REVOLUTIONARY NARRATIVE, REVOLUTIONARY DEFENSE: READING STALIN'S "FIRST VICTIM"

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ABSTRACT

Gary Guadagnolo: Revolutionary Narrative, Revolutionary Defense: Reading Stalin's "First Victim"
(Under the direction of Donald J. Raleigh)

This thesis traces a complex discourse of the self in the early Soviet era, navigating the identities both assumed by and ascribed to Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev (1892-1940), a Volga Tatar and at one time the highest-ranking Muslim in the Communist Party. After the Bolshevik Revolution, Sultan-Galiev balanced a number of influences, most particularly his Tatar nationality, his Muslim culture and faith, and his belief in the objectives of a socialist revolution. Sultan-Galiev strayed too far from ideological orthodoxy, though, which led to his 1923 arrest. Rather than trying to determine Sultan-Galiev's "guilt," I assess his attempts to assert his innocence and the consequences of his failure to do so. Drawing on the field of Soviet subjectivities, I analyze the role of narrative in both the defense and vilification of Sultan-Galiev. This was more than just a conflict over policy; it delineated the power of a Soviet subject over his own story.

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INTRODUCTION

On May 23, 1923, sitting in a cell in the basement of the Lubianka prison in Moscow, Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev addressed a rambling letter of self-examination, self-critique, and self-justification to the Central Control Commission of the Communist Party, sending additional copies to Josef Stalin and Leon Trotsky. Sultan-Galiev had fallen from grace quickly: once the highest-ranking Tatar within the Party apparatus, he now faced charges of nationalist deviation and coordinating an anti-Soviet conspiracy. Responding to these accusations in his letter, provocatively entitled "Who am I?," Sultan-Galiev emphasized his steadfast commitment to the socialist revolution and his belief that history would prove his innocence. Yet his arrest had already called this legacy into question. In the letter, Sultan-Galiev inquired, "Who am I, after all? A communist and a revolutionary, or some kind of political blackmailer, an adventurist or provocateur? Perhaps even a counterrevolutionary?"[1]

Intrigued by Sultan-Galiev's frank interrogation of the self, I seek in this essay to navigate the various identities both assumed by and ascribed to this complex Soviet subject. Sultan-Galiev's detractors condemned him as a counterrevolutionary, a pan-Turkic nationalist, and a traitor. Historians in the West have cast him in a more favorable light as a " Muslim national communist," the "father of revolution in the third world," and an "outcast prophet." These epithets, however, reveal less about Sultan-Galiev than the historical contexts and political objectives in which they operated. So, rather than

[1] Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev, "Avtobiograficheskii ocherk 'Kto ia?'," in I. G. Gizzatullin and D. R. Sharafutdinov, eds., *Izbrannye trudy* (Kazan: Gasyr, 1998), 446.

trying to determine whether he was actually "guilty" of nationalist deviation, I instead assess how Sultan-Galiev represented himself in the early Soviet era and how his eventual loss of control over his biographical narrative reflects the emerging political culture of Stalinism.[2]

After the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, Sultan-Galiev emerged as a powerful figure, personifying the possibility for non-Russians to attain prominence within the Party-state structure.[3] As recently published collections of Sultan-Galiev's writings and speeches disclose, this position was rarely simple or stable. Sultan-Galiev constantly negotiated a number of influences, most particularly his Tatar nationality, his Muslim background and culture, his belief in the socialist revolution, and his passion for ending colonialism. As the head of the Muslim Commissariat (Muskom) and a member of the People's Commissariat of Nationalities, Sultan-Galiev translated, often quite literally, between Party authorities in Moscow and the nationalities under Soviet control. He frequently recounted the history of the Bolshevik Revolution, identified its present tasks, and anticipated its final objective, the realization of a socialist society. This

[2] To do so, I draw on some of the literature from the field of Soviet subjectivities. See, for example: Igal Halfin, *From Darkness to Light: Class, Consciousness, and Salvation in Revolutionary Russia* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000); Igal Halfin, *Terror in My Soul: Communist Autobiographies on Trial* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Igal Halfin, *Stalinist Confessions: Messianism and Terror at the Leningrad Communist University* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009); Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Christina Kiaer and Eric Naiman, eds., *Everyday Life in Early Soviet Russia: Taking the Revolution Inside* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006); Laura Engelstein and Stephanie Sandler, eds., *Self and Story in Russian History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000); and Mark D. Steinberg, *Proletarian Imagination: Self, Modernity, and the Sacred in Russia, 1910-1925* (Cornell, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002).

[3] This point becomes even clearer given the absence of Tatars in the Party in the early years of Soviet rule and Stalin's subsequent interest in increasing these numbers through policies of *korenizatsiia*. When Sultan-Galiev joined the Kazan Communist Party in July 1917, it boasted only 650 total members. In 1922, the Kazan Communist Party consisted of 1,095 Tatars out of 4,420 total members, or 24 percent. Russians made up 56 percent of the Party membership that year, and such an imbalance remained, with varying levels, throughout the Soviet era. See A. V. Gnedenkov, V. G. Sarkin, and I. N. Iudin, eds., *Partiinaia organizatsiia Tatarii v tsifrakh i dokumentakh, 1917-1977 gg*. (Kazan: Tatarskoe knizhnoe izd-vo, 1978), 17, 47.

"revolutionary narrative," rooted in the correct placement of the self in relation to the Revolution's past, present, and future, helped Sultan-Galiev to enlighten Russia's ethnic minorities about their role in the Bolshevik project.

Sultan-Galiev deployed this revolutionary narrative at a number of opportune times, whether celebrating Bolshevik successes, explaining Soviet power to minority nationalities, advocating for specific policies to Moscow, or defending himself from accusations of anti-Party behavior. Most important, Sultan-Galiev assigned himself and the Volga Tatars an active part in this narrative. He saw the Bolshevik Revolution as the beginning of a movement that would achieve worldwide social justice, especially in the East, where millions remained under the oppressive yoke of colonialism. He believed the Tatars could lead this drive for liberation. But, with Party leaders turning their attention elsewhere, Sultan-Galiev became increasingly frustrated. This culminated in him lashing out at Stalin about the new nationalities policies at a Party Congress in April 1923.

Likely in conjunction with this insubordination, Sultan-Galiev was arrested the following month on charges of coordinating an anti-Soviet organization. At a Central Committee conference called by Stalin in June 1923, delegates listened to the purported evidence of Sultan-Galiev's betrayal and banished him from the Party. Former comrades called for a purge of all those involved in *Sultangalievshchina* (Sultan-Galievism), a term that came to epitomize the worst kind of nationalist deviation, orchestrated by traitors to Soviet rule within Party ranks. Stalin subsequently employed the term *Sultangalievshchina* as grounds for the arrest and execution of Tatars throughout the 1920s and 1930s. He orchestrated a new narrative that depicted Sultan-Galiev not as an

advocate for the socialist revolution, but as a villainous mastermind behind a multitude of anti-Party movements that intended to bring down the Soviet government by force.

This essay scrutinizes the process by which the "man" Sultan-Galiev became the "-ism" *Sultangalievshchina*. Viewing Sultan-Galiev as a "text" with multiple authors, I explore how both he and Party stalwarts constructed competing narratives of what he represented. For example, Sultan-Galiev fashioned himself as a mediator between Moscow and the non-Russian periphery in advancing the cause of socialism. In *Sultangalievshchina* literature, Party ideologues characterized him as the embodiment of unbridled, anti-Soviet nationalism. In comparing these two narratives, I consider 1923, when Sultan-Galiev was arrested and publically castigated, as a moment of transition in which the control over subjecthood shifted from Sultan-Galiev to Stalin and the Party. The purges carried out under the banner of eliminating *Sultangalievshchina* in the 1920s and 1930s constituted a recasting of Sultan-Galiev in service of the Party's struggle against nationalism and Islam. The power to create a Soviet subject belonged not just to individuals, but to the Party as well.

In exploring the subjectivity of Sultan-Galiev, I am less interested in what he did than how he portrayed himself, and how others read his life as a text to be imitated, modified, or rejected. Sultan-Galiev's story reveals how he drew on the modes of self-construction available in the early Soviet period to "speak Bolshevik," a skill that many of his critics claimed he had not mastered.[4] Still, one hazard in reading Sultan-Galiev as a constructed text is forgetting that behind the rhetoric stands a real human being. Individuals forge their identity within dynamic social, cultural, and symbolic worlds, so

[4] Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

interactive, communal, and even political dimensions of the self must not be ignored.[5] As historian Lloyd Kramer writes, "The meaning of a particular life is always hanging in conjunction with the evolving experiences and perspectives of other people."[6] In reading Sultan-Galiev's life, I thus cast him as both an agent and object of construction. This is not just a biography of a man; it is also about the idea behind the man.

THE MAN AND THE MYTH

Mirsaid Khaidargalievich Sultan-Galiev was born on July 13, 1892, in the Bashkir village of Elembet'ev, located in Ufa province, to two Tatar parents, Khaidar-Galiev and Ainil'khaiat.[7] Sultan-Galiev's father Khaidar-Galiev worked as a Russian and Tatar language teacher in Bashkir and Tatar villages throughout the province. His mother Ainil'khaiat, the daughter of a Tatar mirza (a hereditary noble rank), watched after her twelve children. After his family moved to the village of Karmaskaly, his father's birthplace south of Ufa, Sultan-Galiev finished primary school with a certificate of merit. Given his family's poor financial situation, he could not enroll in a private gymnasium and instead attended a village *mekteb*, or Muslim elementary school, where he learned Arabic and Persian and studied the Koran. In 1907, at age fifteen, Sultan-Galiev was accepted into the Kazan Tatar Teachers' School. Using the most contemporary

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[5] Thus, while I draw on Igal Halfin's approach to Soviet subjectivities in this essay, I object to his classification of Sultan-Galiev as just another "intimate enemy" who fell victim to the Party's struggle against oppositionists. My intent is to bring back not just politics, but also Stalin, to the analysis of the Soviet subject, illustrating how Sultan-Galiev employed discursive strategies in response to very particular developments in nationality policies. See Igal Halfin, *Intimate Enemies: Demonizing the Bolshevik Opposition, 1918-1928* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007), especially 111-20.

[6] Lloyd Kramer, *Lafayette in Two Worlds: Public Cultures and Personal Identities in an Age of Revolutions* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 8. This book played a key role in the formation of my argument.

[7] Several collections of archival documents published after the demise of the USSR provide much of the documentary evidence and biographical information used in this paper. See Gizzatullin and Sharafutdinov, *Izbrannye trudy*; D. R. Sharafutdinov and B. F. Sultanbekov, eds., *Neizvestnyi Sultan-Galiev: Rassekrechennye dokumenty i materialy* (Kazan: Tatarskoe knizhnoe izd-vo, 2002); B. F. Sultanbekov, ed., *Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev: Stat'i, vystupleniia, dokumenty* (Kazan: Tatarskoe knizhnoe izd-vo, 1992).

pedagogy, the school instructed Tatars to speak and teach Russian. It functioned as a model for educational reform among the Russian Empire's minority groups, as well as a center for the growing *jadid* movement, which sought to modernize the social, cultural, and educational practices of Russia's Muslim population. By the time Sultan-Galiev attended the Kazan Tatar Teachers' School, it was also a place of growing nationalist fervor, where Rousseau, Darwin, and Tolstoy were read alongside Turkish newspapers imported from abroad.[8]

After completing his schooling in 1911, Sultan-Galiev taught Russian in Tatar and Bashkir villages near Ufa and supplemented his pay by working in local government institutions (*zemstvos*). In Ufa, Sultan-Galiev met and married a Tatar woman named Rauza, and in 1914 they moved to Baku. There, Sultan-Galiev enjoyed a successful career as a journalist, publishing poetry, essays, and political commentaries in leading newspapers and journals. He also translated Tolstoy, Pushkin, and Turgenev into Tatar. In Baku, Sultan-Galiev associated with an influential circle of Muslim nationalists, State Duma representatives, and future leaders of Soviet republics. These connections facilitated Sultan-Galiev's transition into active political work after the February Revolution of 1917. Akhmed Tsalikov, one of the leaders of the former Muslim faction in the State Duma, invited Sultan-Galiev to Petrograd to help organize the First and Second All-Russian Muslim Congresses, held in Moscow and Kazan in May and July 1917, respectively. Purporting to gather all of the Russian Empire's Muslim peoples together as a sign of unity, these congresses instead revealed the deep economic,

[8] For more on the Kazan Tatar Teachers' School and the Tatar *jadid* movement, see Robert P. Geraci, *Window on the East: National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).

religious, and political fissures that Sultan-Galiev subsequently sought to overcome in rallying support for socialism.

While in Kazan, Sultan-Galiev became acquainted with Mullanur Vakhitov, a Bolshevik revolutionary, and with him formed the Muslim Socialist Committee. The organization entertained a wide range of views but preserved a Bolshevik leaning, made stronger by Sultan-Galiev joining the Party in July 1917. Following the Bolshevik Revolution in October, Sultan-Galiev played a crucial role in defending Kazan in the Civil War; his prominence only grew after Vakhitov's untimely death in 1918. Stalin subsequently appointed Sultan-Galiev to several positions in the new Soviet government, including chairman of the Federal Land Commission, the chief of the Political Administration of the Eastern Division of the Red Army, and a member of the Collegium of the People's Commissariat of Nationalities (Narkomnats).

While Sultan-Galiev acquired the platform to speak both to and for the Tatars and other nationalities after the Revolution, his earlier years of traveling, teaching, and writing shaped his emerging identity. After graduating from the Kazan Tatar Teachers' School in 1911, Sultan-Galiev chronicled his impressions and experiences. Educational reform, economic hardships, and tensions between Russian and Tatar communities constituted key issues for him.[9] As revolutionary ferment swelled, he began speaking more authoritatively as a representative of the Volga Tatars. He criticized Russian imperial policies that limited the development of their language, literature, and culture. He also expressed himself in poetry and literature, often contemplating the meaning of

[9] See, for example, Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev, "Po povodu nedostatka uchitelei-musul'man," and "Po povodu otkrytiia bibliotek v musul'manskix aulakh," in Gizzatullin and Sharafutdinov, *Izbrannye trudy*, 34-40. See also Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev, "Vse o tom zhe (Krik nabolevshei dushi)," in Sultanbekov, *Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev*, 27-31.

life and death.[10] Strikingly, the recruitment of Sultan-Galiev into the Bolshevik Party in July 1917 marked a change in his literary voice: increasingly serious and politically minded prose now mirrored his growing responsibilities. When he joined Narkomnats in 1918 as the head of the subsidiary Muslim Commissariat (Muskom), Sultan-Galiev took on the role of editor of the Narkomnats newspaper *Zhizn' national'nostei* (Life of the Nationalities). This provided Sultan-Galiev with a space to fine-tune his ideas about the socialist revolution and its long-term ramifications for the national question.

As European Marxists argued about nationalism in the early twentieth century, Lenin embraced the principle of self-determination. Stalin reiterated this position in his 1913 article "Marxism and the National Question," which led to his installation as commissar of nationalities.[11] In that piece, Stalin defined a nation as a "historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture."[12] This construction remained relatively stable throughout Stalin's tenure as the Narkomnats chief and even later as General Secretary.

During the period from 1917 to 1923, the slogan of "national self-determination" convinced many of Russia's minorities to join the struggle against imperialist forces in the ongoing civil war. Lenin and Stalin's "Appeal to the Muslims of Russia and the East," published in December 1917, agitated for Russia's Muslims to support the

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[10] See, for example, "Ia byl meteorom," "Mirazh zhizni," "Zhizn' i liudi," and "Nedopetaia pesnia," in Gizzatullin and Sharafutdinov, *Izbrannye trudy*, 134-40. See also Sultan-Galiev, "Ia chelovek (Shtrikh)," in Ibid., 55.

[11] See Stephen Blank, *The Sorcerer as Apprentice: Stalin as Commissar of Nationalities, 1917-1924* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994). This book focuses on Stalin in his early position as Narkomnats chief, but Blank's lack of archival access leads to conclusions that more recent scholarship challenges.

[12] Joseph Stalin, *Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1952), 307.

Bolsheviks, proclaiming that Soviet power would protect their beliefs and customs. Similarly, Lenin's "Declaration of the Rights of the Working and Exploited People," distributed in January 1918, guaranteed "the principle of a free union of free nations" and articulated the intent of Soviet power to "abolish all exploitation of man by man, to completely eliminate the division of society into classes, to mercilessly crush the resistance of the exploiters, to establish a socialist organization of society and to achieve the victory of socialism in all countries."[13] As historian Jeremy Smith notes, once Soviet power was established in non-Russian areas, national self-determination lost its practical implications. Even so, as Lenin and Stalin backed away from this approach in favor of consolidating authority in Moscow, those agitating for autonomy frequently invoked these earlier promises.[14] In this context Sultan-Galiev began articulating his view of the socialist revolution.

In addition to serving as its editor, Sultan-Galiev frequently contributed to *Zhizn' natsional'nostei*. The paper publicized Bolshevik nationalities policies and chronicled current events not only within arenas of Soviet control, but also throughout the larger "East," a vague construct that included non-Russian Eurasia and the territories of China, Persia, Afghanistan, Turkey, India, and sometimes even Africa. As Sultan-Galiev explained to his readers in a number of articles, the Bolshevik Revolution could achieve universal social justice through the liberation of the colonized East. In "The Socialist Revolution and the East," published in *Zhizn' national'nostei* in late 1919, Sultan-Galiev asserted that the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia marked only the beginning of the

[13] Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, *Collected Works of V. I. Lenin* (New York: International Publishers, 1927), 26:423.

[14] Smith's work is one of the best on the Bolsheviks' nationality policies in the early years. See Jeremy Smith, *The Bolsheviks and the National Question, 1917-23* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 7-28.

international struggle between the proletariat and their imperialist enemies.[15] The Russian Civil War would eventually expand beyond the borders of Russia, enveloping all people: "The old world has become much too decrepit. It is groaning and collapsing, rotten through and through. The entire earth, down to each of its individual atoms, thirsts for and demands renewal, a completely new sense of harmony." With the battle lines drawn, it was now incumbent not just on each government, but on each individual, to decide his fate and "consciously or unconsciously become either a 'Red' or 'White'."

In this article, Sultan-Galiev affirmed his commitment to the international socialist revolution under the direction of the Bolsheviks, in spite of his belief that the Party was "facing the wrong direction" with respect to the national question, having forgotten about the one and a half billion people who remained enslaved in the East. To Sultan-Galiev, the Bolsheviks should turn to the eastern nationalities, without whose backing the international revolution would fail. Ongoing exploitation in the East, which constituted the "chief source of nourishment of international capitalism," presented an "essential source of kindling for the revolutionary movement" that Sultan-Galiev was keen to utilize. With the right motivations, the people of India, Afghanistan, Persia, and Asian and African colonies could cut off their exploiters' capital, causing imperialism to "wither and die a natural death."

This "eastern question" precipitated the roots of conflict between Sultan-Galiev and the official Party line that emerged at the Second All-Russian Congress of Communist Organizations of Peoples of the East, held in Moscow from November 22 to December 3, 1919. About eighty delegates represented Communist Party organizations

[15] Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev, "Sotsial'naia revoliutsiia i Vostok," *Zhizn' natsional'nostei*, October 5, 1919, October 12, 1919, and November 2, 1919.

from Turkestan, Khiva, Bukhara, Kirghizia, the Caucasus, and the Volga region. In the opening session, Lenin adopted an optimistic tone about revolution in the East, but offered no specifics on how to accomplish it. While affirming that oppressed nations of the East would contribute to a socialist victory, he insisted that the Western European proletariat still formed the socialist vanguard of the revolutionary movement. The East could only follow their lead.[16]

In contrast, at this congress Sultan-Galiev called for closer attention to the eastern question. He critiqued Party policy, declaring, "Up until now, nothing has been done in regard to the East—I believe this has been a mistake of our Party's leadership." To Sultan-Galiev, the collapse of revolutionary movements in Germany and Hungary proved that the international socialist revolution could not be accomplished without the mobilization of the East. As a tactical approach, Sultan-Galiev suggested that the Bolsheviks support nationalist movements in the East, gaining access to revolutionary energy that could be harnessed in service of socialism. "A revolutionary boiler that can heat up all of Western Europe in revolution," the East had a decisive role to play in the international revolution, even if it lacked a proletarian class. Sultan-Galiev blamed this deficit on the policies of imperial regimes that limited their colonies' economic growth. He contended that Bolsheviks should foster proletarian-like groups in service of the revolution in the East.[17] Sultan-Galiev outlined several possible ways to do this, like training more Party workers for deployment to the East, creating cadres of "Orientalist" specialists with extensive knowledge of Eastern languages and cultures, and founding an

[16] Lenin, *Collected Works of V. I. Lenin*, 161-62.

[17] Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev, "Doklad po vostochnomu voprosu," in Gizzatullin and Sharafutdinov, *Izbrannye trudy*, 215-22.

Eastern division of the Red Army led by commanders chosen from among the proletariat of Russia's non-Russian peoples.[18] Sultan-Galiev envisioned Tatars fulfilling many of these roles.

Throughout his tenure in Narkomnats (1918-1923), Sultan-Galiev exhibited an intimate awareness of the particular histories, cultures, and languages of the nationalities under his purview. He spent much of his time traveling: seeing economic and political conditions firsthand allowed him to craft a vision for revolution and development in the East that remained sensitive to the great diversity within the nascent Soviet Union. For example, in a piece in *Zhizn' natsional'nostei* in April 1920, Sultan-Galiev noted how the recent founding of the Azerbaijan Soviet Republic embodied a decisive victory in the worldwide socialist revolution: "If Red Turkestan has up until now played a role as a revolutionary lighthouse for Chinese Turkestan, Tibet, Afghanistan, India, Bukhara, and Khiva, then Soviet Azerbaijan with its old and experienced revolutionary proletariat and fortified Communist Party will serve as a Red Lighthouse for Persia, Arabia, and Turkey."[19] Ironically, the contacts that Sultan-Galiev developed traveling throughout these areas later provided fodder for his accusers as evidence of his attempts to create an underground conspiratorial network among Eurasia's Turkic Muslims.

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[18] Sultan-Galiev also proposed convening a Congress of the Peoples of the East, which was held in Baku from September 1-7, 1920. Sultan-Galiev did not go to Baku, however, perhaps on the order of Stalin. Nonetheless, almost two thousand delegates from Turkey, Persia, China, India, Japan, Russia, and the Soviet republics attended. A spirit of internationalism pervaded, and delegates advocated for increased solidarity between the working classes of advanced countries and the oppressed peoples of colonial regimes. The lofty talk reached a feverish pitch when Grigorii Zinoviev, the chief Bolshevik Party representative and one of the congress convenors, declared, "Brothers, we summon you to a holy war, above all against British imperialism!" Prolonged ovations and brandishing of weapons, and shouts of approval followed, although the congress did not change much in terms of long-lasting Soviet policy. See John Riddell, ed., *To See the Dawn: Baku, 1920-First Congress of the Peoples of the East* (New York: Pathfinder, 1993), 78; and Stephen White, "Communism and the East: The Baku Congress, 1920," *Slavic Review* 33, no. 3 (September 1974): 492-514.

[19] Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev, "K ob''iavleniiu Azerbaidzhanskoi Sovetskoi Respubliki," *Zhizn' natsional'nostei*, April 29, 1920.

Concerning this question of loyalty, Sultan-Galiev's response to a political crisis among the Crimean Tatars merits consideration. Sultan-Galiev spent most of February and March 1921 in the Crimea on assignment from the Narkomnats. Reporting to Stalin, he described the "amateurish character" of Party work there, warning that if Moscow did not direct more of its attention to the periphery, anti-Soviet attitudes could translate into rebellious action. Sultan-Galiev suggested that the problem was a lack of native Bolsheviks, with only thirty in the capital of Simferopol' and even fewer in provincial areas. He spoke harshly against the exorbitant use of terror in the Crimea, estimating that Soviet forces had executed 20,000 to 25,000 White Army officers and sympathizers, and 12,000 in Simferopol' alone. This left everyone in fear of the Soviet regime. Sultan-Galiev then turned his criticism to the so-called "Red Resorts" (*zdravnitsy*): the disparity between vacationing government officials relaxing in the spas and the Crimean Tatars dying in the streets from starvation and disease had turned the local population against Soviet power. Party chiefs also ignored important issues of land reform, education, and public health. Sultan-Galiev's closing words revealed the severity of the situation:

> This is the naked truth with which I form my opinion about Soviet power and the Crimean Tatars. The [Crimean] Tatar population interprets all of this [disparity] as a manifestation of an organized, but latent, colonization policy of Soviet power, distrustful of the East as a land of petty bourgeois elements. [They believe that] Soviet power is pursuing the complete economic and political demoralization of Turko-Tatars, who are seen as the vanguard of the inevitable next wave of agitators for the liberation of the colonies. Based on the elimination of private property rights, Soviet power and communism appear to be the new forms of European imperialism, and thus more powerful and menacing than before. These are the poisonous ideas that plague the consciousness of the Crimean Tatars.

Sultan-Galiev's frank account of the deteriorating situation in the Crimea affirms not only his allegiance to Soviet authority, but also his willingness to critique Party policy.[20] Speaking truth to power, however, would soon take Sultan-Galiev outside the realm of acceptable practices.

Notably, the most important element of Sultan-Galiev's vision for the international socialist revolution concerned the Volga Tatars. To Sultan-Galiev, the Tatars' history as a colonized and subjugated nationality, combined with their newfound support of Soviet power, allowed them to mediate between Soviet Russia and the East. This theme emerges in "The Tatars and the October Revolution," published in *Zhizn' natsional'notsei* in November 1921.[21] As Sultan-Galiev recounts, the prerevolutionary "nationalist period" of Tatar history began in 1905 when the first Russian Revolution shook society: "We see the awakening of an entire nation enslaved by tsarism and doomed to complete cultural and economic degeneration and extinction." The publication of Tatar-language newspapers skyrocketed; reformist *jadid* schools replaced Islamic institutions; and women gained newfound access to educational and social institutions. Until February 1917, nationalism remained a unifying force for the Tatars.

Sultan-Galiev explained that, after the collapse of the tsarist regime, socialist Muslims and the revolutionary intelligentsia began to assert their authority under his

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[20] Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev, "Doklad narodnomu komissaru po delam natsional'nostei I. V. Stalinu, kopiia v TsK RKP (b), o polozhenii v Krymu," in Gizzatullin and Sharafutdinov, *Izbrannye trudy*, 323-34. In the article "In the Realm of Hunger," published in *Zhizn' natsional'nostei* on October 17, 1921, Sultan-Galiev again issues a veiled critique of Soviet mismanagement of the famine that gripped Russia. Traveling from Ufa to Moscow, Sultan-Galiev bemoaned the sights of bodies piled in the street, emaciated children, and beggars attacking each other for a crust of bread. Sultan-Galiev arrived in Moscow and looked disdainfully at the fully stocked stores and busy restaurants. He concluded: "On the walls are written the sayings, 'Help the hungry.' Meanwhile, the well-fed, well-dressed, and always bustling and hurrying crowd passes by indifferently. Moscow lives on…."

[21] Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev, "Tatary i Oktiabr'skaia revoliutsiia," *Zhizn' natsional'nostei*, November 5, 1921.

personal supervision. The founding of the Muslim Socialist Committee and its successful struggle for power against reactionary organizations under Sultan-Galiev's direction heralded victory. After October, local Muslim Commissariats, set up by Sultan-Galiev through Narkomnats, served as political and administrative organs and conducted propaganda among Tatars. The newly created Central Muslim Military Collegium, also under Sultan-Galiev's guidance, mobilized Tatars for service in the Civil War. These combatants "were the pioneers of the socialist revolution in the East, carrying the red flag of class struggle to the far villages of Central Asia, to the *yurts* of Siberia, to the mountain *auls* of the Caucasus." The Tatars were destined to help spread socialism to the East—this was their role in the revolutionary narrative. Furthermore, if the Tatars had a special task to fulfill, then Sultan-Galiev, as their de-facto leader, did as well.

Sultan-Galiev also thoroughly understood Islam's influence among the Tatars, even as he endorsed the Bolsheviks' materialist worldview. He maintained that caution should guide any attempt to eliminate religion among Russia's Muslims. In "How to Conduct Antireligious Propaganda among Muslims," published in December 1921, Sultan-Galiev underscored the need for the Bolsheviks to learn about Islam and its different manifestations.[22] He elaborated that, "to fight something without knowing about it is to risk at least failure, if not outright defeat." From Sultan-Galiev's point of view, Islam penetrated the "spirit of the believer" more deeply than other religions. Implying a deep comprehension of Islamic laws, Sultan-Galiev outlined the many ways that religion could not be easily separated from Muslim culture, society, and politics. If the

[22] Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev, "Metody antireligioznoi propagandy sredi musul'man," *Zhizn' natsional'nostei*, December 14 and December 23, 1921.

Bolsheviks did not approach their antireligious work carefully, they risked comparisons to the old Russian Orthodox proselytizers.

Sultan-Galiev recommended that the Bolsheviks first tend to their own ranks before conducting propaganda, training antireligious workers on the intricacies of Islam. He suggested banning former missionaries who had joined with the Bolsheviks from interacting with Muslims. He encouraged replacing verbal agitation with long-term interaction in which atheists would be planted in Muslim villages, slowly revealing the soundness of their cause: "[Tatars] must understand that the atheist is not a devil in disguise, as is customarily depicted, but a man like themselves, only more positive, cultured, resolute, and energetic." Additionally, Sultan-Galiev contended that individual plans for antireligious work should be developed for each nationality, as varying geographic, historical, and economic characteristics fostered unique religious cultures. Sultan-Galiev envisioned achieving greater success among Tatars, as the influence of secularism had made them less susceptible to fanaticism. In Bashkiria, however, animism and superstition reigned supreme, just as religious dogmatism dominated in Turkestan, Khiva, and Bukhara.

Not everyone, however, bought into Sultan-Galiev's vision for the distinctiveness of the Muslim experience. The Second All-Russian Congress of Communist Organizations of Peoples of the East in 1919 debated the usefulness of the word "Muslim" (*musul'mane*/*musul'manskii*) in describing organs of Bolshevik power such as the Muslim Commissariat, the Muslim Scientific Collegium, and the Muslim Military Collegium. Some delegates alleged that "Muslim" had only a religious connotation and should therefore be avoided. Others proposed to eliminate the Muslim organizations

altogether, as they overlapped with other government structures.[23] This conflict surfaced alongside tensions between Muskom and Narkomnats, of which Muskom officially remained a department. Since July 1918, however, Muskom had worked independently of the Narkomnats collegium, often going directly to the Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom) to request funding, challenge policy proposals, and advocate for the interests of various autonomous republics. In late 1918 and early 1919, the frustrated Narkomnats collegium attempted to liquidate the Muskom and the Muslim Military Collegium, both of which Sultan-Galiev led. Although Sovnarkom blocked these moves, such squabbles indicate divisiveness within the Narkomnats and Sultan-Galiev's growing isolation there.[24]

By 1923, the balance of political power in Moscow had started to shift. With Lenin bedridden and for the first time absent from a Party Congress, Stalin manipulated the debate on the nationalities question, which testified to his burgeoning authority and determination to accomplish his objectives. Resolutions from the Twelfth Party Congress in April and a special Central Committee conference in June, in addition to Stalin's speeches at these assemblies, established definitive policies for the fledgling Soviet Union, created just the previous December. After June 1923, all public discussion on nationalities issues ceased. Stalin rejected the devolution of federal powers to the national republics so that power would remain in Moscow. Over the course of 1923, Stalin also declared that the Soviet state would develop those "forms" of nationhood that did not challenge the interests of a centralized socialist polity. This endorsement of

[23] Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev, "Vystuplenie pri obsuzhdenie otchetnogo doklada Tsentral'nogo biuro kommunisticheskikh organizatsii narodov Vostoka pri TsK RKP(b) za period s dekabria 1918 g. po noiabr' 1919 g.," in Gizzatullin and Sharafutdinov, *Izbrannye trudy*, 207-8.

[24] Smith, *The Bolsheviks and the National Question*, 41-43.

national territories, languages, elites, and cultures marked the inception of *korenizatsiia* (indigenization) policies, which by the late 1920s produced impressive improvements among the numbers of non-Russians in local Party structures and a fair amount of cultural autonomy for these groups. Lenin and Stalin intended for this radical agenda—which historian Terry Martin describes as the foundation for the "Soviet affirmative action empire"—to give Soviet power a local feel while retaining ultimate authority in the metropole.[25]

Yet, if 1923 represents the Bolsheviks' clearest recognition of the right for nationalities to pursue some autonomy in the administration of local affairs, why did Sultan-Galiev fall from grace at the very moment when *korenizatsiia* began? Appraising Stalin's life years later, Leon Trotsky recalled a comment made to him by Lev Kamenev, a prominent Bolshevik and one-time ally of Stalin: "Do you remember the arrest of [Sultan-Galiev], the former chairman of the Tatar Council of People's Commissars, in 1923? This was the first arrest of a prominent Party member made upon the initiative of Stalin. Unfortunately, Zinoviev and I gave our consent to it. That was Stalin's first taste of blood."[26] Recently published sources suggest Stalin's close supervision of the attack on Sultan-Galiev, perhaps a result of an incident at the Twelfth Party Congress. There, Sultan-Galiev emphatically rejected Stalin's approach to the nationalities issues, declaring, "In my opinion, the decrees issued by Stalin do not solve the question, and

[25] Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 1-15. Martin and Smith both dispute the idea that Lenin and Stalin significantly differed on the nationalities question.

[26] Leon Trotsky, *Stalin: An Appraisal of the Man and His Influence* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1941), 417.

unless we deal with this decisively now, we will be forced to return to it later."[27] Sultan-Galiev objected to the structure of the new Soviet Union and the relegation of republics such as the Tatar ASSR to a lower hierarchical position. He proposed instead that they enter directly into the Soviet Union. In a December 1922 speech, Sultan-Galiev alleged that any other approach would create an unequal system of "step-sons and natural sons" among the republics.[28]

As before, Sultan-Galiev did not demur at faulting those Bolshevik policies with which he disagreed, and the Twelfth Party Congress proved no exception—in spite of the fact that Stalin, increasingly powerful and disdainful of deviation, did not respond favorably to Sultan-Galiev's public rebuke. Stalin believed he possessed particular expertise in the nationalities question, and he guarded this domain closely. In a psychoanalytical portrait of Stalin, political scientist Robert Tucker highlights such a pattern of vindictiveness, which, beginning in the 1920s, manifested itself whenever someone questioned Stalin's competency. Tucker elaborates: "[Stalin] had to assume that the disparagement was unmerited, in which case the person who failed to give him due recognition and deference must be intentionally maligning him, and Stalin characteristically responded by striking out in anger against the maligner."[29] Still, given that sources offer no "smoking gun," I am not interested in speculating whether Stalin personally initiated the assault on Sultan-Galiev. Rather, after summarizing the charges against him, I assess how Sultan-Galiev marshaled a revolutionary narrative for his own

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[27] Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev, "Vystuplenie na zasedanii sektsii po natsional'nomu voprosu XII s''ezda RKP(b), in Gizzatullin and Sharafutdinov, *Izbrannye trudy*, 435-37.

[28] Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev, "Vystuplenie na zasedanii fraktsii RKP(b) X Vserossiiskogo s''ezda Sovetov," in Ibid., 409-10.

[29] See Robert Tucker, *Stalin as Revolutionary, 1879-1929: A Study in History and Personality* (New York: Norton, 1973), 421-61. Quote on page 444.

defense and how subsequent attacks on him inverted this narrative in pursuit of anti-nationalist, anti-Islamic objectives.

The explicit cause for the arrest was a series of short letters Sultan-Galiev allegedly wrote in early 1923 in which he mentioned ongoing efforts to organize a revolution in the East through underground work in Moscow, Turkey, Iran, India, Afghanistan, and Central Asia. In the correspondence, Sultan-Galiev also mentioned that Central Committee planned to discuss the nationality question in a secret session.[30] In another letter, Sultan-Galiev asked his friend Abdulla Adigamov, a commissar in the Bashkir ASSR, to arrange a meeting with Zaki Validov. A fierce Bashkir nationalist, Validov had a tumultuous history with the Bolsheviks. During the Russian Civil War, Validov initially sided with the imperial White Army until Sultan-Galiev convinced him to support the Bolsheviks in exchange for Bashkir autonomy. Validov's loyalty ultimately proved short-lived; he fled to Central Asia, where he served as a commander of the Basmachi rebels fighting against Soviet power. Party authorities interpreted Sultan-Galiev's interest in communicating with Validov as evidence of their shared political objectives of undermining Soviet power. Notably, by the end of 1922, Validov had apparently indicated to the Bolsheviks' Central Asian Bureau his interest in returning to the Party.[31] Sultan-Galiev later contended that he intended to help with this

[30] For these letters, see "Pis'mo M. Kh. Sultan-Galiev Tadzhi-Bakhshi," and "Rasshifrovka perekhvachennogo 8 aprelia 1923 g. Bashotdelom GPU pis'ma M. Kh. Sultan-Galieva A. K. Adigamovu," in Sharafutdinov and Sultanbekov, *Neizvestnyi Sultan-Galiev*, 37-38, 44-45.

[31] I. Gizzatullin and D. Sharafutdinov, "Vvedenie," in Gizzatullin and Sharafutdinov, *Izbrannye trudy*, 15.

reconciliation and reached out to Validov. He also claimed that his enemies had fabricated any conspiratorial language in his correspondence.[32]

Sultan-Galiev's confidant Gasanov apparently intercepted these letters and forwarded them to the OGPU, the Soviet secret police, which had been monitoring Sultan-Galiev since 1920. The OGPU reported on Sultan-Galiev's suspicious activities to Stalin and the Central Control Commission, which regulated Party members' activities. On May 4, 1923, the OGPU arrested Sultan-Galiev, and the Central Control Commission expelled him from the Party.[33] On May 7, the head of the Eastern Division of the OGPU, Iakov Peters, along with his deputy investigator Iakov Arganov, began interrogating Sultan-Galiev, eventually extracting two confessions from him over the course of several weeks.[34] They placed intense psychological pressure on Sultan-Galiev but did not resort to physical torture, although this was not the case in subsequent arrests.[35] Reporting on the investigation to the Central Control Commission on June 6, Viacheslav Menzhinskii, the vice-chairman of the OGPU, recommended freeing Sultan-Galiev from custody, given the "political undesirability of taking the case to trial," as "his own incriminating

[32] Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev, "Kto ia?" in Ibid., 470-72.

[33] "Vypiska iz protokola No. 6 zasedaniia partkollegii TsKK RKP(b)," and "Vypiska iz protokola No. 3 zasedaniia Orgbiuro TsK RKP(b)," in Sharafutdinov and Sultanbekov, *Neizvestnyi Sultan-Galiev*, 59-60.

[34] "Pokazaniia M. X. Sultan-Galieva ob obstoiatel'stvakh otpravki pis'ma na imia Tadhzhi-Bakhshi," and "Pokazaniia M. X. Sultan-Galieva o raskhodakh na podderzhanie sviazi s edinomyshlennikami," in Ibid., 74-75.

[35] The Central Committee resolution rehabilitating Sultan-Galiev on May 29, 1990, revealed that later confessions were extracted through torture. "Spravka o tak nazyvaemoi 'sultan-galievskoi kontrrevoliutsionnoi organizatsii', podgotovlennaia Komitetom partiinogo kontrolia pri TsK KPSS, Institutom marksizma-leninizma pri TsK KPSS, Prokuraturoi SSSR I KGB SSSR," *Izvestiia TsK KPSS* 10 (1990): 75-88.

admissions would leave him politically neutralized."[36] As proposed, after forty-five days, Sultan-Galiev was released from prison. But despite his physical survival, the arrest and incarceration symbolized a political death: after 1923, Sultan-Galiev became synonymous with anti-Soviet, nationalist deviation and remained an enemy of the state.

Sultan-Galiev's purge not only demonstrates the powerful machinations of Stalin and the Central Committee, but also marks a profound moment in the shaping of a Soviet subject. On May 23, 1923, in the midst of interrogations, Sultan-Galiev wrote his long letter entitled "Who am I?," which parses out what Igal Halfin has called the "Communist hermeneutics of the soul—the complex ritual of words and deeds that permitted the Party to determine who was worthy to belong to the brotherhood of the elect."[37] Struggling with the potential guilt of his Communist self, Sultan-Galiev rewrote his revolutionary narrative, placing not just his Party activities, but also his entire life, within a story of personal redemption through Bolshevism. To Sultan-Galiev, deviation was merely in the eye of the beholder.

"Who am I?" represents a culminating act of self-narration and self-examination for Sultan-Galiev, as he knew that his career, and possibly his life, depended upon a persuasive defense. In the letter, Sultan-Galiev presented himself as a Bolshevik who had contributed immeasurably to the success of the October Revolution, both in Russia and throughout the East. Fashioning himself as a mediator between two worlds, Sultan-Galiev claimed that he could still play a central role in instigating a worldwide socialist revolution. Unlike the "apology ritual" of *samokritika* (self-criticism), in which a Soviet

[36] "Zakliuchenie GPU po delu M. X. Sultan-Galieva, napravlennoe v TsKK RKP(b)," in Sharafutdinov and Sultanbekov, *Neizvestnyi Sultan-Galiev*, 80.

[37] Halfin, *Terror in My Soul*, 7.

subject would acknowledge his mistakes and profess his devotion to the correct line in order to return to the good graces of the Party, Sultan-Galiev did not recant his negative appraisals of nationality policies.[38] Rather, this letter underscores Sultan-Galiev's awareness of how the revolutionary narrative could be deployed as a defense mechanism. Assuming that Sultan-Galiev wanted to retain his influential Party status, the style, language, and structure of this letter becomes even more important.

In "Who am I?" Sultan-Galiev framed his own life within the dominant Bolshevik narrative.[39] He began his letter by establishing his revolutionary credentials, noting the irony that someone who had displayed so much commitment to the Party could suddenly be castigated as a criminal. He acknowledged that his discontent over the "ongoing colonial relationship" between Moscow and the national republics had led him to oppose the Party's nationality policies, but only because of what he claimed to be his own more accurate interpretation of socialism. He elaborated, "I thought that the liberation movement in the colonies and the semi-colonies and the revolutionary movement of the workers in the metropole were intimately and inextricably linked, and that only a *harmonious* combination of them could guarantee real success of the international socialist revolution." Sultan-Galiev asserted that the revolution had succeeded in Russia only because the urban proletariat had the support of national movements on the periphery of the empire: "When workers in Petrograd began shooting, they were answered first in Kazan, Ufa, Orenburg, and Baku, and then in Kazakhstan and Turkestan."

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[38] J. Arch Getty, "Samokritika Rituals in the Stalinist Central Committee, 1933-38," *Russian Review* 58, no. 1 (January 1999): 52-53.

[39] Mirsaid Sultan-Galiev, "Avtobiograficheskii ocherk 'Kto ia?'," in Gizzatullin and Sharafutdinov, *Izbrannye trudy*, 446-509.

Sultan-Galiev maintained that, regardless of his disagreements with Party policies, he still considered himself a Bolshevik. He claimed he never faltered in his dedication to a worldwide socialist revolution and denied any collaboration with Basmachi rebels. Sultan-Galiev revealed that his Party comrades' lack of confidence in him weighed heavily on his soul. Throughout the letter, Sultan-Galiev equated this lack of trust with slavery and oppression. He explained, "Slavery, along with oppression and centuries of hard poverty, gave birth to me. I was the son of an oppressed people. I was a revolutionary, but a revolutionary-slave. I always felt that and was thus always dissatisfied with myself. I had thoughts, feelings, and aspirations, but there was never enough liberty." The loss of trust represented the worst aspect of the entire affair. As he reflected, "I became a slave because no one believed me. But I can't be a slave—I want to remain and die a revolutionary."

After systematically assessing and dismissing all accusations levied against him as fraudulent and constructed by his enemies to tarnish his reputation, Sultan-Galiev placed his fate in the hands of the Central Control Commission. He proposed that the commission render its judgment based not just on the so-called physical evidence at hand, but in light of his entire life. Sultan-Galiev thus transitioned into a biographical narrative, beginning with his birth and childhood and extending through his service in the Civil War. He pinpointed particular moments that provide a clear sense of his revolutionary destiny. For example, Sultan-Galiev chronicled how bullies relentlessly mocked him and his family's poverty throughout his youth, culminating when he visited his wealthy grandfather's farm, which he named his "first real revolutionary school, where I learned the feeling of class hatred." As a fourteen-year-old, he once responded to such teasing by

grabbing his tormentor by the neck and throwing him to the ground. Sultan-Galiev called this his "first class war with [his] opponents." Such violence, lest it be construed as purposeless, had a positive outcome, inspiring Sultan-Galiev to work hard in school in order to escape his family's destitution. This ultimately came at Sultan-Galiev's own initiative, as he had learned "nothing but foolishness" in the village *mekteb*. By age sixteen he had become an atheist and rejected religious instruction, preferring to read Vladimir Korolenko, Mikhail Lermontov, Nikolai Gogol, Sir Walter Scott, and Alexander Dumas.

Tracing his revolutionary development, Sultan-Galiev denoted 1905 (age thirteen!) as the moment of his first exposure to socialism, claiming to have immediately understood and agreed with its precepts. Sultan-Galiev's appreciation for socialism only matured as he enrolled in the radical Kazan Tatar Teachers' School, a crucible for revolutionary thought. After completing his coursework in 1911, Sultan-Galiev explained, he conducted underground socialist work in Ufa, founding a network of libraries to which he contributed socialist literature in an effort to instill in the Tatars a revolutionary consciousness. In subsequent years, he read Marx, embraced materialism, and organized socialist circles. He wrote that he "felt like a Bolshevik" long before he joined the Party in July 1917, notably the same month as Trotsky, after hearing a speech from Mullanur Vakhitov at the Second All-Russian Muslim Congress in Kazan in July 1917.

In any revolutionary narrative, 1917 constitutes a litmus test for determining a Soviet subject's loyalty to the Bolshevik regime. By drawing attention to how he joined the Party in the summer of 1917, Sultan-Galiev reiterated that he sided with the

Bolsheviks before the victory in October, so his decision could not be construed as opportunistic. To accentuate further the importance of that year, Sultan-Galiev provided a striking glimpse into a moment of personal transformation. In 1917, his wife Rauza had an affair with a student in Kazan while Sultan-Galiev engaged in revolutionary work in Petrograd. When Sultan-Galiev found out about the tryst, he "felt like [he] was in hell" and decided to kill his wife's lover not only as an act of revenge, but also to save himself from a "moral, spiritual, and psychological" death. He tracked the lover, a doctor named Orudzhiev, to Moscow. After stalking him for a few days, Sultan-Galiev killed Orudzhiev in his apartment. Although he was not caught, Sultan-Galiev confessed the crime to Stalin and Vakhitov to protect himself and the Party from any accusations that the Bolsheviks were concealing a murderer. This anecdote stands out for its brutal honesty, but it also plays a key role in constructing Sultan-Galiev's revolutionary narrative. The honor killing reveals Sultan-Galiev's passion for justice based on Tatar and Islamic cultural traditions, in spite of his secularism. It also heralds a moment of catharsis in which Sultan-Galiev purged himself of the remnants of his old life. He wrote that only after all of this could he again feel like an "authentic person," ready to join the Party and direct his energy toward the socialist revolution.

Reporting on his work after October, Sultan-Galiev recounted the same narrative found in some of his earlier articles on the history of the Tatars and the Revolution. He wrote himself into even more of a central role in this process, especially during the Civil War, focusing on how he spread Bolshevik ideals not just among Tatars, but also throughout Central Asia and the East. Sultan-Galiev suggested that, without his role as a mediator between various in Moscow and the East, Soviet power might have collapsed.

Sultan-Galiev dismissed any claims that he would ever violate Party discipline, producing a ready-made response for every possible critique of his behavior. His final words composed a list of twenty-four positions he held during his few years in the Bolshevik Party. Sultan-Galiev saw this history as his best defense.

Writing "Who am I?" functioned as a "personal trial" for Sultan-Galiev, as he interrogated his soul to determine whether he deserved to remain a Bolshevik.[40] In Sultan-Galiev's imagining, his revolutionary narrative provided compelling evidence of his ideological purity and steadfast commitment to the socialist revolution. This trial of the self constitutes an interesting foil to the special conference called by the Central Committee on the nationalities question, which served as a proto-show trial for Sultan-Galiev.[41] At a May 19, 1923, meeting of the Politburo, Stalin instructed V. V. Kuibyshev to gather the leaders of the national territories and "present [to them] the case of Sultan-Galiev and show [them] where secrecy and anti-Party work inevitably leads."[42] At the conference, Party leaders excoriated Sultan-Galiev. As Stalin wrote to Zinoviev during one session, "We must always smash counterrevolutionaries!"[43]

Fifty-eight representatives from all twenty republics and national oblasts, in addition to nine out of eleven members of the Politburo, attended the conference, held between June 9 and 12 in Moscow. Delegates spent the entire first day and part of the

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[40] Halfin, *Stalinist Confessions*, 1.

[41] This argument is somewhat limited beyond its rhetorical purposes, though, as none of the standard elements of a Soviet trial were employed at the special conference. Bolsheviks developed a detailed formula for performing trials soon after the October Revolution as part of their socialization efforts. See Elizabeth A. Wood, *Performing Justice: Agitation Trials in Early Soviet Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

[42] "Vypiska iz protokola No. 6 zasedaniia Politbiuro TsK RPK(b)," in Sharafutdinov and Sultanbekov, *Neizvestnyi Sultan-Galiev*, 70.

[43] Maksim Leushin, "Khoroshaia sila on sam i mnogie iz ego okruzheniia," *Ekho Vekov*, no. 3/4 (2001).

second discussing the "Sultan-Galiev affair." Leading the assault, Kuibyshev recounted the investigation into Sultan-Galiev's betrayal, focusing on his alleged interactions with Zaki Validov, the Basmachi rebel leader, testifying that Sultan-Galiev intended to unite various anti-Party elements into a united opposition. He concluded with a seven-point resolution roundly condemning Sultan-Galiev and calling for heightened vigilance against all manifestations of "national deviation."[44]

The ensuing speeches tackled the nature of "national deviation," with a struggle between "Lefts" and "Rights" taking center stage. These two factions mirrored ongoing debates within many of the national republics, particularly the Tatar ASSR and Crimean ASSR, over policies of *korenizatsiia* and autonomy. They bore little connection to left and right opposition movements, which never developed a consistent approach to the nationalities question.[45] Here, the Lefts agitated for internationalism and centralization, interpreting Sultan-Galiev's crimes as symptomatic of a widespread malaise that should be rooted out through Party purges. The Rights, who favored more national autonomy, portrayed Sultan-Galiev's crimes as an isolated example of nationalism gone awry. Many of the Rights were close associates of Sultan-Galiev and feared that affiliation with him would threaten their own positions.[46]

Unusually, Trotsky and Stalin both attempted to mediate between the two sides, emphasizing that everyone needed to pay closer attention to the consequences of their actions and realize that they were all striving toward the same ends. First addressing the

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[44] B. F. Sultanbekov, ed., *Tainy natsional'noi politiki TsK RKP: Chetvertoe soveshchanie TsK RKP s otvetstvennymi rabotnikami natsional'nykh respublik i oblastei v g. Moskve 9-12 iiuniia 1923 g.* (Moscow: INSAN, 1992), 15-23.

[45] For more on this point, see Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, 228-38.

[46] Sultanbekov, *Tainy natsional'noi politiki*, 23-98. See also Smith, *The Bolsheviks and the National Question*, 230-38.

Rights, Trotsky criticized their lack of "vigilance" and noted that their passion for rooting out Russian chauvinism had prevented them from noticing deviationists such as Sultan-Galiev rising up in their midst. The Lefts, in adopting a haughty attitude toward indigenous populations, had impeded the recruitment of new communists into the Party. Trotsky reminded all of the attendees of Lenin's instructions for Russians to work in the national republics not as "teachers" but as "helpers." He ended his speech with a call to unity between the two sides.[47]

Stalin, who gave the last speech, took up a similar point of view, indicating that "the truth lies in between the Lefts and the Rights." He suggested that the presence of national deviation demonstrated that the Rights, who held majorities in many of the eastern republics, did not form a "sufficiently strong bulwark against nationalism." As the primary obstacle to the training of Marxist cadres, nationalism threatened to dilute socialism in the East. The Lefts, even if less likely to yield to the influence of nationalism, had nonetheless demonstrated that "they [were] incapable of the flexibility necessary to win over the local population." Both groups should work together to achieve communism. As Stalin concluded: "We must chastise the Rights in order to make them fight nationalism and forge real communist cadres from local people. But we must also chastise the Lefts in order to teach them to be more flexible and to maneuver skillfully in order to win over the broad masses of the population."

In turning toward the case of Sultan-Galiev, Stalin adopted a peculiar approach. He revealed his disappointment that such a strong Bolshevik had turned into an enemy, noting that Sultan-Galiev's theoretical differences would have been acceptable if he had

[47] Sultanbekov, *Tainy natsional'noi politiki*, 73-80.

just kept them within certain limits. Nonetheless, Stalin steadfastly asserted that taking up anti-Party activities could not be tolerated: "When ideological exercises end in establishing contacts with Basmachi leaders, with Validov and others, it is utterly impossible to justify them as innocent." Stalin also divulged that, for a time, he had protected Sultan-Galiev and cautioned him against continuing anti-Party work. He then struck almost a tender chord, elaborating,

> There are so few intellectuals, so few thinking people, even so few literate people in the Eastern republics and regions, that you can count them on your fingers. How can one help but cherish them? It would be criminal not to take all measures to save people from the East from corruption and preserve them for the Party. But there is a limit to everything. And the limit in this case was the moment when Sultan-Galiev crossed over from the communist camp to the Basmachi camp.[48]

Perhaps this sensitivity to Sultan-Galiev's exceptionality caused Stalin to uphold his decision to free Sultan-Galiev, even as others called for his trial and execution. Even without resorting to the extreme measures of punishment adopted in later years, Stalin made his point about the consequences of deviation. A delegate from Ukraine noted the significance of offering a symbolic sacrifice upon embarking on the new nationalities policy: "It seems to me that the blood of one of these [national deviationist] criminals needs to be placed at the headstone of a correct Party policy, along with the blood of a criminal type such as Sultan-Galiev."[49] The persecution of Sultan-Galiev proved a useful warning for those considering following his lead.

This conference also marked the inception of the term *Sultangalievshchina* (Sultan-Galievism). Sakhibgarei Said-Galiev, an old enemy of Sultan-Galiev and the leader of the Lefts, first suggested "talking not about Sultan-Galiev, but about

[48] Ibid., 80-86.

[49] Ibid., 62.

Sultangalievshchina."[50] Others quickly latched on to this term. By the second day of the conference, the delegates spent much less time talking about Sultan-Galiev as a person than Sultan-Galiev as an "-ism." He no longer represented an individual, but an abstract menace bent on destroying the Soviet Union. For the Lefts, *Sultangalievshchina* proved a terribly advantageous rhetorical device for designating what their approach to the nationalities question could prevent. In creating a strawman open for attack, the authority over Sultan-Galiev's subjectivity transitioned from Sultan-Galiev to the Party. This new line filtered all the way down to the local level: at a Tatar Party Conference held in Kazan from July 19 through 21, delegates rejected *Sultangalievshchina* as a threat to the stability of the Tatar ASSR and inconsistent with Party policy on the nationalities question.[51]

Even with the ouster of Sultan-Galiev from the Party, the conflict between Lefts and Rights in the national republics, and especially in the Tatar ASSR, did not abate. Yet, after 1923, the specter of *Sultangalievshchina* curiously faded from public discourse. Only after 1927, when Stalin had consolidated power and initiated policies of industrialization, collectivization, and centralization, did the Party revive the attack on *Sultangalievshchina*. This new campaign paralleled three major waves of terror (1928-1930, 1932-1933, and 1937-1938) that took place among the Soviet Union's nationalities, targeting elites in particular. Accusations of *Sultangalievshchina* primarily affected Tatars and Bashkirs, but others in Central Asia fell victim to these purges too. While a

[50] Ibid., 27. Said-Galiev, who temporarily served as chairman of the Tatar ASSR Revolutionary Committee, had accused Sultan-Galiev and other Rights in the Kazan Party of trying to assassinate him as a pretext to purge them from their posts. As a result of the scandal that ensued, Sultan-Galiev was called to Moscow to testify to a Central Committee commission. Said-Galiev was eventually removed from his post in Kazan and placed in charge of the Revolutionary Committee of the Crimean ASSR. He and Sultan-Galiev remained bitter foes.

[51] "Iz stenograficheskogo otcheta soveshchaniia Tatarskogo obkoma RKP(b) i OKK, otvetrabotnikov po natsional'nomu voprosu," in Sharafutdinov and Sultanbekov, *Neizvestnyi Sultan-Galiev*, 81-183.

full-scale investigation of the fate of these nationalists and Party members during the 1920s and 1930s lies outside this essay, some of the early *Sultangalievshchina* literature reveals how an inversion of Sultan-Galiev's narrative reflected changing interests and crises within the Stalinist leadership.

In the fall of 1928, the OGPU arrested seventy-seven Party members, economists, scientists, peasants, craftsmen, and students for intending to carry out a program of terror and armed insurrection against the Soviet Union under the direction of Sultan-Galiev.[52] Kashaf Mukhtaorv, Gasym Mansurov, Arif Enbaev, Rauf Sabirov, and Izmail Firdevs, all members of the "Right" who spoke in support of Sultan-Galiev at the July 1923 Central Committee special conference, were purged from the Party.[53] These arrests marked the beginning of a vitriolic campaign against *Sultangalievshchina* that took place in Party newspapers and other publications. Most striking, these texts upended the revolutionary narrative that Sultan-Galiev strove to establish in the years before 1923.[54] They unmasked Sultan-Galiev as the heir to a prerevolutionary movement of pan-Turkic, bourgeois Muslims determined to assert political independence. A close examination of

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[52] "Iz protokola No. 11 zasedaniia Komissii Politbiuro TsK KPSS po dopolnitel'nomu izucheniiu materialov, sviazannykh s repressiiami, imevshimi mesto v period 30-40x i nachala 50-x godov," in Gizzatullin and Sharafutdinov, *Izbrannye trudy*, 681-82. This May 29, 1990, ruling rehabilitated Sultan-Galiev and all those swept up in accusations of *Sultangalievshchina*.

[53] "Dokladnaia zapiska zamestitelia predsedatelia OGPU G. G. Iagody i nachal'nika VO OGPU Ia. Kh. Petersa v TsK VKP(b) i Prezidium TsKK VKP(b) ob antipartiinoi i antisovetskoi deiatel'nosti K. G. Mukhtarova, A. M. Enbaeva, G. G. Mansurova, R. A. Sabirova, I. K. Fierdevsa, O. G. Derena-Aierly," in Sharafutdinov and Sultanbekov, *Neizvestnyi Sultan-Galiev*, 210-23.

[54] In addition to the publications cited below, see also: L. Rubinshtein, *V bor'be za Leninskuiu natsional'nuiu politiku*, Kazan: Tatizdat, 1930; M. Kobetskii, "Sultangalievshchina kak apologiia Islama," *Antireligioznik* 1 (1930): 12-14; and A. Arsharuni, "Ideologiia Sultangalievshchiny," *Antireligioznik* 5 (1930): 22-25, in addition to a number of articles in *Zhizn' natsional'nostei* and the journal *Revoliutsiia i natsional'nosti*. All of these texts served as variations on a central theme of depicting Sultan-Galiev as the heir of an anti-Soviet tradition inherited from the pre-revolutionary Muslim bourgeoisie. Interestingly, for the remainder of the Soviet Union's existence, vocal opposition to *Sultangalievshchina* emerged periodically, but particularly in the 1970s under L. I. Brezhnev, as fears of nationalist separatism increased.

two such publications not only underscores the centrality of the narrative form for Bolshevik discourse, but also suggests key conclusions about the relationship between the Party and Soviet subjects.

Published in 1931, the most articulate attack against *Sultangalievshchina*, entitled *Pantiurkistskaia kontrrevoliutsiia i ee agentura—Sultangalievshchina* (The Pan-Turkic Counterrevolution and its Agent, Sultangalievism), declared that bourgeois nationalism remained a threat to the Soviet state through traitors such as Sultan-Galiev. The author, Gasym Kasymov (1891-1937), a Tatar and a native of Ufa province, studied law at Kazan State University and served the Bolshevik Party as the Bashkir ASSR Commissar of Education, Commissar of Justice, and Chief Prosecutor. He returned to Kazan to work at Kazan State Pedagogical University in 1931, becoming rector in 1933. Kasymov was arrested in 1936 and shot the following year.

In *Pantiurkistskaia kontrrevoliutsiia*, Kasymov traced *Sultangalievshchina* from its roots in prerevolutionary Muslim reform movements to its contemporary manifestations in anti-Soviet conspiracies. Importantly, Kasymov inverted Sultan-Galiev's tradition of assigning the Tatars a predominant role in the revolutionary narrative. Rather than mediating socialism between Russia and the East, as Sultan-Galiev had claimed, the Tatars subjugated and exploited their fellow Muslims in Kasymov's formulation. Tatars embraced Islam not for its religious principles, but as a method of control. Kasymov claimed they adopted the reforms of the *jadids* because, by reconstructing the educational practices of *mektebs* and *madrasas*, they could dictate what Muslims learned. This would prove useful in their attempts to unite all of the Turko-Tatars of Russia under the banner of pan-Turkism. As Kasymov intimated, the

Tatar bourgeoisie's aversion to Islamic beliefs and practices did not demur their appreciation for the religion as a convenient tool for exploitation. When revolution began in Russia, the Tatars sought to maintain their control by supporting the ineffectual Provisional Government: "The Tatar merchant, manufacturer, and mullah, of course, had no qualms about taking advantage of weak central authority in order to negotiate for themselves more favorable conditions for working with Russian capital—they had no intention of breaking the cycle."[55]

Kasymov explained that, following the October Revolution, many Tatar nationalists openly promulgated their opposition to Soviet power, while others carried out their counterrevolutionary objectives in secret from within the ranks of the Bolshevik Party. Sultan-Galiev and his cohort, realizing the futility of an open struggle against the Bolsheviks, worked from the inside to advance their nationalist, pan-Turkic interests. The primary ideological issue at stake, according to Kasymov, concerned their rejection of class: "The substitution of class struggle with national struggle—that is the banner of the Sultan-Galievists."[56] No worse, the Sultan-Galievists advocated violent opposition to Bolshevik power. Kasymov condemned Sultan-Galiev, insisting that he had pursued a program of *Sultangalievshchina* since as early as 1917 and was therefore never a true Bolshevik. Only when Sultan-Galiev discerned the inevitability of a Bolshevik victory in October did he join the Party. Sultan-Galiev betrayed his own people, his Party, and ultimately, himself.

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[55] G. Kasymov, *Pantiurkistskaia kontrrevoliutsiia i ee agentura—sultangalievshchina* (Kazan: Tatizdat, 1931), 67.

[56] Ibid., 79.

Kasymov concluded that, undeterred by Sultan-Galiev's expulsion from the Party, others continued to sabotage it from within, forming illegal factions that collaborated with imperialist and Trotskyist forces. For this reason, Kasymov argued, "All attention should be directed at uprooting *Sultangalievshchina*. Not just every Party member and every Komsomol member, but every non-party worker and farmer, and particularly the young, should know what *Sultangalievshchina* is all about. At any moment one should be ready to rebuff the ideology of the counterrevolutionary Sultan-Galievist, the ideology of the bourgeois nationalist."[57]

In a similar work, authors Arshaluis Arsharuni (1896-1960), a journalist and literary critic from Rostov-on-the-Don, and Khadzhi Gabidullin (1897-1940), a leading Bolshevik in the Tatar ASSR and chair and founder of Moscow State University's Department of Colonial History, also proposed a narrative of national deviation. It progressed from the prerevolutionary Tatar Muslim bourgeoisie to the anti-Soviet activities of Sultan-Galiev and his co-conspirators as well.[58] In *Ocherki panislamizma i pantiurkizma v Rossii* (Essays on Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism), they emphasized how the prerevolutionary Russian bourgeoisie corrupted the Tatars, who monopolized trade in Central Asia and used Islam to influence and control the Muslim masses. Arsharuni and Gabidullin suggested that the Tatar bourgeoisie remained alive and well after the October Revolution in the specter of *Sultangalievshchina*, which sought to harness the revolutionary energy of the working class for pan-Turkic ends. The authors contended that Sultan-Galievists were not interested in a worldwide socialist revolution, but rather

[57] Ibid., 97.

[58] A. Arsharuni and Kh. Gabidullin, *Ocherki panislamizma i pantiurkizma v Rosii* (Moscow: Bezbozhnik, 1931).

in creating a "Republic of Turan" out of all the territories of Russia's Turko-Tatar people. These oppressed nationalities would in turn form a "colonial international" under the banner of Islam. Workers of capitalist countries, including Russians, would be denied membership.

As the authors elaborated, "Emerging from behind a fig leaf of camouflage is the basic structure of this new kind of pan-Turanism, made up of kulaks, Basmachi, bourgeois intellectuals, remnants of commercial exploiters, and the clergy."[59] Sultan-Galiev served as the leader of this movement. His careful manipulation of Bolshevik language and ideas may have temporarily allowed him to hide within the ranks of the Party, but history revealed that Sultan-Galiev's "vegetarian communism [had] nothing to do with the worldview of Marx, Engels, and Lenin," a deriding reference to Sultan-Galiev's preference for nationalist rather than class considerations.[60] The authors also emphasized the close ties between *Sultangalievshchina* and Islam. Pandering to fears of pan-Turkism and pan-Islamism, Arsharuni and Gabidullin revealed that, at the heart of the *Sultangalievshchina* plot, lies the creation of a "League of United Muslims," with six objectives: 1) to unite all Muslims, wherever they are located; 2) to distribute secret materials on the teachings of Mohammad among Russians and other Christians to the detriment of the Orthodox faith; 3) to intervene in the politics of European states and Russia, bringing damage to the latter; 4) to plant undercover agents in every Russian city;

[59] Ibid., 89.

[60] Ibid., 84.

5) to supply money and weapons to those agents; and 6) to carry out propaganda among those Muslims not belonging to the League.[61]

Significantly, these examples of *Sultangalievshchina* literature emphasize not the person of Sultan-Galiev, but the consequences of the crime that bears his name. This denotes the conclusion of a process of transition that began at the July 1923 Central Committee conference. There, delegates' attention veered away from Sultan-Galiev as an individual to the perilous consequences of his actions. His purge, which established the limits of deviation and the consequences for those who strayed too far, proved useful for the Party on the eve of unveiling its new nationalities policy. The authority over Sultan-Galiev as a subject had shifted primarily to the Party's control. It is not surprising, then, to see anti-*Sultangalievshchina* literature arise during successive waves of terror in 1928-30, 1932-33, and 1937-38. This supports what historian Terry Martin describes as the Bolsheviks' "system of signaling." Terror, usually directed against "bourgeois nationalists," marked the Party's turn toward more "hard-line" policies of class warfare, collectivization, and centralization, aiming to eliminate any dissent.[62]

The *Sultangalievshchina* literature can also be read in connection with Stalin's "Great Break" of 1928-32 and the beginning of the first Five-Year Plan. These texts reveal the shifting interests of the Party as it embarked on a new political course. The alleged connection between *Sultangalievshchina* and Islam illustrates this plainly. As the above authors claimed, Sultan-Galievists' devotion to Islam and its principles of unity led them to envision all of Eurasia's Turko-Tatars uniting under the flag of pan-Turkism. This pan-Turkic language reflects historian Adeeb Khalid's point that "the rhetoric of

[61] Ibid., 4.

[62] Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, 21-23, 254-60.

Muslim unity" was "always tied to the rhetoric of modernity."[63] During the industrialization drives of the 1920s and 1930s, the possibility of "backward" Muslims hindering progress presented a threat—real or imagined—that the Bolsheviks could not ignore. Subsequent purges eliminated those the Party perceived as opposed not just to Soviet nationalities policies, but also to modernization. *Sultangalievshchina* literature therefore reflects Stalin's management of the social, economic, and political crises emerging in the Soviet Union during the late 1920s. Accusations of collaboration between Sultan-Galiev and Trotskyite conspirators contributed to efforts to neutralize the Left Opposition, and the campaign against *Sultangalievshchina* strikingly coincided with the 1928 Shakhty Trials, which used accusations of sabotage and "wrecking" by class enemies to instigate new working-class antagonisms. All of this denotes the increasingly repressive contours of the Stalinist state.[64]

The authoritarian nature of Stalin's regime necessarily prevented any change to Sultan-Galiev's political and social status during this period as well. After his arrest in 1923, Sultan-Galiev lived the remainder of his life in exile. In 1928 he was arrested with the other Sultan-Galievists and sent to the Solovki prison camp. In 1934 he was released, but after living in Saratov for a few years was arrested in the fall of 1937 and shot in Moscow in February 1940. His second wife and two children suffered the same fate. Even during N. S. Khrushchev's "thaw," Sultan-Galiev remained an enemy of the state; only in May 1990, during the *glasnost'* (openness) campaigns of M. S. Gorbachev, did the Party finally rehabilitate Sultan-Galiev.

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[63] Adeeb Khalid, "Pan-Islamism in Practice," in Elisabeth Özdalga, ed., *Late Ottoman Society: The Intellectual Legacy* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), 220.

[64] For an illuminating study on these connections, see Michal Reiman, *The Birth of Stalinism: The USSR on the Eve of the "Second Revolution"* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

CONCLUSION

In this essay I have attempted to show how Sultan-Galiev's rise and fall paralleled the shift of power from Lenin to Stalin. As it did for many of Russia's minorities, Lenin's proclamations in 1917 about the right for national self-determination through socialism greatly appealed to Sultan-Galiev. He subsequently envisioned a worldwide revolution that would liberate all colonized and oppressed people from the chains of their bourgeois capitalist exploitation. Sultan-Galiev believed that he, along with his fellow Tatars, could help the Party spread the revolution to the East, a fertile ground for socialism. As his critics pointed out, Sultan-Galiev's formulation did not sufficiently acknowledge the importance of class in instigating the revolution, advocating instead cooperation with bourgeois nationalist movements. By 1923, Stalin's tight control over the nationalities question limited the possibilities for such ideological deviation. Allegations of collaboration with anti-Soviet rebels sealed Sultan-Galiev's fate. The subsequent campaigns against *Sultangalievshchina* solidified his legacy not as a Party leader among Tatars, but as a deviationist opposed to Soviet power.

This essay also suggests the possibilities for self-representation at the beginning of the Soviet era. Subjects develop within the framework of the cultural and linguistic tools at their disposal. In proclaiming the significance of the Bolshevik Revolution for himself, the Tatars, and the East, Sultan-Galiev turned to a narrative framework that placed the past, present, and future in relationship to the Party and its promise to liberate the oppressed. This reflected the centrality of the Marxist construction of history to the Bolsheviks. That Sultan-Galiev returned to this formula after his arrest in 1923 also merits consideration. Assuming that Sultan-Galiev would say whatever he could either to

prove his innocence or escape punishment, his choice to accentuate all that he had done for the Party underscores his assurance in the redemptive power of the past. Not withdrawing his criticisms of Party policy also indicates Sultan-Galiev's confidence in his own position. He believed that demonstrating what he perceived to be a correct application of Marxist doctrine would exonerate him of all charges.

Likewise, the Party's management of *Sultangalievshchina* reveals how the Bolsheviks could assert control over a subject. The *Sultangalievshchina* literature inverted Sultan-Galiev's sense of revolutionary narrative, creating a demonic portrait of the self in which Sultan-Galiev joined the Party only to pursue his own objectives. Bolsheviks took sincerity seriously, and without it, Sultan-Galiev could no longer belong to the elect. The *Sultangalievshchina* propaganda also emerged in a particular historical context in which the Party, embarking on a new path of modernization and industrialization, found it useful to conflate pan-Turkic and Trotskyite conspirators as similarly opposed to Soviet progress. Interestingly, some Anglo-American historians reproduced these accusations as fact during the Cold War as part of a trend to emphasize the instability of the Soviet Union due to internal tensions among nationalities.[65] By accepting the *Sultangalievshchina* literature as a truthful account of the existence of deviation, these scholars missed the larger implications about the Party's control over Soviet subjects in the context of the shifting nationalities policies of the 1920s and 1930s.

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[65] See, for example, Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay, *Islam in the Soviet Union* (London: Pall Mall, 1967); Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslim National Communism in the Soviet Union: A Revolutionary Strategy for the Colonial World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923* (New York: Atheneum, 1968); Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, *The Great Challenge: Nationalities and the Bolshevik State, 1917-1930* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1992); Blank, *The Sorcerer as Apprentice*; and Azade-Ayse Rorlich, *The Volga Tatars: A Profile in National Resilience* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1986).

I began this essay with a quote from Sultan-Galiev, asking from prison, "Who am I, after all?" I have tried to maintain the tension inherent to this question, focusing on the textual transition from Sultan-Galiev to *Sultangalievshchina* as a window into the roles of an individual and the Party in creating a Soviet subject. Both articulated a revolutionary narrative of Sultan-Galiev's life, but with vastly different ends. In the increasingly repressive Soviet regime, only the narrative endorsed by Stalin could achieve supremacy. Yet the predominance of one narrative does not mean that its counternarrative should be forgotten. Newly available archival documents affirm that, when listening to the voices of those whom Stalin erased from the annals of history, one might indeed hear quite a revolutionary story.

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