

The Rise, Repression, and Resistance of Soviet “Academic Entrepreneurs”: The Development of Academic Turkology in the USSR, 1917-1953

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Abstract: *This paper explores the role of the kominternovtsy, the first cohort of Marxist scholars in the USSR, in developing the field of Turkology (the study of Turkey and the Turkic peoples). These “academic entrepreneurs” rose from humble origins to academic posts in prestigious institutions in order to construct a new methodology for the study of their field. In this work, they drew on Marxist texts and on their own practical experiences in state service. Despite the growing political tensions in the Stalinist political environment and the changes in Soviet policy, scholars persevered in their efforts to generate ideas, institutions, and research personnel for the development of Soviet Turkology. Though many of their contributions proved ephemeral, a few of their new research directions and many of their administrative activities had a lasting impact on their field.*

“On the collective frontline of Marxist-Leninist Historiography there is a weak, lagging group, specifically the Orientological one, where the focus is still less on the fight for the adoption of the methods of dialectical materialism than on the aim of “adapting” Marxism to the defense of the theoretical mistakes of the author, or even worse, to different harmful and dangerous institutes, holdovers, obsessions, etc.”¹ This quote, taken from a review by a Turkologist writing under the Germanic pseudonym “Aikhenval’d,” might serve as a brief introduction into the nature of Turkological² ideas and discourse in the period between 1917 and 1953. After the 1917 Revolution, academic Turkology, and Orientology in general, lost its organizational and theoretical foundations. A mixed group of scholars, some trained before and some after the 1917 Revolution, were tasked with rebuilding their field on “Marxist” foundations. For the duration of the early Soviet and Stalinist periods, these scholars explored the connection between scholarship and Soviet state policy and attempted to adapt their studies to academic Marxist historiography and thought. Living through the cataclysmic political events of the Stalinist period, they worked to consolidate old and construct new academic institutions. This

¹ “Nauchnaia fal’sifikatsiia marksizma.” Retsenziia na stat’iu Alimova “Bor’ba za konstitutsiiu 1876 goda v Turtsii,” (Arkhiv Vostokovedov Instituta Vostochnykh rukopisei Rossiiskoi Akademii nauk [AV IVR RAN] f. 68, op. 1, no. 223.

² Turkology is the academic study of the culture, language, history, etc. of Turkey and the Turkic peoples. It must be noted that in Russian, a distinction exists between *Tiurkologiia* (study of the Turkic peoples) and *Turkologiia* (study of Turkey and Turks) which is not captured in the English translation. For the purposes of this paper, the term “Turkologist” will be used to indicate both groups of scholars, since their experiences in this period were quite similar.

paper will focus on early Soviet Turkologists working in the Leningrad Academy of Sciences (at the time one of the most, if not the most, prestigious academic institution in the USSR), identifying and tracing their role in developing academic Turkology between 1917 and 1953. The academic and organizational contributions of many of these scholars have been largely erased from the historiography for a variety of reasons, not least among which is the fact that their methodology of dialectical materialism is largely discredited. But their academic world and work deserves deeper exploration. These scholars did not make momentous discoveries, but they pioneered a new scholarly method, laid the foundations for further Turkological studies in the Soviet Union, and consolidated Soviet academic institutions. This paper will seek to highlight these contributions, arguing that despite their outsider status, poor preparation, and susceptibility to state pressures, Marxist Turkologists carried on the work of their tsarist-educated predecessors and contributed to rebuilding Turkological scholarship and institutions in the period between 1917 and 1953.

Before beginning an exploration of the lives and work of Soviet Turkologists, it would be useful to situate this academic subject within Soviet academia and to review the existing historiography of the topic. Turkology is the study of Turkey and the Turkic peoples, an enormous branch of pursuits that fall, in the United States, under the categories of social science and humanities. Turkologists might be linguists, archaeologists, anthropologists, historians, political scientists, or any number of other types of specialists. Turkology is a branch of Orientology, the study of the Orient, in Russian *vostokovednie*. In the modern West, Orientology as a field of study has fallen out of favor, but in the Russian Federation, the word *vostokovednie* does not have the imperialist implications which its English equivalent bears.³ *Vostkovedy* (Orientologists) continue to be concentrated in Orientological centers of study rather than dispersed into separate departments.

Orientology in the early Soviet period has interested Russian and Western historians because of the role of *vostkovedy* in Soviet nationalities policy. These historians ask how the development of Orientological scholarship interacted with Soviet politics and with the movement away from Imperial Russian scholarly trends.⁴ They also explore whether *vostokovednie* was “Orientalist” in a Saidian sense or whether scholars effectively moved away from imperial perspectives through adapting their work to the ideas of turn of the century Marxist antiracism⁵.

³ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London and New York: Penguin Books, 2003).

⁴ Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014); Yuri Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a State Promoted Ethnic Particularism,” *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (summer 1994); Michael Kemper, “Introduction: Integrating Soviet Oriental Studies,” in *The Heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies*, eds. Michael Kemper and Stephen Conermann (London and New York: Routledge, 2011).

⁵ Kemper, “Introduction: Integrating Soviet Oriental Studies”; David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, *Russian Orientalism: Asia in the Russian Mind from Peter the Great to the Emigration* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010); David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, “The Imperial Roots of Soviet Orientology,” in *The Heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies*, eds. Michael Kemper and Stephen Conermann (London: Routledge, 2011); Vera Tolz, “European, National, and (Anti-) Imperial: The Formation of Academic Oriental Studies in Late Tsarist and Soviet Russia,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 9, no. 1 (winter 2008); Vera Tolz,

Many scholars also present complex overviews of major *vostokovedy* and their institutions in the early Soviet period.⁶ The focus of such works is often on the 1920s and early 1930s; the Great Terror of 1937-1938 often furnishes a compelling end-point for the studies, as many early Soviet actors either passed away before then or perished in the purges. From the perspective of the questions raised in the historiography, this period is the most interesting because of the relative academic freedom and opportunities available to scholars in this period. The Stalinist period remains in the shadows, except in institutional histories. The few works that address it largely confirm that the loss of academic independence made Soviet researchers' work uninteresting and conformist. The Western study of Soviet Orientology becomes richer for the period after 1953, largely because of the resurgence of the importance of non-European nationalities in Soviet politics. The rise of political Islam, relations with China, and other developments of all-union or international importance return scholars and their role in assisting the state in developing policy to the limelight.

Whereas the Western historiography constructs a particular collective narrative about the development of Orientology, Russian historiography is less beholden to this story. In Russia, an extensive literature exists on the personalities and work of Soviet Orientologists. Most scholars' careers begin or end with several published works detailing their own, their associates', and their advisors' place in the field. This literature is essentially memorial—bound up with the political developments of the last 50 years, it is a subject of study in and of itself. One goal of these publications is to create a new academic genealogy for their authors after the cataclysmic

Russia's Own Orient: The Politics of Identity and Oriental Studies in the Late Imperial and Early Soviet Periods (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Madina Tlostanova, "The Janus-Faced Empire Distorting Orientalist Discourses: Gender, Race, and Religion/ (post) Soviet Constructions of the 'Orient,'" *Worlds and Knowledges Otherwise* (spring 2008); Adeeb Khalid, "Russian History and the Debate over Orientalism," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 1, no. 4 (fall 2000); Nathaniel Knight, "On Russian Orientalism: A Response to Adeeb Khalid," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 1, No. 4 (fall 2000); Nathaniel Knight, "Was Russia its own Orient? Reflections on the Contributions of Etkind and Schimmelpenninck to the Debate on Orientalism," *Ab Imperio* 1 (2002): 299-309; Marina Todorova, "Does Russian Orientalism Have a Russian Soul?: A Contribution to the Debate between Nathaniel Knight and Adeeb Khalid," *Kritika: Exploration in Russian and Eurasian History* 1, no. 4 (fall 2000); Stephanie Cronin, "Introduction: Edward Said, Russian Orientalism, and Soviet Ideology," *Iranian Studies* 48, no. 5 (2015); Victor Taki, "Orientalism on the Margins: The Ottoman Empire under Russian Eyes," *Kritika: Exploration in Russian and Eurasian History* 12, no. 2 (spring 2011); Bryan Turner, *Marx and the End of Orientalism* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1978); Gilbert Achcar, *Marxism, Orientalism, Cosmopolitanism* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2013); Nicholas Riasanovsky, "Asia Through Russian Eyes," in *Russia and Asia: Essays on the Influence of Russia on the Asian Peoples*, ed. Wayne S. Vucinich (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1972); Denis V. Volkov, "Rupture or Continuity? The Organizational Set-up of Russian and Soviet Oriental Studies before and after 1917," *Iranian Studies* 48, no. 5 (2015); Mirkasym A. Usmanov, "The Struggle for the Reestablishment of Oriental Studies in Twentieth-Century Kazan," in *The Heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies*, eds. Michael Kemper and Stephen Conermann (London and New York: Routledge, 2011); Dmitry Shlapentokh, "The Fate of Nikolai Marr's Linguistic Theories: The Case of Linguistics in the Political Context," *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 2 (2011); N. I. Borozdin, "Inter-Racial Study in Asia: The Progress of Orientology in the USSR," *Pacific Affairs* 2, no. 6 (Jun 1929); Richard Frye, "Oriental Studies in Russia," in *Russia and Asia: Essays on the Influence of Russia on the Asian Peoples*, ed. Wayne S. Vucinich (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1972).

⁶ Wayne Vucinich, "The Structures of Soviet Orientology: Fifty Years of Change and Accomplishment," in *Russia and Asia: Essays on the Influence of Russia on the Asian Peoples*, ed. Wayne S. Vucinich (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1972).

transformations of 1991. Scholars challenge the Soviet constructed narrative about the role of Soviet, tsarist-educated,⁷ and contemporary scholars. The Russian historiography boasts excellent institutional histories and detailed descriptions of individual scholars' contributions to the construction of both the institutions and the ideas of Soviet scholarship.⁸ It is less involved, however, with Western historiographical trends (except for a few modern scholars).⁹ A more complete narrative of Soviet Orientology will probably emerge from a middle ground between Russian revisionist scholarship and Western narratives; both these historiographies of Orientology are vital in understanding the directions in the specific study of Turkology.

Turkology as a field gets little individual attention in the Anglophone historiography, though there are a few discussions of this topic. A few articles specifically focus on *Turkologiia* (the study of Turkey and Turks); others explore the development of *Tiurkologiia* (the study of the Turkic peoples). The works of Liasan Şahin, Vahram Ter-Matevosyan, and Zaur Gasimov describe specifically the development of the branch of Turkology that deals with Turkey and its role in shaping Russo-Turkish relations.¹⁰ Other researchers write about particular Soviet academic discussions about Turkic regions or areas where Turkic peoples are a large proportion of the population.¹¹ Many of these works are less historical than historiographical works written

⁷ In the Western and Russian historiographies, tsarist-educated scholars are referred to using the term “former” (trans. from the Soviet category “byvshyi”)—this is a general term describing a person who was born and educated before the revolution and was the bearer of pre-revolutionary cultural, social, political, and economic ideas and practices. In this paper, “former”/“formers” will refer automatically to these scholars.

⁸ Mikhail Rodionov, “Profiles under Pressure: Orientologists in Petrograd/ Leningrad, 1918-1956,” in *The Heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies*, eds. Michael Kemper and Stephen Conermann (London and New York: Routledge, 2011); N. A. Kuznetsova and L. M. Kulagina, *Iz Istorii Sovetskovo Vostokovedeniia 1917-1967* (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo ‘Nauka,’ Glavnaia Redaktsiia Vostochnoi Literatury, 1970); A. A. Dolina, *Nevol'nik Dolga* (Saint Petersburg: Peterburgskoe Vostokovedenie, 1994); *O kollegakh i tovarishchakh: Moskovskii vostokovedy 60-kh-80-kh godov*, eds. O. K. Dreier, Ie. A. Lebedev, P. M. Shastitko, Ie. O. Sekar (Moscow: Nauka, 1994); *Otechestvennye lingvisty XX veka*, ed. V. V. Potapov (Moscow: IaSK Publishing House, 2016); A. Baziant, N. Kuznetsova, and L. Kulagina, *Aziatskii muzei—Institut vostokovedeniia AN SSSR 1818-1968* (Moscow: Nauka, 1969); *Moskovskoe vostokovedeniie: Ocherki, issledovaniia, razrabotki. Pamiati N. A. Ivanova*, ed. A. M. Petrov (Moscow: “Vostochnaia Literatura” RAN, 1997).

⁹ E.g., L. B. Alaev, “Vostokovedenie, evropotsentrizm, orientalist i tsivilizatsionnie tsennosti,” *Vestnik Instituta Vostokovedeniia RAN* 1 (Feb 2018).

¹⁰ Liasan Şahin, “Russian Turkology: From Past to Present,” *Türkiye Arastirmalari Literatür Dergisi* 8, no. 15 (2010); Vahram Ter-Matevosyan, “Turkish Transformation and the Soviet Union: Navigating through the Soviet Historiography on Kemalism,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 53, no. 2 (2017); Zaur Gasimov, “Transfer and Asymmetry: Turkological Dialogue Between Russia and Turkey in the First Half of the 20th Century,” *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 24 (2017).

¹¹ Lisa Yountchi, “The Politics of Scholarship and the Scholarship of Politics: Imperial, Soviet, and Post-Soviet Scholars Studying Tajikistan,” in *The Heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies*, eds. Michael Kemper and Stephen Conermann (London and New York: Routledge, 2011); Zifa-Alua Auezova, “Conceiving a People’s History: The 1920-1936 Discourse on the Kazakh Past,” in *The Heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies*, eds. Michael Kemper and Stephen Conermann (London and New York: Routledge, 2011); Devin Dewese, “Ahmad Yasavi and the Divan-i hikmat in Soviet scholarship,” in *The Heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies*, eds. Michael Kemper and Stephen Conermann (London and New York: Routledge, 2011); Till Mostowlansky, “Kyrgyz — Muslim — Central Asian? Recent Approaches to the Study of Kyrgyz Culture in Kyrgyzstan,” in *The Heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies*, eds. Michael Kemper and Stephen Conermann (London and New York: Routledge, 2011); Altay Goyushov, Naomi Cafee, and Robert Denis, “The Transformation of Azerbaijani Orientalists into Islamic Thinkers after 1991,” in *The Heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies*, eds. Michael Kemper and Stephen Conermann (London and New York: Routledge, 2011); Aleksei Asvaturov, “Between the ‘Language of Humanity’ and Latinizatsiia: Nikolai Marr and

by scholars interested in particular Turkological topics. Another important group of historians is those focusing on individual scholars.¹² Often, these latter works frame documentary collections of sources from individual archives. The work of Ashnin and Alpatov on Samoilovich is one example of this; their effort specifically concerned establishing the facts of the life and demise of a famous “former” Turkologist who was active in the early Soviet period. There are a lot of similar collections about non-Turkologist Orientologists, which are interesting because they include documents or facts which also concern Turkologists (letters to colleagues, administrative papers, etc.).¹³ The historiography presents a fragmented but multifaceted picture of the development of Turkology, its practitioners, and its major scholarly discussions over time. Most of the articles, however, hold to the traditional notion of the development of Orientological scholarship in the USSR, privileging some historical actors over others.

This paper will focus on a small subset of Soviet academics who heretofore have received mere mentions in the historiography, and to whom few or no articles have yet been dedicated since 1991: Turkologists-*kominternovtsy*.¹⁴ The name “kominternovtsy” derived from these scholars’ ties with the Communist Party’s international organization, the Comintern, but the category also included other Communist specialists entering academia. This new “Comintern school” of Orientologists was opposed to the “Classical school,” which was the umbrella category that included the pre-revolutionary scholars and those of their students who did not readily adopt preferred Soviet themes like modern or economic history or who investigated questions using old methods. It produced many conventional academics whose works relied heavily on Marx and Lenin and not enough on primary sources, but it also generated a solid

the Oriental Department of the State Public Library in Leningrad,” in *The Heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies*, eds. Michael Kemper and Stephen Conermann (London and New York: Routledge, 2011).

¹² F. D. Ashnin and V. M. Alpatov, “Archival Documents on the Demise of Academic A. N. Samoilovich,” *Vostok*, no. 5 (1996); *Aleksandr Nikolaevich Samoilovich: Nauchania Perepiska, Biografiia*, ed, intro., and bio. G. F. Blagova (Moscow: “Vostochnaia Literatura” RAN, 2008).

¹³ M. D. Bukharin, “Pis'ma P. K. Kozlova S. F. Ol'denburgu iz sobraniia PFA RAN,” *Iz Istorii Nauki* (2012); *Aleksandr Pavlovich Riftin (1900-1945): Avtobiografiia, pis'ma, drugie materialy k biografii*, ed., commentary by G. Kh. Kaplan (Saint Petersburg: Kontrast, 2015); R. M. Valeev, O. D. Vasiliuk, R. Z. Valeeva, and T. I. Ziapparov, “Epistoliarnoie nasledie A. Ie. Krymskovo: pis'ma vostokovedam-kollegam V. R. Rozenu, V. V. Bartol'du, i P. K. Kokovtsovu (1890-1920),” *Uchenyie zapiski Krymskovo federal'no universiteta imeni V. I. Vernadskovo*. Series 2, Volume 2 (68), no. 3 (2016); *Neizvestnye straniy otechestvenno voostokovedeniia*, eds. V. V. Naumkin, I. M. Smilianskaya, and V. V. Volgina (St. Petersburg: Orientological Scholarship of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 1997); G. K. Skriabin, “Akademik Sergei Feodorovich Ol'denburg,” *Vestnik Akademii Nauk SSSR* 9 (1984); Ie. M. Primakov, “S. F. Ol'denburg is Stanovleniie Sovetskovo Vostokovedeniia,” *Vestnik Akademii Nauk SSSR* 9 (1984); G. M. Bongard-Levin, “S. F. Ol'denburg kak indolog i buddolog,” *Vestnik Akademii Nauk SSSR* 9 (1984); Mikhail Dmitrievich Bukharin and Irina Federovna Popova, “Istoriia otechestvenno voostokovedeniia v perepiske V. V. Bartol'da i N. F. Petrovskovo (1893-1908 g.) iz arkhivnykh sobranii Rossiiskoi akademii nauk,” *Journal of Russian History and Historiography* 10 (2017).

¹⁴ It should be noted that the *kominternovtsy* belong to a group of the early Soviet intelligentsia already identified in the Soviet historiography. In her *The Cultural Revolution* (1978), Sheila Fitzpatrick presents a tripartite division of the Soviet intelligentsia (a word generally indicating anybody working with the ideas or in the professions), including the Communist specialists/intellectuals, former specialists/intellectuals, and *vydvizhentsy*, Stalin-era specialists/intellectuals educated by the two aforementioned groups. I would argue that Orientologists can be classified more a gradient from “formers’ dedicated to their old ideals to ardent Marxists than into three categories, but that conversation is beyond the scope of this paper. It should be noted that in order to avoid the cumbersome ‘Turkologists-*kominternovtsy*, the word “kominternovtsy” can here on out be assumed to refer to Turkologists.

foundation of researchers with experience working in Eastern countries. Many of the *kominternovtsy* went on to receive proper training in the form of in-depth academic instruction and, this time with adequate methodological preparation, academic field experience. They represented a key part of the academic scene in the 1920s-1930s, and sometimes into the 1940s and even 1950s. Throughout their careers, they engaged in debates on the vaguenesses in Marxist dogma and established a uniquely Russian Communist view of the world.

The *kominternovtsy* were often revolutionaries from the Soviet East promoted through one of the Communist or Party organs and receiving limited academic training.¹⁵ Often coming from the ranks of the proletariat or the peasantry, many of them were ardent native revolutionaries from the Soviet East who had participated in military and diplomatic missions.¹⁶ The state rewarded their service by granting them the opportunity to study in Moscow or Leningrad.¹⁷ The Communist Academy, IKP, and Sverdlov Communist University were the most important institutions for the training of Marxist scholars in the 1920s and 30s.¹⁸ Although the introduction into academia of people with military or foreign policy experience was hardly new, the rapidity with which the *kominternovtsy* rose to their positions and the groundbreaking role they were supposed to play in revising academic studies were unprecedented.¹⁹ Despite their active participation in contemporary academic discussions and community service initiatives, they are barely visible even in the Russian historiography. After 1991, the legacy of these scholars was complicated by their role in the brutal academic politics of the 1930s; a reevaluation of their work and place in Soviet academic history is very much in order. My paper will ask several questions: what was the typical background of a Turkologist-*kominternovets*? What institutions did they enter, and how did they confront the tensions produced by professional conflicts and mounting state pressures? Did the *kominternovtsy* contribute to existing academic trends or bring any lasting influences into Soviet academia? What happened to them in the 1930s and 40s, after the state cracked down on dissenting Marxist academics? The answers to these questions reveals how the *kominternovtsy* made their careers in a chaotic political and administrative situation, and how they introduced new ideals while continuing the work of their predecessors. In other words, the *kominternovtsy* were “academic entrepreneurs,” taking advantage of new opportunities and

¹⁵ “Spetsial’nyi vypusk stengazety, posviashchennyi pamiati Alimova A. A.” (AV IVR RAN f. 68, op. 2, no 10, l. 1); “Avtobiografiia Alimova Abida Akhmedovicha” (AV IVR RAN f. 68, op. 2, no. 1, l. 1-2).

¹⁶ The phrase “Soviet East” refers to “Vostok” (“the Orient”). The “Eastern” *kominternovtsy* came from the USSR’s Central Asian, Far Eastern, and Siberian groups.

¹⁷ “Avtobiografiia P. P. Ivanova, 15 November 1941,” (AV IVR RAN f. 124, op. 3, no. 92, l. 1-2); AV IVR RAN f. 68, op. 2, no. 1, l. 1-2.

¹⁸ The foundation of the OMV within the Communist Academy, specifically, initiated Stalinist consolidation and replaced VNAV, the key institution of Marxist scholarship in the 1920s, which had been attached to the Narkomnats. The presidium of the Communist Academy became the center of all Orientological research in the USSR in 1930 (Nisha Sahai-Achuthan, “Soviet Indologists and the Institute of Oriental Studies: Works on Contemporary India in the Soviet Union,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 42, no. 2 (Feb 1983), pp. 324-6).

¹⁹ Volkov, 700; Mikhail Roshchin, “Evgenii M. Primakov: Arabist and KGB Middleman, Director and Statesman,” in *The Heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies*, eds. Michael Kemper and Stephen Conermann (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 106-107.

reconstructing their field on a combination of new conceptions and reconfigured pieces of its former foundation.

The Rise of Academic Entrepreneurs: Confronting Disorganization “from Marxist Positions”

The 1920s presented scholars with unique challenges due to a turbulent political situation. Total organizational disarray retarded the progress of academic work. While many former scholars had fled the country, some stayed in Russia and continued serving the new state. Former and new scholars mingled both in reorganized old institutions of Oriental studies as well as newly created ones. In 1921, many preexisting Orientological institutions were reorganized into the VNAV (the All-Russian Scholarly Association of Oriental Studies) under the Commissariat of Nationalities. Many other institutions were reorganized and renamed, subsuming and dividing up tsarist-era institutes.²⁰ Saint Petersburg University’s Orientologists, for example, were consolidated into the College of Orientologists. The Academy of Sciences went through several reorganizations, as individual scholars and groups scrambled to secure a place for their subjects of study in the new institutions. Several new institutes were founded, including N. Ia. Marr’s Japhetic Institute of Linguistics, the Institute of Buddhist Culture, the Institute for the Training of Red Professors (IKP—Institut Krasnoi Professury), and the Communist Academy (Kommunisticheskaia Akademiia). Although there was not a major move of scholars to Moscow even after the capital had moved from St. Petersburg, many of the newly founded institutes were located there in an effort to bring Soviet academia closer to the seat of government. In 1929, VNAV, the main (Moscow-centered) institution of Orientological study, was accused of taking a pseudo-Marxist and apolitical approach to scholarship (i.e., of failing to promote the study of the contemporary East in accordance with the current policies of the state). In 1930 it was closed down and Leningrad Orientological institutions were reorganized into IVAN, the Orientological Institute of the Academy of Sciences, a new amalgamation of Orientological institutions under the leadership of S. F. Ol’denburg.²¹ IVAN would be the primary Oriental research institute in Leningrad throughout the Soviet period, and Leningrad was the center of Orientological study in 1917-1950.

Even though many former scholars continued to work in the old (and some of the new) institutions, it was vital for the Soviet state to fill the ranks of academics with ideologically devoted people trained in contemporary affairs. These were the *kominternovtsy*, who became the primary beneficiaries of the institutional reorganizations of the 1930s. As has been mentioned, many of the *kominternovtsy* were former revolutionaries. New scholars for a new world, these Marxist researchers were supposed to be of a certain social status and to conform to a certain model of behavior. One exemplary figure of early Stalinist Turkological scholarship was Abid Ahmed Alimov.²² A key figure in the reorganization of Turkology in Leningrad in the early 1930s and an early enforcer of party dogma at the Leningrad Oriental Institute (LVI), he appears

²⁰ Kuznetsova and Kulagina, pp. 42, 60-2.

²¹ S. F. Ol’denburg (1863-1934). Indologist; Vucinich, pp. 52-57; Atkin, pp. 229-31; Sahai-Achuthan, pp. 327-330.

²² A. A. Alimov (1900-1935). Historian of modern Turkey.

in the historiography as a capable party worker and important administrator.²³ In his official biography in a commemorative newsletter from 1935, this role of his is much-emphasized: for instance, the paper lauds his participation in 1933 in the Committee for the Purging of Party Ranks of the Leningrad Oblast Party Organization (*Komissia po chistke riadov partii Leningradskoi oblastnoi partorganizatsii*).²⁴ Alimov's story, as described both in his autobiography²⁵ and in his posthumous biography in the commemorative newsletter, can be taken as that of a model Soviet Orientologist. The son of a poor village schoolteacher, he is described in the newsletter as an “*inorodets-tatarin-bedniak*” (literally, “non-Russian national-Tatar-destitute man”) to emphasize his struggles in facing economic privation and national discrimination under the tsarist regime. He fought in the Bolshevik ranks in the Caucasus and completed party work abroad in Turkey from 1918 to 1924. The Party duly rewarded his loyal service with permission to study at the Institute of Red Professors (*Institut Krasnoi Professury*, IKP), where he continued to participate in party work and complete assignments abroad in Persia. In 1930, he was granted a position in several Leningrad institutes, including the Institute of History of the Leningrad Section of the Communist Academy (*Institut Istorii Leningradskoi Oblastnoi Kommunisticheskoi Akademii*, LOKA), the Institute of Orientology of the Academy of Sciences (*Institut Vostokovedeniia Akademii Nauk*, IVAN), and the Leningrad Oriental Institute (*Leningradskii Vostokovednii Institut*, LVI), and became a member of the Association of Marxist Orientologists (*Obshchestvo Marksistov-Vostokovedov*, OMV) at the Communist Academy.²⁶ The biography of another komintervets, P. P. Ivanov,²⁷ follows the same model. The son of a landless laborer in Turkestan, he worked as a teacher and economic analysis in Tashkent and in Khirgizia before being recruited into academic work.²⁸ Both these scholars were minor bureaucrats or agents of lowly origins; their backgrounds were exactly appropriate for the Soviet vision of Marxist academics.

Besides appropriate class origins, Alimov's national origins were particularly important, as bringing “*inorodtsy*”²⁹ to the educational institutions of the USSR was a particularly vital practical and propaganda project of the USSR.³⁰ The Soviet leadership wished to include natives

²³ A. D. Zheltiakov, “Izucheniie istorii, ekonomiki, I kul'tury Turtsii v Leningrade za 50 let (1917-1967),” *Tiurkologicheskii sbornik* (Moskva: Nauka, 1970), 179.

²⁴ AV IVR RAN f. 68, op. 2, no. 10.

²⁵ “Autobiography” here signifies a short official document detailing social origins, work history, and other information of relevance to one's employment.

²⁶ AV IVR RAN f. 68, op. 2, no. 10; AV IVR RAN f. 68, op. 2, no. 1.

²⁷ P. P. Ivanov (1893-1942). Turkologist.

²⁸ AV IVR RAN f. 124, op. 3, no. 92

²⁹ This is an ethnic descriptor usually referring to the non-European nationalities in the USSR.

³⁰ One might learn about the broad parameters of this topic in the well-known works on nationality policy by Terry Martin and Francine Hirsch (see references at the beginning of this paper). There also exists an immense historiography on nationalities in general and on particular groups which would be of use for further research. Also, see Achcar, *Marxism, Orientalism, Cosmopolitanism* and Turner, *Marx and the End of Orientalism* for information about the interaction between Marxist theory and Orientalism. It should finally be noted that these were emphatically not the first instances of the inclusion of non-Russian nationals in the academic establishment. For instance, see the case of A. K. Kazembek in Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, David. “The Imperial Roots of Soviet Orientology,” p. 58.

in the research on their regions. Their firsthand knowledge of the language, culture, practices, and ideas of their nationalities would help these scholars present relevant conclusions that would transform academic knowledge along Marxist lines and assist the Soviet state in creating domestic and foreign policy. In practice, of course, matters were more complex. One incident involving an Orientologist recorded in a transcription of an late 1920s academic debate about the state of the “vostokovednyi front” at the Institute of Red Professors (IKP) illustrates the fact that *inorodnost*’ as a qualification was losing its utility already in the late 1920s. One speaker, the Indian Communist A. T. Mukhardzhi,³¹ accused his Russian colleagues of harboring imperialist sentiments, implying that the methodological accusations leveled against him were merely the product of a “hounding of non-Russian Communists.” These methodological errors, he claimed, were the result of not having had the opportunity to learn Russian well enough to read all of Lenin’s works. A rival responded that Mukhardzhi was diverting attention from the real issues at hand.³² In general, the movement away from radical anti-imperialism in the 1930s robbed many of *inorodtsy* scholars of state support, leaving them defenseless.

The entry of Soviet scholars into non-Marxist academic institutions and their work within them was extremely fraught from the beginning. From the perspective of former scholars, institutions were being populated with political favorites who brought discord, short-sightedness, and ignorance into academic institutions. The *kominternovtsy* were often proteges of various branches of the state dealing with nationalities or foreign policy; rivalries between these latter played a great role in the promotion or demotion of these academics. The Comintern, which sometimes diverged from the Bolshevik Party line in policy, the Bolshevik Communist Party, and the Narkomindel each pursued its own interests, recruiting researchers and pitting academic groupings against one another.³³ The macro-politics of the Party thus found its reflection in the micro-politics of academia. Scholars were in constant danger of falling afoul of whichever state branch would ultimately secure Politburo support for its policies; and their arrival in academic institutions introduced into them the volatility and violence of early Soviet politics.³⁴ Many of the *kominternovtsy* were either untrained or poorly trained as academics and often lacked the requisite language skills for serious research or an understanding of academic methodology. Filled with revolutionary enthusiasm, they applied the theories and ideas of the new regime indiscriminately to different Eastern countries. That is, these scholars understood the details of Marxist-Leninist theory and had a complex and nuanced comprehension of facts on the ground from their practical revolutionary experience. They lacked, however, anything more than, for example, the most superficial historical perspective. They had access only to tsarist-era

³¹ A. T. Mukhardzhi (1891-1938). Indologist and famous Indian revolutionary. Founder of the Indian Communist Party. Arrested and executed during the Great Terror, 1938.

³² “Stenogrammy vystuplenii i preni na diskussii v Institute Krasnoi professury o “Polozhenii na vostokovednom fronte” (AV IVR RAN f. 68, op. 1, no. 373).

³³ The Narkomindel is the name for the Commissariat of International Affairs (Komissariat Innostrannykh Del); the Comintern was the Communist Party’s international organization, organizing and promoting pro-Soviet and revolutionary activity abroad. The Bolshevik Communist Party was ostensibly a separate organization which dominated state structures within the USSR.

³⁴ Ter-Matevosyan, p. 290.

secondary literature and often did not know the Western European languages needed for secondary research or enough Eastern languages for primary research (though, of course, this problem was less sharp among Eastern nationals than among their Russian counterparts).³⁵ The view from the perspective of the *kominternovtsy* themselves was not necessarily better. As has been discussed, scholars quickly realized what a profound effect the vicissitudes of high politics could have on their work and lives. By the late 1920s, political tensions in the country were rising, and scholars struggled to keep up with changing political truths.³⁶ The political righteousness implied in their origins was undermined by the changeability of policy. Their ignorance of essential matters such as languages caught up with some of them. The purges of the Stalinist period would greatly exacerbate the conflicts that these new national scholars would face. Stalinism, of course, was damaging not only to Eastern *kominternovtsy* but to the entire field of Turkology.

The new political context surrounding the *kominternovtsy* added new dangers and difficulties to the generic professional rivalries that pervaded the Imperial and early Soviet academic establishment. The atmosphere in early Soviet academic institutions emerges even in the wording of meeting transcripts, articles, and letters from the time. For instance, a posthumous newsletter commemorating the life of A. A. Alimov describes in military terms Alimov's ideological opposition to "national-democratic, pan-Turkic," and "trotskiite-zinovievite," trends in scholarship, as well as to the deviationist ideas of several of his colleagues, including V. A. Gurko-Kriazhin,³⁷ A. G. Prigozhin,³⁸ and others. The words *borotsia* (to fight), as well as the division of Turkology (and Orientology in general) into genuine Marxist and enemy scholarship pervade its description of Alimov's work. He himself is referred to as a vanguard soldier of on the Orientalist front.³⁹ Allusions to the "vostokovednyi front"—the "Orientological front" are ubiquitous in transcripts of debates, open letters, and other contemporary documents, as well. Marxist scholars had to form a "united Orientalist front" against "the old reactionary Orientology and the 'young' Orientologists who trail in its rear" as well as "opportunism and petit-bourgeois radicalism." Tsarist-era scholars fell under the first category, and those Soviet scholars who too enthusiastically adopted imperial traditions under the second. The variety of deviations a Soviet scholar could be accused of was immense, and, as has already been mentioned, the labels above, as well as others (like "conciliatory," for example) could be used as weapons against competitors and personal rivals. Anything but dedicated combat against 'former' ideas was unacceptable. An adoption of the traditions of old Orientology signified "the absence of a Bolshevik political sense" and "a formalistic approach to the study of the questions of Oriental studies." Formalism was defined as excessive generalization or the attempt to approach one's studies through the lens

³⁵ Kuznetsova and Kulagina, pp. 73-7, 98; *O kollegakh i tovarishchakh*, p. 23.

³⁶ See Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment," Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, and Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*.

³⁷ V. A. Gurko-Kriazhin (1887-1931). Scholar of the Near East.

³⁸ A. G. Prigozhin (1896-1937). Soviet Sinologist. Arrested, 1937, as a Trotskyist.

³⁹ AV IVR RAN f. 68, op. 2, no. 10.

of random facts, as opposed to systematic and in-depth study.⁴⁰ The references in the scholarship in the language of military campaigns reflected the general militarization of discourse both in publications and in discussion.⁴¹ Militarization of language was accompanied by increasingly vicious and high-stakes academic politics: rising scholars decried the work of tsarist-era Orientologists but also constantly challenged each other's interpretations and vied for primacy within their institutions. As these researchers struggled to define the correct Stalinist answers to Turkological questions, each tried to enshrine his own ideas as the party line on the matter. He would then be able to destroy his opponents with the combined strength of arguments and a vague threat of force.

The shadow of Stalinism that fell over the discussions and very lives of Orientologists is also evident in other details in the documents that demonstrate how academic politics worked in practice in the later 1920 and the 1930s. For instance, allusions to the need for "samokritika" ("self-criticism") in the documents hint at the pressures *kominternovtsy* began to feel from a state which was slowly shifting its domestic and international policies in this period.⁴² Explanations, exculpations, and recriminations in the text further evidence this. One example is A. A. Alimov's letter acknowledging his mistakes. In the document, he attempts to explain himself by drawing a line between ideological support of a group of scholars and collective administrative action with them (two totally different acts, with very different political implications, he claims). Alimov insists that despite his support of the group against the administration on certain issues, he criticized their deviationist ideas from the very beginning. Furthermore, he attempts to distance himself from a colleague, claiming that her support of the disgraced group was of a different, more grievously deviationist nature than his own. This attempt to create a hierarchy of ideological adherence and correctness demonstrates the increasing strictness of the Stalinist party line in Orientalology, and the importance of demonstrating one's close adherence to Marxist methods and conclusions (as the Stalinist state understood them) in one's research.⁴³ In the new political context, merely administrative conflicts could quickly become dangerous not only to one's job but also to one's person, as being purged from an institution for deviationist thinking was often a precursor to arrest.

Stalinist foreign and domestic policy generated targeted purges, forcing scholars to adhere to or drop different kinds of research. Particularly as policy crystalized in the mid to late 30s, the fate of Communist scholars who had participated in discredited early campaigns or upheld rejected (now "deviationist") theories hung on a thread. Stalin's seizure of power by 1927 and the end of NEP in 1928 represented the defeat of the partisans of world revolution and the triumph of the idea of socialism in one country. Many scholars connected to the Comintern and

⁴⁰ "Otkrytoe pis'mo obshchevo sobraniia studentov-kommunistov Leningradskovo Vostochnovo instituta prezidiumu komakademii ob ideologicheskoi bor'be v vostokovedenii" (AV IVR RAN f. 68, op. 1, no. 394).

⁴¹ Şahin, p. 612.

⁴² AV IVR RAN f. 68, op. 1, no. 394; "Kopiiia otzyva A. D. Novicheva na rabotu Muratova Kh. I. 'Natsional'no-osvoboditel'noe dvizhenie v Turtsii v 1919-1923 gg. Kemalistskaia revoliutsiia" (AV IVR RAN f. 98, op. 1, no. 70).

⁴³ A. A. Alimov, "Zaiavlenie vo fraktsiui soveta obshchestva istorikov-marksistov o priznanii svoikh oshibok" (AV IVR RAN f. 68, op. 2, no. 4).

the Asia policy of N. I. Bukharin were purged.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the narrative of Russian imperial oppression of Eastern nationalities was downplayed, and instead the nationalities were compelled to produce their own class oppressors. In fact, 1934-5 saw the switch to a “positive” reinterpretation of the Russian colonial past.⁴⁵ This new national policy was just the one element of the “Great Retreat” of the mid-1930s as explained by Yuri Slezkine in his article, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment.”⁴⁶ Slezkine argues that the Stalinist state continued to promote the idea of the USSR as multicultural, but also privileged certain large national groups at the expense of smaller ones. Many Turkologists fell victim to this change in policy, as the government eradicated traces of the former practices.⁴⁷ Russians as an ethnic group took a place as “older brothers” in the Soviet multiethnic community, and nationalism displaced the early Soviet internationalist trends. This change produced corresponding modifications in language policy, as the Latinization of Arabic scripts, motivated by the idea of the Latin script as being at a “further stage of development” than Cyrillic, fell out of favor and *kirillizatsia* (Cyrillization) was adopted in its place.⁴⁸ In the Stalinist fashion the fall of one idea and the rise of another was accompanied by the promotion of the proponents of the former and the physical elimination of the supporters of the latter. The confrontation of Turkologists with the state increasingly limited scholars’ ability to do research and administer Turkological institutions; they persevered, however, making many contributions, some ephemeral and some lasting, to their field.

Exploration and Adaptation: Building the New Soviet Academia

The Soviet government, as has been mentioned, sought to dictate not only *what* researchers wrote about and discussed, but how they did so. The *kominternovtsy* used “Marxist” methods; that is, they related all studies and theories fundamentally to understandings of class struggle. In history, this of course meant matching the histories of Eastern countries to the Marxist model and explaining how they manifested the transformation between the social orders of slavery, feudalism, and capitalism.⁴⁹ For example, the works of Turkologists-*kominternovtsy* like A. A. Alimov, A.F. Miller⁵⁰, and I. V. Gurko-Kriazhin⁵¹, in their *Ocherki po istorii Vostoka v epokhu imperializma* (Alimov), “Formirovaniie politicheskikh vzgliadov Kemalia Atatiurka” (Miller), *Turtsiia: Ee istoricheskoe proshloe i nastoiashchee* (Miller), and *Blizhnii Vostok I*

⁴⁴ Garay Menicucci, “Glasnost’, the Coup, and Soviet Arabist Historians,” *International Journal of Middle Eastern studies* 24, no. 4 (Nov 1992), pp. 570-2.

⁴⁵ Auezova, p. 256.

⁴⁶ Slezkine, pp. 436-448; Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*; Nicholas Timasheff, *The Great Retreat: The Growth and Decline of Communism in Russia* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1946).

⁴⁷ Michael Leezenberg, “Soviet Kurdology and Kurdish Orientalism,” in *The Heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies*, eds. Michael Kemper and Stephen Conermann (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 91.

⁴⁸ This was partially based on Marr’s theory of languages as descendent from a single proto-language. (Dmitry Shlapentokh, “The Fate of Nikolai Marr’s Linguistic Theories: The Case of Linguistics in the Political Context,” *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 2 (2011), p. 62).

⁴⁹ Usmanov, “The Struggle for Reestablishment of Oriental Studies in Twentieth-Century Kazan”; Stephen Dunn, *The Rise and Fall of the Asiatic Mode of Production* (London, Boston, Melbourne, and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982); Joshua Fogel, “The Debates over the Asiatic Mode of Production in Soviet Russia, China, and Japan,” *The American Historical Review* 93, no. 1 (Feb 1988).

⁵⁰ A. F. Miller (1901-1973). Turkologist.

⁵¹ V. A. Gurko-Kriazhin (1887-1931). Scholar of the Near East.

*derzhavy*⁵² (Gurko-Kriazhin) all follow the Marxist idea of historical development. But it was not only history which adapted to Marxist understandings; Marxism was brought to bear on linguistics (with special attention paid to the difference between elite and subaltern use of language), religion studies, literature studies (for both of these, there was a new focus on the class content of faiths and literary works), etc.⁵³ Every discipline was reinvisioned through a Marxist lens, and ideological combat took place over scholarly methodology. In an article on ideological combat and methodology in Orientology, A. A. Alimov outlined what he believed to be the essential postulates of Marxist Orientology: “We should aim that the characterization of the socio-economic structures of Eastern countries and the classification of various phenomena in the history of the East be precisely explored and explained within such particular formulations that they can be fully adapted to the illustration and confirmation of the general theoretical positions of Marxism-Leninism.” For works on contemporary questions, this meant analyzing events in the context of party policy and connecting them to party goals. In the case of studies of ancient topics, a scholar was supposed to make sure to explain the relevance of his topic to contemporary issues of Soviet policy. Studies of history and culture must be clearly adapted for the purposes of agitation and propaganda. The article places particular emphasis on studies of foreign parties and ideologies.⁵⁴ It propagates a politically conscious scholarship that would mobilize researchers for the collective task of building a socialist state and, ultimately, a socialist world.

Capturing the “Marxist method” and the Party line in one’s research could be a challenge. The problems introduced by policy changes have already been discussed, but there were methodological issues, too. In a discussion at the IKP in 1930, Turkologist K. G. Vasilevskii⁵⁵ described one way anti-Marxist studies were disguised: pseudo-Marxists, he insisted, used quotations and statistical tables to create the appearance of using the Marxist method without applying it in any meaningful way. He accused specifically the fields of archaeology, ancient history, and linguistics of “using a scholarly style [of writing] to veil anti-Marxist analyses of contemporary problems.” He then went on to describe what he saw as the “leftist” and “rightist” deviations in the contemporary Turkology. The accusations he levels at his colleagues often involve the words “underestimation” and “overestimation,” revealing what a difficult position scholars found themselves in, always needing to arrive precisely at the golden middle. For example, Vasilevskii accuses “left” deviationists of “forgetting Lenin’s teachings about the stages of revolutions and the role of the national bourgeoisie in each,” and in the same breath reminded “right” deviationists not to forget “the specificity of national liberation movements.” In other words, scholars were supposed to balance historical specificity based on particular sources

⁵² A. F. Miller, “Formirovaniie politicheskikh vzgliadov Kemalia Atatiurka (k 25-letiiu so dnia ievu smerti),” *Narody Azii i Afriki*, no. 5 (1963); *Ocherki po istorii Vostoka v epokhu imperializma*, eds. A. Alimov and M. Godes (Moscow and Leningrad: State Socio-Economic Publishing House Leningrad Branch, 1934); A. Mel’nik, *Turtsiia: Ee istoricheskoe proshloe i nastoiashchee* (Moscow and Leningrad: Moskovskii Rabochii, 1929); V. A. Gurko-Kriazhin, *Blizhnii Vostok i derzhavy* (Moscow: Nauchnaia assotsiatsiia vostokovedeniia pri Ts.I.K. S.S.S.R., 1924).

⁵³ *Moskovskoe vostokovedeniie*, p. 513

⁵⁴ “Stat’ia ob ideologicheskoi bor’be i metodologii v vostokovedenii” (AV IVR RAN f. 68, op. 1, no. 396).

⁵⁵ K. G. Vasilevskii (1896-1938). Turkologist. Arrested, 1938, for counterrevolutionary activity.

carefully with the general applicability Lenin's stages of historical development. Even as Vasilevskii criticized scholars for misunderstanding the role of agrarian revolutions or the national bourgeoisie as explained by Lenin, he warned them not to "schematize events" and "transfer schematic analyses of one country's situation directly to others" without specifying the uniqueness of the disparate cases.⁵⁶ Because of the simultaneous rigidity (due to state pressures) and fluidity (due to changing political circumstances) of official views on many topics, walking the fine line between overgeneralization and failure to apply Marxist theory became an increasingly dangerous one to tread.

At the same time as the state limited what types of work could be written, it offered its scholars privileged access to resources for their projects. Their work was eased and made more productive by extensive access to primary source material. For example, the personal archive of P. P. Ivanov contains copious amounts of documents granted to him by the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs (Narkomindel).⁵⁷ Marxist scholars could go abroad, given that they often doubled as Comintern or Narkomindel agents, and could thus access certain types of information much more easily and directly than former or non-Marxist academics.⁵⁸ The *kominternovtsy* made good use of them, despite state pressures—though most of their theories have been discredited, they laid the institutional and methodological foundation for further work.

A few of the contributions of the *kominternovtsy* preempted some of the discussions in decades to follow or made a lasting impact on their field. First of all, these scholars, unlike their tsarist-era counterparts, were highly conscious of their own political biases and leanings. Academic Turkology had transformed from a very limited discourse (confined to a couple hundred people at most in a country of millions) into a state-sponsored discourse explicitly connected to a deliberate political project.⁵⁹ In a sense, Marxist scholars did actually introduce an anti-Orientalist way of thinking because they were honest with themselves about the power relations and structures that informed academic writing. This does not mean that academics always recognized their position of relative power or that they were self-conscious about the hypocritical aspects of Soviet policy or ideology. To them, the state and academic establishment both pursued an "objective" truth, which may have been an Orientalist perspective in and of itself. Still, they were deeply cognizant of and candid about a close relationship between scholarship and politics in the USSR. Their understanding of this issue contributed to deepening the discussions of this topic that carried over from the Imperial period, when Orientologist like S. F. Ol'denburg were already discussing this relationship and its impact on Orientological work.⁶⁰ Also, the *kominternovtsy* chose new and earlier understudied themes in their work. A salient example was economic history—the works of Tukologists-*kominternovtsy* like A. A. Alimov,

⁵⁶ AV IVR RAN f. 68, op. 1, no. 373

⁵⁷ AV IVR RAN f. 98 (P. P. Ivanov).

⁵⁸ G. M. Yemelianova, "Aleksandr Moiseevich Shami (Il'ia Naumovich Teper) (1893-1938)," in *Neizvestnye stranitsy otechestvennovo vostokovedeniia*, p. 46.

⁵⁹ It must be noted that though in the Imperial period knowledge and power were, of course, intimately connected, the Soviet project subjected scholarship to political beliefs and aims in an unprecedented way.

⁶⁰ Yountchi, p. 222; Tolz, *Russia's Own Orient*.

A.F. Miller, and I. V. Gurko-Kriazhin, for instance, focused on this aspect of the history of Turkey in works like *Ocherki po istorii Vostoka v epokhu imperializma*, “Formirovaniie politicheskikh vzgliadov Kemalia Ataturka,” *Turtsiia: Ee istoricheskoe proshloe i nastoiashchee*, and *Blizhnii Vostok I derzhavy*.⁶¹ These scholars may have been excessively detailed in their explorations of congresses, parties, and other organizations, but this was no less because of the state emphasis on the role of Communist Parties in history than because of the fact that their work as agents and bureaucrats gave them the opportunity to witness the functioning of these groups firsthand. Soviet scholars like those mentioned above often produced excellent institutional histories. One of the major weaknesses of these academics, on the other hand, was political history, since they perceived it as derivative from economic history. Altogether, even though they made few big discoveries, the *kominternovtsy* contributed to changes that were already taking root in the field of Turkology.

Besides doing research, Soviet scholars had to contribute to aid and advise the state about development and industrialization in the national territories. Three invitations to conferences demonstrate the kind of work that Alimov, Ivanov, and their colleagues, as Orientologists, were called upon to take part in. Invitations to 1933 and 1934 conferences on the study of the industrial capacity of Tadzhik, Turkmen, and Buriat-Mongolian SSRs can be found in Alimov’s papers, and a 1932 conference on the study of the industrial capacity of the Uzbek SSR in P. P. Ivanov’s personal archive.⁶² These scholars’ unique understanding of the nationalities they studied was supposed to help them assist with the industrialization of the Soviet periphery. Their most lasting contribution, however, was less as researchers or advisers than as administrators and organizers.

It is most frequently the organizational, rather than the academic, skills of the *kominternovtsy* that are memorialized by historiographers. A. A. Alimov’s example is, again, a useful one. Academic A. D. Zheltiakov⁶³ assesses Alimov’s importance primarily as someone who provided for Turkology’s survival in the constant reorganizations of the 1930s. Alimov not only anchored the study of Turkey firmly in a new Marxist historiography, but contributed to Turkology’s consolidation in Soviet institutions. Zheltiakov neglects, however, Alimov’s scholarly or specific methodological contributions.⁶⁴ Liasan Şahin also focuses primarily on Alimov’s place in the new academic administration. Vahram Ter-Matevosyan is the most attentive to Alimov’s academic contributions, but this is because his article focuses explicitly on tracing the development of a particular discussion, rather than assessing the relative importance

⁶¹ Miller, A. F. “Formirovaniie politicheskikh vzgliadov Kemalia Ataturka (k 25-letiiu so dnia ievu smerti).” *Narody Azii i Afriki*, no. 5 (1963): 65-85; *Ocherki po istorii Vostoka v epokhu imperializma*. Eds. A. Alimov and M. Godes. Moscow and Leningrad: State Socio-Economic Publishing House Leningrad Branch, 1934; Mel’nik, A. *Turtsiia: Ee istoricheskoe proshloe i nastoiashchee*. Moscow and Leningrad: Moskovskii Rabochii, 1929; Gurko-Kriazhin, V. A. *Blizhnii Vostok i derzhavy*. Moscow: Nauchnaia assotsiatsiia vostokovedeniia pri Ts.I.K. S.S.S.R., 1924.

⁶² “Dokumenty (udostavereniia, spravki, pochetnaia gramota, foto Alekseeva itd.)” (AV IVR RAN f. 68, op. 2, no. 2; “Raznoe (priglasitel’nye bilety, spravki, ordera, propuska)” (AV IVR RAN f. 124, op. 3, no. 108).

⁶³ A. D. Zheltiakov (?-?). *Historian of Turkey*.

⁶⁴ Zheltiakov, p. 179.

of the various contributions of scholars. In addition to helping organize scholarly work, the *kominternovtsy* trained the second generation of Soviet Turkologists. Among these new scholars were A. D. Novichev,⁶⁵ A. S. Tveretina,⁶⁶ T. P. Cherman,⁶⁷ and A. N. Kononov,⁶⁸ whose names appear in all Russophone works on the history of Soviet Orientology and who left a lasting mark on their field.⁶⁹ These contributions were vital to developing the foundations of Turkological research in the USSR.

Soviet Turkology was slowly consolidating its forces, but the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War in 1941 brought the advance of serious non-military scholarship to a dead stop. Researchers either focused their energies on matters of military necessity or volunteered for the army either as soldiers or as interpreters and other specialist supporting personnel.⁷⁰ After the Great Terror, the war caused a second major loss of qualified Orientologists. For example, of the already small cohort of Turkologists in the Turkish Cabinet of IVAN (consisting of nine before the war), only three were left to carry on after 1945 due to the deaths of the others in battle or from sickness or hunger.⁷¹ Many of those Leningrad Orientologists who stayed in the city after the formal evacuation of IVAN, whether for family reasons or for access to sources, died during the extended blockade of the city in 1941-1944. Despite the near impossibility of continuing research, scholars carried on with their work. Graduate students continued to produce dissertations despite a lack of support from their institutions and immense logistical difficulties. During the siege of Leningrad, scholars worked to publish against all odds.⁷² Leningrad researchers taught, gave presentations, and worked on manuscripts under inhuman conditions of cold, emaciation, and exhaustion. For months, some of them went to work every day beneath the German bombs.⁷³ The casualties of the siege and the war itself were enormous, but the research on the Soviet and foreign East went on against all odds.

The story of the war is a story of individual heroism, but inevitably it is also the story of institutional disintegration and political disaster. The chaotic evacuation of the Academy of Sciences, the scattering of scholars and documentary collections all across the country, the deaths of colleagues and the need to find and preserve their work, the losses and destruction of personal and institutional archives and libraries, and finally the general precarity of wartime life reflected itself in the disappearance of research groups and the languishing of topics. Many a department was held together by the personal initiative and organizational talent of one or a few

⁶⁵ A. D. Novichev (Rabinovich) (1902-1987). Soviet economist and historian of Turkey. Exiled, 1937; rehabilitated, 1939; served in the Red Army, 1941-5.

⁶⁶ A. S. Tveretina (1910-1973). Soviet Turkologist and Ottomanist. Awarded Order of the Badge of Honor in 1953 for service to the USSR in her capacity as a scholar during the Leningrad Blockade in 1941-1942.

⁶⁷ T. P. Cherman (?-1973). Historian of modern Turkey.

⁶⁸ A. N. Kononov (1906-1986). Turkologist and linguist. Recipient of numerous awards, including the highest honor of the USSR, the Order of Lenin.

⁶⁹ Zheltikov, p. 179.

⁷⁰ Vladimir Datsishen, "The Great Patriotic War and Soviet Sinology," trans. Ievgeny Khazanov. *Far Eastern Affairs* 43, no. 2 (Apr/ Jun 2015), p. 130.

⁷¹ Şahin, p. 613-9.

⁷² Datsishen, pp. 132-3, 137.

⁷³ A. A. Dolina, *Nevol'nik Dolga* (Saint Petersburg: Peterburgskoe Vostokovedenie, 1994), pp. 317-25.

of its researchers, and often even that could not save a department or research group that might have taken over a decade to get approved. Despite the best efforts of Leningrad Orientologists, the war accelerated a process of movement of the center of Orientological scholarship from Leningrad to Moscow. On October 22, 1943, evacuees from the Institute of Oriental Studies in Leningrad founded the Moscow Orientological group. Many scholars who had evacuated from Leningrad ultimately settled permanently in Moscow, Tashkent, or the other cities to which they had been sent, and in the immediate aftermath of the war IVAN and LGU lost much of their prestige as centers of Orientological learning.⁷⁴ Recovery in Leningrad in the immediate aftermath involved trying to collect personnel, scattered all over the country, reorganize departments and find students. Overwhelmingly, women students entered the Oriental faculty, as qualified male students were all but impossible to find.⁷⁵ In the international arena, the war brought a dangerous development affecting the work of Turkologists working on the Ottoman Empire and Turkey—the deterioration of Russian-Turkish relations. Radical-nationalist trends dominating in Turkey since the 1930s had soured relations, and Turkey’s pro-German leanings had cemented the split. Suddenly, having Turkish connections became dangerous, and scholars’ previous sympathetic analyses of Turkish history and culture became a liability to them.⁷⁶

The events of the post-war period would leave Orientologists demoralized and disorganized. State pressure on Orientologists to study modern topics returned as strong as ever. These topics were given priority in terms of limited funding and manpower, and the government sought to move the study of these topics to the capital.⁷⁷ The disorganization of Orientology presented a great opportunity to carry out this intention, and in 1950 IVAN was officially moved to Moscow, with the Leningrad institute staying behind as a mere branch. This meant a move for many Orientologists, a layoff for others, and the shock of suddenly acquiring the status of peripheral, as opposed to metropolitan, scholars for the rest. It furthermore threatened formerly distinct research groupings with the possible necessity of merging. This would mean the elimination of some departments and organizations that for some scholars had been their life’s work.⁷⁸ The reorganization cemented the persisting divide between Leningrad and Moscow institutions, with the former specializing in “classical” Orientology (i.e., linguistics, philosophy, and religion) and the latter in contemporary topics.⁷⁹

Broader political developments were also coming to bear on Orientology as the emergency situation produced by the war lifted. Stalinist repression returned, this time as the “campaign against the cosmopolitans,” an anti-semitic purge. Many Jewish Orientologists faced sudden difficulties in obtaining or keeping posts in the Academy of Sciences. This attack, however, also hit some non-Jewish Orientologists; their public denunciations by colleagues were

⁷⁴ Dolinina, pp. 340-2; Kuznetsova and Kulagina, p. 103.

⁷⁵ Dolinina, p. 349.

⁷⁶ Gasimov, p. 14; Alfred Rieber, *Stalin and the Struggle for Supremacy in Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 67; Ter-Matevosyan, p. 288.

⁷⁷ Dolinina, p. 376; Kuznetsova and Kulagina, p. 125.

⁷⁸ Dolinina, pp. 390-7; Kemper, “Propaganda for the East, Scholarship for the West,” p. 172.

⁷⁹ Atkin, pp. 229-31; Sahai-Achuthan, pp. 327-330.

resumed at the state's demand or with tacit state support. Both categories included those who only a few years ago selflessly served Soviet scholarship or the Soviet motherland as researchers, military specialists, and soldiers during the war. Watching the callous way in which yesterday's heroes became today's pariahs could hardly fail to frustrate even those whom the purges did not touch.⁸⁰ Furthermore, a surge of Great Russian nationalism unsettled scholars, who were worried about the need to align their ideological positions with those adopted by the state. This trend was accompanied by corresponding religious resurgence in the national periphery; the state expected its scholars to comment on these developments. Researchers, knowing the deadly potential of independent judgment on the explosive topic of religion, tread carefully. Finally, the post-World War II international situation revealed Asia as a prize in a new ideological "Great Game" between the USSR and the US, and the Soviet state set its scholars to work on furthering, through research and propaganda, the cause of Bolshevik hegemony in Asia.⁸¹ These new trends were just beginning to open to Orientologists when on 6 March, 1953, Joseph Stalin was pronounced dead. At the moment, nobody could be sure of it, but an era had ended and a chapter of Soviet history closed. Upon the survivors, Orientologists who had lived through the purges and the war, the death brought a sense of anxiety and apprehension. Uncertainty lay ahead.

By 1953, few of the original "academic entrepreneurs" were still working in academic institutions. A. A. Alimov passed away of natural causes in 1935; in 1942, P. P. Ivanov perished during the Leningrad blockade. And in any case, by 1953 many people of that generation were (or would be) nearing retirement age. Their introduction of the Marxist method would be held in the historiography as a credit to them until 1991, when it was discredited. Their emphasis on new trends in various fields (e.g., on economic history) and their focus on the relationship between scholarship and politics, however, represented extensions of and contributions to previous trends. Most importantly, the *kominternovtsy* (along with their former colleagues) left behind strong research institutions and educated personnel to man them. It was their students, who had prepared for their positions in the university, and not in the civil war-era Red Army or on Comintern missions, who dominated the 1940s and early 1950s and who were left to carry on Turkological and broader Orientological work.

⁸⁰ Dolinina, pp. 373-7; Amri R. Shikhsaidov, "Arabic Historical Studies in Twentieth-Century Dagestan," in *The Heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies*, eds. Michael Kemper and Stephen Conermann (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 206; Kemper, "Introduction: Integrating Soviet Oriental Studies," p. 13.

⁸¹ Vucinich, pp. 68-70.