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UZBEKISTAN

“Birlik” Stages Another Demonstration in Tashkent

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On May 21, in the center of Tashkent, the Uzbek popular front, “Birlik” (Unity), staged its third major demonstration.¹ The previous day, the Tashkent City Executive Committee had given official permission for the demonstration to be held, but with the proviso that it be held outside the city center, in Chuqursay Raion in the northern part of Tashkent.² Accordingly, on the morning of May 21, policemen and military personnel blocked off Tashkent’s central Lenin Square and many government buildings, preventing thousands of would-be demonstrators from entering the city center. By mid-morning, however, approximately 10,000 people had managed to gather in front of the Navoi Theater in the heart of the city. Although the majority of the participants were Uzbek, members of several other nationalities were present, including Russians, Tatars, Kazakhs, and Jews.

The chief demand of the demonstrators was that the target set for Uzbekistan’s major crop, cotton, be lowered to a maximum of 4 million tons annually. Uzbek officials recently appealed to the central authorities to lower the target to 5 million tons (a reduction of 250,000 tons) and asked that it remain at this figure for one or two five-year plan periods.³ Public dissatisfaction with the relatively small reduction requested by the authorities was evidenced at the demonstration by signs with “5,000,000”

¹ The information contained in the present article was received through two telephone interviews—one with “Birlik” working group member Safat Bijanov, who was speaking from the headquarters of “Birlik” in Tashkent, and one with an Uzbek journalist who wishes to remain anonymous. The two other demonstrations organized by “Birlik” took place on March 19 and April 9. See Timur Kocaoglu, “Demonstrations by Uzbek Popular Front,” *Report on the USSR*, No. 17, 1989, pp. 13-15.

² After the demonstration on March 19, the Tashkent City Party Committee banned the staging of demonstrations in the center of the city.

³ For more information on this topic, see Ann Sheehy, “Uzbeks Requesting Further Reduction of Cotton Target,” *Report on the USSR*, No. 8, 1989, pp. 19-21.

written on them and a large black slash running through the figure. Other placards read: “We Demand that ‘Birlik’ be Recognized”; “Freedom of Information”; and “As Long as the Language Lives, the Nation Lives” (a quote from the Kirgiz writer Chingiz Aitmatov). A very large banner, written in Russian, read: “The Ways to Solve the Nationality Question,” with a quote from Lenin and a quote from Stalin printed underneath. The quote from Lenin was: “There is only one way to solve this central question—through democracy,” and the one from Stalin was: “The way to rid ourselves of the vestiges of nationalism is to expurgate them with a red-hot poker. It is necessary to defeat this nationalism once and for all.”

Abdurrahim Pulatov, the chairman of the working group of “Birlik” and a member of the Uzbek Academy of Sciences, made the opening speech. “‘Birlik’ is not trying to pit the people against the government,” he said; “rather, it is the government that is putting itself in opposition to the people through its policies.” Following Pulatov, the Uzbek poet Usman Azim, also a member of the working group, noted that “Birlik” is not nationalist but internationalist in character, as was illustrated by the number of different ethnic groups represented at the demonstration. Professor Alim Karimov then discussed the situation of farmers in Uzbekistan, stating that “Uzbek farmers should own their land for life, an economic freedom that would allow them to feed a population of 20 million.”

The Uzbek poet Gulchehra Nurullaeva proposed that the current Uzbek national hymn be scrapped, since it is “denigrating to Uzbek national pride.” Uzbeks find the opening line—“Greetings to the Russian people, our elder brothers”—particularly offensive. The new version offered by Nurullaeva mentions such prerevolutionary historical figures as Navoi, Babur, and Tomaris.⁴

⁴ Alisher Navoi was a fifteenth-century poet whom many Uzbeks consider the father of Uzbek literature. Babur, who was born and spent his early years in what is today the Uzbek SSR before going on to found the Mogul Empire in India, is regarded by Uzbeks as a national hero but by orthodox Soviet ideologists

Uzbek officials have made it plain that they do not look favorably upon demonstrations by the popular front. On May 6, the Uzbek Party Buro published a resolution in *Pravda Vostoka* calling for strengthened measures against "antisocial phenomena" in the republic and expressly condemning the activities of "Birlik." In addition to criticizing the leaders of the popular front for refusing to take into consideration "the great work" currently being done by Party and state organs towards resolving the republic's economic, social, and cultural problems, the resolution also censured them for "inciting various groups of people" to attend unsanctioned demonstrations during which efforts are made to "discredit" the organs of power. The resolution warned that Party members working in the Prosecutor's Office, the Ministries of Internal Affairs and Justice, and the Uzbek Supreme Court have been advised "to use more fully the power of the law" against those who

as a feudal despot. According to the Uzbek Soviet encyclopedia, the Greek historian Herodotus wrote of the brave struggle of Tomaris, the legendary queen of the Massagates in Central Asia in the fifth century B.C., against the Persian invading forces.

instigate disorderly conduct and kindle interethnic tensions. Apart from "Birlik," the resolution also denounced activists in other "independent organizations" who are attempting to incite believers to violate existing legislation on religious cults.

Members of "Birlik" responded to this resolution by widely distributing a document entitled "An Open Letter to the Uzbek Population," dated May 11. The letter defended the popular front as a democratic organization born in the spirit of *glasnost'* and *perestroika* and refuted all charges of extremism. Regarding the reference in the Party Buro's resolution to "the great work" being undertaken by officials to alleviate the republic's pressing problems, the letter stated: "Unfortunately, we have not seen this in practice. We find the work of Party and state officials deficient in this regard."

It should be noted that Uzbek officials have consistently refused to register the popular front despite several attempts by the working commission of "Birlik" to obtain official recognition.

(RL 267/89, May 26, 1989)

UKRAINE

Plagiarism and Politics in Kiev

David Marples & Roman Solchanyk

A clash between two newspaper editors in Kiev over an apparent case of plagiarism throws some interesting light on electioneering politics in the Ukrainian capital and, more generally, on the political struggle over *glasnost'* and *perestroika* in Ukraine. At the center of the controversy is Vitalii Karpenko, chief editor of *Vechirniy Kyiv* and an unsuccessful contender for a seat in the Congress of People's Deputies.

In late April, an item published in *Robitnycha hazeta* accused Karpenko of plagiarism in an article that he had written for the journal *Dnipro*.¹ The topic of the article was a seemingly innocuous one—"Impressions of Japan." According to the author of the item in *Robitnycha hazeta*, however, Karpenko had simply copied articles about Japan that had been published in *Novyi mir* and in book form in Moscow by two writers, V. Ovchinnikov and V. Tsvetov. In response to the charge, Karpenko composed an open letter to the editor of *Robitnycha hazeta*, Mykola Shybyk, who also heads the Ukrainian Union of Journalists, accusing him personally of trying to sabotage Karpenko's chances in the runoff election campaign. In a further twist to the story, the editors of the Kiev daily *Prapor komunizmu* then joined in the attack on Karpenko.

¹ *Robitnycha hazeta*, April 23, 1989; *Dnipro*, No. 9, 1988.

The article in *Robitnycha hazeta* that started the controversy was by R. Mikhn'ov, an economist who had formerly been a specialist in Japanese affairs and had retained an interest in contemporary Japan. Mikhn'ov wrote that he had picked up a copy of *Vechirniy Kyiv*, which had reprinted Karpenko's article from *Dnipro*, and been "staggered" by what he described as Karpenko's "direct, shameless larceny." He then proceeded to list eight quotations, each several lines long, in two columns: the left-hand column consisted of Russian-language comments by Ovchinnikov and Tsvetov, with the sources listed underneath, while in the right-hand column Karpenko's Ukrainian-language text was given. Mikhn'ov maintained that he could have provided many more examples and asked: "How could a journalist, the head of a newspaper, sink so low? And at what cost to our trust in him as readers and citizens?"

Karpenko's open letter to Shybyk appeared in both *Vechirniy Kyiv* and *Robitnycha hazeta*.² He devoted little of it, however, to a rebuttal of the accusation of plagiarism.

² *Vechirniy Kyiv*, April 25, 1989; *Robitnycha hazeta*, April 26, 1989. In his editorial commentary, Shybyk merely noted that Karpenko had not answered the charges made in Mikhn'ov's article.

serious attempt to implicate them in the recent upsurge of ethnic tensions in Fergana Oblast could bring lasting harm to the reputation of the fledgling popular movement.

Pointing to "the solid financial resources" of the rioters and their organized approach, several reports in the Soviet media have suggested that they are connected with professional mafia gangs. While such a connection is improbable as professional racketeers have no vested interest in nor any tradition of openly massacring small minority groups, Soviet officials should not be surprised that the rioters possess a large number of firearms. (According to a spokesman for the Ministry of Internal Affairs, a total of 5,561 weapons have been appropriated, including many hunting guns handed in by residents in response to a call to prevent arms falling into the hands of rioters.) Since 1987, the central media have been publishing reports about caches of weapons in the hands of private citizens, a phenomenon that is particularly

widespread in the Central Asian republics that border Afghanistan.²⁰ Moreover, given the abysmal social and economic conditions in the republic as well as increasing competition for jobs and other scarce resources such as land and water, Soviet officials should not wonder at the rioters shouting slogans such as "Uzbekistan for the Uzbeks!" and "We'll strangle the Turks, we'll strangle the Russians!" Whatever the root cause of the unrest, the rapid escalation and spread of violence throughout the Fergana region suggests that plans for "a pogrom" had probably been in preparation for some time, and that the Meskhetian minority provided a safer target than the more numerous Slavic population in the republic.

²⁰ See Aaron Trehub, RL 536/88, "Privately Owned Weapons in the Soviet Union," December 5, 1988; *Prauda*, April 6, 1989; *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, April 29, 1989.

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CENTRAL ASIA

Appeal to the People of Fergana

Yaqub Turan & Timur Kocaoglu

According to information received from Tashkent by the Uzbek Service of Radio Liberty, the leaders of "Birlik" and two other informal groups—"The National Turkish Association for the Return to the Homeland" (representing the Meskhetians) and "The National Movement of the Crimean Tatars"—met in Tashkent on June 7 and signed a joint appeal for calm addressed to the various nationalities in Fergana Oblast. The following is the full text of the joint appeal, which was distributed in the region on June 8:

"We are deeply disturbed and saddened by the current unnecessary bloodshed in Fergana Oblast. It is very difficult to describe the present calamity in words. Attempts have been made to discredit the innocent informal groups in Uzbekistan by accusing them of being behind the Fergana tragedy. The ancient Romans used to ask the following question to solve a murder case: 'To whose advantage was it to commit murder?' Let us ask the same question and analyze the answer. It is unlikely that people who can hardly make ends meet, who do not have a job or enough land to cultivate, who have to move to inhospitable Siberia to search for work, and who united to defend their own privileges and equality among nations would find it necessary to shed the blood of their own people and of other friendly nations. It is also unlikely that these informal groups would set a people against its own brothers or set the Turks against other Turkic peoples. Are not the roots of the tragedy much deeper than this? Are not those who blame the informal groups today

themselves behind the present violence? Were not the homelessness of the Turks and the hardships of the Uzbeks in their own country the main causes of these killings? It would have been logical to find in these reasons an answer to the question: 'To whose advantage was it to commit murder?'

"Dear people! Even a lie should be told in such a way that at least a few people can believe it. It is unlikely that the whole population would follow a handful of drunks and drug addicts. Dear brothers, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kirgiz, Crimean Tatars, and fellow Turks! We share our history, our religion, and our hearts. We likewise share our poverty, our unemployment, and our unhappiness. Now, we also share our tragedy. Would it not be better to struggle together with open eyes and solidarity against our common calamity instead of fighting each other in this darkness? Why can we not unite? Brothers, there is enough room for consultations. Why should we be using our fists when it is possible to solve the problem with words? Otherwise, a large fist could easily nail us down on the black bench of the law. Please stop! Not in withdrawal and defeat, but in order to think logically. In order to stand straight in front of the people and justice tomorrow, we should show courage and patience today. We should stop to find the real intriguers. We should stop and confer before they divert our caravan from the main road. We should not give up our generosity and humanity. We should remain faithful to our centuries-long history, to the memory, intelligence, and humanity of our ancestors!

We want our future generations to remember our deeds with pride. We also want our children to live close together and grow old in brotherhood.

"Dear fraternal brothers! We should not jeopardize our longstanding relationship by cutting off our roots.

Uzbekistan's Popular Front Birlik,
The National Turkish Association for
the Return to the Homeland,
The National Movement of the Crimean Tatars.
Tashkent, June 8, 1989"
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