op.6, no. 664, "Sekretaryu Ts.K. VKP/b/ tov. Malenkovu G.M." Telegram authored by Zikov, Organisator Upravleniya Kadrov Ts.K. VKP/b/, November 11, 1940, in "Dokladnye zapiski upolnomochennogo KPK pri Ts.K. VKP(b) po Uzbekskoj SSR..." 1939-1942.

<sup>130</sup> RGANI, f. 6, op. 6, no. 667, Letter from N. Lomakin, "Upolnomochennyj KPK pri Ts.K. VKP(b) po Uzbekskoj SSR, 1941" to A. Andreev ("Informatsionnaya Zapiska") in "Spravki rabotnikov komissii partijnogo kontrolya pri Ts.K. VKP (b) po dokladnym zapiskam upolnomochennogo KPK po Uzbekskoj SSR, informatsii i telegrammy upolnomochennogo, postanovleniya Byuro Ts.K. KP(b) Uzbekistan i drugie materialy o narusheniyakh ustava VKP (b)..." 1941-1943.

<sup>131</sup> B. Reskov and G. Sedov, *Usman Yusupov* (Toshkent: BAE, 1976), Chapter 6 "Budem Vmeste Rabotat'".

mechanic in Tashkent but was assigned to Tajikistan and rose to the position of deputy Commissar for Food Industry, and then deputy First Secretary of the Communist Party. He encountered Yusupov in the early 1940s during the construction of the Great Ferghana Canal and Yusupov was reportedly so impressed with Ghulov's labor that he instructed Second Secretary Kudriavtchev to appoint him first deputy of the State Control Commission. "Yusupov knew one criterion," Reskov and Sedov write, "Intelligence, education, independence, organizational skills, determination, and courage [...] not national origin." Another appointee, the head of the Great Ferghana Canal project, a Bukhara native, was illiterate, but reportedly had the qualities Yusupov sought.<sup>132</sup> Yusupov's men may have been lacking in *savoir faire* but they were apparently both loyal and in possession of the requisite talents.

Abdulla Mavlyanov and Mirza-Akhmedov, both Kazakhs and natives of southern Kazakhstan, were two key figures in Yusupov's "family circle".<sup>133</sup> Born in the Kazakh village Sarar, Mavlyanov was active in Tashkent Unions during the 1930s, at which time he encountered Yusupov. They would also rise together. Having served as secretary of the October raykom in Tashkent, then secretary in Ferghana and Bukhara, Mavlyanov was elevated to Central Committee secretary in 1941, and from 1942 to 1946 he occupied the prestigious position of First Secretary of the Tashkent obkom.<sup>134</sup> Similarly, Mirza-Akhmedov was a native of Turkestan City, located near the Kazakh city of Shimkent, which today is better known, but like Yusupov and Mavlyanov he spent almost his entire career in Tashkent.<sup>135</sup> The common denominator of Yusupov, Mavlyanov, and Mirza-Akhmedov was that their careers were confined almost exclusively to Tashkent; all had served in the Tashkent obkom or gorkom at various points, but it bears noting that none of them came from this area.

---

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> Donald Carlisle, "The Uzbek Power Elite: Politburo and Secretariat (1938–83)," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 5, No. 3-4, (1986), p. 103.

<sup>134</sup> "A. Mavlyanov," in *Uzbek Sovet Entsiklopediyasi*, Vol. 7 (Tashkent: Uzbekiston SSR Fanlar Akademiyasi, 1976), p. 467.

<sup>135</sup> "M. Mirza-Akhmedov" in *Uzbek Sovet Entsiklopediyasi*, Vol. 7 (Tashkent: Uzbekiston SSR Fanlar Akademiyasi, 1976), p. 262.

Conversely, the two eminent Tashkent natives during Yusupov's reign in the 1940s – Sabir Kamalov and Arif Alimov – served predominantly outside of Tashkent. During the 1930s Kamalov was stationed in Bukhara, then First Secretary of the Karakalpak obkom 1933-36, first Secretary of the Margilan raykom in Ferghana 1937-38, Second Secretary of the Ferghana obkom 1938-1939, deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers 1940-41, only to end up as First Secretary of the Karakalpak obkom 1941-1946, and First Secretary of the Ferghana obkom in 1949.<sup>136</sup> At the age of 38 in 1950, Arif Alimov had served as First Secretary of the Tashkent gorkom, the Kokand gorkom and the Namangan obkom in Ferghana, commissar of state security in Karakalpakstan, Second Secretary of the Andijan obkom, and First Secretary of the Namangan and Samarkand obkoms. Down to 1950, the Tashkent-based phase of his career had lasted only two years even if he had traversed all oblasts of the republic but three.<sup>137</sup> The pattern during the Yusupov years was that elite careers were primarily pursued outside of native oblasts – “Ferghanites” served primarily in Tashkent and *vice versa* while several others crisscrossed the republic at a breathtaking pace. This made the formation of regional cliques on the basis of place of birth all but impossible.

The Party Control Commission's files on party violations in the early 1940s further testifies to the diversity of origins among members of “protection pacts”.<sup>138</sup> For example, Ferghana's Party Control Commission head Abdurakhmanov was identified to have “secret ties” with the former Secretary of the Uzbekistan Central Committee on propaganda, Suleiman Azimov, and the former secretary of Tashkent

---

<sup>136</sup> “Sabir Kamalov,” in *Uzbek Sovet Entsiklopediyasi*, Vol. 5, (Tashkent: Uzbekiston SSR Fanlar Akademiyasi, 1974), p. 283-284.

<sup>137</sup> “Arif Alimov,” in *Handbook of Central Asia*, Vol. 3 (New Haven, CT: Human Relations Area Files, Inc., 1956), p. 885.

<sup>138</sup> RGANI, f. 6., op. 6, No. 667 “Spravki rabotnikov komissii partijnogo kontrolya pri Ts.K. VKP (b) po dokladnym zapiskam upolnomochennogo KPK po Uzbekskoj SSR, informatsii i telegrammy upolnomochennogo, postanovleniya Byuro Ts.K. KP(b) Uzbekistan i drugie materialy o narusheniyakh ustava VKP (b)...” 1941-1943.

obkom, M. Yuldashev.<sup>139</sup> However, Abdurakhmanov was a native of Tashkent, Yuldashev from Kokand Ferghana oblast,<sup>140</sup> and Azimov from Samarkand.<sup>141</sup>

The influence Central Asian leaders exerted through mutual protection pacts is evident. But whatever the extent of such pacts and their occasional concentration to geographical regions, they were scarcely unique to Central Asia. In 1937, for example, A.A. Kulyakin alerted Stalin to the formation of a regional patronage group in Ukraine, where the First Secretary of Dnepropetrovsk obkom M.M. Khataevich had contrived a “loyal following of former co-workers and friends” at different levels of responsibility – all of whom shared the background of having been associated with Khataevich in party organizations and factories in the past.<sup>142</sup> Indeed, Ukraine and the Black Sea area were the regions most associated with nepotism -- not Central Asia. Declaring a “war on bureaucracy and nepotism” in 1937, Stalin averred that in “a number of regions of the Soviet Union, notably Ukraine and the Black Sea area, party executives were being ‘chosen’ by a small group of insiders instead of being elected.”<sup>143</sup>

### **Party Violations in Yusupov’s Uzbekistan**

In-depth investigations by the Party Control Commission in Tashkent, Samarkand, and Bukhara oblast in the early 1940s posit that the main predicaments here were others than violation of cadre policy, though of no lesser importance. The Party Control Commission highlighted four main areas of wrong-doings in Tashkent. First, Tashkent officials had splurged 50,000 rubles on a banquet, which together

---

<sup>139</sup> RGANI, f. 6., op. 6, No. 667, Letter from Sec. of Ts.K. KP/b/Uz Lomakin to Chm. of KPK A.A. Andreev, January 23, 1942.

<sup>140</sup> “A. Abdurakhmanov” in *Handbook of Central Asia*, Vol. 3 (New Haven, CT: Human Relations Area Files, Inc., 1956), p. 883; “M. Yuldashev,” at [centrasia.ru](http://www.centrasia.ru) <<http://www.centrasia.ru/person2.php?&st=1094934819>> (2013-11-05).

<sup>141</sup> Beyond engaging in these illicit ties, Abdurakhmanov had also used public funds for house construction and had a reputation considered “strongly unfavorable”. See RGANI, f. 6., op. 6, No. 667, Letter from Sec. of Ts.K. KP/b/Uz Lomakin to Chm. Of KPK A.A. Andreev, January 23, 1942.

<sup>142</sup> RGASPI, f.558, op.2, d.148, “Pis’mo Kulyakina A.A. v Osobyj Sektor Ts.K. VKP (b),” June 16, 1937.

<sup>143</sup> “Stalin Orders End of Bureaucracies,” *New York Times*, March 8, 1937, p. 10.



with other banquets and concerts for heads of enterprises, secretaries of the party bureau, komsomol secretaries, and raykom secretaries had “created conditions for *semejstvennosti* [nepotism]”. Although Tashkent was spotlighted in particular, such spendthrift was pinpointed in other oblasts of the republic as well, not seldom involving the throwing of lavish parties, the “drinking of wine and vodka”, and other disorderly conduct.<sup>144</sup>

A second target of criticism was the “low number of figures with worker backgrounds” among Tashkent officials (and also other oblasts of the republic) and the “liberal relations to judicial practice” among judges.<sup>145</sup> Thirdly, and perhaps most serious, were allegations against Tashkent obkom and gorkom officials for their “violation of intra-party democracy”, “the question of collective leadership in the party apparatus”, and the “failure to hold party plenums as envisaged.” Such missteps were asserted to have been particularly pronounced in Oktyabrskom, Stalinskom, and Kalininskom rayons. Not a single session of the Bureau of the Tashkent gorkom between March and August, for example, was held with the attendance of all members and only four out of the nine voting members were present during the seven sessions held during these dates.<sup>146</sup> This quadrumvirate of officials effectively monopolized decision-making to the others’ dismay.

Samarkand’s oblast received its share of criticism, which focused on four general concerns: failure to absorb local nationalities in industrial work, insufficient party work in primary party organization, low response rates to complaints against the party, and a “feudal attitude” towards spouses and women in general. The “high turnover of cadres” was also critiqued whereby in the first 8 months of 1940, as

---

<sup>144</sup> RGANI, f. 6, op.6, No. 664, “Dokladnaya zapiska – O faktakh razbazarivaniya gosudarstvennykh sredstv Tashkentskim obkomom KP/b/Uz na ustrojstvo banketov,” October 21, 1939, in “Dokladnye zapiski upolnomochennogo KPK pri Ts.K. VKP(b) po Uzbekskoj SSR...” 1939-1942. In defense, First Secretary Yusupov claimed this had been unsanctioned by the SNK and the CC. See, RGANI, f. 6, op.6, No. 664, in “Dokladnaya zapiska...” January 8, 1940.

<sup>145</sup> RGANI, f. 6, op.6, No. 664, in “O faktakh narusheniya...” July 7, 1940, and “Dokladnye zapiski...” August 27, 1940.

<sup>146</sup> RGANI, f. 6, op.6, No. 664, in “O Narusheniyakh ustava VKP/b/ o Sozyve..” to Yusupov and Andreev AA from V. Filimonov, October 10, 1940.

much as 35.3 percent of the 1497 *nomenklatura* employees in the obkom changed positions for various reasons. This was conceived to be an “unserious relationship to cadre development” with “cadre shifting from place to place”. The failure to include local nationalities in the *nomenklatura* was also identified to be a problem, with only 634 of the 1497 being Uzbeks, and the share of women negligible.<sup>147</sup>

Finally, in an evaluation of Bukhara oblast authored by the First Secretary of its obkom, T. Dzhuraev, the vast majority of party exclusions concerned misuse of state property or poor performance. Out of 50 exclusions from 1930 to 1952, 21 concerned embezzlement of state or kolkhoz funds, 10 related to “violations of socialist instructions”, 6 to “hooliganism”, and 2 for violations of “party discipline”.<sup>148</sup> Another 26-page long evaluation on performance and party violations in Karakalpakstan notes significant problems in virtually all spheres of political life, mostly in respect to plan fulfillment, but does not mention poor staffing of cadres.<sup>149</sup> Instances of patronage (*protektsiya*) and embezzlement were observed in Namangan and Tashkent oblasts where in the former one Ubajdullah Khaipakhunov had protected “an associate” and in the latter Kolkhoz funds had been plundered in Parkent rayon, but attention to cadre policy, nepotism, and favoritism was on the whole marginal.<sup>150</sup>

Even taking into consideration the possibility that such violations may simply have eluded the Party Control Commission it is important to recognize that nepotism and localism were problems encompassing all of Soviet society to varying degrees. An article published shortly after Stalin’s death on August 4, 1953, in *Pravda* set the tone. Cadre selection in the USSR takes place following three criteria it proclaimed: First,

---

<sup>147</sup> RGANI, f. 6, op.6, No. 664, “Dokladnaya zapiska: o rabote Samarkandkogo obkoma KP/b/Uz” from V. Filimonov to U. Yusupov and A.A. Andreev, October 24, 1940.

<sup>148</sup> RGANI, f. 6, op. 6, No. 1047, “Informatsiya o rabote partijnoj komissii pri Bukharskom obkome Kompartii Uzbekistana za vtoroe polugodie 1953 goda”.

<sup>149</sup> RGANI, f. 6., op. 6, No. 667, “O faktakh samouspokoeniya...” April 15, 1942. On failure to fulfill cotton plans, see RGANI, f. 6, op. 6, No. 667, Postanovleniya SNK UzSSR “O merakh po sokhraneniyu khlopka volokna i khlopka-syrtsa urokhaya 1941-1942” authored by Yusupov November 23, 1942.

<sup>150</sup> RGANI, f. 6., op. 6, No. 667, “Zapiska o Sistematicheskome narushenii so storony Byuro TsK KP/b Uzbekistan i nekotorykh obkomov i rajkomov partii...o rassmotrenii apellyatsii”. October 28, 1942.

on the basis of “political trust” and reliability; second, on the basis of concrete work and merit; And third, more negatively, on the basis of “personal loyalty, friendship connections, and localism (*zemlyachestvo* or *rodstva*).”<sup>151</sup>

## Regionalism Reversed

In 1950 First Secretary Yusupov was replaced with another Ferghana native, Amin Niyazov, who inhabited this office until 1955. Next to Supreme Soviet head Yuldash Akhunbabaev, Niyazov belonged to that small clique of individuals whose careers had commenced prior to the purges and prospered afterwards. His formative career experiences were unlike Yusupov primarily in his native Ferghana. Designated Minister of Finance in 1940, Niyazov held this post until 1946 when named deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers. In 1947 he climbed an additional rung on the career ladder being elected Chairman of the Supreme Soviet and admitted member of the Central Committee Bureau. He would serve as First Secretary from 1950 until his dismissal in 1955.<sup>152</sup>

Similar to the key officials during the Yusupov era, Niyazov’s “ruling coalition” was primarily based on figures who had not pursued their careers in their native regions. For example, Malik Abdurazakov (from Namangan) was appointed First Secretary of the Tashkent gorkom in 1952 and elected member of the Central Committee in 1956 after a brief sojourn in the all-Union Council of Nationalities.<sup>153</sup> Nurutdin Mukhitdinov, conversely, like many other Tashkent natives grounded his career in the Ferghana Valley. Born in 1917 and having joined the party in 1942, he was appointed secretary for propaganda in the Namangan obkom in 1948, and then First Secretary of Namangan obkom in 1948-50. Thereafter he headed the Tashkent oblast for two years until his appointment as Chairman of the Council of Ministers in 1951.

---

<sup>151</sup> “Soblyudat’ Partijnye Printsipy Podbora Kadrov,” *Pravda*, August 4, 1953, No. 216, p. 1.

<sup>152</sup> “A. Niyazov,” in *Handbook of Central Asia*, Vol. 3 (New Haven, CT: Human Relations Area Files, Inc., 1956), p. 897.

<sup>153</sup> “M. Abdurazakov,” in *Handbook of Central Asia*, Vol. 3 (New Haven, CT: Human Relations Area Files, Inc., 1956), p. 883.

In parallel to this he served in the Central Committee Bureau 1952 to 1956 during which time he was chosen to be First Secretary of Uzbekistan in 1955.<sup>154</sup>

That most leading Tashkent officials had served the greater part of their career not in their province but in Ferghana and *vice versa* created bonds of loyalties at workplaces, but not necessarily in their native regions. Thus, the Second Secretary of the Andijan obkom in 1946, the Tashkent native Arif Alimov, encountered another Tashkent-native Abdurazak Mavlyanov when he served as First Secretary of the Andijan obkom in 1946 and Mavlyanov and Alimov would rise together: Mavlyanov was appointed Chairman of the Council of Ministers in 1950 when Alimov was designated Minister of Agriculture.<sup>155</sup> Abdurakhmanov, the Tashkent native, served as head of the Yangijul raykom in Tashkent when Yusupov from Ferghana was First Secretary of Tashkent oblast. They rose and fell together in 1937 and 1950 respectively.<sup>156</sup>

Severly weakened but not entirely defeated, Niyazov's predecessor Yusupov returned to Tashkent in 1953 to chair the Council of Ministers but was soon undermined and demoted to director of a Sovkhoz. Yusupov was the first casualty of Khrushchev's rise to power and he was replaced with Nurutdin Mukhitdinov who, using this office as a springboard, would be appointed First Secretary two years later. At the plenum of the Central Committee of the Uzbek Communist Party in 1954, Arif Alimov, Secretary of the Tashkent Obkom, accused Yusupov of "nepotism and corruption" and Malik Abdurazakov, the Tashkent gorkom Secretary, lambasted Yusupov's construction of 2 million-ruble personal mansions in Tashkent and Yangi-yol.<sup>157</sup>

---

<sup>154</sup> "N. Mukhitdinov," *Uzbek Sovet Entsiklopediyasi*, Vol. 7 (Tashkent: Uzbekistan SSR Fanlar Akademiyasi, 1976), p. 482-483.

<sup>155</sup> "Abdurazak Mavlyanov," in *Uzbek Sovet Entsiklopediyasi* Vol. 6 (Tashkent: Uzbekistan SSR Fanlar Akademiyasi, 1975), p. 467.

<sup>156</sup> Refer to their biographies cited earlier.

<sup>157</sup> RGANI, f. 5, Op. 31, d. 72, l, 147. July 28, 1954.

True or untrue, such allegations were the *modus operandi* in the Soviet system and frequently concerned flamboyant lifestyles, house construction, and promotion of friends and relatives.<sup>158</sup> If in the U.S. wealth has more commonly been a road to political office than political office has been a road to wealth,<sup>159</sup> the reverse undoubtedly held true in the USSR. Doubtlessly, Soviet leaders exploited the perquisites of public office to acquire apartments and other attractive goods for family and friends. It is doubtful, however, whether all such accusations should be taken at face value. That virtually every new leader chastised his predecessor for “nepotism”, housing violations, or related accusations made such accusations rather script-like. Besides, the figure who did not have an entourage of protégés would likely never have made it to the higher echelons of power in the first place.

### Party Violations in Niyazov’s Uzbekistan

A more reliable indicator of favoritism than the opinions of a successor are the confidential reports of the Party Control Commission. Firstly, it is suggestive that the one Party Control Commission file relating specifically to *mestnichestvo* in the Soviet Union covers only cases in Rostov, Gorkov, and Karelo-Finn oblasts, the Ministry of Building Material, the Leninabad and Tatar obkoms, and others.<sup>160</sup> Uzbekistan is not mentioned among them, even if this file is enlightening regarding these practices elsewhere. For example, in Russia’s Shelkov Cotton Kombinat the former Director, Comrade Bolshakov, had filled this enterprise with relatives, including his wife’s brother.<sup>161</sup> Likewise, in Tajikistan’s Leninabad oblast, the chairman of the Pobeda enterprise, Mirzaidov, had embezzled factory funds and engaged in favoritism.<sup>162</sup> That no case in this file concerns Uzbekistan may have several explanations and does not necessarily imply that such practices were not part of Uzbek politics, which they in all certainty were to some degree. But it

---

<sup>158</sup> See e.g. “A Forest Tale,” *Izvestija*, December 30, 1959, p. 4.

<sup>159</sup> Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 66.

<sup>160</sup> RGANI, f.6, op.6, no. 1652, “Spravki rabotnikov KPK pri TsK KPSS po proverke zayavlenij o narushenii gosudarstvennoj distsipliny, pripiskakh, ochkovtiral’tel’stve i mestnichestvo,” October 1952-May 1955.

<sup>161</sup> RGANI, f.6, op.6, no. 1652, “Zamestitelyu predsedatelya KPK pri TsK VKP/b t. Yagodkinu I.T.” 1951.

<sup>162</sup> RGANI, f.6, op.6, no. 1652, “Predsedatelyu KPK pri TsK KPSS t. Shkiryatovu M.F.” 1953.

indicates that localism as well as the related practice of nepotism were not more extensive than elsewhere in the USSR, including the European parts of the empire.

Secondly, the violations that did occur in Uzbekistan appear to have been principally of other types. The Party Control Commission's examination of Uzbek obkoms and gorkoms in the first half of 1953 reveals that of 101 party exclusions considered by the Uzbek Central Committee from 1923 to 1951, 23 concerned embezzlement or theft of state property, 15 various forms of misdemeanors in cooperatives, 5 for withholding compromising material on oneself or relatives, and 27 for drinking, hooliganism, or moral problems. Typical deficiencies among the rest of these neatly arranged violations pertained to desertion, feudal relationship to wives, "sloppiness" in work, and anti-Soviet activity. Specific examples referred to include a prosecutor in Tyurya-Kurgansk rayon who had illegally minted a total of 9,200 rubles; tens of thousands of rubles had been embezzled from the Naryn Sovkhoz by a judge in Kurgansk rayon; and the Chairman of the Kirov Kolkhoz had amassed a small fortune amounting to more than 300,000 rubles.<sup>163</sup> A similar story could be told for spotted party violations in the second half of 1953.<sup>164</sup>

Thirdly, Central Committee plenum reports rarely referred to localism in Uzbekistan, even if they were part of similar reports elsewhere. A reading of public reports from the Uzbek Central Committee Party plenums in the late 1940s and early 1950s confirms that the party violations referred to in secret correspondence square overall with public reports on "the struggle against feudalism-landowner survivals",<sup>165</sup> failure to meet cotton targets,<sup>166</sup> "district and province officials who...have even themselves stolen collective farm property",<sup>167</sup> "a trend toward

---

<sup>163</sup> RGANI, f. 6, op. 6, no. 1070, "O rabote partijnoj komissii pri Ts.K. Kompartii Uzbekistan za pervoe polugodie 1953 g." in "Informatsiya o rabote partijnoj komissii pri Ts.K Kompartii Uzbekistana za 1953, 1955".

<sup>164</sup> RGANI, f. 6, op. 6, no. 1070 "Informatsiya o rabote partijnoj komissii pri Ts.K Kompartii Uzbekistana za 1953, 1955".

<sup>165</sup> "S'ezd Bolshevikov Uzbekistana," *Pravda*, March 2, 1949, p. 1.

<sup>166</sup> "Plenum TsK KP/b/ Uzbekistana," *Pravda*, April 23, 1950, p. 2.

<sup>167</sup> "Plenum TsK KP/b/ Uzbekistana," *Pravda*, June 15, 1952, p. 2.

private property acquisition, petty bourgeois corruption and nationalist and religious sentiment,"<sup>168</sup> and "instances of a feudal-beg attitude to women".<sup>169</sup>

Contemporaneous plenum reports from the Kyrgyz and Tajik Central Committees contain nearly the same content of party violations but here, in contradistinction to Uzbekistan, the ills of nepotism and related practices were emphasized. Thus, a Kyrgyz Central Committee plenum report remarked how "The struggle against the incorrect practice of selecting cadres for family reasons is being waged... Officials who have failed in their work are frequently transferred from one post to another."<sup>170</sup> Likewise, a Tajik Central Committee Plenum report intimated that "[Second Secretary of Tajikistan] Perminov...was waging a principled struggle against existing shortcomings and had spoken out firmly against selecting personnel on the basis of friendship."<sup>171</sup>

These differences are likely not coincidental since nepotism, *zemlyachestvo* or *mestnichestvo*, were precisely the maladies emphasized in Tajik confidential party documents. Available data suggest that there was a qualitative difference between politics as conducted in at least these two republics, even if public bombast and blunder of "promotion of friends and relatives" was a means to denigrate one's predecessor in most Soviet republics. The hegemony of the Leninabad faction in Tajikistan serves as a useful contrast to the comparatively less territorialized factions in Uzbekistan.

### **Leninabad Hegemony in Tajikistan**

The previous chapter noted how Tajikistan's Leninabad oblast emerged as the foremost source of political power following its detachment from Uzbekistan in 1930. This hegemony was tangible. While comprising less than a fifth of Tajikistan's

---

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>170</sup> "Plenum TsK KP/b/ Kirgizii," *Pravda*, May 4, 1952, p. 2.

<sup>171</sup> "In the Tadzhikistan Communist Party Central Committee," *Current Digest of the Russian Press*, No. 21, Vol. 9, July 3, 1957, p. 25.

territory and less than a third of its population (in 1976),<sup>172</sup> Tajikistan's northwestern Leninabad oblast (with the capital Khojand) supplied all of Tajikistan's First Secretaries from 1946 to 1991 (Gafurov, T.U. Uldzhabaev, D.R. Rasulov, R.N. Nabiev, and K.M. Makhkamov). This in spite of the fact that the population of neighboring Stalinabad oblast was almost double that of Leninabad.<sup>173</sup> Likewise, all Chairmen of the Council of Ministers during this half-century long period were born in Leninabad oblast (D.R. Rasulov, T.U. Uldzhabaev, A.K. Kakharov, R.N. Nabiev, K.M. Makhmanov, I.I. Khaev, and K.M. Makhkamov) with the exception of N. Dodkhudoev (1956-61), hailing from Derzud in Gorno-Badakshan oblast. None of these figures – heads of party and state – ever served outside of Leninabad or the capital oblast Stalinabad, except Uldzhabaev who was “exiled” to Khatlon oblast after he had fallen out of favor with the party in 1961.<sup>174</sup> Whereas heads of party and state came from disparate origins in Uzbekistan and a majority, as a rule, had served in several oblasts during their careers, in Tajikistan political power was concentrated to a single region.

Besides the low level of inter-oblast mobility within Tajikistan, it was on the lowest rung of Soviet republics in enlistments for positions in the center in Moscow. In fact, of the Soviet Union's 129 oblasts in the post-Khrushchev period, Leninabad oblast occupied the 128<sup>th</sup> place when measuring the degree of upward mobility from oblast to union-level positions. Only the Ukrainian Sum'ska oblast was a more unfavorable spot for the career-oriented official seeking promotion to Moscow.<sup>175</sup> In other words not only was lateral mobility within Tajikistan impeded but vertical mobility was severely circumscribed.

The tight-knit group of leading Tajik officials which formed against this backdrop was quite distinct from their Uzbek counterparts. One document dating from 1952

---

<sup>172</sup> “Tadzhik Soviet Socialist Republic,” in *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, Vol. 25 (New York: Macmillan, 1980), p. 285.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 285.

<sup>174</sup> See *Entsiklopediyai Sovetii Todzhik*, Vol. 1-8 (Dushanbe: Akademiyai Fankhon RSS Todzhikistan, 1986-1988).

<sup>175</sup> William A. Clark, “Toward the Construction of a Political Mobility Ranking of Oblast Communist Party Committees,” *Soviet Union*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (1987), pp. 215-218.



noted serious deviations from the party line by the Tajik Central Committee Bureau, and especially its stubbornly disobedient First Secretary Gafurov, including but not limited to anti-government activities, fraud in the cotton industry, and localism. “Gafurov and Rasulov”, it grumbled, “demonstrate a tendency of *mestnichestvo* and *zemlyachestvo*...[with] all attention directed to Leninabad oblast where they were born and where they have all of their relationships”.<sup>176</sup> Nepotism was rife among this clique of Leninabadis. One case among many others cited referred to the former Secretary of the Stalinabad gorkom Shomukhamedov who had smoothed the way for his 75-year old uncle and other relatives. Heads of kolkhozes, meanwhile, had reportedly been filled with “close friends” of Rasulov and Gafurov and ministers and others were appointed on the basis of their origin (*rod*). Not limited to this, Russian raykom secretaries had been replaced with *rodstvoenniki* of Gafurov and Rasulov.<sup>177</sup>

In parallel, peripheral regions of the republic had overall suffered from chronic neglect, especially Garm and Gorno-Badakshan where no measures had been taken to “lift them from their low level of cultural and scientific development.” “Gafurov and Rasulov detest the mountain regions and their cadres” the document lamented, and they even went as far as liquidating the Garm oblast because of their dislike of the erstwhile secretary of the Central Committee, Isaev, and the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet Presidium, S.S. Shogodaev. Funds earmarked for these regions had been programmed by Gafurov and Rasulov to Stalinabad and Leninabad instead, and attempts to raise this issue in Moscow had prompted the firing and exclusion of several raykom and ispolkom secretaries.<sup>178</sup>

By 1956 all other oblasts in the republic had been abolished apart from Leninabad,<sup>179</sup> which served to reinforce this hegemony. Uzbek officials, too, readjusted rayons and

---

<sup>176</sup> RGASPI, f. 558, op.11. d. 903. l.86-99, “O Ser’eznykh Izvrashcheniyakh Linii Partii v rabote rukovodstva Ts.K. KP (b) Tadzhikistana, osobenno ego sekretarya Gafurova. V.” June 1, 1952.

<sup>177</sup> RGASPI, f. 558, op, .11. d. 903. l. 86-99, “O Ser’eznykh Izvrashcheniyakh Linii Partii v rabote rukovodstva Ts.K. KP (b) Tadzhikistana, osobenno ego sekretarya Gafurova. V.” June 1, 1952.

<sup>178</sup> RGASPI, f. 558, op, .11. d. 903. l. 86-99, “O Ser’eznykh Izvrashcheniyakh Linii Partii v rabote rukovodstva Ts.K. KP (b) Tadzhikistana, osobenno ego sekretarya Gafurova. V.” June 1, 1952.

<sup>179</sup> With the partial exception of the Autonomous Oblast of Gorno-Badakshan whose status only could be changed by Moscow.

oblasts to shore up their power bases (e.g. in the creation of *Jizak* oblast under Rashidov and its abolishment by First Secretary Nishanov in the late 1980s) but they were not so bold as to liquidate *all* other oblasts.

While politics in Uzbekistan never approached the magnitude of nepotism and “localism” in Tajikistan, it is conceivable that bonds of loyalties were little different in Tajikistan than elsewhere in the Soviet Union. Earlier career ties may have been as influential here as in other Soviet republics. However, the concentration of a cadre pool in one single region created effects which were quite distinct from a case in which power is dispersed between figures from a diverse set of regions and where officials inter-mingle. It amounted to a geographical territorialization of power, akin to the sway held by a geographically defined ethnic group over another.<sup>180</sup> Being among the smallest of the Soviet republics, Tajikistan’s size impacted this concentration of power to one region as well since the cadre pool was much more circumscribed.

The differences which can be observed in these two cases cast doubts on the thesis that localism and nepotism in Central Asia were culturally determined. Both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan were settled societies, had undergone similar transformations of identities in the pre-Soviet era, and were part of the non-tribally organized part of Central Asia. Variations in Soviet cadre policy and the disparate sizes of these two republics nonetheless produced dissimilar outcomes: In Uzbekistan, localism was weak and nepotism certainly not more extensive than the Soviet average; In Tajikistan, localism was much more pronounced and nepotism fed into this since officials typically served in their home regions.

---

<sup>180</sup> On the strength of “clans” and regions in Tajikistan see, e.g., D.V. Mukulskii, “Klany i Politika v Tadjikistane,” *Rossii i Musulmanskii*, No. 12 (1995); and A. Sh. Niazi, “Tadjikistan: Konflikt Regionov,” *Vostok*, No. 2 (1997).

## Sharaf Rashidov's National Orientation

### Uzbekistan's Post-Stalin Leadership

Having consolidated his powers in Moscow, Khrushchev in 1955 nominated Nuritdin Mukhitdinov as the new First Secretary of Uzbekistan, replacing Niyazov.<sup>181</sup> Like many of his contemporaries, Mukhitdinov had built his career in Tashkent and Ferghana.<sup>182</sup> Niyazov was sharply rebuked at the republican plenum in 1956: He had failed to direct the Central Committee Bureau and Secretariat successfully, left cotton quotas unfulfilled, neglected large areas of the republic, illegally constructed 100 houses in Tashkent for officials, and resorted to the "questionnaire" method in selecting officials.<sup>183</sup>

All-Union evaluations of Uzbek cadre policy dating back to the same period, however, did not indicate that cadre policy was a particular area of concern. The deputy director of cadre development in the USSR Central Committee, Alekseev, pinpointed Armenia, Georgia, and Tuva, Vologod, Kaluzh, Smolensk, and Yaroslavl oblasts as areas where cadre policy was unsatisfactory but did not mention the Central Asian republics. Uzbekistan was faulted for its failure to include local nationalities and minorities, especially Karakalpaks, in party organizations, a problem which also was present in Dagestan and the Karelo-Finn party organization, but Alekseev did not relate this to violations of "collective leadership" and other misconducts identified by Niyazov's successors.<sup>184</sup> The only "serious

---

<sup>181</sup> "Nurutdin Mukhitdinov," in *Uzbek Sovet Entsiklopediyasi* Vol. 7 (Tashkent: Uzbekistan SSR Fanlar Akademiyasi, 1976), pp. 482-483.

<sup>182</sup> He served as First Secretary of the Namangan obkom from 1948 to 1950, First Secretary of the Tashkent obkom 1950-51, and thereafter member of the Central Committee from 1952 to 1956. See *Ibid.*

<sup>183</sup> See article in *Partiy'naya Zhizn*, No. 1 (January, 1956), pp. 34-38.

<sup>184</sup> RGANI, f.5, op.29, no. 33, "TsK KPSS" letter from Alekseev, deputy director of cadre, TsK KPSS, December 20, 1954.

violations” of factionalism in Uzbekistan detected by Moscow’s sentinels were confined to Tashkent and Surkhandarya oblasts, where a number of Komsomolists and communists had been arrested and excluded for “groupism in criminal activities”.<sup>185</sup> This stood in contrast to the faculty at Moscow State University where the “cadre [were] recruited on the basis of earlier connections and birth ties (*rodstvennykh otnoshenij*)”<sup>186</sup> and the Soviet Minister Beshchev and his deputy Kuznetsov who promoted figures on the basis of “prior connections” in Lvov, Northern Caucasus, and elsewhere.<sup>187</sup>

The predominance of figures from Tashkent and Ferghana in the Uzbek Central Committee Bureau continued well into the mid-1950s even if these, with few exceptions, had crisscrossed a number of oblasts.<sup>188</sup> Among the most prominent members admitted were Arif Alimov and Mukhitdin Nurutdinov (not to be confused with First Secretary Nurutdin Mukhitdinov). Alimov was a protégé of Mukhitdinov who had previously been his superior in the Namangan obkom.<sup>189</sup> Nurutdinov, in turn, belonged to that nonconformist group of Uzbek politicians who had served uniformly in one oblast, Tashkent.<sup>190</sup> Ferghana Valley and Tashkent

---

<sup>185</sup> RGANI, f.6, op. 6, doc. 1106, “Spravki rabotnikov pri TsK KPSS o rabote partkomissii pri TsK KP Uzbekistana o rasmotrenii personal’nykh del kommunistov” April 1957 in “Material k otchetu KPK pri TsK KPSS po Uzbekistan 1957 i 10 mes 58g.”

<sup>186</sup> RGANI, f.5, op.29, no. 33, TsK KPSS “O nedostatках v podbore kadrov v Moskovskom gosudarstvennom universitete im. M.V. Lomonosova”, August 28, 1954.

<sup>187</sup> RGANI, f.5, op.29, no. 28, “Spravka – po faktam, izlozhennym v pis’me t. Bryunina V.H.” Undated.

<sup>188</sup> Nicklas Norling, “Myth and Reality: Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan,” Ph.D. Dissertation, Johns Hopkins University-SAIS, April 2014, Appendix B, Table 5-6.

<sup>189</sup> From 1952 to 1955 Alimov headed the Tashkent obkom and became a member and candidate of the Central Committee Bureau in 1954 and Secretary of the Central Committee in 1956.

<sup>190</sup> At the age of 27, in 1938, Nurutdinov was named First Secretary of the Tashkent komsomol gorkom and First Secretary of the Tashkent komsomol obkom a year later. After service in the Army he was appointed secretary of the Tashkent obkom and then First Secretary of the same oblast in 1948. See, “M. Nurutdinov,” *Uzbek Sovet Entsiklopediyasi*, Vol. 8 (Tashkent: Uzbekistan SSR Fanlar Akademiyasi, 1976), p. 91.

officials also made their presence felt beyond the Central Committee Bureau, including in positions traditionally spoken for by non-Central Asians.<sup>191</sup>

Mukhitdinov's time in office would be short since in December 1957 he was transferred to Moscow. However, his standing with Khrushchev ensured that he was not subject to the typical defamation but was quietly replaced with Tashkent's Sabir Kamalov. Like several of his predecessors, Kamalov rose through the provincial apparatuses of Ferghana and Tashkent. This earned him a spot on the Central Committee in 1950, which he held until 1955 when he was named chairman of the Council of Ministers and First Secretary two years later.<sup>192</sup> The new Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Mirza-Akhmedov, had served as secretary of the Tashkent gorkom in 1940 and then First Secretary of the Andijan obkom from 1949 to 1956.<sup>193</sup>

Evidence is inconclusive but it is probable that Mirza-Akhmedov transgressed his authority as head of government by expanding the Council of Ministers' Presidium beyond the lawful limits. According to the joint Party-Government decree of March 7, 1953, following Stalin's death, the Presidium of the Council of Ministers was to consist of only one vice chairman. However in 1959, Mirza-Akhmedov's Presidium was composed of *all* vice chairmen, including the vice chairman of Gosplan, as well as the Ministers of Agriculture and Finance. It is conceivable that Mirza-Akhmedov put these officials on this prestigious organ to reinforce his power base, assure their loyalties, and create a set of devoted clients. On the other hand, it is unclear whether

---

<sup>191</sup> For example, the new deputy Chairman of the Uzbek KGB on cadre issues, Turgun Ashuraliev, appointed in 1957 was a native of Andijan. His predecessor Tadziddin Dzhililov, another Andijan native was concurrently designated Minister of Interior and Alim Karimov from Namangan was named head of mechanization of agriculture in the Central Committee in July 1957, to mention but a few. See "Tadziddin Dzhililov," at [centrasia.ru](http://www.centrasia.ru/person.php) <<http://www.centrasia.ru/person.php>> (2013-11-05).

<sup>192</sup> From 1937 to 1950 he was First Secretary of the Margelan raikom (Ferghana), second secretary of the Ferghana obkom, secretary in a Tashkent raikom, and First Secretary of the Ferghana and Karakalpak obkoms. "Sabir Kamalov," at Alexander Yakovlev Archives <<http://www.alexanderyakovlev.org/almanah/almanah-dict-bio/1003642/9>> (2013-11-05).

<sup>193</sup> "M.Z. Mirza-Akhmedov," in *Uzbek Sovet Entsiklopediyasi*, Vol. 7 (Tashkent: Uzbekistan SSR Fanlar Akademiyasi, 1976), p. 262.

he could have acted in such outright defiance of this important Party-Government decree unless, of course, it served the central government's interests.<sup>194</sup>

In March 1959, however, Kamalov was unexpectedly dismissed in part due to "serious problems" in cadre development in Uzbekistan, including insufficient education of party officials, poor job matching, few women in party organizations, and leaking of secret documents.<sup>195</sup> Like his predecessor, Kamalov lasted only two years as First Secretary of the republic and his removal coincided with the firing of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Manzur Mirza-Akhmedov. Noteworthy is that the downfall of these two officials was proclaimed together with the sacking of two Moscow secretaries – Ivan V. Kapitonov (First Secretary of Moscow obkom) and Nikolai F. Iganotov (head of a raykom in Moscow oblast). Demoted on similar charges, Kamalov had allegedly put his "toadies" in key positions, Mirza-Akhmedov had "behaved like a little dictator", while the Moscow leaders had speculated in dachas and patronized each other.<sup>196</sup> Malik Abdurazakov who had earlier chastised Yusupov in the earlier 1950s for corruption and greed now attacked Kamalov in a tirade which mimicked that against Yusupov verbatim. In a retribution of his missteps at the party plenum, he highlighted the "flamboyant lifestyle of Kamalov's wife", the "spending of huge amounts of money on the renovation of Kamalov's summer house and apartment which Mirza-Akhmedov authorized". It is further noted how "Kamalov was trying to factionalize the bureau of the Central Committee and pit Russian and Uzbek members against each other."

---

<sup>194</sup> Robert C. Tucker, "Field Observations in Soviet Local Government," *American Slavic and East European Review*, Volume 18, No. 4 (December, 1959), p. 532.

<sup>195</sup> RGANI, f.5, op.29, no. 27, "O sostoyannu raboty s kadrami v Sredne-Aziatskom territorial'nom upravlenii material'nykh rezervov," March 14, 1953, in "Zapiski TsK KP Uzbekistana, Vladimirskogo, Smolenskogo, Stalinskogo, Tul'skago, Chalovskogo, Yaroslavskogo obkomov partii so spravkami otdelov po podboru i raspredeleniyu kadrov, administrativnykh i torgovo-finansovykh organov TsK KPSS o sostave kadrov..." February-June 1953.

<sup>196</sup> Harry Schwartz, "Kremlin Warns of One-man Rule," *New York Times*, May 18, 1959, p. 4.

And how he “grossly violated cadre selection” often “resolving these “on a friendly basis”<sup>197</sup>

Whatever the truth behind each of these allegations, they were not unique to Uzbekistan – indeed, they corresponded almost too closely with the forms of violations identified elsewhere. For example, in 1961 the First Secretary of a Krasnoyarsk oblast raykom was apprehended for “stealing of funds”, “construction of a house with state funds for personal use”, and for “running the raykom as a dictator, striving for concentration of power”<sup>198</sup> In retrospect, when comparing the public allegations against officials in the Soviet Union, it appears that many were carefully scripted, often resembling one another, and conforming to the trend of the day.

A further observation is the discrepancy between the Party Control Commission’s reports and those of the Soviet media. In the former, officials typically stood accused of one charge or a group of charges related to that particular charge (e.g. embezzlement). The media, however, often leveraged an entire battery of unrelated charges e.g. corruption, local favoritism, harems, flamboyant lifestyles etc., and bundled them into a neat package designed to discredit the individual in question. Perhaps this made for entertaining reading but this sensationalism should not be taken at face value. The confidential reports of the Party Control Commission are a better barometer on party violations than central media.

The high turnover of First Secretaries during Khrushchev’s reign renders it difficult to determine who patronized whom and the influence of various forms of loyalties. The two-year stints of Mukhitdinov and Kamalov as First Secretaries of the republic likely precluded them from consolidating “coalitions of protégés” in this short span of time. Such consolidations were typically lengthy processes. In any event, it is unlikely that strong regional elite identities and loyalties resulted from this since the elite were transferred between oblasts at a breath-taking pace. It is hard to envisage

---

<sup>197</sup> Vystuplenie Sekretarya TsK KP Uzbekistana M. Abdurazakova na XI Plenum TsK KP Uzbekistana, March 14, 1959.

<sup>198</sup> RGANI, f. 6, op. 6, no. 1816, “Zapiski i Spravki rabotnikov KPK pri Ts.K. KPSS po proverke zayavlenij o narushenii gosudarstvennoj distsipliny, pripiskakh, ochkovtiratel’stve i mestnichestve”, 1953-1962.

how they could advance in their careers relying solely on income from their native regions.

### **Samarkand Plunges Back into Power**

The hierarchy of cadre pools was by the mid-1950s shifting back towards Samarkand/Bukhara after more than 20 years on the political periphery. With the stroke of a pen, Samarkand in 1957 was suddenly portrayed in Moscow's Central Committee as "second in importance of the oblasts of the republic" after Tashkent.<sup>199</sup> This accorded with the share of party members in these three oblasts, in which the 53,000 members in Tashkent oblast dwarfed Samarkand's 21,000 but this was still more than Ferghana's 19,000.<sup>200</sup> This opening of the Tashkent/Ferghana barrier was manifested in the re-introduction of officials from Samarkand, of whom the most prominent was Sharaf Rashidov.

Hailing from Jizak/Samarkand, Rashidov was appointed Secretary of the Central Committee in 1950 and Chairman of the Supreme Soviet the same year. Like Mukhitdinov, also born in 1917, Rashidov's party credentials were less impressive than those of the more mature remaining Stalinists but his literary background lent the Central Committee a degree of sophistication.<sup>201</sup>

Rashidov enjoyed strong support in the center, which in part owed to the fact that he had travelled with Khrushchev to India and was known in Moscow as a capable, loyal, and erudite man. In early February 1959 Rashidov departed for Moscow to attend the opening of an exhibition on literature and arts of Uzbekistan, the visit of which included meetings with Khrushchev, the British Prime Minister Harold MacMillan, and the deputy head of government Anastas Mikoyan. Rashidov undoubtedly made an impression on the General Secretary as a month afterward he was elected Uzbekistan's First Secretary.

---

<sup>199</sup> RGANI, f.6, op. 6, doc. 1106, "Spravki rabotnikov pri TsK KPSS o rabote partkomissii pri TsK KP Uzbekistana o rasmotrenii personal'nykh del kommunistov". See "Spravka o resultatakh komandirovki v Uzbekskaia SSR Mart 1957 goda".

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>201</sup> Donald Carlisle. "The Uzbek Power Elite: Politburo and Secretariat (1938-83)", *Central Asian Survey* Vol. 5, No. 3-4, (1986), pp. 105-106.



S. Rizaev's book on Rashidov provides a transcript of the historic 3-day meeting in March, 1959, which brought him to power. The support for Rashidov was nearly unanimous even if the deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers spoke in favor of the second contestant, Arif Alimov. Several of the Central Committee members were motivated in their choice by referring to their earlier career-based encounters with Rashidov. Thus, Rasul Gulyamov declared: "I know Sharaf Rashidovich very well...he was secretary of party-organizational matters in the Samarkand obkom when I was in the personnel department. We know each other and we became friends. He is a good friend, a humble worker, and enjoys great respect...". Likewise, the first Secretary of the Ferghana obkom supported Rashidov since he had known "Rashidov since 1944 through his work in the Samarkand obkom [and when] he came to Ferghanavodstroy [which he headed]".<sup>202</sup> Career-based loyalties evidently mattered in Rashidov's appointment.

On March 14, Rashidov was elected as First Secretary and a number of changes in the top leadership ensued. Most prominently, Arif Alimov was appointed Chairman of the Council of Ministers, replacing Manzur Mirza-Akhmedov, and Yadgar Nasriddinova was named Chairman of the Supreme Soviet, taking over this office from Rashidov.<sup>203</sup> Before becoming head of the Council of Ministers, Arif Alimov had assignments in all of the republic but was particularly established in Andijan, Namangan, Tashkent, and Samarkand where he had served as First Secretary of obkoms or gorkoms for twenty years.<sup>204</sup> Conversely, a native of Kokand (Ferghana), Nasriddinova's career was more concentrated in the Tashkent region.<sup>205</sup> The Central Committee Bureau was also overhauled. The number of central

---

<sup>202</sup>S. Rizaev, *Sharaf Rashidov: Shtriki k Portretu* (Tashkent: Ezuvchi, 1992)

<sup>203</sup>"High rate of Change," *New York Times*, March 26, 1959.

<sup>204</sup>"Arif Alimov," in *Handbook of Central Asia*, Vol. 3 (New Haven, CT: Human Relations Area Files, Inc., 1956), p. 885.

<sup>205</sup>She was appointed First Secretary of Tashkent Obkom in 1946, served on the Central Committee for much of the 1940s, then First Secretary of Kirov raikom in Tashkent only to be promoted to the republican-level as Minister of Industry and Building Materials in 1952. See "Ya. S. Nasriddinova," in Alexander Yakovlev Archives <<http://www.alexanderyakovlev.org/almanah/almanah-dict-bio/1003534/12>> (2013-11-05).

Russian/Slavic appointees doubled between 1956 and 1959 – from 3 to 6, indicating a similar recentralization of authority as had occurred in the immediate aftermath of Stalin's great purges.<sup>206</sup> The difference now being that the formerly dormant Samarkand plunged back into politics as part of this Russification after having been dislodged under Stalin.

### **Crackdown on Zemlyachestvo and Party Problems in Central Asia and Elsewhere**

Such heightened central control took place in conjunction with a nation-wide media campaign on the ills of *zemlyachestvo* in the early 1960s. The catalyst was the purge of the Tajik leadership, including First Secretary Uldzhabaev, following startling revelations of “secret harems, nepotism, blackmail, and falsification of cotton production”.<sup>207</sup> “It is a fact, after all,” an editorial in *Pravda* sniped, “that hoodwinking (*ochkovtiratelstvo*) can flourish only where inner-Party democracy is being violated, where criticism and self-criticism have not been developed, where personnel are chosen not on the basis of their professional and political qualifications but on the basis of *zemlyachestvo*, kinship (*rodstva*), and personal loyalty. It is precisely in such soil, for example, that nepotism (*semeistvennost'*), mutual protection (*krugovaya poruka*) and morals alien to our party appeared in a number of Party and Soviet agencies of Tadzhikistan.”<sup>208</sup> In parallel the Tajik leadership had bribed officials both below in the oblasts and above in Moscow to conceal the overstatement of cotton yields, culminating in vertical “family groups” from the local to the union-level.<sup>209</sup> Thus, in July 1961, a new union-wide control agency, Goskontrol, was established to root out “corruption, falsification, localism

---

<sup>206</sup> Nicklas Norling, *Myth and Reality: Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Johns Hopkins University-SAIS, April 2014, Appendix B, Table 7.

<sup>207</sup> “Soviet Purge Strikes Hard in Asia Area,” *Christian Science Monitor*, April 22, 1961, p.7. Another reason for the dismissal of these officials was the “misrepresentation of reports in plan implementation”. See *Istoriia Tadzhikskogo Naroda*, Vol. 3 (Moscow, 1965), pp. 157-158.

<sup>208</sup> “Byt' chestnym pered partej i narodom!” *Pravda*, May 26, 1961, p. 1.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*

(*mestnichestvo*), inefficiency, and waste”.<sup>210</sup> The Party Control Commission was reinvigorated and given greater powers.<sup>211</sup>

The crack-down eventually encompassed the whole of the USSR. In Kyrgyzstan, First Secretary Razzakov was reprimanded for having reinstated a “punished” first secretary of the Tyan-Shan Province Party Committee as Minister of Internal Affairs;<sup>212</sup> the head of the Belarus Institute of Railroad Engineering had reportedly engaged in widespread nepotism;<sup>213</sup> and in the Abkhaz and Adzhar Autonomous republics of Georgia, “personal loyalty, personal friendship, and nepotism” guided the placement of cadre.<sup>214</sup> In a measure of defense and self-introspection, F.S. Goryachev, the First Secretary of the Novosibirsk oblast proposed during the campaign a statute to prevent the “selection of cadres on the basis of friendship, kinship or personal loyalties”<sup>215</sup> and his counterpart in Azerbaijan bluntly declared that “mutual support, kinship and devotion” had received “a new content”.<sup>216</sup> Likewise, the First Secretary of Kazakhstan, D. Kunaev, remarked how the First Secretary of the Kyzyl-Orda oblast had organized card games with several secretaries of district Party committees, chairmen of district executive committees and collective farm managers, leading to “cronyism, nepotism and corruption”.<sup>217</sup>

Criticism of Uzbekistan, by contrast, related largely to the flamboyant lifestyles of officials in the Samarkand oblast and the nationalistic inclination of the Uzbek elite. One report in *Izvestija* from June 11, 1961, for example, implicated the Chairman of Samarkand ispolkom and the Directors of the Clothing, Textile, and Household Articles Trade Trusts with building expensive villas for public funds, which were

<sup>210</sup> “Ukaz Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR,” *Pravda*, July 23, 1961, p. 1; See also “Russia sets up new curb,” *The Sun*, July 24, 1961, p. 5.

<sup>211</sup> Fedor Razzakov, *Korrupsiya v Politburo: Delo Krasnogo Uzbeka* (Moscow: Eksmo, 2009), Chapter 10.

<sup>212</sup> “Doklad Pervogo Sekretarya TsK Kompartii Kirgizii t. I.R. Razzakov,” *Pravda*, January 14, 1961, p. 5-6.

<sup>213</sup> “Semejnyj Institut,” *Pravda*, August 14, 1961, p. 2.

<sup>214</sup> “Povyshat’ trebovatel’nost’ k rukovodyashchim kadram,” *Pravda*, July 7, 1962, p. 2.

<sup>215</sup> *Pravda*, October 31, 1962, pp. 6-7.

<sup>216</sup> N. Gadzhiev, “Chuvstvo Sem’i Edinoj,” *Pravda*, January 31, 1961, p. 2.

<sup>217</sup> Speech by D. Kunaev in *Kazakhstanskaya pravda*, December 26, 1963, pp. 1-4.

dwarfed only by the palatial houses of the former Director of the Samarkand ispolkom and the First Secretaries of Samarkand and Bukhara.<sup>218</sup> Another article in *Sotsialisticheskaya Zakonnost* accused senior officials in Uzbekistan, Armenia, and Lithuania of localism. However, the meaning ascribed to the concept of “localism” was not the promotion of figures on the basis of region of origin but the favoring of republic interests over central ones, which more accurately could be described as “nationalism”. Thus, Uzbeks were charged with failure “to fulfill the plans and assignments for the delivery of excavators and cable products to the economic regions of other Union republics,” the accusations of which were similar to those levied against their counterparts in Armenia and Lithuania.<sup>219</sup>

A similar conclusion could be drawn from the Party Control Commission’s comprehensive evaluation of the Uzbek party and state apparatus in 1962. Several instances of “violation of Soviet law” on personnel matters were noted, resulting in a number of party exclusions of heads of enterprises, kolkhozes, primary party organizations, gorraykoms, and also obkoms officials. For example, N.G. Potanenko of the Samarkand oblast was ostracized “for harshness towards subordinates”, K.B. Kadyrov for “insufficient” work, and S. Dzhabbarov in Andijan for “corruption”.<sup>220</sup> Sharaf Rashidov was the first to candidly expose to the Politburo all the faults of the administration he controlled, admitting these violations in toto while adding that several oblasts had failed to put able-bodied men to work.<sup>221</sup>

It should be recognized that many violations in the oblasts may simply have eluded the Party Control Commission. One would expect nothing less since in seven out of Uzbekistan’s 10 obkoms, the Party Control Commission comprised of only one employee – the Chairman himself – and only in Andijan, Bukhara, and Karakalpakstan was the Chairman aided by instructors or administrative personnel.

---

<sup>218</sup> *Izvestia*, June 11, 1961, p. 4.

<sup>219</sup> M. Katsuk and N. Onipko, “Bor’ba s Mestnichestva,” *Sotsialisticheskaya Zakonnost*, No. 11 (November, 1961), pp. 47-50.

<sup>220</sup> RGANI, f.6, op. 6, no. 1793, Zapiska Instruktora KPK t. Fedorenko D.D “O faktakh neobosnovannogo uvol’neniya s raboty kommunistov, privilekaemykh k partotvetstvennosti po Uzbekskoj partorganizatsii”, February 7, 1962.

<sup>221</sup> RGANI, f.6, op. 6, no. 1793, “Postanovlenie: Sekretariyata TsK Kompartii Uzbekistana – Zapiska Instruktora KPK pri TsK KPSS t.Fedorenko”, February 24, 1962.

It is inconceivable that a single envoy would be able to discover and report all forms of party violations occurring in an oblast, especially in the larger ones -- Tashkent, Ferghana, and Samarkand. The absence of "localism" and nepotism in the Party Control Commission's documents may simply have been due to understaffing or insufficient work.

However, in several other parts of the USSR, the Party Control Commission did probe and report these phenomena and the staff of these areas were not larger than in Uzbekistan. For example, in Azerbaijan's Akhsuin rayon the rayispolkom chairman, Sh. Nazarov, and third secretary of the raykom, S.V. Ismailov, were charged with promoting their distant relatives (*dal'nukh rodstvennikov*) to power. Similar accusations of "poor work with cadres" were levied against G.G. Aliyev, Secretary of the Derbent gorkom in Dagestan<sup>222</sup> and staffing on the "principle of *zemlyachestvo* in Ukraine's Donetsk gorkom.<sup>223</sup> In a file relating specifically to the issue of *mestnichestvo*, only cases in the Chelyabinsk oblast, the Ministry of Defense, Krasnodarsk, Novosibirsk, Moscow oblasts and Azerbaijan were noted.<sup>224</sup>

Stated differently, media reports as well as the Party Control Commission's secret reports canvassed several party problems in Uzbekistan in the early 1960s. Most of these concerned embezzlement, affluent lifestyles, and "hidden unemployment". Localism and nepotism were identified as major questions in several Russian oblasts, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Ukraine and elsewhere but not to the same degree in Uzbekistan. The geographical concentration of localism and nepotism identified overlapped to some degree in confidential as well as journalistic reports, with the situation being particularly acute in Tajikistan and Azerbaijan.

---

<sup>222</sup> RGANI, f. 6, op. 6, no. 1806, "Zapiski i spravki rabotnikov KPK pri Ts.K. KPSS po proverke zayavlenij o narushenii partijnykh printsipov podbora i rasstanovki kadrov" January 1962-October-1962.

<sup>223</sup> RGANI, f.6, op.6, no. 1815, "Spravka – O rezultatakh proverki pis'ma v KPK chlena KPSS Anikina, A.I." January 29, 1962, in "Zapiski i spravki rabotnikov KPK pri Ts.K. KPSS po proverke zayavlenij o narushenii gosudarstvennoj distsipliny, pripiskakh, ochkovtiratel'stve i mestnichestve," 1961-1962.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*

If nepotism had been extensive and if clan-ties and solidarities specific to Islamic society had been manifestly present in Uzbekistan they are unlikely to have escaped Khrushchev's radar. Much more than any other Soviet leader, Khrushchev considered the family the most important place for shaping the communist citizen. To prevent the family from being a "transmission belt" for dissenting views and religion, Khrushchev used direct force against the family to change its values.<sup>225</sup> With this background, it is conceivable that Khrushchev would have recognized and targeted clannism in Uzbekistan's government had it been a significant problem.

The degree of inter-oblast mobility in Uzbekistan in part explains why *mestnichestvo* was a lesser concern contemporaneously in Uzbekistan than in other parts of the USSR. The Uzbek obkom First Secretaries under Khrushchev were scarcely "rooted". For example, of the five obkom First Secretaries who served in Andijan, Bukhara, Khorezm, Namangan, and Surkhandarya for the majority of the Khrushchev era, all had served in *at least* four oblasts in the course of their careers, none of them were natives of the oblasts in question in which they served, only one "rose" in the same oblast in which he was appointed First Secretary, and no one stayed in the oblast after termination of duty.<sup>226</sup> Inter-oblast mobility served to uproot local networks and nepotism was conceivably less extensive the further officials served from their home village or city.

In this context of non-place based loyalties, many officials were both promoted and dismissed by their *rodstvonniki*. The chequered career of Ferghana's Mirza-Ali Mukhamedzhanov is a case in point. From 1947 to 1950 he served as Minister of Sovkhozes. With Yusupov's fall in 1950 he was demoted to academia only to rise again in 1953 as Minister of Agriculture. Two years later, in 1955, when Nurutdin Mukhitdinov was appointed First Secretary he was again demoted to his previous position in academia. When Kamalov came to power in 1957 he was reinstated as

---

<sup>225</sup> Donald A. Lowrie and William C. Fletcher, "Khrushchev's Religious Policy 1959-64," in Richard H. Marshall (Ed.) *Aspects of Religion in the Soviet Union 1917-1967* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971).

<sup>226</sup> See Appendix B, Table 2, in Nicklas Norling, "Myth and Reality: Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan," Ph.D. Dissertation, Johns Hopkins University-SAIS, April 2014.

the Minister of Agriculture only to be demoted again in 1959 when Rashidov replaced Kamalov.<sup>227</sup> In other words, he was promoted and dismissed by “Ferghanaites”, appointed and removed by Tashkentis, and demoted by Rashidov from Samarkand. Place of birth was of marginal importance in Mukhamedzhanov’s roller coaster ride. What mattered was whether his patron was an enemy of the replacing First Secretaries, which they often were.

The only archival evidence of factionalism in Uzbekistan in the 1960s detected by this author concerns a group of engineers in GSKB, the state cotton producer, with “groupist” (*gruppировки*) tendencies.<sup>228</sup> Headed by comrades Prikhodko, A.N., Nekhoroshevym, and Iomdinym N.G. and others, this faction had for several years struggles against its leadership, failed to implement Central Committee decisions, been unreceptive to the cadre suggestions of the Goskomitet and Sovnarkhoz directorship, and refused to adopt new machinery and technology.<sup>229</sup>

Such “groupism” spread from de-Stalinization and the opening up of the political system. Thinly veiled dissent, foot-dragging on policy implementation, and factional cleavages became increasingly commonplace. Broadly speaking, the cementing factor of such groups related to common outlooks on specific policies and were “loose informal clusterings that articulated distinctive interests.”<sup>230</sup> Khrushchev’s many reforms, e.g. the division of the party into agricultural and industrial units, inevitably generated “winners” and “losers” who collaborated to

---

<sup>227</sup> “Mirza-Ali Mukhamedzanov,” in *Uzbek Sovet Entsiklopediyasi*, Vol. 7 (Tashkent: Uzbekistan SSR Fanlar Akademiyasi, 1976), p. 481.

<sup>228</sup> RGANI, f.6, op.6, no. 1792, “Zapiska tt. Kharitonova A.A., Gorbunova V.I., i Popova, N.I. o ser’eznykh nedostatkakh v rabote GSKB po Khlopkouborke Sovnarkhoza Uzbekskoj SSR,” October 10, 1962, in “Reshenie komiteta partijnogo kontrolya pri TsK KPSS, zapiska rabotnika KPK i materialy proverki o nedostatkakh v rabote po sozdaniyu Khlopko-uborochnykh Mashin v Uzbekskoj SSR” January 1962-October 1962.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.* See also reply from N.G. Iomdin “Zayavleniye...” August 19, 1962 and “Zhaloba...” in “Reshenie komiteta partijnogo kontrolya pri TsK KPSS, zapiska rabotnika KPK i materialy proverki o nedostatkakh v rabote po sozdaniyu Khlopko-uborochnykh gMashin v Uzbekskoj SSR” January 1962-October 1962.

<sup>230</sup> Lawrence Whetten, *Current Research in Comparative Communism: An Analysis and Bibliographic Guide to the Soviet System* (New York: Praeger, 1976), p. 24.

further their interests. Khrushchev's cadre centralization was in part a countermeasure to the resistance encountered from his reforms yet leaders at each level fought back. The career-based loyalties of Soviet politics were given added impetus since the interests of figures in the same organ or workplace tended to converge.<sup>231</sup>

### The Khrushchev-Brezhnev Leadership Transition

The transition from Khrushchev to Brezhnev spelled the end to Khrushchev's reorganizations, enabling the new leaderships installed throughout the Soviet Union to consolidate their powers. Venting his frustration at Khrushchev's reforms, Rashidov at the Plenum of the Central Committee in 1964 declared how the republic was "tired of reorganization" in such spheres as production management organs and the dizzying administrative reforms in the rayons.<sup>232</sup> A new "stable cadre" policy of long stints for secretaries at all levels ensued as part of Brezhnev's going concern. Brezhnev also ushered the USSR into a period of decentralization in the area of cadre policy, which had been highly centralized under Khrushchev.<sup>233</sup>

The empowering of the local political elite in the republics in part offset the formal workings of the *nomenklatura* system. Empowered to recruit their protégés in the provinces with much less interference than earlier, republic-level political elites formed cliques that were increasingly defined by "regionalism". Modern analysts of clans and regions in Central Asia have identified this trend towards heightened regionally-based promotions under Brezhnev as a uniquely Central Asian development. Yet the same trend was observed throughout the Soviet Union.<sup>234</sup>

---

<sup>231</sup> Milton Lodge, "Groupism in the Post-Stalin Period," *Midwest Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (August, 1968), pp. 330-351.

<sup>232</sup> AP RF, f.3, op. 67, d. 223, "Rabochnaya protokol'naya zapis' V.N. Malina zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS," October 13-14, 1964.

<sup>233</sup> See Oleg Khlebnyuk, "Sistematsentr-Regiony v 1930-1950-e gody: Prepochylkipolitizatsii Nomenklatury," *Cahiers du Monde Russe*, Vol. 44, No. 2/3 (April-September, 2003), pp. 264-267.

<sup>234</sup> See e.g. George Breslauer, "Provincial Party Leader's Demand Articulation and the Nature of Center-Periphery Relations in the USSR," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 45 (1985), pp. 650-672; T. H. Rigby, "The Soviet Regional Leadership: The Brezhnev Generation," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 37 (March, 1978), pp. 1-24; and



As Robert Kaiser notes in respect to the USSR in its entirety: “However, while de jure economic decentralization was more limited during the Brezhnev era than it had been under the *sovmarkhozy* system, decision-making authority devolved de facto to enterprise managers and local political elites. In turn, these local elites were increasingly comprised of socially mobilized indigenes, chosen not according to the dictates of a centrally orchestrated *nomenklatura* system but rather through a selective procedure increasingly dominated by ‘regionalism’”.<sup>235</sup>

Thus, the thesis advanced in these writings was that regionally defined sub-national and national elites had penetrated the USSR in the tranquility of the Brezhnev period and that the central *nomenklatura* system was increasingly being bypassed. The center was relegated to a background role, ratifying appointments but delegating authority to the republics in the process. Hegemonic regions formed at the national level as upwardly mobile actors entered into networks that controlled local or regional jobs. Even if key offices at the republic level were listed on the central *nomenklatura*, “the process through which candidates appear[ed] on the appointment lists [was] endemic to the regions in which [the patrons] had carved out their initial careers.”<sup>236</sup>

For example, in Kabardino-Balkariia of the North Caucasus, the First Secretary T.K. Mal’bakhov brought in clients from Tersk and packed the obkom Bureau and other strategic positions with former acquaintances from this district. That this happened to be Mal’bakhov’s native oblast generated the semblance of a “clan” centered on this territory but this was an epiphenomenon of the process of regionalization discernible in the USSR as a whole.<sup>237</sup>

---

James H. Oliver “Turnover and Family Circles in Soviet Administration,” *Slavic Review*, Vol. 32 (September, 1973), pp. 527-545.

<sup>235</sup> Robert Kaiser, *The Geography of Nationalism in Russia and the USSR* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 332.

<sup>236</sup> Michael Urban and Russell Read, “Regionalism in a Systems Perspective: Explaining Elite Circulation in a Soviet Republic,” *Slavic Review*, Vol. 48, (1989), pp. 413-414.

<sup>237</sup> Yoram Gorlizki, “Too Much Trust: Regional Party Leaders and Local Political Networks under Brezhnev,” *Slavic Review*, Vol. 69, No. 3 (Fall, 2010), pp. 681-682.

Rashidov's powers mirrored the developments in Brezhnev's Soviet Union: he was almost defenseless against central directives but was afforded some elbow room in choosing his personnel. Cadre appointment was formally in the hands of the Uzbek Second Secretary, decided collegially at the plenums and in the Bureau of the Central Committee, but Rashidov often encroached on these powers. Uzbekistan's Central Committee exploited this and recentralized cadre policy to Tashkent from the oblasts. Early in the Brezhnev era a new formal rule was enacted, requiring *every* change in *nomenklatura* positions at the oblast level to have the Uzbek Central Committee's approval.<sup>238</sup> Rashidov entirely usurped the autonomy of cadre appointment that rested with the obkoms, even if they still were entitled to initiate appointments and removals.

This concentration of powers to Tashkent was a manifestation of the increasingly autocratic methods of leadership in the party, state, and economic organs under Brezhnev.<sup>239</sup> Such autocratic tendencies clearly have a negative connotation but they must be viewed in the context of the Soviet system. In contrast to Western liberal democracies, there were no rules in the Soviet system mandating an automatic replacement of personnel during leadership turnovers. Upon gaining office, American Presidents or British Prime Ministers could act immediately and install their protégés committed to their policy programs in power. Not so for the Soviet First Secretary or General Secretary.<sup>240</sup> They had to incrementally force out their enemies and substitute them with their clientele.<sup>241</sup> Rashidov's autocratic leanings and centralization of the *nomenklatura* was to be expected since few Soviet leaders passed on such opportunities if they opened.

The paradox of Rashidov's leadership is that the imposed "regionalism" in place since the late 1920s partly dissolved under his reign when it flourished elsewhere in the Soviet Union. Not unlike other Soviet leaders, Rashidov gravitated towards individuals whose loyalty could be assured. However, because Rashidov had not

---

<sup>238</sup> Irwin Steven Selnick, *The Ethnic and Political Determinants of Elite Recruitment in the Soviet National Republics: The Uzbek Soviet Elite, 1952-1981*, PhD Dissertation, Columbia University, 1984, p. 324.

<sup>239</sup> M.S. Sansanwal, *Political Leadership in Soviet Central Asia, 1946-1964* (New Delhi: Commonwealth, 1968).

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

presided over an obkom and because he spent most of his career in the metropol of Tashkent, the origins of his close associates were diverse. The sources of Rashidov's elite diversity were not very different from that of other Soviet leaders, diverging only in that he followed a different career path.

### **Sharaf Rashidov: A Biographical Sketch**

Born to poor parents on the eve of the Revolution in 1917, Rashidov occupied prominent state and party posts in Soviet Uzbekistan for 45 years and headed the republic for almost 25 years. Rashidov's father, Rashid Rashidov, was like many others of his generation a beneficiary of the revolution. As a newly minted policeman he guaranteed the Rashidov family a life beyond subsistence-level farming. However, after the death of Rashidov's mother in the late 1920s his uncle Hamid Azimov took custody of the young prodigy. Like his patron Yusupov, Rashidov came from a literary background and he owed this predilection to his uncle Hamid who wrote poems and novels and taught at the Samarkand pedagogical academy. Following closely in his uncle's footsteps, Rashidov enrolled at the Jizak pedagogical academy after graduation in 1931 and was considered a man of extraordinary talent. Thus, he was elected Chairman of the Academy's Trade Union Committee.<sup>242</sup>

Stalin's great purges in 1937-38 paved the way for Rashidov's path to power. Being 20 years of age at that point, Rashidov's career commenced at the precise time when Stalin staffed positions throughout the Soviet Union with a younger more party-minded elite. He shared this fate with Leonid Brezhnev who was designated head of a department of the Dnepropretovsk regional committee in 1938; Yuri Andropov was appointed secretary of the Yaroslavl komsomol a year earlier; and Alexei Kosygin was named head of a department in the Leningrad obkom in 1938. In 1937 Rashidov was selected executive secretary of the Samarkand-based newspaper *Lenin Yuli* (The Lenin Path).<sup>243</sup>

---

<sup>242</sup> Fedor Razzakov, *Korrupsiya v Politburo: Delo Krasnogo Uzbeka* (Moscow: Eksmo, 2009), Chapter 2.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*

Rashidov was a dedicated communist and espoused the Soviet system because he as well as his family benefited from it. But events at the time would also instill in him a pride in Uzbek culture and history. As a journalist for *Lenin Yuli* he covered the opening of Amir Timur's tomb in 1939 and Uzbek history textbooks in that repressive decade even went so far as to depict Timur as a hero. Timur had rescued Russia from the yoke, it was said, and Rashidov's writings reciprocated by portraying the USSR as Central Asia's savior.<sup>244</sup> Such developments together with Stalin's reconciliation with Islam in the post-war period increasingly connected Rashidov with Central Asia's historical heritage. These three influences: Soviet patriotism, pride in Uzbekistan's past, and a conciliatory attitude towards Islam conditioned Rashidov's future statesmanship.<sup>245</sup>

Rashidov entered the party in 1939 but accomplished his major career leaps only in the post-World War II period. Prior to his appointment as Chairman of the Supreme Soviet in 1950, Rashidov served in a school in Namangan (1942-1943), editor of the Samarkand newspaper *Lenin Yuli* (The Lenin Path)(1943-44), in a factory in Bekabad outside of Tashkent in 1944, Secretary of party-organizational control in the Samarkand obkom (1944-1947), editor of *Kizil Ozbekistan* (Red Uzbekistan) in Tashkent (1947-49), and Chairman of the Uzbek Writers' Union (1949-50).<sup>246</sup> Rashidov's outgoing character and interpersonal skills facilitated bonds of loyalties with a number of prominent figures during these years, including the General Secretary of the USSR Union of Writers, Alexander Fadeev, and others in the Moscow intelligentsia. It was Fadeev's support which secured Rashidov's chairmanship of the Uzbek Writers' Union and he owed his election to the Supreme Soviet to First Secretary Yusupov's patronage.

---

<sup>244</sup> See, e.g., *Leninizm: Znamia Osvobozhdeniia i Progressa Narodov* (Tashkent: Uzbekistan, 1972); *Ideologicheskaia Rabota: Moshchnyi Faktor Bor'by za Kommunizm* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1974); and *Pobediteli* (Tashkent: Uzbekistan, 1951).

<sup>245</sup> Fedor Razzakov, *Korrupsiya v Politburo: Delo Krasnogo Uzbeka* (Moscow: Eksmo, 2009), Chapter 2-4.

<sup>246</sup> "Sharaf Rashidov," in *Uzbek Sovet Entsiklopediyasi*, Vol. 9 (Tashkent: Uzbekistan SSR Fanlar Akademiyasi, 1977), p. 198.

Rashidov presided over the Supreme Soviet for nine years, which was the springboard to the position of First Secretary. He was appointed candidate member of the (all-Union) CPSU Central Committee at the 20<sup>th</sup> Party Congress and became a full member after the 22<sup>nd</sup> Congress, holding this office through the 26<sup>th</sup> Party Congress and until his death in 1983. The most senior post that Rashidov occupied was that of candidate member of the USSR's Politburo, which he was elected to in 1961.<sup>247</sup>

Often described as a cautious man with broad visions and an innate sense of tact, Rashidov did not only survive the feuds of Soviet politics but climbed the career ladder. Anyone who could navigate through Stalin's purges, the personnel turnover after Stalin's death, Khrushchev's de-Stalinization, and the Khrushchev-Brezhnev transition unscathed and then stay in power for an additional 19 years must have possessed extraordinary tactical skills. Most of Rashidov's peers fell by the wayside at either of these points but Rashidov steadily rose in the hierarchy. Unlike Khrushchev who made foes everywhere, Rashidov understood that his powers were limited and contingent on sustaining support from others.

His steadfast promotion of Uzbek identity could scarcely have passed without such support from the highest levels. Cultural institutions operating in the vernacular languages flourished under Rashidov and gradually took on nationalistic overtones. Brezhnev's *laissez faire* approach opened the doors to explore literary and historical themes which had been banned under Khrushchev. Medieval heroes such as Amir Timur and Babur resurfaced together with the writings of Uzbekistan's first set of leaders, Akmal Ikramov and Faizullah Khodzhaev.<sup>248</sup> In 1963 Rashidov even inaugurated a planetarium in Tashkent inspired by the Timurid ruler and renowned scientist Ulug-bek. That the mahalla as a traditional institution was resuscitated from the day Rashidov took office in 1959 further indicated the restoration of Islam's place in Uzbek society.<sup>249</sup> Pre-Soviet Islamic traditions were no longer considered

---

<sup>247</sup> "Sharaf Rashidovich Rashidov," *Pravda*, November 1, 1983, p. 2.

<sup>248</sup> See, e.g., *Voprosy istorii*, No. 2 (February, 1973), pp. 3-20.

<sup>249</sup> Thus, Uzbekistan's 21<sup>st</sup> Party Congress in 1959 declared the need to "transfer several functions of the executive committees of Soviets to social autonomous organizations of workers, including the mahalla

ills to be eradicated in the construction of Soviet society but as assets in building “new contemporary traditions.”<sup>250</sup>

### **Rashidov’s Unrelated Relatives: The Tashkent Party Conference**

Rashidov has gone down in history as one of the most nepotistic of Soviet politicians who overwhelmingly favored relatives and figures from his native Jizak/Samarkand. This is a misreading since many of those branded as his relatives were not, in fact, his relatives and the Samarkand natives that experienced upward mobility during his reign were, with few exceptions, associates from his time in the Samarkand obkom. Tashkent’s obkom party conference of December 1964 affords us with a rare glimpse into the reality of Uzbekistan’s elite politics.

Khrushchev’s removal triggered a “domino effect” in the republics: Kazakhstan’s First Secretary Ismail Yusupov was replaced with Dinmuhammed Kunaev a month after the General Secretary’s fall from grace and Uzbekistan was not unaffected since Rashidov owed his rise to Khrushchev’s patronage. Rashidov’s opponents seized the opportunity and hatched a scheme to eliminate him. Taking place shortly after Khrushchev’s ousting in October the same year and Brezhnev’s visit to Uzbekistan in November, the conference revealed serious rifts within the Uzbek elite. Particularly venomous in his criticism of Rashidov was Vali Usmanov, the deputy head of the Organizational-Party Department of the Tashkent obkom.<sup>251</sup>

In a speech lasting about 25 minutes, he assailed Rashidov’s cult-like devotion of Khrushchev and directed the audience’s attention to such provocative statements by Rashidov as that “there would be no life on Soviet soil without Khrushchev” and that Uzbekistan “owed its prosperity to Khrushchev”. Not limited to this, Rashidov

---

(kvartal) committee.” K. Kamilov, “O Roli Makhallinskikh (Kvartal'nykh) Komitetov v Sovremennom Periode,” *Obshchestvennye Nauki v Uzbekistane*, Vol. 2 (1961), p. 60. Cited in David Abramson, *From Soviet to Mahalla: Community and Transition in post-Soviet Uzbekistan*, PhD Dissertation, Indiana University, 1998, p. 75.

<sup>250</sup> David Abramson, *From Soviet to Mahalla: Community and Transition in post-Soviet Uzbekistan*, PhD Dissertation, Indiana University, 1998, p. 75.

<sup>251</sup> Fedor Razzakov, *Korrupsiya v Politburo: Delo Krasnogo Uzbeka* (Moscow: Eksmo, 2009), Chapter 16.

had placed supporters in government on the basis of kinship (*rodstva*) and localism (*zemlyachestvo*). Three examples were cited: Sarvar Azimov, then deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers; N.D. Khudaiberdyev, then Secretary of Uzbekistan's Central Committee; and his brother Sahib Rashidov, head of the Party-State Control Commission under the Central Committee and Council of Ministers -- all of whom came from Rashidov's native Jizak. "Friendship" had also guided several other of Rashidov's appointments e.g. the Kashkadarya-born First Secretary of the Tashkent gorkom, Kayum Murtazaev.<sup>252</sup>

This long tirade did not go unopposed. A member of Uzbekistan's Supreme Soviet, Akhmad Kadyrov, took the floor, declaring: "I have been a member of the Supreme Soviet's Presidium for 10 years working with Rashidov and know him well. Many of you, almost everyone, will agree with me that Rashidov is a modest, sympathetic...and honest man".<sup>253</sup> The head of "Glavgolodnostepstroya" mounted a similar defense. Having headed the agency for five years, Ashot Sarkisov reminded the audience that Rashidov on several occasions had forthrightly objected to Khrushchev's unrealistic demands in rice sowing and other spheres. He then proceeded to declare how "he had known Rashidov since 1944 when he, wounded, had returned from the war front to 'Farkhadstroy' [in Bekabad, Tashkent] and with 10,000 kolkhozniky built Farkhad GES [Hydro-Electric Station]. I know him as a humble, principled, extremely simple, and honest man." Not mincing his words, Sarkisov branded Usmanov's charges "filth".<sup>254</sup>

The Tashkent obkom's First Secretary, Malik Abdurazakov, seconded these points. Dismissing Usmanov's speech as demagogic, M. Abdurazakov assured that Sarvar Azimov's approval as deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers in 1959 came not at Rashidov's initiative but that of Arif Alimov, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers [from Tashkent]". Rasul Gulyamov, a former head of the Tashkent gorkom and native of Tashkent, murmured in the audience that: "he [had] put forward the nomination and Alimov supported it". Turning to the appointment of Khudaiberdyev, Abdurazakov certified that "Rashidov had no relationship to him

---

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*

[Khudaiberdyev]. I have known Khudaiberdyev for many years. He was secretary of the obkom and secretary of the Central Committee and is a respectable person." That Murtazayev was "full of flaws" and a "sycophant" was considered similarly unfounded.<sup>255</sup>

Politely waiting until all had spoken, Rashidov finally intervened in this crossfire. He assured that Azimov and Khudaiberdiyev had been "approved by the CPSU Central Committee on the recommendation of Uzbekistan's Central Committee, not [him]". He knew them "only from Tashkent when Comrade Khudaiberdyev had worked as a deputy to Comrade Mukhitdinov, then head of the agricultural department of the Central Committee." In Rashidov's version of events, they "decided on his appointment collectively". And, he continued, "about my brother [Sahib Rashidov] he served for five years in the Soviet army and worked for seventeen years in the rayon [presumably in Jizak]. He was promoted to deputy prosecutor of the republic before I came to the Central Committee. That is it."<sup>256</sup>

What can be derived from this exchange in Tashkent's halls of power? First, the three prominent figures from Jizak – Azimov, Khudaiberdiyev, and Sahib Rashidov – have all been noted in the literature as "relatives" of Rashidov.<sup>257</sup> While this is true in the case of his brother Sahib, Sharaf Rashidov claims to have barely known the other two, much less them being his relatives. Demian Vaisman, Kathleen Bailey Carlisle, and others have translated *rodstvenniki* into "relatives". But *rodstvenniki* has a dual meaning, implying both relatives and people from the same place. In this case, it clearly denoted individuals from Rashidov's native Jizak and not relatives. This is important since these three individuals belong to the few examples of real persons assumed to have formed part of Rashidov's "clan". Furthermore, that Rashidov's brother was deputy Prosecutor General cannot be considered

---

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.* For Arif Alimov's biography, see "Arif Alimov," in *Handbook of Central Asia*, Vol. 3 (New Haven, CT: Human Relations Area Files, Inc., 1956), p. 885.

<sup>256</sup> Fedor Razzakov, *Korrupsiya v Politburo: Delo Krasnogo Uzbeka* (Moscow: Eksmo, 2009), Chapter 16.

<sup>257</sup> See Demian Vaisman, "Regionalism and Clan Loyalty in the Political Life of Uzbekistan", in Yaacov Ro'i (Ed.) *Muslim Eurasia: Conflicting Legacies* (Portland: Frank Cass, 1995), p. 112; Kathleen Bailey Carlisle, *Clan and Politics in Uzbekistan*, PhD Dissertation, Boston College, September 2001, p. 307.



extraordinary. An obvious parallel is perhaps John F. Kennedy's nomination of his brother, Robert Kennedy, to U.S. Attorney General.

Second, this in-fighting shows that place of origin was of negligible importance in determining loyalties. Rashidov from Samarkand was supported by Kashkadarya's Murtazaev and Abdurazakov from Namangan as well as Gulyamov, Sarkisov, and Alimov from Tashkent.<sup>258</sup> The ties between these individuals resulted from intersecting careers: Rashidov was acquainted with Azimov and Khudaiberdyev from Tashkent; Sarkisov encountered Rashidov in 1944 at "Farkhadstroy", located on the outskirts of Tashkent; and Akhmad Kadyrov knew Rashidov from their work in the Supreme Soviet. In other words what this faction amounted to was a Soviet "family group" bound by prior work connections and mutual support. It is possible that the appointments of Azimov and Khudaiberdyev came at Rashidov's initiative and that Gulyamov and Abdurazakov were being disingenuous and protected him. Even so, such mutual solidarity would still conform to the definition of "family group".

### **The Primacy of Career-Based Loyalties**

The snapshot above provides clues to the nature of loyalties in Rashidov's Uzbekistan. His elite was composed of individuals that he had encountered in the course of his career. Other individuals could be cited, many of whom shared Rashidov's intellectual side. Thus, Egemkul Tasanbaev, Minister of Sovkhozes 1971-1975, had a long history in journalism as editor of "Our Bolshevik Kolkhoz".<sup>259</sup> Mansur Mirza Akhmedov, the Minister of Housing from 1961 to 1966 and subsequent deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers also had a background in culture as director of the Tashkent Institute of Cinematics.<sup>260</sup> Both Tasanbaev and

---

<sup>258</sup> For biographies, see: "M. Abdurazakov" in *Handbook of Central Asia*, Vol. 3 (New Haven, CT: Human Relations Area Files, Inc., 1956), p. 883; "Kayum Murtazaev" at

<<http://www.centrasia.ru/person2.php?&st=1223363364>> (2014-02-10); Sarkisov's biography is at "soldat.narod.ru," <[http://wwii-soldat.narod.ru/200/ARTICLES/BIO/sarkisov\\_aa.htm](http://wwii-soldat.narod.ru/200/ARTICLES/BIO/sarkisov_aa.htm)> (2014-02-10).

<sup>259</sup> Tasanbaev's biography on file with author.

<sup>260</sup> See Akhmedov's biography at [centrasia.ru](http://www.centrasia.ru/person2.php?&st=1013880584) <<http://www.centrasia.ru/person2.php?&st=1013880584>> (16-12-2012).

Mirza Akhmedov were born in southern Kazakhstan but they had served in Uzbekistan for most of their careers.

Another example of the intellectuals who experienced upward mobility under Rashidov is Ubaidulla Abdurazakov. A graduate of Tashkent Pedagogical Institute and a teacher by profession, Abdurazakov was in 1971 appointed Managing Director of the Council of Ministers and then editor of the journal *Mekhnat*. Twenty years later he chaired Uzbekistan's Writers Union, the prestigious position of which Rashidov, First Secretary Yusupov, and Foreign Minister Sarvar Azimov all had held.<sup>261</sup> These well-bred individuals came from diverse places but their literary backgrounds resonated with Rashidov.

The Samarkand clique was predominantly composed of figures Rashidov had encountered during his time in its obkom. For example, the Minister of Internal Affairs Khaidar Yakhyaev served as department head in the obkom in 1944 when Rashidov held the cadre portfolio.<sup>262</sup> Likewise, the KGB head Leon Melkumov was stationed there as secretary of Komsomol together with Rashidov but when Yusupov was dismissed in 1950 he was dispatched to Moscow. A year after Rashidov came to office in 1959, Melkumov returned to Uzbekistan and was instated KGB officer in Samarkand oblast.<sup>263</sup> Bektash Rakhimov, First Secretary of Samarkand oblast in the 1970s, had been a co-worker with Rashidov in the obkom 30 years earlier.<sup>264</sup> And N. Makhmudov from Kokand in Ferghana Valley, one of Rashidov's closest confidantes, was yet another acquaintance from this time. A writer as Rashidov, Makhmudov penned articles for *Shavot Khakikati* in the 1930s

---

<sup>261</sup> Sarvar Azimov served as Foreign Minister from 1959 to 1969. See "Sarvar Azimov," in *Uzbekiston Millij Entsiklopediyasi* (Tashkent, 2010), p. 170.

<sup>262</sup> Khaidar Yakhyaev served as Minister of Internal Affairs between 1964 and 1979. See "Khaidar Yakhyaev," in *Uzbek Sovet Entsiklopediyasi*, Vol. 13 (Tashkent: Uzbekistan SSR Fanlar Akademiyasi, 1979), p. 483.

<sup>263</sup> Leon Melkumov was deputy chairman of the Uzbek KGB from 1970 to 1978 and then Chairman of the same organization until Rashidov's dismissal in 1983. See "Leon Melkumov," in *Uzbek Sovet Entsiklopediyasi*, Vol. 7 (Tashkent: Uzbekistan SSR Fanlar Akademiyasi, 1976), p. 134.

<sup>264</sup> "Bektash Rakhimov," *Uzbek Sovet Entsiklopediyasi*, Vol. 9 (Tashkent: Uzbekistan SSR Fanlar Akademiyasi, 1977), p. 203.

and was First Secretary of Samarkand in the decade thereafter (1943-48).<sup>265</sup> In 1963 with Rashidov's patronage he assumed the post of First Secretary of Syr Darya obkom which he held until 1969 when he was put in charge of the People's Control Commission (*Komiteta Narodnogo Kontrolya*).<sup>266</sup>

Such concentration of former co-workers from native or non-native regions was the rule in the Soviet system. Cynical Uzbek party functionaries reportedly joked that Russia's history was divided into three periods: "the pre-Petrine, Petrine, and Dnepropretovsk".<sup>267</sup> That Brezhnev had smoothed the way for such individuals from Dnepropretovsk as Shukanov (his assistant), Novikov (the deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers), Pavlov (director in the CPSU Central Committee), Shelokov (Minister of Internal Affairs) and several others did not pass unnoticed in Tashkent.<sup>268</sup> Brezhnev's "cadre pool" of ca. 130 oblasts, of course, also made this favoritism even more blatant compared to Uzbekistan's eight oblasts from which the leadership could pick its staff.

One of a few from Samarkand who did not share this background in the Samarkand obkom was the President of the Uzbek Academy of Sciences, Ibrahim Muminov. His monthly salary of 9000 rubles shortly after Rashidov came to office, above the pay grade of a Minister in the Central Government (7000 rubles) and almost three times that of the Chairman of the Tashkent city soviet (3500 rubles), shows that he was held in high esteem.<sup>269</sup> Yet Muminov rose to prominence long before Rashidov and it was he who sustained Rashidov and not *vice versa*, at least initially. Their common denominator was clearly professional bonds, not region of origin.

The share of Samarkand-associated figures under Rashidov was unprecedented, which owed to the fact that the region had been in the freeze box since Stalin,

<sup>265</sup> "N. Makhmudov," in *Uzbek Sovet Entsiklopediyasi*, Vol. 2 (Tashkent: Fanlar Akademiyasi, 1976), p. 95.

<sup>266</sup> In the mid-1950s Makhmudov was appointed Chairman of the Bukhara ispolkom (1954-56) and then First Secretary of Karakalpak SSR (1956-63). *Ibid.*

<sup>267</sup> Fedor Razzakov, *Korrupsiya v Politburo: Delo Krasnogo Uzbeka* (Moscow: Eksmo, 2009), Chapter 20.

<sup>268</sup> Ilya Zemtsov, *Chernenko: The Last Bolshevik* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1989), p. 104.

<sup>269</sup> Robert C. Tucker, "Field Observations in Soviet Local Government," *American Slavic and East European Review*, Volume 18, No. 4 (December, 1959), p. 528.

Rashidov spent his formative years in its obkom, and Yusupov initially had patronized several of the rising stars from Samarkand – Rashidov, Muminov, Azimov, Khudaiberdyev, and others. Yet an equally voluminous number in Rashidov's elite were drawn from Tashkent and Ferghana,<sup>270</sup> of which the composition of the Central Committee was a miniature expression. According to the *Uzbek Soviet Encyclopedia*, of the 16 members and candidates admitted to the 1976 Bureau, five were Russian non-natives, three hailed from Tashkent, two from Uzbekistan's Karakalpak ASSR, two from Ferghana, one from Jizak other than Rashidov himself, one from Khorezm, and one from Osh oblast in the Kyrgyz part of the Ferghana Valley.<sup>271</sup>

In sum, what united Rashidov's coalition was that the figures he patronized were his associates. He had encountered them in different phases of his work life in Tashkent, Samarkand, and elsewhere, many of whom shared his intellectual abilities. The result was a non-territorialized coalition of protégés whose cement of loyalties did not deviate much from Soviet norms. That Rashidov one-sidedly established rapport with figures from his native Samarkand is not upheld by biographical data on the key office holders. The formative influence behind his coalition was similar as for other Brezhnev era factions in other parts of the USSR, only that in some places the career trajectory of the patron in question resulted in more pronounced territorial factions.<sup>272</sup>

---

<sup>270</sup> Suffice to say, they included S. Mamarasulov, the long-standing Minister of Irrigation and Water; the Minister of Cotton Production, Ibragimov; Eiyadullaev, the deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers and then Chairman of Gosplan; and A. Khodzhaev, a Chairman of the Supreme Soviet. See "Salidzhan Mamarasulov," in *Sovetskij Entsiklopedicheskij Slovar'* Vol. 2 (Moskva: Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya, 1983), p. 643; "A.A. Khodzhaev," in *Uzbek Sovet Entsiklopediyasi*, Vol. 12, (Tashkent: Uzbekistan SSR Fanlar Akademiyasi, 1979), p. 413.

<sup>271</sup> See Nicklas Norling, "Myth and Reality: Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan," Ph.D. Dissertation, Johns Hopkins University-SAIS, April 2014, Appendix B, Table 8.

<sup>272</sup> John B. Willerton, *Patronage and Politics in the USSR* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 195.

## The Twilight of Rashidov's Rule

The *laissez faire* approach that enabled Rashidov's relative autonomy was increasingly being suffocated in the late Brezhnev era when the central government took a firmer stand against the spread of Islamic practices, nationalism, and corruption. Rashidov's hold on power was also crumbling, the signs of which were evident already by the late 1970s. The turning point was the replacement in 1978 of Khiva's Matchanov as head of the legislature with I. B. Usmanhodzhaev, a native of Ferghana, former First Secretary of the Andijan obkom and the Namangan oblispolkom, and staff member of the CPSU Central Committee.<sup>273</sup>

Looking at the appointments Rashidov made during 1977-1978 and how these appointees fared after his demise shows that this was the twilight of his rule. Beyond Usmanhodzhaev, two figures stand out: Timur Alimov and Ismail Jurabekov. Alimov was elected to the Supreme Soviet Presidium on the very eve of Usmanhodzhaev's appointment in December 1978.<sup>274</sup> He would go on to become the republic's second or third most powerful person in the Gorbachev era and the same held true in the post-independence era. Another power broker of almost identical potency was Ismail Jurabekov who in 1977 replaced Rashidov's longstanding protégé, Salidzhan Mamarasulov as the Minister of Reclamation of Water Resources.<sup>275</sup> Most noteworthy, Alimov, Jurabekov, and Usmanhodzhaev were among the select few who survived the shake-ups of Rashidov era politicians during 1982-1985. Usmanhodzhaev would also turn out to be Rashidov's fiercest critic after his death in 1983, and the one who most vigorously planted the accusation of "kinship-based" promotion in Rashidov's Uzbekistan in Soviet media. The post-Brezhnev leadership's continued trust in these individuals suggests that they were a local cabal of officials in the hands of some influential forces in Moscow, in all likelihood Yuri Andropov, the then-KGB chairman and future General Secretary of the CPSU.

---

<sup>273</sup> "I. Usmanhodzhaev," in *Uzbek Sovet Entsiklopediyasi*, Vol. 14 (Tashkent: Uzbekistan SSR Fanlar Akademiyasi, 1980), p. 640; "Government Appointments; New Chairman of Uzbek Supreme Soviet, Other Appointments" *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, February 2, 1979.

<sup>274</sup> *Pravda Vostoka*, December 21, 1978, pp. 1-2.

<sup>275</sup> "New Uzbek Minister of Reclamation Appointed," *Pravda Vostoka*, January 28, 1977, p. 1.

## Zemlyachestvo in Rashidov's Uzbekistan: The Party Control Commission's Scoresheet in 1982

The Party Control Commission's "scoresheets" for 1982 serve as a useful litmus test of Soviet contemporaneous perceptions of *zemlyachestvo* in Uzbekistan and the rest of the USSR. That the Soviet leadership in several parts of the USSR was teetering on the tightrope between unearthing widespread corruption and praise for disclosing it was manifestly evident. Thus, in a volume on Party Control, the Chairman of the Party Control Commission, N.S. Guslov, stated that "excellent results" had been achieved by the control agency in the communist parties of Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Latvia, Moscow obkom and gorkom, Leningrad, Sverdlovsk, Ivanov, and Dnepropretovsk. Improving its framework of controls, the Central Committee of Kyrgyzstan was considered to have been particularly "disciplined" in its work. The case of T.Iyazaliev, a former first deputy chairman of the Kyrgyz republican society 'Znanie', who had been excluded for "serious shortcomings" in his work was cited as evidence of the improved discipline in the Kyrgyz party organization.<sup>276</sup> Likewise, Kazakhstan's Alma-ata obkom together with the control commission was praised for its exemplary work in protecting "socialist property".<sup>277</sup>

Criticism in the Chairman's report was directed almost uniformly to Russian oblasts. For example, the leadership of Volgograd was accused of engaging in *razbazarivenniya* of state property and in Orenburg "several measures had not been adopted" to correct the recommendations of the Party Control Commission.<sup>278</sup> Since half of the control commissions in each republic and oblasts were comprised of indigenous elites and half representatives of the center,<sup>279</sup> these assessments could be interpreted as conditional praise in those republics and oblasts which would later

---

<sup>276</sup> N.S. Guslov, "Novye Zadachi – Novye Trebovaniya" in V.M. Lyukov et. al., *Partijnyj Kontrol': Printsipy, Praktika, zadachi* (Moskva: Polizdat, 1983), p. 27. From KN Fond Kabineta Politicheskogo Prosveshcheniya Partkoma Apparat TsK KPSS.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>279</sup> See, for example: RGANI, f.6, op. 6, doc. 1106, "Spravki rabotnikov pri TsK KPSS o rabote partkomissii pri TsK KP Uzbekistana o rasmotrenii personal'nykh del kommunistov" April 1957 in "Material k otchetu KPK pri TsK KPSS po Uzbekistan 1957 i 10 mes 58g."

be subject to some of the most vicious criticism for laxity in party control. The fact that Uzbekistan was never mentioned in the Chairman's assessment, neither as a "negative" or "positive" example, indicates either that: a) the party control work there was neither worse nor better than anywhere else, or b) that the subject of Uzbekistan was taboo.

An indication that it was a) rather than b) is that Uzbekistan, along with Ukraine, Armenia, several Russian oblasts, and other republics were given their own "republic chapters" in this volume in contrast to the troublesome Tajikistan, which was entirely excluded. In the Uzbekistan chapter, U.A. Atakulov, Chairman of the Uzbek Party Control Commission, acknowledged several violations of Soviet discipline: "hooliganism", complacency (*samodovolstvo*), conceit (*zaznajstvo*), "deep violation of plan discipline", and "speculation" (*spekulatsiya*).<sup>280</sup> Pharmacist A. Kazymov, for instance, ran a "speculative machinery" together with the head of Uzbek pharmacies, I. Dzhuraev, while the Chairman of Papskogo Rajtrebsoyuza in Namangan had deeply violated financial discipline. But overall the majority of cadres were conceived to be "industrious, active, and result driven" and no attention was paid to either *mestnichestvo*, nepotism, or related concepts.<sup>281</sup> If nepotism and localism had been particularly serious problems Atakulov likely would have said it since these were surely not regarded as worse than violations of plan discipline in Soviet discourse at the time.

That these ills were identified elsewhere in the USSR in the same volume testify to that these subjects were not taboo. For example, the Chairman of the Party Control Commission in the Moscow gorkom, K.S. Buchin, the Party Buro Secretary V.P. Surin in the Kaluzhskoj oblast, and the head of a local hospital had for several years used connections and relatives (*rodstvennyye svyaz*) to acquire a large sum of money from the Ordozhonikidze kolkhoz in the same oblast.<sup>282</sup> Likewise, the Chairman of

---

<sup>280</sup> U.A. Atakulov, "Na Perednem Krae," in V.M. Lyukov et. al., *Partijnyj Kontrol': Printsipy, Praktika, Zadachi* (Moskva: Polizdat, 1983), p. 147-148.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>282</sup> K.S. Buchin, "S pozitsij Vysokoj Trebovatel'nosti" in V.M. Lyukov et. al., *Partijnyj Kontrol': Printsipy, Praktika, Zadachi* (Moskva: Polizdat, 1983), p. 97-98.

Armenia's Party Control Commission, S.M. Khachatryan, chastised the former Chairman of the Ispolkom in Noemberjanskogo rayon, S.S. Antonyanom, for having acquired "two apartments for his sons", constructed a "two-story dacha with state funds", and engaged "in other illicit affairs with his *rodstvenniki*", the success of which was contingent on his "cooperation" with the former First Secretary of the rayon, G.S. Nakhshkuryan, whom he was connected with from "prior work".<sup>283</sup>

Needless to say, the Party Control Commission's reports should not be taken as definitive. But they serve as a reminder that nepotism and localism were not concepts primarily associated with Central Asia or Rashidov by the time of Brezhnev's death in November 1982. They were perceived as encompassing all of Soviet society and they had been declared by authorities to be ills since at least the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>284</sup> If anything, Uzbekistan was *less* frequently linked with these predicaments. This is not only evident from the material cited above and media reports but also party resolutions, whose contents correspond to the party control agency's findings. For example, an all-Union Resolution on party violations in Samarkand oblast identified problems in plan fulfillment, low quality of goods, and unkempt equipment but nothing beyond this.<sup>285</sup> However, as the next chapter will explore, 1983 would be a turning point in the perception of localism and nepotism and their presumed geographical concentration within the USSR. From that moment on they were to become inextricably intertwined with Central Asia as a whole and Uzbekistan in particular.

## The Rashidov Era: An Evaluation

What distinguished the height of Rashidov's reign in the 1970s was not the concentration of officials from Samarkand/Jizak but the varied origins of his closest

---

<sup>283</sup> S.M. Khachatryan, "Zrelost' obretaetsya v borbe", in V.M. Lyukov et. al., *Partijnyj Kontrol': Printsipy, Praktika, Zadachi* (Moskva: Polizdat, 1983), p.172.

<sup>284</sup> See citation from *Partijnyj Kontrol' Deyatelnosti Administratsii* (Moskva, 1983), p.31, in *Spravochnik Partijnogo Rabotnika* (Moskva, 1983), p. 311.

<sup>285</sup> "O rabote Samarkandskogo oblastnogo komiteta narodnogo kontrolya po vypolneniyu ukazaniy TsK KPSS o povyshenii dejstvennosti kontrolya' postanovlenie Komiteta Narodnogo Kontrolya SSSR," April 24, 1981. In *Organizatsionnaya Rabota v Organakh Narodnogo Kontrolya SSSR* (Moskva: Ekonomika, 1982), p. 279.



allies, most of whom he had encountered during his professional career. For all intents and purposes, Rashidov's promotions and appointments did not differ much from the coalitions of protégés elsewhere in the Soviet Union. His lack of a substantial background in the obkoms entailed that his principal clientele was drawn from the central apparatus, the cultural elite, and from his brief stint in Samarkand. That this "de-regionalization" was most pronounced in the period when powers over cadre appointment were extensively de-centralized further strengthens the hypothesis that Uzbekistan's "regionalism" was of external rather than internal origin.

Rashidov's promotion of Uzbek culture and identity was intertwined with the diversity of his elite. The introduction of Karakalpaks to the Central Committee Bureau was a conscious attempt at nation-building just as his rediscovery of Amir Timur and national symbols served a similar purpose. These separate areas formed part of a whole in Rashidov's Uzbekistan which in a nutshell can be expressed as a national orientation. Contemporaneous analysts took note of this. Even critics of the notion of strong national identities in Central Asia conceded that Uzbekistan was an exception to this rule. It is not for nothing that Alexander Bennigsen considered Uzbekistan the only Soviet Muslim republic becoming "a real nation" when discussing the strength of sub-national, national, and supra-national identities in a 1979 article.<sup>286</sup>

Evidence will remain inconclusive until now declassified material from this period is made available, but a fair appraisal of Uzbekistan under Brezhnev on the basis of existing evidence is that nepotism and locally based loyalties at most approximated the picture in the average Soviet republic or oblast. The official Soviet perception at the time was that nepotism and localism were not major problems in Uzbekistan. In the post-Brezhnev period, however, the presence of *zemlyachestvo* in Uzbekistan was grossly exaggerated by Rashidov's successors; Andropov, Chernenko, Gorbachev and others in the Soviet politburo; Moscow's anti-corruption

---

<sup>286</sup> Alexander Bennigsen, "Several Nations or One People? Ethnic Consciousness among Soviet Central Asian Muslims," *Survey*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (1979), p. 61.

investigators Gdlyan and Ivanov; Soviet and Western media; and perhaps most consequentially, by scholars.

# Misreading and Mythmaking: The Cotton Affair

## The Cotton Affair Unfolds

Addressing the Paakhthabad electors of Moskovskiy rayon in January 1980, Sharaf Rashidov touted Uzbekistan's rapid economic development. "Even under last year's extremely difficult conditions," he said "the Republic's cotton farmers fulfilled with honor their patriotic duty to the homeland. A record harvest was gathered in: 5,763,000 tons of cotton...and 62% of the harvest was gathered in by machines... The Party teaches us not to tolerate sham efficiency and sensation-seeking."<sup>287</sup> A Candidate member of the Politburo, Rashidov was decorated with his tenth Order of Lenin two months later.<sup>288</sup>

This glory came to naught in late 1982 with the death of Rashidov's patron, Leonid Brezhnev. Determined to reverse Brezhnev's decentralization of authority, KGB head Yuri Andropov initiated a nation-wide anti-corruption campaign, in particular examining corruption charges held against Central Asian officials. What began as a KGB routine investigation against an official in Bukhara ispolkom, Muzaffarov, soon implicated not only grand embezzlement by Uzbek cotton procurement agencies, the top Party officials in Uzbekistan, and hundreds of lower level secretaries, but also key figures in Moscow.<sup>289</sup>

---

<sup>287</sup> "Rashidov's Speech in Moskovskiy Rayon Constituency," The Elections to The Republican Supreme Soviets, SU/6334/C1/1, BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, February 1, 1980.

<sup>288</sup> Yegor Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), p. 211.

<sup>289</sup> RGANI, f.89, op. 24, no. 24, "Pis'mo narodnykh deputatov t.t. Kalmykova, Kerimova, Kudryavsteva, Semenko, Sukhareva, Yakovleva A.M., Bakatina, Guseva, Kvartsova, Kryuchkova, Yakovleva V.F., v Presidium Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR s pros'boj o provedenii proverki zhalob na narusheniya zakonnosti pri rassledovanii ugovolnyka del v Uzbekskoj SSR brigadoj sledovatelej, vozglavlyajemyj, starshim sledovatelem po osobo vazhnym delam pri general'nom prokure SSSR Gdlyanom T.Kh." To members and candidates of Politburo of the TsK KPSS. 19.y.1989.

In April 1983, Yegor Ligachev was appointed as head of the Party Organization Department of the Central Committee. The “problem of Uzbekistan”, he solemnly recalled, was brought to his attention on the very day he assumed office since “thousands of letters were coming in from ordinary Uzbeks complaining about lawlessness and arbitrary and unfair actions”.<sup>290</sup> Rashidov was summoned to Ligachev’s office in the fall of 1983 and confronted with the pile of letters on his desk.<sup>291</sup> Several investigations were begun, one of which was headed by two chief investigators of the Prosecutor’s office, Gdlyan and Ivanov.<sup>292</sup>

In the course of 1983 it transpired that significant chunks of Uzbekistan’s production had been falsified, that the republic had been paid for cotton never produced, and that as much as three billion rubles had been embezzled by Uzbek officials between 1978 and 1983 alone.<sup>293</sup> Around half of the total was believed to have been accrued by the secretaries at the provincial and republican level, with the remainder spread on both lower and higher levels.<sup>294</sup> In what was officially declared to be a heart attack, Rashidov died in late 1983.

“What we are talking about,” Gdlyan asserted, “is a well-planned system of organized crime, in which every stolen ruble is earmarked for some future use [where] present-day emirs are systematically feeding (*kormlenie*) on the ‘golden calf’”. Heaped with treasure beyond imagination, First Secretaries of local Party committees had forced collective farm chairmen to “pad reports and accept bribes” and the First Secretaries, in turn, had been bribed by provincial level officials whose activities were sanctioned and profited from by the republican leadership.

Those unwilling to take part in such schemes faced consequences. Some collective farm chairmen who refused to pad reports were murdered in cold blood, *Pravda* reported, even if recalcitrant First Secretaries at the provincial level were generally

---

<sup>290</sup> Yegor Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev’s Kremlin* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), p. 210.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 215.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 221.

<sup>293</sup> TsK KPSS, Letter dated May 5, 1986. Dmitrii Antonovich Volkogonov Papers, Container No. 16, “Uzbek Affair” Materials of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

<sup>294</sup> G. Ovcharenko, “Kobry nad Zolotom,” *Pravda*, January 23, 1988, No. 23, p.3.

treated more leniently. Thus, the cautious Kayum Murtazaev, First Secretary of Bukhara the obkom 1965-1977, was merely replaced with A. Karimov. Akhmadzan Adylov, the head of the Paisk industrial complex, received particular publicity and turned into a symbol of corruption, dictatorship, and medieval legacies. Residing in a multi-million ruble mansion equipped with a private zoo, Adylov had according to the Soviet press turned a rural settlement into a private empire with roughly 30.000 subjects, a large underground dungeon, and a private security force.<sup>295</sup>

Similar condemnations streamed in from Soviet officials. Commenting on Ligachev's report on Uzbekistan in the Politburo in 1984, A. Chernaev penciled in his diary "The horror, the complete decomposition...the fiber yield decreased annually even though the crop was growing, robbing the state of hundreds of thousands of rubles...In Tashkent palaces and magnificent squares were constructed...and all the party secretaries in Samarkand had acquired mansions and villas and some five cars...in all the oblast committees sat *rodstvenniki*... but it's unclear why it's decided to expose the whole system".<sup>296</sup> Even though Chernaev questioned the scorched earth tactic used, he too left to the conclusion that the rapacity knew no bounds.

### **Usmankhodzhaev and Rashidov's "Local Favoritism"**

Rashidov's demise catapulted a new triumvirate of leaders to power: I. Usmankhodzhaev, A. U. Salimov, and G.Kh Kadyrov – heads of party, legislature, and state respectively. Usmankhodzhaev's appointment was preceded by intense politicking among the Politburo members in Moscow. That the choice fell upon Usmankhodzhaev is attributed principally to Second Secretary Chernenko, Gorbachev, and other supportive members of the Politburo and Secretariat.<sup>297</sup>

Seeking to enlist the hand of the center in his vendetta with the Rashidov leadership, First Secretary Usmankhodzhaev at the 16<sup>th</sup> Plenum of the Uzbek Central

---

<sup>295</sup> Nancy Lubin, "Uzbekistan: Challenges Ahead," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (Autumn 1989), p. 625.

<sup>296</sup> The Diaries of A. Chernaev, July 15 1984, "1984" in *Sovetskaya Politika 1992-1991*, Unpublished, p. 34.

<sup>297</sup> Yegor Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), p. 242.

Committee in 1984 singled out the Kashkadarya, Jizak, and Bukhara oblasts as particularly prone to violations of cadre selection and promotions on the basis of “kinship, local favoritism, or personal devotion”. Kashkadarya’s former oblispolkom chairman, B. Elbayev had built luxurious housing for his children and the erstwhile party raykom First Secretaries N. Khikmatov, T. Tillayev, D. Khushnazarov, A. Umirov, Kh. Kalilov had engaged in “deception and falsification”; Jizak’s former gorkom secretary U. Turakulov had patronized workers who had broken the law; and in Bukhara the then-obkom First Secretary, A. Karimov, had promoted several figures on the basis of “friendship or local favoritism”, including the oblast state prosecutor and the chiefs of the Internal Affairs Administration.<sup>298</sup> An article in *Izvestija* buttressed these claims, identifying Rashidov’s region of origin, Jizak, as the most troublesome of Uzbekistan’s oblasts. “It was here” the journalist G. Dimov lamented, “that the ugliest sprouts of nepotism shot up...what more could one expect, when half the members of the province Party committee’s bureau were related.”<sup>299</sup>

Rashidov’s demise became the inception of a deep purge of the Uzbek state and party apparatus. In 1984 and 1985 alone, 1813 officials in the *nomenklatura*, or 45.7 percent of the total, were excluded. As many as 52 out of 65 secretaries of obkoms were ejected, of whom 11 were First Secretaries, and 400 new secretaries (equivalent to 70 percent of the total) at the raykom and gorkom levels were elected of whom 149 were First Secretaries. Forty six chairmen of oblispolkoms and deputies were changed, 29 figures on the Central Committee were replaced, 232 deputies in the Supreme and local soviets were demoted, and 6663 party members were expelled from the communist party.<sup>300</sup> First Secretary I. Usmankhodzhaev proudly touted this purge at the October Plenum of the Party Congress in 1984, citing these numbers and others, acknowledging meanwhile that several difficulties remained “after

---

<sup>298</sup> “Uzbek CP Plenum Examines Local Problems,” *Pravda Vostoka*, June 26, 1984, pp. 1-3.

<sup>299</sup> *Izvestija*, December 30, 1986.

<sup>300</sup> TsK Uzbekistana, Letter from I. Usmankhodzhaev, April 30, 1986, in Dmitrii Antonovich Volkogonov Papers, Container No. 16, “Uzbek Affair,” Materials of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, p. 3.

years of deficient leadership” that “cheated the party and the state.”<sup>301</sup> Eventually, the fallout of this scandal would radiate even to Brezhnev’s son-in-law Yuri Churbanov, deputy Minister of Interior, who was convicted along with other Moscow officials in the central party apparatus. The long-standing First Secretary of the Tashkent obkom, Musakhanov, was similarly dismissed and reprimanded on the eve of the 1986 Communist Party Congress.<sup>302</sup>

Usmankhodzhaev presided over an almost completely revamped Bureau of the Central Committee. Only Salimov and Usmankhodzhaev remained from the 1981 Bureau whose Brezhnev era native and non-native members had been thoroughly purged. Determined to reverse the corrupt and negative tendencies in Soviet society, Alexander Yakovlev in 1985 penned a letter to Gorbachev on the imperative of further economic and political centralization.<sup>303</sup> This thinking extended to cadre policy which was put under much stricter surveillance. Thus, a party document from 1986 notes “how the work of party...organs of Uzbekistan continues [but that they are now placed] under the control of the *otdel* of the Central Committee of the Communist Party [KPSS]” in Moscow “to strengthen discipline”.<sup>304</sup> As during the post-purge Stalin and Khrushchev eras, the Central Committee Bureau was “Russified” where the number of non-native central appointees jumped from five in 1981 to eight in 1986.<sup>305</sup> Gorbachev refrained from taking steps as drastic as those in Kazakhstan, however, where in 1986 he dismissed the long standing Kazakh First Secretary Kunaev and replaced him with an ethnic Russian, Gennady Kolbin.

Usmankhodzhaev, in an attack on Rashidov’s leadership, noted in a letter to the all-Union Central Committee on April 30, 1986, how he “seriously...violated the work with cadres,” how “cadres were promoted on the basis of birth place (*rodstva* and

---

<sup>301</sup> RGANI, f. 2, op. 3, d. 691, “Plenum Ts. K KPSS,” October, 1984.

<sup>302</sup> “M.M. Musakhanov,” in *Uzbek Sovet Entsiklopediyasi*, Vol. 7 (Tashkent: Uzbekistan SSR Fanlar Akademiyasi, 1976), p. 441.

<sup>303</sup> GARF, f. 10063, op.1, d. 380. “Zapiska A.N. Yakovleva M.S. Gorbachevu ‘Imperativ politicheskogo razvitiya’ o neobkhodimosti vsestoronnego reformirovaniya sovetskogo obshchestva” December, 1985.

<sup>304</sup> Ts. K. KPSS, “O Zapisie...”, May 5, 1986, p. 3-4.

<sup>305</sup> Donald Carlisle. “The Uzbek Power Elite: Politburo and Secretariat (1938–83),” *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 5, No. 3-4 (1986), see Appendix.

*zemlyachestvo*), personal loyalty, and workplace". Many positions in the party, soviet, and governmental organs were filled with his close *rodsvenniki* who "benefited from appointments". Not limited to these, Rashidov had bestowed the Hero of Socialist Labor Order on "his uncle Nasirov" and awarded doctorates to his brother N. Rashidov and daughter S. Rashidova.<sup>306</sup> As many as eight Jizak natives were allegedly employed in Uzbekistan's Central Committee and three with kinship relations to Rashidov could be pinpointed in the Jizak obkom.<sup>307</sup>

The CPSU Central Committee's response to Usmankhodzhaev's tirade in 1986 was less damning, though still acknowledging Rashidov's deficiencies. The Central Committee affirmed flaws in the "placement and training of cadres" and that serious violations on party norms occurred, including "widespread corruption" and "bribery", resulting in the misappropriation of more than 3 billion rubles between 1970 and 1983.<sup>308</sup> While addressing many of Usmankhodzhaev's points, it is noteworthy that no reference is made to Rashidov's "favoritism", kinship connections, or any other of the allegations made by the Uzbek First Secretary, which may possibly denote that these were the opinions of a "successor" rather than established facts.

Rashidov's kin-based promotions were neither a subject in an article on Uzbek party violations in *Pravda Vostoka*. Not being apologetic, the article still chastised several Uzbek officials whose offices had been sources of personal enrichment. All of those "puzzled" by the allegations, the newspaper charged, were in fact guilty: the Minister of Rural Construction had been preoccupied with providing for his family and mistress; the previous Director of the Agency of Foreign Tourism had smoothed the way for his son's acceptance to Tashkent University's Oriental Studies division, which had "allowed his son to travel abroad"; the former Rector of Tashkent's

---

<sup>306</sup> TsK Uzbekistana, Letter from I. Usmankhodzhaev, April 30, 1986, in Dmitrii Antonovich Volkogonov Papers, Container No. 16, "Uzbek Affair", Materials of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, p. 1-2.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>308</sup> Ts. K. KPSS, "O Zapisie t.t. Chernikova V. i Rekunkova, A.M.," May 5, 1986, in Dmitrii Antonovich Volkogonov Papers, Container No. 16, "Uzbek Affair", Materials of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, p. 1-3.



Medical Institute had endowed his five daughters with higher education in the university he was heading; and the then-head of Uzbekistan Writers' Union was charged with reissuing works published years ago (an "operation" valued at 15,000 rubles) and of using public funds to pay for 800 plates of kebab at his son's wedding.<sup>309</sup>

### **"Tribalizing" Central Asia**

Alluding to more serious troubles, President Gorbachev at the CPSU Party Congress in 1986 identified the Uzbek republic as the place where "negative processes have been manifest in their most acute form". A Party Control Commission publication from a year later, analyzing the Samarkand party organization, similarly noted how "negative processes crystallized in Uzbekistan", where the leadership "organized banquets", and even several Party Control Commission central appointees had been "drawn into disloyalty and localism (*mestnichestvo*)" (even if "localism" in this context almost certainly meant the favoring of Uzbek interests over central ones and not "localism" as preference for certain Uzbek regions).<sup>310</sup>

Corruption was not limited to cotton embezzlement. When Boris Yeltsin, then Central Committee Secretary in charge of construction, visited Tashkent in 1985 he scourged the leadership for "constructing prestige objects" of culture, sports, political education, and science while neglecting the "social development of the city".<sup>311</sup> *Krasnaia Zvezda*, meanwhile, identified all of the Soviet officials protecting their sons from being sent to Afghanistan as Uzbeks.<sup>312</sup>

Kazakhstan also received its share of criticism. For example, the head of the Kazakh Academy of Sciences stood accused of alcoholism, improper conduct, and the selection of personnel on the basis of favoritism, nepotism and preference by

---

<sup>309</sup> *Pravda Vostoka*, November 22, 1986.

<sup>310</sup> A.V. Krasnov, *Sotsialisticheskij Kontrol', Istoricheskij Op'it KPSS* (Moskva: Mysl', 1987), p. 216.

<sup>311</sup> Leon Aron, *Yeltsin: A Revolutionary Life* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), p. 133.

<sup>312</sup> *Krasnaia Zvezda*, July 11, 1986. Cited in Timothy Colton and Thane Gustafson, *Soldiers and the Soviet State* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 329.

geographic origin.<sup>313</sup> Nearly identical accusations were leveled in 1987 against the former First Secretary, D.A. Kunaev, whose work violated the principle of collective leadership and encouraged nepotism and toadying.<sup>314</sup> The Kazakh Minister of Higher and Specialized Secondary Education was similarly alleged to have had a predilection for “hometown friends” patronizing each other.<sup>315</sup> Thus, a Coordinating Council for Combating Crime, Alcoholism, and Unearned Income was established, whose *raison d’être* was to wage an uncompromising struggle against favoritism, nepotism, and “preference for people of similar geographic origin”.<sup>316</sup> At a Politburo meeting on June 11, 1987, addressing the problem of favoritism in the USSR, Kazakhstan was also the sole focus of deliberations. The proceedings noted that: “favoritism and the selection of personnel on the basis of kinship, tribe, hometown or friendship [in Kazakhstan] must be eradicated”.<sup>317</sup>

Testimony from Gorbachev’s memoirs even attributes Kazakhstan’s Alma-Ata riots in December 1986 not to nationality conflicts but to the “the advantages extracted by the relatives, close and distant, of the top man Kunaev” and his “Dzhuz clan”, which made people “upset and dissatisfied”.<sup>318</sup> This was in spite of the fact that the riots started a day after Kunaev was *dismissed* and the Russian Gennady Kolbin was installed in his place. Of course, no parallels were drawn these events and Gorbachev himself immediately elevating his protégé Murakhovskii, the former Party Secretary of Gorbachev’s native Stavropol, to Chairman of Gosagroprom<sup>319</sup> when coming to power in 1985 and the new chairman of the Council of Ministers in 1985, Nikolai Ryzhkov, smoothing the way for three of his clients from the Tyumen’

---

<sup>313</sup> *Pravda*, February 14, 1987, p. 3.

<sup>314</sup> *Pravda*, July 16, 1987, pp. 1-2.

<sup>315</sup> *Kazakhstanskaya pravda*, February 19, 1987.

<sup>316</sup> *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda*, December 28, 1987.

<sup>317</sup> *Pravda*, June 12, 1987, p. 1.

<sup>318</sup> Mikhail Gorbachev, *Memoirs* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), p. 330.

<sup>319</sup> Gordon Smith, “Gorbachev and the Council of Ministers: Leadership Consolidation and Its Policy Implications,” *Soviet Union*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (1987), p. 353.

region – Evgenni Varnachev, Iurii Batalin, and Sergei Bashilov.<sup>320</sup> Likewise, in Ulyanovsk oblast's Staraya Kulatka district, media uncovered "report-padding", "suppressions of criticism," and "toadying and nepotism".<sup>321</sup> However, neither there nor in most other areas of the USSR, was this described as having a social basis in tribe, clan, or home-town. Whereas favoritism in Kazakhstan concerned century-old tribal solidarities, analogous practices in Moscow were merely considered "normal" Soviet politics.<sup>322</sup>

That Andropov and Chernenko were to crack down on Central Asia and the Caucasus was to some degree to be expected. In an insightful quantitative study of the attention given by the Politburo members and candidates from 1972-79 to the 15 union republics in public speeches, Philip D. Stewart et al. uncovered how Andropov and Chernenko were the two Politburo members of the 19 members and candidates whose priorities most clearly lay elsewhere. They lobbied primarily for the interests of Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldavia, and Estonia and were set firmly against the faction composed of Brezhnev, Kosygin, Masherov and others "defending" Central Asia.<sup>323</sup>

Ligachev claims that the party, soviet, management and law enforcement personnel were chosen "largely on the basis of personal loyalty to Rashidov". Thus, it is said that "no fewer than 14 of his relatives worked in the republican Central Committee apparatus."<sup>324</sup> I. Usmankhodzhaev had made a similar remark, declaring that eight in the Central Committee hailed from Jizak and three in the Jizak obkom had kinship relations with Rashidov. *Izvestija* likewise claimed that half of the Jizak obkom's bureau were related to each other. Noteworthy is, however, that not a single one of the example provided ever indicated who these persons were.

---

<sup>320</sup> Varnashev was promoted Minister of Construction and Building Materials, Batalin deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers, and Bashilov Minister of Construction and of Heavy Industry Enterprises. See *Ibid.*, p. 348.

<sup>321</sup> *Pravda*, April 3, 1985.

<sup>322</sup> Mikhail Gorbachev, *Memoirs* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), p. 330.

<sup>323</sup> Philip D. Stewart, Roger A. Blough, and James N. Warhola, "Soviet Regions and Economic Priorities: A Study in Politburo Perceptions," *Soviet Union*, Vol. 10, No. 2-3 (1983), Table 2.

<sup>324</sup> Yegor Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), p. 211.

If nepotism was as pronounced during the Rashidov era as has been claimed, why did confidential documents, media reports, and scholars all fail to provide a specific documented example? *Izvestija*, for instance, supplied a wealth of examples in minutiae about fairly benign violations in Uzbekistan but did not identify a single person in the nepotistic Jizak obkom bureau. That neither Usmankhodzhaev nor anyone else was able to come up with a real person, even while being sharp-eyed on such figures in other spheres, points to these claims having been either spurious or exaggerated. Had he, media, or scholars known any such examples they would almost certainly have mentioned them. Perhaps this is also why the Central Committee in Moscow left this particular concern aside when responding to Usmankhodzhaev's litany of accusations.

Conceivably, Rashidov's ostensibly kinship-based promotions were derived from the corruption and padding of cotton reports during his reign. Like other Soviet and Uzbek leaders before him, accusations came as part of a "package" since few leaders could be or were dismissed solely on one charge. The re-labelling of career associates as *rodstvenniki*, a common practice in the Soviet central media, probably held true also in this case.<sup>325</sup> Such "bundling" of *kompromat* aimed at disreputing Rashidov, and was no different from any of those levied against the several dozen other Soviet politicians cited in this paper who had fallen from grace. What is puzzling is that few, if any, of the scholars writing on "clans" in Soviet Uzbekistan have seriously acknowledged either the possible fabrication of such accusations or the "rebranding" of former colleagues as *rodstvenniki*. Many appear to have taken the claims in public sources at face value.

### **Gorbachev's Misreading of the Situation**

The purge of Uzbek officials in the early and mid-1980s proved ineffective. A document dated August 1987 of the CPSU Politburo reveals that corruption and favoritism were present even when the Uzbek political system was under tight controls. Apart from pointing out insufficiencies in cotton cultivation in practically all oblasts of the republic, the Central Committee averred that a lot in these harvests

---

<sup>325</sup> See also RGANI, f.6, op.6, no. 1652. "Zamestitelyu predsdatelya KPK pri TsK VKP(b) t. Yagodkinu I.A." 1952.

had been embezzled and that several officials had “been drawn into friendship ties with a number of others”. Thus, the Central Committee called upon First Secretary Usmanhodzhaev and Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Kadyrov, to “strengthen work with cadres”, to listen to the opinion of agricultural specialists, and to take other measures to resolve problems in the cotton sector.<sup>326</sup>

Some may argue that this description of the Politburo came too soon after the purge to judge its effectiveness. Still, instead of predicating the policy on reversing the primary source of region-based power and nepotism – the promotion of former First Secretaries upwards in the system, from a rayon to the oblast containing the rayon, and from oblast to the republic level– it was continued. Clearly, Moscow could have targeted the problem of region-based promotions had it closed off the republic-level offices from figures rooted in the oblasts, but it did not. Instead, Moscow pursued the alternative strategy of transferring officials “laterally” across the republic from oblast to oblast. The intention was to root out the “wide-spread corruption”, “exploitation”, create stability in the republic, to instill a sense of “collegiality and criticism”, and return to “Leninist norms of party life”.<sup>327</sup>

Whatever the success on each of these parameters, the uprooting had unintended consequences. Patronage networks expanded as the transferred personnel built loyalties in new areas. More consequentially, the few power brokers who were not subject to the “inter-oblast” transfers emerged emboldened and unchallenged, which concentrated powers in increasingly few hands. Three pair of hands to be more precise, belonging to Timur Alimov, Ismail Jurabekov, and Shukrullah Mirzaidov. Only two weeks after Mikhail Gorbachev’s appointment on March 11, 1985, as General Secretary of the Communist Party, Timur Alimov was made a full member of Uzbekistan’s Central Committee, serving in parallel to his position

---

<sup>326</sup> RGANI, f.89, op.36, doc. 13 “O Ser’eznykh nedostatkakh v razvitii khlopkovostva v Uzbekskoj SSR” Vypiska iz protokola No.78 zasedaniya Politburo TsK KPSS, August 3, 1987.

<sup>327</sup> TsK Uzbekistana, Letter from I. Usmanhodzhaev, April 30, 1986. In Dmitrii Antonovich Volkogonov Papers, Container No. 16, “Uzbek Affair”, Materials of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

as First Secretary of the Tashkent obkom.<sup>328</sup> On August 29 the same year Gorbachev and the Politburo appointed Jurabekov deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers.<sup>329</sup> The Tashkent native Alimov served in Tashkent structures untouched for a decade, first as Chairman of the Tashkent oblispolkom from 1978 to 1985 and then First Secretary of the Tashkent obkom, 1985 to 1988. Next to his position in the Council of Ministers, Jurabekov named Chairman of Gosagroprom was in 1985 and through this position could control much of the republic's cotton production and rural countryside, including in his native Samarkand.

Another powerful figure whose network was left intact, Shukrulla Mirzaidov, was to be swiftly neutralized by Karimov after independence but played a profound role in shaping the events of the Gorbachev era. Having served uninterrupted as Chairman or deputy Chairman in Tashkent-based institutions since 1963 – in the oblplan, oblispolkom, gorplan, and gorlispolkom – Mirzaidov had amassed a regional power base unmatched within the Uzbek elite. Even so, Gorbachev named him Chairman of Tashkent's oblispolkom in 1985 and in 1989 Chairman of Gosplan. These three – Alimov, Jurabekov, and Mirzaidov – were also to become the principal power brokers behind Karimov's rise to power in 1989. While Gorbachev's unfaltering *glasnost* and *perestroika* aimed to spread powers in society and state, the unintended effect in Uzbekistan was a concentration of power. These kingmakers were products not of Brezhnev and the Rashidov era but of Andropov, Chernenko, and Gorbachev.

The above may be interpreted as a one-sided failure on Moscow's part. But this is not the whole story since the Uzbek elite had proven stubbornly resistant to change. Much more than elsewhere in Central Asia they had become masters of keeping Russia out of their hair even when tightly manacled. Many of Moscow's dismissals in Uzbekistan were often rapidly reinstated locally in other positions. This

---

<sup>328</sup> "Personnel Changes at Party Plenum of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan," *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, April 24, 1985.

<sup>329</sup> "Ministerial Appointments in Uzbekistan", *Pravda Vostoka*, August 18, 1985.

“revolving door” subverted Moscow’s cadre policy at every step, and was especially pronounced at the oblast and rayon level.<sup>330</sup>

Moscow recognized its failure of eliciting obedience at the 1986 Party Congress and issued a decree in 1987 warning party organs not to reinstate figures who had been expelled from the party on “bribery, embezzlement, and padding of reports”.<sup>331</sup> Yet Moscow was utterly lacking in the resources needed to control adherence to this decree. It also faced a dwindling reserve of qualified personnel after the purge, forcing Moscow’s cadre bureau to turn a blind eye towards some reinstatements.

### **Usmankhodzhaev’s Credibility Questioned**

Next to this resourceful meddling in cadre policy, new corruption allegations soon arose. In 1988 Rashidov’s successor, Usmankhodzhaev, was arrested along with dozens of other officials accused of accepting “large sums of money from their subordinates and other officials for patronage”. According to the Procurator General, Usmankhodzhaev in two instances embezzled 65000 rubles,<sup>332</sup> and in a subsequent telegram it is established that he bribed Central Committee member Roshanov with 25000 rubles.<sup>333</sup> A campaign in mass media further alleged that Usmankhodzhaev had bribed Ligachev with 30000 rubles.<sup>334</sup> Corruption – whether true or untrue – had officially persisted to Gorbachev’s dismay.

Usmankhodzhaev’s successor was Rafik Nishanov whose Janus-face undoubtedly pointed more towards Gorbachev than his own republic.<sup>335</sup> Heeding Gorbachev’s brisk instructions, Nishanov effected a further unpopular shake up within the Uzbek state apparatus. On July 28, 1988, 13 ministries were abolished by decree and several oblasts and rayons were declared subject to immediate amalgamation. The

---

<sup>330</sup> James Critchlow, “Prelude to Independence: How the Uzbek Party Apparatus Broke Moscow’s Grip on Elite Recruitment,” in William Fierman (Ed.) *Soviet Central Asia: The Failed Transformation* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 147-152.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>332</sup> Prokurata Soyuz SSR, “Tovaritsu Gorbachevu M.S.”, No. 1-6-116-89, October 16, 1989, p. 4.

<sup>333</sup> Prokurata Soyuz SSR, “Tovaritsu Gorbachevu M.S.”, No. 1-5-101-89, November 12, 1989.

<sup>334</sup> Yegor Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev’s Kremlin* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), p. 231.

<sup>335</sup> See Mikhail Gorbachev, *Memoirs* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), p. 304.

office holders in the defunct ministries were to be “transferred to production”, in effect losing the privileges they had held in the party *nomenklatura*.<sup>336</sup>

In early September, 1988, the Navoi and Samarkand oblasts were merged into one “Samarkand oblast” and Syr Darya oblast absorbed Jizak oblast.<sup>337</sup> This reorganization followed complaints in Moscow a year earlier that “hundreds of thousands” were employed in Uzbekistan’s 55 ministries and that several oblasts were too small to justify their existence. Jizak, for example, with a population of 800,000 was singled out as particularly unwarranted.<sup>338</sup> While the abolishment of Jizak has been viewed as a posthumous attack on Rashidov, it is important to recognize that this formed part of Moscow’s campaign to combine oblasts in the entire union.<sup>339</sup> Jizak was an obvious victim due to its size but one cannot rule out that other motives guided this decision.

The dismissal of Usmankhodzhaev in 1988 was a catalyst to yet another affair which raised questions not only of Usmankhodzhaev’s credibility but also of Gdlyan and Ivanov’s corruption investigation in Uzbekistan during the 1980s. Prepared to cut off his nose to spite his face, Usmankhodzhaev stated during interrogations that he had implicated honest people at the demand of Gdlyan and Ivanov.<sup>340</sup> The Prosecutor’s office, Gorbachev, and a commission of legislators unearthed equally appalling violations in the work of the anti-corruption investigators. A not insignificant number of Uzbek officials had been indicted on trumped up charges, the material of which Gdlyan and Ivanov made it a matter of principle to feed to the Soviet news media. Uzbekistan was publicly condemned but eventually silently rehabilitated in the Politburo.

### **Uzbekistan’s Silent Rehabilitation**

Having humbled Uzbekistan to the status of a mafia republic, the spotlight on Soviet corruption unexpectedly turned on Gdlyan and Ivanov themselves. Beginning in

---

<sup>336</sup> “Uzbek Ministries Abolished,” *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, August 6, 1988.

<sup>337</sup> “Merging of Oblasts in Uzbekistan,” *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, October 15, 1988.

<sup>338</sup> The Diaries of A. Chernaev, “1987” in *Sovetskaya Politika 1992-1991*, p. 54.

<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>340</sup> Yegor Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev’s Kremlin* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), p. 243.



May 1989 their rummaging in Uzbekistan was sharply criticized in confidential deliberations. This eventful month climaxed with a plenary session of the Supreme Soviet's Presidium held on 13 May. In a terse summary it was reported that Gdlyan and Ivanov had "used provocative methods", "violated law" in their investigations of some "of the leading officials of the USSR", and a commission was to be established to appraise Gdlyan's and Ivanov's work.<sup>341</sup>

One Politburo document authored by Gorbachev summarizes the many letters on violations by judicial organs (procurators, judges, courts etc.) in Uzbekistan, especially following the onset of Gdlyan's and Ivanov's investigatory work.<sup>342</sup> The majority had been sent by either convicted prisoners or their relatives, practically all of whom testified to unfair trials, false accusations, forced confessions, and the stereotyped picture portrayed in media.<sup>343</sup> The USSR Prosecutor General, it was declared, underwrote several of the complaints contained in them. From Moscow's perspective, the problem was not confined to the unlawful pursuit of several innocent communist and high level officials, which "had no parallels" in the rest of the USSR, but it had affected public opinion negatively, smeared judges, and created a perception that these methods "were a facet of perestroika".<sup>344</sup>

For example, two letter writers included in Gorbachev's appraisal, V.Z. Zhevagin and U.S. Sizov of the USSR Supreme Court, referred to the former Uzbek deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and another senior official in the Yangiyul raykom (Tashkent) who had both committed suicide while under investigation. According to these letters, the judge handling their case had groundlessly been accused by Gdlyan and Ivanov for ties to the mafia, and both were claimed to be innocent. This letter, received on February 20, 1989, was only one in a pile of similar letters.<sup>345</sup>

---

<sup>341</sup> "V Presidume Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR," *Pravda*, May 13, 1989, p. 2.

<sup>342</sup> RGANI, f.89, op.24, No. 21, TsK KPSS "O pismakh s zhalobami na narushenie zakonnosti pri vedenii sledstviya po ugovolnym delam v Uzbekskoj SSR". From Mikhail Gorbachev to members and candidates of the Politburo, Secretaries of the Central Committee, V.M. Chernikov, and Prosecutor A. Ya. Sukharev. May 4, 1989.

<sup>343</sup> RGANI, f.89, op.24, No. 21, TsK KPSS "O pismakh...", p. 1-2.

<sup>344</sup> RGANI, f.89, op.24, No. 21, TsK KPSS "O pismakh...", p. 2-3.

<sup>345</sup> RGANI, f.89, op.24, No. 21, TsK KPSS "O pismakh...", p. 3-5.

Another letter cited by Gorbachev and authored by one S.K. Ishanov, which had been received on March 3, 1989, blamed Gdlyan and Ivanov for “unlawfulness”, of having lapsed into “uncontrollable behavior”, and “terrorized the people of Uzbekistan”. This “moral trauma” was declared to have affected thousands of members of the Communist Party, their families, and relatives. Referring to one out of many equivalent instances of misconduct, he noted how another deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan had been terrorized by the investigators on trumped up charges and falsified documentation. Other letters of forced confessions were received from the First Secretary of the Karshi gorkom, an accountant at a Kolkhoz, and the wife of the former First Secretary of the Kyzyl-tep raykom. The latter’s husband had been sentenced in 1986 for grand scale embezzlement but after a complaint and appeal the Navoi oblast judge dismissed the case due to insufficient preliminary investigation.<sup>346</sup>

Uzbekistan’s former Second Secretary T.N. Osetrov submitted an equally long complaint about Gdlyan and Ivanov’s investigation, categorically denying the charges against him and the unlawful arrest of his wife and daughter. To make matters worse, his reputation had been sullied in the media whereby *Selskaya Molodezh* had charged him with “being bought all the time when serving in the Central Committee; *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (March 9, 1988) had accused him of belonging to Uzbekistan’s “mafia”; *Pravda Vostoka* (May 1988) profiled him as “directing a criminal cadre”; and Gdlyan’s book *Detektiva i Politika* (APN, 1989) portrayed him as a “criminal” and “bribe-taker”. A response from the Ideology and Judicial Section of the all-Union Central Committee dated from January 16, 1989, vindicated Osetrov’s claims. Having raked through the evidence, the USSR General Prosecutor A. Sakharov concluded that he “did not agree with the [Uzbek] prosecutor [in Osetrov’s case], “that the prosecutor’s office had made no attempt to acquire accurate information”, and that “the handling of Osetrov violated the presumption of innocence”.<sup>347</sup>

Osetrov was not alone in having been desecrated in the media. Another letter authored in defense of A.G. Statenin, a member of the Communist Party of

---

<sup>346</sup> RGANI, f.89, op.24, No. 21, TsK KPSS “O pismakh...”, p. 5-8.

<sup>347</sup> RGANI, f.89, op.24, No. 21, TsK KPSS “O pismakh...”, p. 19-20.

Kazakhstan, remarked how as soon as the second day after Statenin's arrest the media portrayed him as a criminal and plunderer. Statenin was sentenced to 8 years but was later acquitted due to insufficient evidence.<sup>348</sup> Usmankhodzhaev, who had been feeding Gdlyan and Ivanov with false indictments throughout the 1980s, was subjected to an equally vicious media campaign after his arrest.<sup>349</sup>

Investigative journalist Olga Chaikovskaya's article "the Myth", published in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, lent further support to Gorbachev's case.<sup>350</sup> In her account, Gdlyan and Ivanov had, among other violations, attempted to extract a false confession from a director of a state farm stating that he had bribed the Secretary of the Karakalpak obkom.<sup>351</sup> Others had been subjected to torture or died in detention.<sup>352</sup> Although comparable revelations were contained in then confidential documents, Chaikovskaya had evidently crossed a red-line since her follow up to this article was published in *Vestnik Akademii Nauk SSSR* (Bulletin of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR), a publication of much more limited circulation.<sup>353</sup> Apparently, the Soviet public was "ready" to learn about the spurious claims against Politburo members but the wrong-doings in Uzbekistan were a much more bitter pill to swallow.

A second confidential document, authored by 11 non-Central Asian all-Union Supreme Soviet deputies and addressed to members of the Politburo, raised further questions about the investigations.<sup>354</sup> Evaluating the work of the commission

---

<sup>348</sup> RGANI, f.89, op.24, No. 21, TsK KPSS "O pismakh...", p. 23.

<sup>349</sup> Letter from Inomzhon Buzukurovich Usmankhodzhaev to Ye. K. Ligachev, 27 January 1988, republished in Yegor Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), p. 241.

<sup>350</sup> Olga Chaikovskaya, "Mif," *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, May 24, 1989.

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>352</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>353</sup> *Vestnik Akademii Nauk SSSR*, No. 8 1990.

<sup>354</sup> RGANI, f.89, op. 24, no. 24, "Pis'mo narodnykh deputatov t.t. Kalmykova, Kerimova, Kudryavsteva, Semenko, Sukhareva, Yakovleva A.M., Bakatina, Guseva, Kvartsova, Kryuchkova, Yakovleva V.F., v Presidium Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR s pros'boj o provedenii proverki zhalob na narusheniya zakonnosti pri rassledovanii ugovolnyka del v Uzbekskoj SSR brigadoj sledovatelej, vozglavlyajemyj starshim sledovatelem po osobo vazhnyj delam pri general'nom prokurore SSSR Gdlyanom T.Kh." To members and candidates of the Politburo TsK KPSS, Secretaries of the TsK KPSS, and comrades Kryuchkov and Pugo. May 19, 1989.

composed of the USSR Prosecutor, KGB, and the Supreme Court, the assessment deduced that Gdlyan, Ivanov, and their "circle" had severely violated Soviet law, used "provocative methods", and been corrupted by wide-spread bribe taking. Not only letters streaming into the Central Committee testified to this but also the General Prosecutor O.M. Litvok and co-workers of Gdlyan.<sup>355</sup> Particularly "illegal" was the treatment of the former chairman of Bukhara oblpotrebsoyuza, G. Mirzaev, who had been living under "terrible conditions" for the past five years.

Other forms of mistreatment included the arbitrary arrests of relatives, which had been "painful psychologically" for all involved. For example, sixteen of the relatives of the former First Secretary of the Bukhara obkom, Karimov, had been incarcerated and put in confinement for terms ranging from 5-8 months. Thus, the Ministry of Justice and the Supreme Court reported that the investigators Gdlyan and Ivanov "had violated constitutional norms on judicial independence" and unacceptably interfered in the trials of the accused.

Several others condemned in the course of the cotton affair had been indicted on thin or inexistent evidence, including but not limited to G. Mirzabaev, T.M. Umarov, R. Baltaev, T.N. Osetrov, G.M. Orlov, K. Kamalov and others.<sup>356</sup> For these reasons, the evaluation called on the USSR Prosecutor to reassess the cotton affair, reopen the cases on corruption, crime and bribery in the republic, and conduct a "careful" investigation of the "criminal groups" working under Gdlyan in central, party, and state organs. Beyond this, it ordered the falsely accused Uzbeks Kakhmatov, the former Interior Minister Yakhyayev, and an Estonian scientist, Khinta, to be promptly rehabilitated.<sup>357</sup> The systematic abuse of official position, toadyism, amoral way of living, among other violations, that *Izvestija* and Usmankhodzhaev had charged Yakhyayev with, were all of a sudden said to be fabricated.

### **The Politics of Rehabilitation**

The attacks on Gdlyan and Ivanov may have bloodied their noses but they only reinforced their popularity with the Russian public. In May 1989 they were elected

---

<sup>355</sup> RGANI, f.89, op. 24, no. 24, "Pis'mo narodnykh deputatov...", p. 1-2.

<sup>356</sup> RGANI, f.89, op. 24, no. 24, "Pis'mo narodnykh deputatov...", p. 3-7.

<sup>357</sup> RGANI, f.89, op. 24, no. 24, "Pis'mo narodnykh deputatov...", p. 8-10.

to the Supreme Soviet, using attacks on the top echelons of the party leadership in part, it seems, as a strategy to gain votes. Subsequently, Gdlyan and Ivanov were both fired from the prosecutor's office and reprimanded for having brought false accusations against Politburo member Yegor Ligachev.<sup>358</sup>

While acknowledging that transgressions had been made by Gdlyan and Ivanov in Uzbekistan and elsewhere, the contents of the classified documents noted above were not publicized. Uzbekistan and the large number of innocent Uzbeks were never rehabilitated in Soviet and Western media. A general silence on the matter prevailed, no thorough independent investigation on what was true and not true in Uzbekistan was made, and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 rendered any such investigation impossible. The sentencing of Rashidov's head of government, N. Khudaiberdyev, to nine years in a labor camp in September 1989 only added fuel to the general sentiment that whatever the flaws of Gdlyan's and Ivanov's investigation the "Uzbeks were still guilty".<sup>359</sup>

For the remainder of 1989 and 1990 media attention in the West and the USSR focused almost uniformly on the Churbanov and Ligachev cases, the Estonian scientist, and the internal power struggles in the Kremlin, which Gdlyan and Ivanov had become a part of.<sup>360</sup> Indicatively, at the Central Committee Plenum of September 1989, Prosecutor General Alexander Sukharev provided a long official report with several substantive examples and facts about Gdlyan's and Ivanov's abuses, including those against Ligachev and Smirnov (the head of the CC party organization department).<sup>361</sup> But except for Usmankhodzhaev's false testimony against Ligachev not a single word from the plenum concerned the rehabilitation of the Uzbeks who were the primary targets of this campaign, and on whom internal Politburo discussions were overwhelmingly focussed. Indeed, the misdeeds in Uzbekistan were at the center of Politburo and Supreme Soviet concerns, if only

---

<sup>358</sup> "Soviets won't Charge 2 Corruption Probers," *Chicago Tribune*, April 19, 1990, p. 8.

<sup>359</sup> "Ex-PM of Soviet Republic Jailed," *The Vancouver Sun*, September 7, 1989, p. A3.

<sup>360</sup> See for example: "Corruption Taints Soviet Anti-Corruption chiefs, too" *The Gazette* [Montreal, Quebec] June 9, 1989, p. B3; "Anti-Corruption Soviet Prosecutor Comes Under Fire," *Seattle Times*, May 14, 1989, p. A10; "Ex-Politburo Member Cleared of Corruption," *Edmonton Journal*, September 22, 1989, p. C9.

<sup>361</sup> "Na Plenum TsK KPSS," *Pravda*, September 22, 1989, pp. 6-7.

because these cases were of excellent help when discrediting the allegations levied at Politburo members in the center.

Although the center shirked from publicizing alternative findings of the cotton scandal, then-First Secretary and future President Islam Karimov sought restitution. "Having ensured the country's cotton independence," Karimov stated at the 28<sup>th</sup> CPSU Congress in 1990, "the republic became a laboratory of 'cotton scandals', repression, and mass lawlessness degrading to people's national dignity".<sup>362</sup> In February 1991, Uzbekistan's Supreme Court examined 241 cases related to the "cotton affair" and acquitted all of them.<sup>363</sup> After independence the Uzbek leadership assigned the blame for the "cotton scandal" not on Rashidov but on the communist party which had given incentives for massive corruption.<sup>364</sup> Aside from this redress, Rashidov was portrayed as a hero who had outsmarted the Russians, defended Uzbekistan's legitimate interests, and stood up to the welter of pressures emanating from the center.<sup>365</sup>

Karimov's rehabilitation of Rashidov and the victims of the cotton scandal has been widely portrayed as merely an instrument to consolidate his own rule. That Karimov employed this segment of history for his own purposes is probable, which is why he labelled the transgressions of the cotton affair as degrading to people's *national dignity*. It was a means to generate a degree of centripetal force and nationalism at the time of independence and a response to the denunciations of the entire Uzbek people as "parasites". Even so, the rehabilitations themselves were practically ignored by scholars and journalists. Karimov's intentions were the sole focus, not whether the rehabilitations were warranted as a readjustment of past errors. With the exception of an obscure book published in Tashkent, few probed the substance behind the accusations that had been hurled at Uzbekistan.<sup>366</sup>

---

<sup>362</sup> *Pravda*, July 6 1990, p.3.

<sup>363</sup> "Khlopok delo," *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, April 2, 1991, p.1.

<sup>364</sup> "Uzbekistan Reexamines the Cotton Affair," *RFE-RL Research Report*, September 18, 1992, pp. 7-12.

<sup>365</sup> See, for example, Interview with Islam Karimov, *Izvestija*, January 29, 1991, p. 3.

<sup>366</sup> V. Iliuskhin, *Oborotni: Kak Bylo Nadumano "Uzbeeskoe" Delo* (Tashkent: Uzbekiston, 1993).

## “Clans” and Mythmaking

The mythmaking of Uzbek “clans” that ensued was a function of this neglect. In early 1988, *Pravda’s* Uzbekistan correspondent, G. Ovcharenko wrote a damning article on “bandits”, “mafia”, “criminals”, “organized crime”, and “modern day Emirs” in Uzbekistan.<sup>367</sup> Later that same year such denunciations took on a new dimension when a series of articles appeared in Soviet and Western media on the theme of “clans” in Uzbekistan. Prior to this the “clan” concept had rarely, if ever, been employed in Uzbekistan’s elite politics. Thus, Ovcharenko did not mention anything of the sort in the article cited above even if most other conceivable negative epithets were used.

That this concept emerged in 1988 is evident when doing a simultaneous search in the *FBIS, Pravda, EastView, and Proquest* databases. In each of these, which contain practically all major Soviet and U.S. newspapers and issues in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and are independent from each other, the same search of “Clan” and “Uzbekistan” returns results only from 1988 and on. From March to August articles on this topic appeared in *Trud, Literaturnaya Gazeta, and Komsomolskaya Pravda*.<sup>368</sup> Later, within the scope of a few months in the fall of 1988, this concept was introduced in a *New York Times* article describing the existence of “criminal clans” in Uzbekistan.<sup>369</sup> On August 30, *Pravda’s* G. Ovcharenko, the author of the “Cobra” article, portrayed Yuri Churbanov and Sharaf Rashidov as heading a “crime clan” (*prestupleniya klan*).<sup>370</sup> Likewise, Steve Goldstein wrote in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* three months thereafter how: “Clans...relatives and friends all help one another to succeed”.<sup>371</sup> These reports

---

<sup>367</sup> G. Ovcharenko, “Kobry nad Zolotom,” *Pravda*, January 23, 1988, p.3.

<sup>368</sup> *Trud*, June 18, 1988, in FBIS-SOV-88-125; *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, July 20, 1988, in FBIS-SOV-88-145; *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, August 17, 1988, in FBIS-SOV-88-165.

<sup>369</sup> G.L. Ulmen, “Socialist Corruption,” *New York Times*, August 10, 1988, p. A26.

<sup>370</sup> Untitled article by G. Ovcharenko and A. Chernenko in *Pravda*, August 30 1988, p. 6. See under “Retrospektiva”.

<sup>371</sup> Steve Goldstein, “Unveiling a Mafia in Uzbekistan,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 24, 1988, p. A11.

precipitated a flood of news articles thereafter describing the same phenomena in Uzbekistan.<sup>372</sup>

Demian Vaisman was correct in his observation in 1995 that publications on “clans have only recently become more frequent”.<sup>373</sup> It was not until 1989 that Western scholars began referring to “clans”. Thus, Boris Rumer wrote in a book published in May 1989 that the Soviet Union had reinforced the “clan” and made it stronger.<sup>374</sup> Likewise it was argued in 1991 that “clan and tribal allegiances” were still strong in Uzbekistan.<sup>375</sup> In 1994, Olivier Roy introduced a related term, describing Uzbek political factions as *groupe de solidarité* (solidarity groups) which functioned as a “new ‘clan’”.<sup>376</sup> The concept gained increasing currency thereafter, in media as well as scholarship. While some were cautious, others took the claims contained in *Pravda’s* reports at face value. In other words, it was scholars who responded to this public/journalistic engagement about “clans” with the liveliest enthusiasm and not *vice versa*.

Critics will almost certainly object that I could not possibly safeguard against the use of these concepts in the thousands of local newspapers and obscure journals across the world. While correct, such reasoning would reveal more about the fears of the critic in question than the validity of this hypothesis. If earlier scholarship that pre-dates the articles of Soviet journalists hypothetically exists it would, presumably, have been cited in the literature. Yet the literature does not contain any

---

<sup>372</sup> See, for example, among others: V. Artemenko, A. Kaipbergenov, and N. Kozhanov, “Vremya Idti Vpered – Dialog Posle XXII S’ezda Kompartii Uzbekistana,” *Pravda*, June 9, 1990, p. 3; “Vozvrashchenie k ‘Vozvrashcheniyu,” *Pravda*, June 24, 1989, p. 3; Frank Viviano, “A Dream of Generations Dies in Uzbekistan,” *Star Tribune*, July 25, 1990, p. 2A; Rupert Cornwell, “A Tinderbox in the Garden of Asia,” *The Independent*, June 26, 1989, p. 12; “Why Capitalism Can’t Save the Soviet Economy; Socialist Corruption,” *New York Times*, August 10, 1988, p. A.26; “Soviet Political Rumbling / Moscow Deals with More than Earthquake,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 28, 1988. p. 3/Z6.

<sup>373</sup> Demian Vaisman, “Regionalism and Clan Loyalty in the Political Life of Uzbekistan”, in Yaacov Ro’i (Ed.) *Muslim Eurasia: Conflicting Legacies* (Portland: Frank Cass, 1995), p. 105.

<sup>374</sup> Boris Rumer, *Soviet Central Asia: A Tragic Experiment* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, May 1989), p. 149 and p. 158.

<sup>375</sup> James Critchlow, *Nationalism in Uzbekistan* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), p. 199.

<sup>376</sup> Olivier Roy, “L’Asie Centrale et le National-Soviétisme,” *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie*, Vol. 96 (January-June, 1994), p. 183.



references to works observing “regionalism” in Uzbekistan prior to Carlisle’s 1986 article and “clans” before Rumer’s 1989 book.

Some of these early analysts, including Critchlow, readily acknowledged that the data on “clans” and sub-national networks derived from Soviet central media and often added caveats on the use of this material.<sup>377</sup> This was understandable since the clans pioneered by journalists were often not “real” clans but metaphors. For example, one Uzbek “clan member” identified by *Pravda*, Yuri Churbanov, was born and raised in Russia, i.e., half a continent away from the kinship network of which he ostensibly was a part. Another odd *klan* constellation consisted of Brezhnev, Medunov, Rashidov, and Kunaev – the first two born in Russia and the two latter in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.<sup>378</sup> In many ways, *klan* functioned as a negative word for all sorts of phenomena Moscow did not like and was used as propaganda against its perceived enemies. The notion of *klan* was a synonym to the Soviet concept of “family group” only expressed in stronger terms. Perhaps sensing this connection, many scholars used the concept of “clans” in inverted commas at first but during the 1990s these gradually disappeared and what were once fictive groups, turned into real political factions.

When following the labyrinthine citations of “secondary” sources in this field one almost inevitably hits a dead end, where no source is quoted, and where the original claim often has been distorted along the way. For example, the source cited for Luong’s contention of overt regional favoritism occurring under Rashidov’s auspices is an early article by James Critchlow from 1991.<sup>379</sup> Yet Critchlow made no such specific claim about Rashidov in the article and pages referred to (p. 137, 140) but he did suggest that “localism” and “subnational networks” were present in

---

<sup>377</sup> See James Critchlow, “Prelude to Independence: How the Uzbek Party Apparatus Broke Moscow’s Grip on Elite Recruitment,” in William Fierman (Ed.) *Soviet Central Asia: The Failed Transformation* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), p. 141.

<sup>378</sup> “Vozvrashchenie k ‘Vozvrashcheniyu,” *Pravda*, June 24, 1989, p. 3.

<sup>379</sup> Pauline Jones Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in post-Soviet Central Asia: Power, Perceptions, and Pacts* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 88.

Uzbekistan.<sup>380</sup> Critchlow, in turn, did not provide any source for his claim but referred to “denunciations by Moscow spokesmen”.<sup>381</sup> In other words, Luong’s proposition about Rashidov traces to Soviet central media even if she, presumably, was unaware of this connection.

With time the regionalism hypothesis also came to encompass the citizenry at large and not only the elite.<sup>382</sup> The argument was that a national identity had not yet consolidated in Uzbekistan and that region of origin was the primary identity among the populace. One may question whether this was more an assumption than a finding. Michael Kennedy’s extensive survey research on the strength of regional versus national identities in Ukraine, Estonia, and Uzbekistan conducted in 1997 produced the direct opposite conclusion. He found that regional identities were critical variables in Ukraine and Estonia but less so in Uzbekistan. With the partial exception of the Karakalpaks, who are distinct since they have formed a nominally autonomous oblast since the early Soviet period, “Uzbeks and Tajiks...were quite unlikely to highlight regional issues”. Whereas citizens of Ukraine’s Lviv, Donetsk, and Kiev held grievances against other regions and each other, Kennedy’s research team was “frankly surprised...that regional identity was not particularly important” among the citizenry of Uzbekistan.<sup>383</sup> This survey suggests that direct contact with the Uzbek people may generate alternative findings.

That the clan/region hypothesis emerged in conjunction with the cotton scandal and Moscow’s drive to portray Uzbekistan as ruled by “mafias” and “clans” is evident though rarely, if ever, acknowledged by advocates of this hypothesis. There has been little, if any, reflections on the circumstances under which this theory arose, nor has there been much problematization of the absence of primary sources in existing scholarship. In the course of the post-independence period, the clan/region

---

<sup>380</sup> James Critchlow, “Prelude to Independence: How the Uzbek Party Apparatus Broke Moscow’s Grip on Elite Recruitment,” in William Fierman (Ed.) *Soviet Central Asia: The Failed Transformation* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), p. 141.

<sup>381</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>382</sup> See e.g. Kathleen Bailey Carlisle, *Clan and Politics in Uzbekistan*, PhD Dissertation, Boston College, September 2001.

<sup>383</sup> Michael D. Kennedy, “Post-Soviet Identity and Environmental Problems in Transition: Estonia, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan through Focus Groups,” Paper prepared for project workshop on “Identity Formation and Social Problems in Estonia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan”, Kyiv, Ukraine, August 4-8, 1997.

hypothesis was gradually amplified; each successive publication made more far-reaching claims about the relevance of this theory than the preceding one yet without basing them on new evidence. But if the initial premises are wrong, then the conclusions are bound to be wrong. And if the premises derive from Soviet propaganda, it is worthwhile to remain open to alternative hypotheses.

## Whither the Clan/Region Hypothesis?

Several conclusions can be drawn from this survey of politics and patronage in Soviet Uzbekistan. To start with, it is clear that contemporary scholarly assessments and archival evidence are discordant. This suggests either that scholars are wrong or that Soviet perceptions of localism and “clans” in Uzbekistan were erroneous and that the former have uncovered a reality that eluded Soviet control organs. On the basis of available evidence, the conclusion points to the first. There are good reasons to believe that the notion of regional elite “clans” and particularly strong regional elite identities is a myth. Like most myths, this finding is not based on primary sources but the accumulation and gradual amplification of initially unsupported claims. Most roads in this literature lead back to Carlisle’s pioneering article or the early writings on “clans” around 1991-1992 through a maze of citations of other secondary sources. A research field in which primary sources remain unexplored could progress in few other ways.

In their defense, Carlisle, Critchlow, and other path-breaking authors wrote at a time when the Soviet archives had not yet opened and when scholars were confined to the sources of Soviet central media, other publicly available publications, testimony of émigrés, and limited field research in the era of *glasnost*. That the theses of scholars were drawn from the trends reported was not surprising. When archives opened after the collapse of the USSR, scholars focussing on “clans” or regionalism in Soviet Uzbekistan did not take advantage of them but instead tended to rely on the earlier post-1985/pre-1992 writings. Along the way, the initial claims of the pioneering writers have been distorted and their caveats vanished.

Few, if any, of the major works on clans and regions have related regionalism in Uzbekistan to the trend of regionalism and territorialized factions elsewhere in the Soviet Union is noteworthy. If the thesis of indigenous “clans” and strong regional identities rooted in Central Asia’s past hypothetically is correct, then this must

somehow be separated from regional factions elsewhere in the USSR. A link must be established between region and individuals and that several identifiable characteristics were unique to Central Asia, e.g., the existence of a core “kin group” in clans, marriage as a method of strengthening clan power, and that region of origin was an important criterion in appointments. Such links need written correspondence, assessments of party violations, or testimony of participants to be proven. This problem has not been attacked because there are few ways of resolving it absent the documentation of the USSR’s party control organs. Shielded off from the rest of Soviet scholars, Central Asia analysts have instead claimed a unique Central Asian “regionalism” derived from its culture.

The ultimate source of this myth of strong regionalism and clans traces to the “cotton affair”. A retrospective reading of the literature confirms that it evolved with it. The concept of regionalism was adopted shortly after the Uzbek Party Congress in 1984 and the notion of “clans” was incorporated from 1989 and on after similar observations had been made by Soviet journalists starting in mid-1988. Eventually, this blossomed into the field as Uzbek “clans” and regionalism. That the stimulus of this field was Soviet propaganda would have been a problem in any event. Yet that it traces to the “cotton affair” further compounds it since many of the claims were fabricated as the Politburo’s self-introspection revealed in 1989.

If there is a common link that runs through the archival material, media, and party plenum reports down to the “cotton affair” it is the near absence of *zemlyachestvo* or *mestnichestvo* as sources of concern in Uzbekistan. The Bolsheviks did not formulate a “tribal policy” or anything similar based on region for early Soviet Uzbekistan and factionalism among the elite in the post-purge Stalin period related primarily to conflicts between Uzbeks and Russians. In the Khrushchev period the Party Control Commission identified a number of other problems but neither in Soviet central media nor in confidential correspondence was the Uzbek elite exposed to similar criticism of *zemlyachestvo* as their Tajik counterparts.

A rare exception to this rule is the campaign mounted against Rashidov at the 1964 Tashkent obkom Party Congress when he stood accused of favoritism. However, none of the figures involved were “relatives” of Rashidov as has been claimed in the

literature. The 1982 “scoresheet” of the Party Control Commission did not pinpoint localism as a problem in Rashidov’s Uzbekistan even if it was observed elsewhere in the USSR. Nor did the Party Control Commission’s specific file on *mestnichestvo* in the Soviet Union mention Uzbekistan even if such practices were exposed in Chelyabinsk, Moscow, Krasnodarsk, Azerbaijan and other places.

Another method to reach this conclusion is simply to read the literature on “clans” and regions. If “localism” was a constant concern in Uzbekistan throughout the Soviet period and was “regularly condemned” as has been argued,<sup>384</sup> then why are these scholars not citing any media or plenum reports that would vindicate these claims? The reality is that it was not a major concern, neither publicly nor confidentially.

If the thesis of “clans” and strong regionalism in Uzbekistan is a myth what, then, was the reality in summarized form? Taken as a whole, the forms of party violations canvassed by the Party Control Commission in Uzbekistan over this long stretch of time were scarcely unique: Foot-dragging on policy implementation, nepotism at lower levels, theft, concentration of powers, misuse of state funds, low numbers of figures with worker backgrounds in governing positions, failure of plan fulfilment, wrecking and sabotage under Stalin, a permissive approach to national/religious sentiment, failure to include local nationalities, “groupism”, corruption, speculation, flamboyant lifestyles, and embezzlement. All of these were to varying extents observable in the Western parts of the empire as well, as Fainsod’s study of the Smolensk archive elaborates in greater detail. Tendencies of “groupism” in the Khrushchev era also entered at a point in time when “interest groups” were pinpointed throughout the USSR. The only “special concerns” in Central Asia appear to have been a “feudal attitude towards women” and perhaps the “high turnover of cadres”. Stated succinctly, party violations and patronage in

---

<sup>384</sup> Pauline Jones Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in post-Soviet Central Asia: Power, Perceptions, and Pacts* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 88; James Critchlow, “Prelude to Independence: How the Uzbek Party Apparatus Broke Moscow’s Grip on Elite Recruitment,” in William Fierman (Ed.) *Soviet Central Asia: The Failed Transformation* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), p. 141.

Uzbekistan did not deviate much from those observed in the other corners of the empire.

Moscow imposed a common mold across the USSR, but what made Uzbekistan distinct was the high elite mobility laterally and vertically which eroded the territorialization of patronage networks seen elsewhere. With the exception of Nurutdinov whose career was confined to Tashkent, practically all other prominent officials had served in several oblasts and often outside of their home provinces. This high level of elite lateral and vertical mobility, partly explains why *zemlyachestvo* was a lesser concern in Uzbekistan than in many other Soviet republics, at least on higher levels in the state and party hierarchy.

Inevitably, this mobile elite formed new loyalties in diverse places. That “protection pacts” tended to be composed of individuals of diverse origins suggests the relevance of career-based ties. Likewise, because Rashidov was not “rooted” in a particular oblast and had not served as the obkom First Secretary, his closest allies came from all over the republic. The individuals that came to Rashidov’s defense in 1964 came from Namangan, Kashkadarya, and several were from Tashkent and all referred to career-based encounters with the First Secretary. Similar reflections among the Bureau members who elected Rashidov in 1959 suggest that the 1964 conference was not an isolated case.

Other factors beyond high elite mobility accounted for the heterogeneous protection pacts. First, the size of the republic and the comparatively large number of oblasts entailed that officials seldom served only in one region, in contrast to Tajikistan. This is conceivably why regionalism tended to be most visible in the smaller republics e.g. Lithuania, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. The principle behind loyalties may not necessarily have been different than in Uzbekistan only that the concentration of power to a single region generated hegemonies which were more palpable.

Second, the settled lifestyle of Uzbekistan’s territories favored elite ties which were not place-based. Catapulted into leadership positions after delimitation, the new national elite had vested interests in the preservation of the new republic and were not bound by tribal solidarities like their Turkmen counterparts. Their loyalties did

not primarily lie in their home regions but with the Communist Party and Stalin's national idea, if not for any other reason than for the privileges bestowed upon them. A "tribal policy" was not implemented in Uzbekistan because the social structures of the settled and nomadic areas were very different and because the Bolsheviks' shared preconceptions about this important distinction.

Third, national solidarities among Uzbekistan's elite were triggered by the center's omnipresence. Uzbeks in the Central Committee Bureau cooperated and colluded against their Russian/Ukrainian counterparts with Stalin's tacit approval and the center's tightening of cadre policy and control over Uzbekistan's *nomenklatura* was sometimes subverted, as evident in the Gorbachev era. What defined Rashidov's rule was a national orientation and an attempt to break Soviet regionalism to the extent that circumstances allowed: he assured an interchange of personnel between the republic-level and the oblasts, incorporated the marginalized areas of Uzbekistan into government, and promoted Uzbek national culture. It should not come as a surprise that contemporaneous scholars in the late 1970s considered Uzbekistan the most consolidated and nationalistic of the Central Asian republics. Importantly, however, this rarely aroused hatred towards Russians as was the case in the Baltics. In spite of the degrading treatment during the cotton scandal, 95% of Uzbeks in March 1991 still voted in favor of preserving the Soviet Union.

The "regionalism" hypothesis is correct in the sense that Soviet rule empowered certain oblasts. This fettered Uzbekistan's politics and confined it to two or three predominant regions. This was particularly true in the Stalin period when regions were judged according to their perceived loyalties. The Kokand elite was destroyed early on and the Bukharans were bought off, which initially ensured the latter a prominent role in the new republic next to Tashkent. The domination of Tashkent and Ferghana in the post-purge period owed in part to the fact that the Bukharans were undermined, the status of Ferghana was raised with the expanding cotton production centered on Ferghana Valley, and Yusupov enjoyed Stalin's trust. The robustness of this cadre hierarchy was clearly evident when Stalin executed the first generation of leaders from Tashkent and Ferghana and a new set of leaders from the same origins were installed in their place.



This Tashkent-Ferghana linkup lasted until the late 1950s when Samarkand was upgraded to “second in importance” among Uzbekistan’s eight oblasts. True to form, Samarkand crept back with Rashidov’s rise to power. Noteworthy is that when cadre policy was most decentralized under Brezhnev, the hegemony of figures from Tashkent and Ferghana in Uzbekistan’s Central Committee Bureau became fragmented. Members and candidates admitted to Rashidov’s Bureau at the zenith of his powers in 1976 had the most disparate origins in Soviet Uzbekistan’s history. The “regionalism” that did exist in Uzbekistan had external origin and was not indigenous to Uzbek society.

In the final analysis, evidence is thin that Uzbekistan’s factionalism added up to “clans” or strong regionalism. The limited evidence that can be mustered in favor of the “clan” hypothesis is the bombast and bluster of Usmankhodzhaev and central media. Yet such data should be approached with skepticism for the same reasons that the alleged presence of “harems” among the Tajik elite should be. The discrediting of predecessors often involved a battery of accusations and it is the task of the analyst to single out which ones that have a basis in reality.

Having said that, the conclusions reached in this paper must still be treated as provisional. Much of the documentation of the Brezhnev era is still classified and evidence may surface that challenges the hypotheses advanced here just as those about the other Soviet republics may need to be revised. It cannot be ruled out completely that kinship was of particular importance in the politics of Soviet Uzbekistan, even if most indicators and existing evidence do not point in this direction. To confirm this hypothesis analysts must find clear-cut evidence that kinship-related bonds were a particular concern in Soviet Uzbekistan. The Party Control Commission’s records among other resources were examined by this author but other agencies may have documented such bonds.

This paper has established that the reigning theory of “clans” and regionalism is questionable and that evidence supports the alternative theory of politics in Uzbekistan as “normal” Soviet patronage. Archival evidence, journalistic material, and plenum reports attest that patronage in Soviet Uzbekistan approximated practices in the non-Muslim areas of the USSR, deviated only in marginal respects

from it, and that existing assumptions are based on fragile evidence. This author sees few reasons why the heterogenous groups that formed among the Uzbek elite at the obkom- and republic-level in Soviet Uzbekistan should be considered distinct from the Soviet “family groups” elsewhere. Determined to assert Central Asia’s uniqueness, many post-Soviet Central Asia analysts instead took Moscow’s claims at face value, ignored the contradictory evidence that Moscow itself provided later on, and built a theory that with few exceptions are based on citations of each other.

## **Authors' Bio**

**Nicklas Norling**, Ph.D., was a Research Fellow with the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program Joint Center from 2007 to 2015. He holds a Ph.D. from the Johns Hopkins University's Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, and an MA degree in Political Science from Stockholm University. His articles have appeared in *Asian Survey*, *Central Asian Survey*, and other journals. He specializes in Central Asia, and his main expertise are in the fields of foreign policy, infrastructure, trade, and energy issues.