



## INTRODUCTION

Collapsing houses, torture chambers, open-pit fires, dampness, bitter winter cold, and an unenviable downtrodden life—that is the path of our enemies. New, well-equipped homes, ovens, wooden floors, phonographs, beds with springs, and electricity—this is the path of the Communist Party.

—Usman Yusupov, November 1938

On September 17, 1939, *Pravda Vostoka* declared that the construction of the Great Fergana Canal fulfilled the “centuries-long” dream of supplying the people of Central Asia with water. The Soviet government’s investment in the region, the expansion of the local transportation infrastructure, and the “voluntary” and “heroic” efforts of thousands of ordinary Uzbek Soviet citizens transformed a former Russian colony into a “flowering garden” and the center of Soviet life in Asia. According to Usman Yusupov, first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan, the canal presaged the future prosperity of the region: “Each Soviet village will no longer have a *hauz*, from which people drink water with worms, but proper drainage canals will now flow to make [the entire region] flourish.”<sup>1</sup> The new canal exemplified the Stalinist state’s abiding concern for its Central Asian citizens and its ability to guide them into the modern age and to socialism. Officially, Soviet power had removed water, the source of life, from the hands of the “feudal-*bey* landlords,” who previously had forced

Asians into poverty, hunger, and flight. The revolution reorganized social and economic relations in Central Asia, and all citizens of the region—Uzbeks in particular—gained from the abundant harvests of fruits, vegetables, and cotton that this new Soviet infrastructure produced.

The centerpiece of this “flourishing garden” was to be the modern city of Tashkent. The Uzbek capital, the largest urban area in Central Asia, also received water in the summer of 1939 as a result of the construction of Komsomol Lake, which was in the center of the city and fed by a canal. Located in the newly established Stalin Park of Culture, the lake was built by the “voluntary” efforts of Tashkent’s Komsomol members. The park replaced a purportedly ramshackle, dusty, and barren Uzbek *mahalla* (traditional neighborhood) with a monument to Soviet progress. The desert city’s workers gained a lakeside resort complete with wide sandy beaches, clean water, cascading fountains, and competitive swimming and boating areas. Its grand opening in June 1939 was a much-touted Soviet holiday for Tashkent residents.<sup>2</sup> By all published accounts, the Soviet state was rapidly transforming the physical environment of the city for the benefit of its residents. Tashkent in official Soviet discourse was becoming the center of Soviet Asia and a symbol of the prosperity, abundance, and progress that the socialist system provided to the region.

A little more than a decade later, Russian writer Viktor Vitkovich described an even more impressive vision of the city as a budding urban metropolis with Soviet cars racing up and down brand-new asphalt streets as trams and trolleybuses delivered Central Asian commuters to multistory office blocks and factories. He saw Tashkent as “so advanced” that it was no longer uniquely Central Asian, that it instead resembled numerous other state-of-the-art urban centers across the globe with its new schools, hospitals, industrial enterprises, and suburban areas. He portrayed Tashkent’s main thoroughfare, Navoi Street, as a clean and boisterous place where “office workers carry portfolios; school boys hop along, textbooks tucked under their belts; ice-cream vendors push handcarts. A truck waters the street and a momentary rainbow comes into being in the sunlight. There is as much pulsating life as in any Soviet capital.”<sup>3</sup> In Vitkovich’s account, Soviet Central Asia is depicted as well on its way toward modernity, with the technological achievement of Tashkent—paved roads, automobiles, and mechanized public transportation—all helping the Uzbek people ride toward the future of communism. Soviet propagandists and Party officials argued that Uzbekistan, under the leadership of the Communist Party, was transitioning from a backward Asian colony into a twentieth-century industrial state with new urban spaces that showcased the “liberation” and “prosperity” of

the Uzbek people under socialism. Tashkent had become both the “flower” and the “factory” of Soviet Uzbekistan—a model urban center that contained all the important markers of economic development that socialism would spur across all of Asia in the years to come. The Sovietization model of Tashkent reportedly had universal applications, and the new Uzbek capital soon would help spark a global revolution to bring socialism to towns and cities across Uzbekistan, Central Asia, and beyond.

In this regional study, the transformation of the social and physical landscape of Central Asia and the Soviet Union is viewed through the prism of the city of Tashkent, the multiethnic capital of the former Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic (Uzbek SSR) and now of independent Uzbekistan. Such a view addresses two topics largely overlooked in existing literature of Soviet history: urbanism and the Central Asian experience during the 1930s to the 1960s, the middle period of Soviet power.<sup>4</sup> Tashkent provides an interesting focus because it is outside the core Slavic republics of the Soviet Union and because Soviet officials—Party leaders in Moscow and Tashkent, city planners, architects, and factory directors—embarked on a massive effort to create a socialist urban center in Asia at a time of revolutionary change. This effort had a significant impact on the everyday lives of Tashkent residents, primarily Uzbeks and Russians, but also Kazakh, Tajik, Jewish, Tatar, and countless other ethno-national groups that either lived in the region or arrived there during the Soviet era. As material from local, national, and Communist Party archives as well as extensive published sources show, the drive to make Central Asia “socialist” was part of a broader campaign of rebuilding cities to create a new socialist society and to transform an ethnically diverse population into “new Soviet men and women.” Communist Party leaders in Moscow and city officials in Tashkent sought to create a carefully planned urban space by destroying public reminders of the non-Soviet past (e.g., mosques, single-family houses, and traditionally narrow streets) and replacing them with architecturally elaborate theaters, apartment buildings, modern factories, and hospitals—all allegedly built for the benefit of the people of Uzbekistan. The residents of the city responded in multiple ways, with some resisting the destruction of their hometown, others actively accepting the new urban areas, and the majority gradually adapting to the changing environment of the new Soviet Central Asia in which they lived, often trying to fuse some traditional practices or customs with the new Soviet culture that was taking root in Tashkent.

While transforming the Uzbek capital was outwardly about city development, Soviet urban renewal campaigns had a much more important purpose, namely, bringing about the breakdown of traditional social relations

and increasing the state's ability to monitor its citizens. Building a "Soviet city" was not the end goal in itself but the means to change the society it housed. New socialist cities were to provide Soviet Uzbek citizens with unique urban areas that the state deemed superior to those anywhere else in the world, particularly in the colonial and postcolonial societies of Asia and the Middle East, allegedly because of socialism's ability to plan and monitor the development of all sectors of the economy, from industry and agriculture to urban growth and population migration. In turn, this extensive planning would create the optimal environment for building ideologically and physically healthy citizens of the Soviet state, who could participate in socially productive labor, appreciate high culture, and willingly lay down their lives for socialism. Creating an ideal modern capital for the Uzbek SSR was as much about creating a vision of the new Uzbek Soviet national identity as it was about building streets, establishing new schools, installing plumbing, or improving the living standards of this distant outpost of socialism in Asia, which grew into one of the larger and more important urban centers in the Soviet Union over the course of the twentieth century.

### **Creating Uzbekistan**

Soviet officials created or, to use Benedict Anderson's term, "imagined" Uzbekistan, just as they imagined and then created a variety of other ethnic and national groups.<sup>5</sup> Sovietization in Central Asia, whether it concerned Soviet-style education, public health campaigns in the Uzbek capital, or the construction of an apartment building, was meant to "modernize," "civilize," and "free" the Uzbek people from the allegedly negative aspects of their past and push them into a happy Soviet future. Architects and urban planners sought to create a new city and, in the process, a new Soviet Uzbek national identity. This project included the creation of an urban center that combined twentieth-century building designs with purported local and ethno-national architectural details. In a time of global decolonization, these efforts in Central Asia underscored the fact that the Soviet regime strove to "solve" ethnic discrimination by providing formerly colonized minorities with cities that mirrored the prosperity of Russia, but with minor allowances for cultural differences. In short, political and cultural leaders in Moscow and Tashkent developed their views of Uzbek national identity and tied this identity closely to the image of a prosperous Soviet state. To show that the Soviet Union had moved beyond colonial oppression and was heading toward communism, Soviet officials were determined to build the modern urban infrastructure that was needed to establish a socialist society and create ideologically sound Soviet citizens in the Central Asian desert.

However, the socialist experience in Central Asia remains an understudied topic. Until recently, scholars focused on the ability of Central Asians to resist Sovietization and paid less attention to how Central Asian identities changed under Soviet rule, a surprising oversight considering that the Uzbek SSR and its four Central Asian neighbors supported the Soviet state to its very end, long after anti-Soviet independence movements had developed in the Caucasus region, the Baltics, and even in Russia itself.<sup>6</sup> In fact, the multiethnic population of Tashkent reacted to, adapted, and ultimately helped to shape these efforts during times of intense turmoil in Soviet history as the state experienced rapid industrialization, World War II, postwar Stalinism, de-Stalinization, and the dawn of the Brezhnev era. A variety of themes runs through this history, ranging from city planning, migration, industry, education, health care, and cultural affairs, demonstrating that the effort to create new cities touched a wide variety of daily activities. The Soviet system gradually gained a support base in the region, particularly during times when the top-down pressure of Stalinism decreased—temporarily during World War II and more noticeably in the late 1950s, after Stalin's death, when Uzbeks interacted more closely with the Soviet institutions that had taken root in the city.

In 1924, Soviet officials divided Central Asia into individual republics and established a territory called the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic. As Francine Hirsch has shown, they created images of the new Uzbek ethnos, declared the language that local residents spoke to be “Uzbek,” and then revised the Uzbek alphabet three times in the first three decades of Soviet rule—from Arabic to Latin and finally to Cyrillic.<sup>7</sup> Simultaneously, Soviet historians—initially, most of them Russian—began to create an Uzbek historical narrative to fill in the region's “national content.” Party officials initiated a campaign to transform Navoi, a fifteenth-century Central Asian poet who wrote in both Turkic and Persian, into the Uzbek national literary figure.<sup>8</sup> Soviet propaganda in Uzbekistan frequently included mention of the heroism of the struggle against the Basmachis, the anti-Soviet Central Asian rebels who were finally defeated in the mountains of Central Asia in 1931. Concurrently, public health specialists and Party leaders criticized pre-existing Central Asian cultural or historical traditions, particularly the purported low status of women, high illiteracy rates, poor health standards, the strong influence of Islam, and “barbaric” local customs—polygamy, underage marriage, and circumcision. All of these “backward” traits were eventually to be overcome through rational Soviet science, the creation of modern health-care and education systems, and productive factory labor. While in some ways this creation of new national groups began as a top-

down process initiated by Party leaders in Moscow, recent archivally based studies indicate that new national identities and cultural traditions were much more the result of a complex negotiation between indigenous residents on the ground in Central Asia and top Party ideologists sent out from Russia to help construct socialism in the region.<sup>9</sup>

In creating the Uzbek SSR, Soviet officials also selected a capital city and began to conceive of what “Soviet Uzbek” architecture should look like. Architects and artists studied the building traditions of Central Asia, declared most of them “backward,” and then postulated how they could “improve” local building designs with modern Soviet technology. In categorizing Uzbek cities, Soviet urban planners painted a picture of traditional Central Asian towns as primitive, unhealthy, and uncomfortable, echoing sentiments expressed by European officials across colonized Asia. In fact, Soviet architects and city officials spoke negatively of the disorder of the winding streets of the Old Town sections of Tashkent to such an extent that the dust in these streets and the one-story “mud” homes along them became the defining characteristics of historic Central Asian urban centers. Propaganda portrayed these traditional homes with their enclosed courtyards as prisons for women. Soviet officials also decreed the community *hauz* to be a breeding ground for disease. By the early 1930s, the Soviet regime celebrated a few achievements of Uzbek history—Navoi and the defeat of the Basmachi rebels—but was busy belittling almost everything else. Party officials identified negative traditions that were to be excised from Soviet life in Central Asia, while simultaneously inventing new ones that would help create a new socialist identity for the region.

Although Soviet policies introduced to Central Asia a number of features unique to socialist societies, in many ways they continued the project launched by the tsarist regimes, which also viewed traditional Central Asian society as stagnant and resistant to change. Soviet leaders in Uzbekistan decreed that the revolution liberated Central Asians from colonial oppression and imperialism, but their efforts to “enlighten” the local population, their goals of creating a modern European-style urban environment in Central Asia, and their propagandistic use of the region’s transformation to showcase state power remind one of similar programs of late-nineteenth-century Russian administrators in the newly conquered territories of Turkestan. In Central Asia and the Russian Empire as a whole, these similarities show that certain ideas about cities, urban life, and the means of ruling urban spaces spanned the revolutionary divide, despite the clear ideological break of 1917.

Furthermore, in “inventing” Soviet Uzbekistan, government bureau-

crats, Party leaders, and architects put much effort into reconstructing Tashkent so that it would fit their ideologically inspired images of what a “capital city” needed to look like, just as their imperial predecessors had emphasized the need for a European-style urban center in Central Asia.<sup>10</sup> As the focal point of the Soviet system in Asia, Tashkent was to be like Moscow—an immensely powerful political, economic, and cultural center that could act as the “capital” for international socialism. As a result, state officials, city planners, and mapmakers closely followed the Moscow example throughout the Soviet era in the way in which they built the socialist system in Central Asia. They needed Tashkent to look like a contemporary capital city of the “liberated” Uzbek SSR, just as the Soviet capital was the political and symbolic heart of socialism for the entire “liberated” working class of the former tsarist empire and beyond.

Tashkent was of particular importance to the Soviet regime as a symbol of socialism and a beacon of hope for Asian peoples who lived under Western colonial domination. In many ways, Tashkent, the largest city in Central Asia, was to become Moscow’s “shining star” in the East and an example of the adaptability of Soviet-style socialism. With the new city of “Soviet Tashkent,” Moscow was hoping to show Asia and the Middle East the “light” of socialism and help spread its revolutionary ideology around the globe. This creation of a model socialist city in Asia was an important goal of all Soviet leaders immediately upon the establishment of the Uzbek SSR in 1924, but it grew in importance during the cold war, when the Soviet Union and United States competed intensely for influence in the decolonizing world. It is thus appropriate to examine the transformation of this multiethnic Central Asian city in a broad context of twentieth-century European, colonial, and postcolonial trends in the planning of both cities and societies and the distinct path laid out under this authoritarian socialist system. This transformation included European socialists’ efforts to bring “enlightenment” to oppressed classes and peoples of the world, which was one aspect of broader twentieth-century attempts to create ideal citizens in modern states. Tashkent was effectively a city situated at the crossroads of colonialism and an ultra-centralized socialist state. Given this situation, it was a rapidly changing place that was both Central Asian and Soviet (i.e., “modern”), even when Party leaders did not always identify it as such or when local residents tried to preserve some aspect of their family or community customs in their new Soviet lives, often using the state’s own laws and regulations. This history of Sovietization in Central Asia is neither a simple case of a Soviet identity being imposed on the region from Moscow through Russification nor simply an example of popular resistance to this

process from the residents of Tashkent. Through urban planning, among other programs, the multiethnic Soviet state sought to create common identities for Central Asia's diverse inhabitants and, at the same time, to concentrate power and decision making around Moscow. With great difficulty, that regime over time successfully fused Soviet and regional identities through the gradual interaction—both positive and negative—of the population with political and cultural institutions of the city, even if the ultimate creation of a Soviet Uzbek identity was not exactly what Soviet planners originally had in mind. However, since Uzbeks were among the most stalwart supporters of the Soviet regime during the late *glasnost*' era, Soviet cultural mentalities and allegiances certainly took root in the region and proved to endure for a long time.

The utopian ideals of the Soviet regime promised enormous benefits: improved standards of living, racial and ethnic equality, liberation from colonial oppression, economic prosperity, industrial growth, expansion of water resources, and educational or socioeconomic opportunities for individual citizens. However, the regime's ideological stress on industrial development, its uncompromising faith in Marxist theories of development, its desire for total control over the population, and its bureaucratic inefficiency complicated efforts to build an ideal capital city. Exploring the ways in which Soviet officials sought to transform Central Asian urban society and the level of success they achieved also invites an evaluation of the success of this epic campaign, particularly because these utopian ideals of socialist urbanization led to a tremendous displacement of the Tashkent population and a reordering of urban space, thus introducing stresses into urban life, including hunger, disease, overcrowding, and deteriorating sanitary conditions. Furthermore, in promoting a socialist vision for Central Asian cities, Soviet officials—many of whom were based in Russia—aimed to reorient traditional community structures toward new Soviet ideals but often ignored the importance of the home, causing many residents—and even some city officials and urban designers in Moscow—to view the urban transformation plans as assaults on local neighborhoods and cultures or, to use the term coined by J. Douglas Porteous and Sandra Smith, as a form of “domicide,” all in the name of building for the public good and the Soviet future.<sup>11</sup>

### **Tashkent in Pre-Soviet History**

Thousands of miles from Moscow, Uzbekistan is situated in the middle of the Kyzyl Kum (Red Sand) desert. The region experiences a continental climate, with long, hot summers and shorter but frequently cold and rainy



or snowy winters. Two main rivers, the Syr Darya and Amu Darya, run through the region to the Aral Sea. Central Asia bore religious and cultural influences from Buddhism, shamanism, and Zoroastrianism until the Arab conquest in the seventh and eighth centuries led to the conversion of the region's inhabitants to Islam. Pre-Islamic influences remain important aspects of popular religious belief and practices in Central Asia. Genghis Khan and the Mongol Empire seized much of Central Asia in the thirteenth century before the Mongol invasion of Russia. These conquests began a pattern of constant migration into and across Central Asia. Although Uzbekistan has a predominantly Sunni Muslim population, trade routes (as well as tsarist and Soviet migration policies that brought in deportees and voluntary migrants) led a variety of other ethnic and religious groups, including Jews, Orthodox Christians, Poles, Koreans, Armenians, Tatars, and Germans, to Tashkent.

For much of Central Asia's history, the cities of Bukhara and Samarkand, now in independent Uzbekistan, dominated the region, while Tashkent was a minor commercial town. Bukhara was an important site of Islamic learning, and Samarkand was a political, economic, and cultural center on the Silk Road trade route. Samarkand also served as the seat of the Timurid Empire, ruled at the peak of its power by Amir Timur (or Tamerlane, 1369–1405). Both Samarkand and Bukhara have strong Persian influences in language, culture, and ethnic makeup, a fact that is reflected in their Soviet and post-Soviet populations. The Islamic architecture of the region, particularly in Samarkand, with its main square (Registan), the astronomer Ulug Beg's observatory, and *madradas* on the Registan, became symbols of the Timurid Empire's power and scientific achievements. Samarkand later served as an important comparison point for Soviet artists and building designers when creating "Soviet-Uzbek" architecture. From the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, the region was dominated by three local powers: the emirate of Bukhara, the khanate of Khiva, and the khanate of Kokand.<sup>12</sup> Russian perceptions of cruel and repressive rulers in these cities grew in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but the symbolism of glorious Samarkand and Bukhara, two of the Islamic world's greatest cities, lingered the Soviet era.

For most of the pre-Soviet modern period, Tashkent was a small trading center. The Russian conquest of Turkestan in 1865 spurred the growth of the city, as Jeff Sahadeo has shown.<sup>13</sup> Russian armies seized the town from the Kokand khanate in that year, making it the center of the tsarist regime in Central Asia and reorienting the region toward Moscow and thus to European culture, philosophies, and ideologies. Imperial administrators quickly

set up a military fortress, and the region grew in political and economic importance to become the de facto capital of Russian Central Asia. This growth brought in large numbers of migrants from Russia—exiles, peasants, soldiers, railroad and textile workers, and government bureaucrats—who lived in European-style settlements built alongside the traditional Central Asian ethnic city. From Tashkent, Russian armies gradually moved on Samarkand, Kokand, Bukhara, and Khiva, the latter two becoming protectorates of the tsarist state. The establishment of Russian Central Asia was accomplished in ten years and was undertaken largely for economic and foreign policy reasons to demonstrate Russia's status as an imperial power.<sup>14</sup> Robert Crews has examined how the tsarist regime successfully penetrated Muslim communities in the region, showing that the state used Islam to build support among the local population and involved them more actively in the mechanisms of empire. As such, he also explores the ways in which the indigenous population in Central Asia in turn used the state to solve local disputes, settle religious disagreements, and shore up family relationships.<sup>15</sup>

Russian influences likewise brought Western political ideas to the region, including revolutionary ideologies. Until recently, Western scholars largely viewed the communist revolutionary era in Tashkent as a European affair, with railway workers and soldiers fighting for Soviet power and reforms. However, historians have argued that there was considerable support for a revolutionary change among indigenous peoples, specifically among the Jadids, a group of intellectuals who attempted to bring about Muslim cultural reform, as Adeeb Khalid has shown.<sup>16</sup> The revolution and the subsequent Russian civil war brought chaos to Central Asia, with an out-migration of some Russian settlers, followed by an influx of refugees to Tashkent because of the war and the famine that was ravaging some areas of Russia. After the Bolsheviks won the civil war and after the creation of national borders in Central Asia in 1924, Tashkent lost some of its symbolic importance, particularly after Soviet officials designated the historically Central Asian Samarkand, not the more Russian city of Tashkent, as the first capital city of the newly established Uzbek SSR. In the first ten years of Bolshevik rule, the state largely held off making a direct assault on the city of Tashkent and on many local cultural or social institutions. By 1930, however, re-imagining Uzbek cities took central stage when the more modern and industrial Tashkent regained its official claim as the political center of the republic, a symbol of the Soviet Union's march toward the future and toward communism and a sign that attitudes toward Uzbekistan and its inhabitants were changing quickly.

The study of Central Asia is a relatively new field in the West. Until recently, scholarship focused largely on the cultural and literary traditions of Uzbekistan and Central Asia or on the influence and, at times, the “threat” of Islam to the Soviet state. Little attention was paid to the topic of Sovietization, except to show how it was a form of Russian/Soviet domination and Russification of the region.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, some Western scholarship focuses too specifically on individual Central Asian peoples and makes little effort to place the socialist experience in Central Asia in the broader context of Soviet and world history. This problem continues, with post-Soviet nationalist historiography in Uzbekistan too often dwelling on the victimization of Uzbeks in the Soviet era but not on their role in the creation and functioning of the Soviet system, the establishment of Soviet-Uzbek identities, and the participation of Uzbeks in some of the darkest crimes of socialism in the twentieth century.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, Soviet literature often simply reiterates the “achievements” of the Soviet era but adds little to our understanding of the difficulties of bringing about major transformations, the hardship caused by such rapid changes, or the ways in which local and state officials interacted to create the new Soviet society in the region.<sup>19</sup>

In the subfield of Soviet Central Asian studies, Gregory Massell argued in the 1970s that Marxist-Leninist ideology was particularly important to the Soviet regime in Central Asia but that it needed adaptation to suit the local environment. Massell explains that because the region lacked an indigenous working class that could support socialism, Soviet leaders attempted to build support for the Soviet project among women, the “surrogate proletariat,” who, like the workers of Europe in Marxist ideology, possessed the lowest status in Central Asian cultural and economic life. Through a forced and violent female unveiling campaign, called *hujum* (which means “attack” in Uzbek), Central Asian women were to gain liberation from the traditional family and Islamic social structure and become the building blocks upon which a new Soviet culture would be created.<sup>20</sup> This campaign was an attempt to destroy traditional social norms and to replace them with a new and “modern” Soviet society, an early example of the regime’s efforts at social engineering. Two recent studies using newly accessible archival data have picked up on Massell’s arguments. Marianne Kamp focuses on the policies toward and perceptions of Central Asian women mostly before the direct assault on the veil in the late 1920s, while Douglas Northrop follows the women’s liberation movement and popular resistance to the *hujum* campaign through the 1930s to show how violence became a critical component of Stalinist rule in the region.<sup>21</sup> He notes high levels of resistance at the height of Stalinist violence but a more gradual accommodation to So-

viet norms over time, particularly during World War II. In many ways, the war years helped solidify allegiances and a sense of loyalty between Uzbeks and the Soviet state, no matter whether one was fighting on the front lines, working in a Soviet factory, or trying to relieve the hunger and suffering of so many desperate war evacuees and refugees who found themselves in the Tashkent region. With the all-encompassing effort to defend the Soviet Union against the Nazis, Central Asian and Soviet identities began to merge more tightly and Soviet citizens in Tashkent gradually gained a greater understanding of socialism and a bigger stake in the success and longevity of the Soviet project in the region, even if its policies and bureaucratic inefficiencies contributed to the tremendous suffering.

Shoshana Keller has concentrated on Soviet attempts to eradicate Islam, and she places these efforts in a local as well as in a broader context of Soviet antireligious campaigns.<sup>22</sup> Other studies have looked at Soviet attempts to “modernize” Central Asia and other less “developed” regions of the Soviet Union, either through bringing “Soviet” (i.e., European)-style health care to Central Asia, constructing the Turksib railroad through the region, or building socialism through various projects in the arctic north, all of which were part of the general campaign at transforming indigenous peoples by replacing traditional cultures with “modern” Soviet ones. These studies, however, generally focus on the early years of Soviet rule without thorough examination of World War II, a cataclysmic global event that fundamentally transformed this region, as it did much of the world.<sup>23</sup>

The topic of urbanism in Soviet history has also gained momentum recently, with historians beginning to look beyond high culture, elite politics, the terror, collectivization, and industrialization. The traditional neglect of this topic is surprising considering that urbanization was a natural outcome of Stalin’s policies of modernizing and eradicating Islam and that Soviet officials used economic and social planning to control urban life. Stephen Kotkin’s study of the city of Magnitogorsk demonstrates how the Soviet experiment was an exercise aimed toward an overall enlightenment and explores how Party leaders, factory workers, and local officials went about building a new Soviet culture in the city through industrialization.<sup>24</sup> However, Magnitogorsk, a city that was built from scratch in the Soviet era, was not representative of most Soviet urban environments that had pre-existing cultures and infrastructures with which Soviet power had to contend. Although the city had many non-Russian workers, it was still located in an ethnically Slavic region, so Kotkin’s study thus gives little indication of how Sovietization occurred in an ethnic republic and of the cultural dislocation it caused in a minority region, particularly one that was not pre-

dominantly Orthodox Christian.<sup>25</sup> Also, Kotkin does not follow the story of Magnitogorsk through the trauma of World War II, when men went off to the front to die for socialism and women and children moved in greater numbers onto the factory floor, thereby transforming gender and family dynamics, a process that can be seen as a fundamental turning point in the solidification of Soviet values and identities in Central Asia as a whole.<sup>26</sup>

Indeed, archival research on Tashkent indicates that city planning was an ever-changing interaction between central authorities, republic-level officials, and local Tashkent planners to develop images of both the Soviet state and Uzbekistan that were “modern” and “progressive.”<sup>27</sup> Building Soviet Tashkent was neither a strictly “top-down” nor “bottom-up” process. Local officials and residents themselves participated in this effort to shape local identities and the urban environment, often responding to events either on the ground in Tashkent or in distant parts of the Soviet Union that could indicate fundamental changes in the direction of society. Soviet planners also gradually had to acknowledge the importance of city residents, who, despite Soviet ideology’s belief in the transformative power of rational planning, were not always rational beings and did not necessarily act as Soviet urban planners and Party officials believed they would or should. Moreover, residents’ actions, complaints, and innovative responses to the problems that arose in this major Soviet city at times hampered official attempts to create a model multiethnic socialist urban space in Central Asia as Tashkenters themselves tried to put their own stamp onto this massive redevelopment project.

Urban studies must look beyond the conventional boundaries of Soviet history, particularly the revolution, World War II, the Stalin-Khrushchev break, and the cold war. These arbitrary divisions limit our ability to see the continuities, particularly in Central Asia, between these periods of Soviet history.<sup>28</sup> In fact, examining the history of Soviet Central Asia by studying Tashkent shows that Stalinism was a central component of both the Uzbek Soviet experience in the twentieth century and the urban planning apparatus, just it was throughout the Soviet world. The Stalinist system lasted well beyond the death of Stalin. Although the Stalinist stress on building grand public structures lost influence during the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras, the construction of model cities, with beautiful city centers, ethno-national motifs, and, in Tashkent, maximum decorative use of water, continued to the end of the Soviet era and beyond, as did the authorities’ strong desire to mold, shape, monitor, and control the lives and habits of Soviet citizens.

Although Tashkent was never touched by German bombs, World War II had a tremendous influence on the Sovietization process in the Uzbek capi-

tal. Its urban layout and ethnic makeup were fundamentally altered by the millions of refugees who came through the city during the war years. While Stalingrad, Kiev, and Minsk were all completely destroyed, the Soviet cities of Central Asia and Siberia experienced rapid industrial, economic, and population growth during these years. Studying how this city managed its unexpected wartime development is essential to our understanding of how local governing structures and planning agencies responded to the conflict. Instead of rational planning—the mantra of Soviet urban design—city officials responded to crisis after crisis to guarantee the survival of the Soviet Union, even if its clumsy response to the war across the board could not guarantee the survival of scores of Soviet citizens. In Central Asia, the rapid wartime industrialization exposed the uneven prewar economic development of the Soviet Union because the region lacked the infrastructure (both physical infrastructure and trained employees) for military industrial production. Unable to handle all the city's needs, Party officials decreed which institutions and people were useful enough to the war effort to assist and left the majority to fend for themselves, silently showing that Soviet officials had created hierarchies of importance among institutions, cultures, political priorities, and socioeconomic and ethnic groups.

An awareness of the impact of the war on urban societies is likewise necessary for understanding the social and economic development of the Soviet Union during the cold war. Scholars must examine how Soviet cities on the home front both incorporated this growth and regularized these four years of unprecedented industrial development. In many ways, the early postwar liberalization and sheer necessity enabled city planners to reinterpret traditional Uzbek architecture, neighborhoods (*mahallas*), and local lifestyles, ultimately calling for the adaptation—not the destruction—of Central Asian towns. However, the more open interpretations of Soviet cultural norms fell victim to the rise of late-Stalinist architecture at the end of the 1940s. Because of constantly changing decrees from Moscow, construction was delayed or executed in an uncoordinated—perhaps even chaotic—fashion. As a result, the Soviet citizens of Tashkent, who identified much more closely with the socialist system after the war and desperately hoped for a higher standard of living after the Nazi-Soviet conflict, did not see much improvement in their lives in the early postwar years, despite the sacrifices they had made between 1941 and 1945.

It is important to consider how urban planners in the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras promoted the idealized image of a victorious multiethnic state while concurrently dealing with the pressing problems of postwar Soviet life, a time of extreme economic hardship. Central Asian cities were fast

becoming symbols of the Soviet Union's global aspirations, with Tashkent, the largest urban center in the region, serving as de facto ambassador to the postcolonial world. The earthquake that hit Tashkent in 1966 caused a slight delay in the push to display the city as a model of postcolonial socialism. That natural disaster damaged large parts of the city but conveniently provided planners with the blank slate that would allow them to transform the Uzbek capital into a truly "high modern" city that would showcase socialism in Asia. They went on to create the contemporary urban landscape that forms the backbone of Tashkent today. In doing so, planners gave birth to a new myth of Tashkent as a socialist "city reborn," one that persisted for the remainder of the cold war—and beyond.