The Daughters of Amazons
Voices from Central Asia

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The Daughters of Amazons: Voices from Central Asia

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Cassandra Balchin
for Shirkat Gah
## Contemporary Central Asia

![Central Asia Map](image)

## Demographic and Ethnic Profile of Central Asia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Republic</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Indigenous Population</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>22 million</td>
<td>17 million Uzbeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>16 million</td>
<td>7 million Kazaks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>4.5 million</td>
<td>2.2 million Kyrgyz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkmenia</td>
<td>4 million</td>
<td>2.7 million Turkmen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tadjikistan</td>
<td>5.5 million</td>
<td>4.2 million Tadjik</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>&gt;50 million</td>
<td>&gt;15 million = Russians</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Glossary

*chachvan*
A specifically Uzbek form of veiling which consisted of a thick, mask-like veil made from horse-hair placed on top of the *parandja* cloak.

*chaddor*
Veil

*gap*
Slang term for a rowdy get-together among male friends.

*hijab*
Veil

*ichkari*
The women's section of traditionally arranged Uzbek houses; inaccessible to outsiders.

*kalim*
Traditional bride-price practiced in parts of Central Asia; can be in form of money or goods.

*kolkhoz*
Collective farm

*mohalla*
A residential area, whose inhabitants interact closely. In the past, the *mohalla* constituted the primary location of religious interaction.

*nomenklatura*
The ruling elite; the personnel appointed and vetted by Party bodies. A *nomenklatura dama* was the largely pejorative term applied to a woman in the *nomenklatura*.

*parandja*
Heavy cotton veil traditionally worn by Muslim women in Central Asia.

*soviets*
Pseudo-elected councils.
Editor's Note

In the original Russian-language manuscript, there were a number of recurring phrases which posed a major challenge to the translators and editor alike. These are based on concepts which reflect both the specificity of the situation in former Soviet Central Asia, as well as the particular perceptions on which these concepts were and still are founded.

An example is the notion of 'female loneliness' - *zhenskoe odin ostvo*, - which is a central theme of Chapter 2 'The Family: A Source Of Both Support And Suffering'. This phrase has been variously rendered as 'female loneliness', 'single women' and 'unmarried women' according to the context. However, in the original Russian, the phrase instantly evokes a recognised social problem which plagued much of the former Soviet Union and clearly continues to dominate women's lives in the post-Soviet period in Central Asia. Despite the overwhelming social and state backing given to the notion of family, large numbers of women remain single - out of choice or force of circumstances - or are divorced/separated, and living as single parents. Factors involved include: the possibility of rejecting an arranged marriage, inadequate leisure opportunities, men's unwillingness to take on family responsibilities and spousal violence, the housing shortage, a lack of social acceptance of articulate, intelligent and powerful women, high divorce rates. Although the problem was openly acknowledged by Soviet society, the focus was less on the particular problems facing individual women in such a situation, and more on the fact that this was an 'unnatural' phenomena. Moreover, with the Russian word for 'single' and 'lonely' being one and the same, it is clear that for many being unmarried necessarily implied a state of loneliness.

Similarly, the Russian *nepolnaya sem'ya*, which has been translated as 'single-parent families' and 'broken homes' reflects a specifically negative attitude towards a non-traditional, non-patriarchal family. The original phrase, literally translated is 'incomplete family'. Invariably headed by women, such families on the one hand faced supposed state support in the form of certain state benefits; on the other hand, social attitudes as reflected by the language were clearly critical and unsupportive of families which had no male head.

In Chapter 5 'Education: Bane Or Boon?' there is clearly some confusion on the part of the respondents regarding the intent of the survey, a confusion facilitated by the Russian phrases for 'single-sex education' and 'coeducation': respectively, *razdel'nii* and *sovmes'nii*; the Russian simply means 'separate' and 'together'. The respondents' confusion about whether this refers to schools being mixed in terms of the sex of their pupils or the language of instruction reveals that the language issue is at least, in some cases if not more, as important as the gender issue in their minds.

Cassandra Balchin
Introduction

The historians of Ancient Greece called the area located on the banks of the Caspian Sea `the land of the Amazons'. It was in fact the land of the Saks and Masagets of ancient Khorezm, and while it may not have been the birthplace of those fearless female warriors, it was nevertheless the domain of proud queens. The inhabitants of these lands, which were so distant from the world of classical antiquity, worshipped beautiful and powerful goddesses who gave granted their followers life, fertility and plenty. History has preserved traces of these legendary times in the shape of crumbling citadels, and archaeological sites whose titles ring with the names of maidens from ancient times; in sculptures and bas-reliefs that depict goddesses, as well as in tales and sagas in which women - loving and respected, beautiful and resourceful - protect their country, their honour and their love. The subsequent religions and states that have appeared over the centuries in Central Asia have attempted to obliterate the memory of those ancient goddesses and warrior women, forcing people to forget those times when a woman was capable of resolving not only her own destiny, but also that of her country.

As it became part of the world of Islam, Central Asia lent the young Islamic civilisation the charm of its past culture, and its ancient history has remained in the people's subconscious in the form of local fairy tales and legends. The centuries-long history of the Central Asian Muslim states yields isolated examples of the participation of women in their political and cultural life. But for the overwhelming majority of women, the restricted world of the harem and ichkeri, of the hijab and parandja confirmed the absolute superiority of men over women. Yet the male elite of Central Asia, by turning mothers into the dutiful slaves of their sons, by labelling women a sub-human category, a mere source of pleasure or a child-bearing machine, deprived their countries of the cultural and social initiative of women. This segregation of women became one of the factors behind the region's stagnation, its historical backwardness and conservatism.

The concept of restoring the rights of the women of the East came from the West. (1) Just as the concept of Enlightenment had prepared Europe for its entry into the modern era, the Islamic reform movement emerging in Central Asia at the beginning of this century made the elimination of the region's historic and economic backwardness its goal. The reformists considered the emancipation of women and their emergence out of seclusion to be one of the main points of the enlightenment of their people.

Soviet Central Asia was one of the first areas to experience the impact of the social experiment which followed the 1917 Revolution. 1927 was the year of the Khudjum - a violent offensive against the old world order, ushering in the forceful and premature 'liberation of the women of the East'. In a society which was not yet ready to see women enjoy equal rights with men, and with a political system which could not and did not have freedom of identity as its
goal, this forced liberation led to vast contradictions between ideas and reality, and profound suffering for women, who had faith in the beautiful ideas behind the Revolution, in their future and in their own significance. 'Let women sit astride a horse!' was one of the contemporary slogans the Communist Party's which, with typical decisiveness, proceeded to translate the vision of an emancipated woman into reality.

At this stage, the one sixth of the globe's land mass which constituted the new Soviet state, needed caryatides whose shoulders were to bear the burden of the modernisation of their country and the construction of socialism. It needed Amazons, whose courage and faith could evoke the sympathy of the peoples of the world. But in this grand plan there was little room for worrying about the minutiae of each and every woman's happiness.

Today, history has swept aside the socialist experiment, with assessments of its achievements tending towards the negative. This rejectionist trend includes the current revaluation of the socialist approach to the women's issue, and those voices that reject women's equality and idealise the position of women in the Islamic past are being allowed a decisive say. Yet it is vital that society avoid a one-sided assessment of the socialist experiment. History is as much a witness to the fact that along with the losses borne by women, they also made noticeable gains - not those which propaganda trumpeted, but specifically the changes which took place in some women's consciousness. No doubt in the Soviet era millions of women became recruited into the army of workers, but, at the same time, the door to the world of modern civilisation was opened up to thousands.

This change has given these women a sense of involvement in the life of their country and responsibility for its future. Each one of them has travelled a formidable historical distance to realise her own worth and now they want their young independent country to take the path of progress and humanism, aspiring to lend it their intelligence, knowledge and strength.

During the Soviet era, for the first time in the history of the East, there emerged a defined female intelligentsia. But the precise nature of this phenomenon is still to be assessed. Without constant watering by the state, can it survive on the bare soil of Central Asian society, so richly fertilised by the compost of its Muslim past, a past that opposes the development of women's identity? Only time and the female intelligentsia itself can tell if it can survive, and prove its maturity and adaptability.

In the words of Gabriel Garcia Marquez on receiving the Nobel prize for Literature in Stockholm in 1982:

"What to say about the Europeans, delighted by the contemplation of the achievements of their own culture, but unable to find a method by which it would be possible to interpret the meaning of our lives! One understands the persistence with which they attempt to assess us using their own indicators, forgetting in the process that the vicissitudes of life are not the same for everyone and that our search for our own path is no less determined nor less bloody than theirs. Interpretation of our actions with the aid of alien schemata, is facilitating the deepening of our alienation and the loss of our freedom and solitude".
The history of Central Asia during the Soviet period, and more specifically the history of the national intelligentsia, substantiates his assertion.

The present book is an attempt to interpret the meaning of our lives; to give voice to the female intelligentsia of the Central Asian states, to reveal their views about themselves, their problems, their needs and fears. It is not a portrait of modern women but a momentary snapshot, taken at a time which has brought forth numerous challenges for women.

The changes that society had thirsted for have not taken place and the sense of deep depression and disillusionment that has seized all thinking people is now leading many of them to seek out the causes of what is taking place in their society.

The idea of this book was born out of discussions with our colleagues. But its actual writing faced the very same problematic conditions which confront thousands of our country-people. Only able to invest part of our working hours on the book, we used whatever spare time we had to conduct an independent sociological survey among women who wanted to share their thoughts, hopes and problems, and were ready to respond to the questions we asked them.

One of us prepared a questionnaire on various aspects of women's lives women in Central Asia. Our initial attempt to collect written responses was subsequently dropped because this only elicited general and rather formal answers to our questions. It was then decided to conduct the survey in the form of personal interviews, facilitating the individual to emerge more clearly from the discussion.

An additional problem was the identification of our survey group. While it was initially hoped that women from a variety of social strata would be interviewed, it subsequently became apparent that women in the senior and lower ranks of the administration, health-care and education either did not agree to answer, taking the plea that they were too busy, or simply gave formal answers in which they avoided being honest or giving their personal opinion. Likewise, women from working class and peasant backgrounds rarely agreed to answer the full questionnaire, with the excuse that they did not have enough knowledge or experience allowing them to make any specific comments, or again excusing themselves on the grounds of overwork; the majority sought to avoid a discussion. Thus a more limited circle of respondents was determined: educated women, the majority of whom had nothing to lose from participating in the survey. Thus, it was subsequently felt necessary to include a brief introductory chapter on the history of the intelligentsia in Central Asia.

Almost all of the respondents have had university education, with one-third having studied at the former Soviet Union's top educational institutions and research institutes. The majority had had the kind of life experience that allowed them, in addition to their personal observations, to make generalisations applicable to the whole of society. Roughly half were over 35 years of age.

In all, 67 persons were interviewed in Uzbekistan, 59 in Kazakhstan, 49 in
Kyrgyzstan, and 24 in Turkmenia. Unrest in Tadikistan prevented us from travelling to the area, but we were nevertheless able to survey 18 people from Tadikistan in the four Central Asian Republics where the survey was conducted.

The majority of materials on Uzbekistan, Turkmenia, Kazakhstan and Tadikistan were collected by Marfua Tokhtakhodjaeva, while materials for Kyrgyzstan were collected by Elmira Turgumbekova; Chapters 1 to 4 and 6 to 8 were written by Marfua Tokhtakhodjaeva, with Chapter 5 being written by Elmira Turgumbekova respectively.

In order to place each woman's response in its particular context, we asked each of the respondents to give a brief introduction about herself, wherever possible including details regarding her age, nationality, education, profession, family circumstances, name and surname. Respondents were encouraged to discuss their thoughts and fears, and to give reasons for their observations. Despite the fact that this has necessitated some level of repetition, we have included each respondent's personal introduction before each set of her responses in order to facilitate the use of the book as a sociological reference tool.

When it came to compiling the material, after much soul-searching we came to the conclusion that it would be impossible to include the answers of every single respondent, especially since the answers were often repetitious, reflecting broadly similar viewpoints with only slight variations in the emphasis. Hence it was decided to include the responses of only those who, in our view, were interesting individuals or those who reflect a typical viewpoint, also occasionally including the answers of other respondents on specific points in the questionnaire. Whether or not their responses are featured in the present book, we are deeply grateful to all who answered the questionnaires.

Our final group of respondents was encouragingly open to interaction, relating episodes from their lives and exchanging opinions. Many of them seemed to shared our attitude towards our professional life, our place in society, our future and our past. They helped us to find those who wanted to discuss things with us and thus the process of conducting the survey led to the immensely heartening discovery of the huge intellectual potential of our young countries. And we became convinced of the spiritual commonality of our peoples, which not only determined the common flow of our cultural history, but also continues to shape our contemporary concerns.
Chapter 1

The Female Intelligentsia
Of Central Asia:
Old and New Problems
Chapter 1

The Female Intelligentsia Of Central Asia: Old And New Problems

The fate of the national intelligentsia of Central Asia is both tragic and contradictory. Yielding to the general ideological overhaul, there are many today who are of the view that the national intelligentsia - understood to mean those who were concerned with enlightenment, culture and science - appeared as early as the end of the 19th century with the introduction of capitalist relations during the colonial period.

Formerly one of the centres of Muslim culture, by the 19th century Central Asia had already lost its significance as a trade route between the East and West, although it was nevertheless not wholly isolated from the world and its cultural traditions continued. Even though intellectual activity was restricted to the drawing rooms of the urban elite and the middle classes, the letters of high colonial officials at the end of the 19th century(1) provide evidence that general education standards were not as low as portrayed by Soviet historians. However, colonial dependence retarded the evolutionary path of history. Thus the initiative for reform and change in social structures began to come not from within the local milieu (even though the seeds of reform had already germinated within local society) but from without as part of a deliberate policy of strengthening the region's dependence on the colonial metropolis. Consequently, the shattering of the old society came to mean different things to Muslims belonging to different social strata.

At the turn of the century, the national intelligentsia began supplementing its religious education with self-education or studies in institutions in Russia, in Turkey and - very occasionally - in Europe. This generation of the national intelligentsia saw as its basic task the enlightenment of its people and the consequent attainment of modern civilisation and its values. The concept of a freedom movement appeared, expressing itself above all through the call for the preservation and development of cultural traditions. The new national intelligentsia found itself sandwiched between the old aristocracy and clergy, which supported the feudal status quo, and the new colonial powers, which along with the colonisation of the region, introduced elements of new capitalist social relationships as well as modern western ideas and knowledge. But Russia, fearful of its political opponents, attempted to isolate its new colonies from the world. And thus Central Asia, which was to become the backward colony of backward Russia, retained its old feudal attitudes within a Muslim society, courtesy of the colonialist goal of exploitation.

The 1917 Revolution awakened the young national intelligentsia's faith in the idea of national independence, in the revitalisation of its homeland and in
attaining, through socialism, that modernity which had been obstructed by colonial dependence. Soviet rule, which declared the 'right of nationalities to self-determination' attracted the most educated and active amongst the Muslims, using them as the facade to screen the renewed subjugation of the region. It betrayed their faith and the hope of creating a free homeland. Instead it transformed Central Asia into a colonial source of raw materials for the totalitarian and militaristic empire, the chauvinist goals of which became more and more evident once it had consolidated its political position.

The national intelligentsia, attempting to retain some form of autonomous cultural development for the region, was eliminated. Its goal - to serve the people and lead them along their own path into a modern world - conflicted with the policies of the Soviet empire, which suppressed all attempts at autonomy, be it of a nation or an individual. The national intelligentsia was faced with the choice of either supervising the policies of colonisation and cultural expansion or of perishing. Conformism, rejecting the call of one's conscience, was not acceptable to all, but no third option was available. Thus thousands from the national intelligentsia were either killed or, at the very least, deprived of their profession and the possibility of working in the field of intellectual activity.

It was in this period that the first handful of educated women appeared. They became the first fruits of the notion, propagated by enlightened Muslims, of including women in public life. The female national intelligentsia, as a social process, emerged out of the fires of the Khudjum,(2) but it was to become one of socialism's ideological symbols, used to demonstrate to the world that only socialism was capable of solving one of the new political challenges of the 20th century: the women's question.

Although the concept of Muslim women's emergence out of seclusion and their participation in public life had been propagated by the national intelligentsia as early as the beginning of the century, ironically it was put into practice only later when a 'cultural revolution' was directed against the national culture and its bearers. Behind the declared goal of 'freedom for the women of the East' lay the Soviet state's need for the hard-working hands of Muslim women on the Central Asian cotton plantations, farms and factories. The attractive facade given to this policy was the placement of educated women in the organs and institutions of power and at top posts in the culture and education sectors. There were few who recognised the evident contradictions between the policy and its facade, not least because the idea of women's equality was highly attractive to the national intelligentsia which could not conceive of national independence without including the independence of the nation's deprived and downtrodden female half.

The appearance of the first women among the intelligentsia in the 1930s, was, from the dialectical view of history, a strange phenomenon for the times. Women began to be educated in a society which was unprepared to accept women's education, appreciate its value and allow its full and independent development. This lack of preparedness was partly because in the past, those who had laid the grounds for this phenomenon had been discredited and eliminated by massive repression. For the remaining segments of society,
freedom for women was a strange idea. There was no spiritual continuity between the pre-revolution national intelligentsia and the newly educated young women entering the intelligentsia. Consequently, their respective courses in the new era were to be completely different.

The first generation of the female national intelligentsia was completely dependent upon the state as it did not have the support of society. Indeed, the new woman frequently received little understanding from within her own family. In the face of repression against religion and the national intelligentsia, and deprived of its own script, cultural values and private property, traditional society remained resistant towards anything new because the new, at that time, was associated not with achievement but with the reality of loss. Hence, women's education and equality, which were propounded as part and parcel of the new order that opposed traditional principles and attitudes, did not easily take root.

The history of women in the early Soviet intelligentsia consisted of a confluence of circumstances which forced upon them profound moral experiences, not only caused by external circumstances but also by factors emanating from within their own society. Certain circumstances were common to the national intelligentsia as a whole, others were specific to its female members. In the former category were all the aspects of the 'cultural revolution' which was to shape the new Soviet intelligentsia, which was in turn supposed to be obedient to all state directives. Specifically, it was expected to ideologically reorientate its people, instilling in the people's consciousness the notion that the interests of the totalitarian state were the interests of all.

The state's other objective was the suppression of all manifestations of national consciousness that were linked with the Muslim past. The state sought to teach the national intelligentsia to think as Russians, to look at its own past through the eyes of the metropolis, to lend its support to the all-encompassing repression by the regime, and to be a partner in its cultural and economic expansionism. This, of course, included the suppression of any visible manifestation of ideological opposition.

Towards this end, the history of Central Asia was rewritten and the intelligentsia was instilled with a sharply critical attitude towards its own people and culture. In the process, Soviet education came to emphasise the region's historical backwardness and criticise those individuals who had had an impact on the history of the region's people, while at the same time promoting the exclusively positive impact of Russian campaigns and the empire's role in civilising the region. Thus, the spiritual heritage of the past was permanently cut out of the new literature. The state's proposed version of history was accepted by the sovietised national intelligentsia, which influenced and, to this day, continues to influence analysis of historical as well as contemporary events.

The new Soviet national intelligentsia, pushed by the state into the ideological sphere, took up its place in the superstructure in each of the Union Republics of the Soviet Union, creating the superficial appearance of autonomy in the matter of state education. The humanities, which had nurtured local languages and played a representative role, effectively emasculated themselves by breaking away from the past. In the form and
quality of their thinking, those working in the sphere of the humanities were
to become perpetual students of the Russian school. Towards this end, they
tore themselves away from that part of the intelligentsia which was
introducing technological progress and was already speaking another
language, and whose analysis focused on the integration of the huge empire's
economy. Hence, the uppermost layer of the intelligentsia found itself in the
field of administration or created an elite 'culture', nationalist in form and
socialist in content. In a primitive way it propagated 'internationalism', but in
reality it simply reaffirmed the dependence of the region on 'big brother' and
fear before the 'father of the people'. The larger and lower portion of the
national intelligentsia worked among the socially subordinate people of their
nation in the field of school education, which followed the ideological
programme of instilling a sense of obedience to the system. Thus the quality
of education, torn away as it already was from the people's spiritual heritage,
now accorded it a secondary role in the productive and cultural spheres - a
situation that persists right up to present times.

This social role was particularly painful for those who were talented and
mature. Their inclination towards the spiritual values of the past and their
attempts to talk about them often met with repression or disgrace, while the
study of the nation's documentary heritage and past spiritual culture
remained a 'pure science' almost up to the 1960s.

There were two major barriers obstructing the entry of youth into the sphere
of technology: the medium of instruction in the education system, and the
poor quality of basic education. In terms of lifestyles and thinking, there was
a gradual parting of ways between those purposeful and capable people who
had received technical education and were working in industrial production,
and those of the national intelligentsia who worked in the sphere of the
humanities. The former usually worked among people of other nationalities,
and became increasingly russified in order to successfully compete in
technical fields. Those of the intelligentsia working in scientific fields
underwent a similar transformation. All information was in Russian and as
the language of science, the Russian language displaced local languages as
the mother tongue. Young people, attracted by the idea of the social re-
education of their backward region, truly believed that their occupying key
posts in the administration was necessary for progress. But once in such
positions, they felt their peoples' powerlessness even more keenly. They were
squeezed into shape by the powerful forces of the system, gradually losing
their enthusiasm, and many losing their self-respect by adapting to the rules
of the game within the ruling structures.

YOUNG women entering the fields of science and administration suffered a
similar fate. Even though the state gave them a supposedly 'special life'
which guaranteed a certain level of comfort in their lifestyles, these women
were not unaware of the artificiality of their situation, with the majority of
them experiencing problems in their private lives. Living in the proverbial
golden cage, and dependent upon the state for their social position and the
success of their careers, in their public lives they were forced to tell numerous
lies to maintain the facade. The state bolstered the authority of the first
educated women by awarding them medals and honourary titles, nominating
them to high posts and having them 'elected' to its pseudo-elected bodies. But in many instances, the abilities and talent of these women was actually obscured by the education system and their careers, with only a few of them ever receiving true recognition for their work. Specifically, those women who also recognised themselves as individuals suffered as a consequence. Nevertheless, those women who entered the public domain and took up senior posts did elevate the value society accorded to the education of girls and became examples for later generations of women who sought to pursue higher education.

The heroines of the 1930s and 1940s were actresses and learned women from the ideological fields - historians, jurists, writers and critics. They were the prominent ones. At the same time, the state created a large number of job opportunities for educated women in the social field because men had largely been absorbed in the sphere of production - where there was a huge demand for working hands - or in the inflated bureaucracy, armed forces and state intelligence agencies. While in the West, educated professional women have had to compete alongside men in the labour market, for women in the Soviet Union the division of labour on the basis of gender meant that competition between men and women effectively did not exist until the 1960s.

In Central Asia, too, such competition was absent. Even though there were fewer men from local nationalities employed in the armed forces and state organs of repression, and job opportunities for men in production were also very low in comparison with other areas of the Soviet Union, the fact remained that there were fewer educated women of local nationalities in Central Asia than in Russia. All poorly paid professional posts in the fields of education, health and culture were set aside for educated women. Thus all branches of the social sector became the almost exclusive domain of women workers. This is not indicative of the state’s concern for women, but merely reflects the fact that the state regarded these fields as secondary and therefore appropriate for women.

During the Stalinist totalitarianism of the 1930s-50s, the structure of society in Central Asia was primitive, consisting of a small strata of the ruling elite, a minute national intelligentsia and the socially subordinate majority. Due to repeated repression, until the end of the 1950s the national intelligentsia was not a stable and socially identifiable group. The number of women of local nationalities working in the intellectual sphere was negligible although there were isolated examples of women who became leading historians, jurists, linguists, as well as women who rose to academic heights and senior posts in academic institutions in the fields of medicine and pure sciences.

Between the 1960s and 1980s a division took place within the intelligentsia due to two factors: social background and the medium of instruction. The children of the ruling elite and the majority of children of parents from the capital and industrial cities were educated at Russian schools and at prestigious Soviet institutions, and became that part of the intelligentsia which worked in industry, science and the administration. Those children who came from traditional society in the villages and cities, and who were educated in the local language, largely entered the fields of mass education, medicine, the social sector and mass media. Even though the intelligentsia from the various fields had much in common - specifically when it came to
conforming to policy directives - the gulf between them widened as a result of differences in the quality of education which led to a difference in the type and quality of their thought. Yet the national intelligentsia of both strata - the russified and the vernacular intelligentsia - were caught between two cultures. And here the basic problem was that against the background of a general social decline due to the ideological crisis, the level of both cultures declined. Within both sections of the intelligentsia the sense of national self-consciousness eroded, or alternatively, became grossly distorted.

The intelligentsia lost its idealism and spirituality with the resulting vacuum gradually being filled by a hunger for material wealth and power. A logical consequence was that the intelligentsia came to camouflage this hunger under the cloak of religious or national traditions.

Between the 1960s and 1980s, the female intelligentsia grew quantitatively, and stabilised as a social group. Even though part of it continued to play a largely illusory role rather than having any actual power to influence the economic processes in their own republics, the standard of education and professionalism within the other part rose significantly. Many of those in this latter group began competing with Russian specialists in the fields of science and higher education. A condition of success was either an educational background in schools and institutes where the medium of instruction was Russian, or the patronage of those in powerful positions who were either relatives or from the same community. As a consequence, many talented women with top quality professional backgrounds were superceded by the children of important people or by those from the numerically superior Russian intelligentsia, which, being dissatisfied with the largely clan-based 'national' policies in the scientific field, had begun to feel threatened. Women who were the offspring of important parents were academically successful and strengthened the position of their clans in the research and academic institutes. Provincial women, meanwhile, enthusiastically filled the Party organs, and continued the Soviet tradition of symbolizing the success of the 'emancipated women of the East' by occupying top positions in the fields of history and law. Women who did not have such patronage, were relegated to lesser academic posts and uninteresting jobs. Even women fortunate enough to have received post-graduate degrees from central Soviet academic institutes, found themselves in situations where their professional growth was artificially obstructed. This was especially true in the academic domain where specific areas of knowledge became monopolised by true or supposed male academicians who exploited these women's knowledge and talent. Not surprisingly, under circumstances in which a majority of women were expected to either constantly gratify (at best) the ideas of others or (at worst) someone's base desires, talented women found themselves in especially difficult circumstances. These women, who were often at the forefront of scientific discovery, frequently found their achievements attributed to their male superiors.

The corruption of society affected all spheres of intellectual life, impeding the establishment of a truly academic intelligentsia. The spirit of authoritarianism and the adherence to concepts of hierarchy and clan loyalty obstructed the development of original ideas and independent individuals, giving rise to a culture of conformism, flattery and sycophancy instead. This loss of consciousness and self-respect became the hallmark of the young
intelligentsia, and the moral and material suppression of people's intellectual work led to a lowering of intellectual standards. With stagnation gradually stifling science, education and production, the continuing corruption arrested the development of research and education, and negated the prestige of genuine scientific research. Conditions within the academic and educational institutes mirrored a profound spiritual crisis in society, whose development had been arrested by corruption. Ultimately the situation led to the emergence of obscurantism and dogmatism. Such a situation, not surprisingly, pushed educated women into the most subordinate roles.

The situation of the intelligentsia, and particularly of its female members, working in the field of the humanities was pitiable. While the tiny minority working in the upper echelons of the administration, higher education and science were apparently successful, then the middle section, employed in the field of mass media, and the lower section working in the entertainment and culture sectors were deprived of the stimulus and conditions necessary for their development because of the anti-culture attitude of the rulers. Intellectual standards gradually declined throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Materially impoverished, their life was restricted to the struggle for survival and they were unable to achieve any development in their level of consciousness. The insignificantly minute portion of the educated who studied the spiritual heritage of their people became recluses. Their moral feats remained unknown and their work was dismissed as 'research for research's sake'.

Nevertheless, the healthier middle layer of the intelligentsia working in the field of the humanities had preserved enough of a sense of its own and the nation's worth to emerge as the bulwark of society's heritage. It stood for the preservation of what remained of its spiritual heritage, and even though it sagged under the weight of ancient traditions, it nonetheless continued to draw its strength from them. In terms of lifestyle and outlook, this part of the intelligentsia gradually moved closer towards the traditional society which by this time had come to be led by the nouveau riche that was emerging out of the shadow economy. Within traditional society, the aspiration towards conspicuous consumption of scarce commodities began to displace the desire for spiritual values and - first and foremost - the desire for good education. In its place grew conservatism and the observation of external religiosity, leading to a further and sharper decline in the intelligentsia's influence.

The uppermost russified part of the national intelligentsia used its superior education to preserve its position in the power structure, to expand its circle of influence, and to attain top academic positions and titles that guaranteed access to privileges and good salaries. Its members truly regarded themselves as part of the elite, and demonstrated their loyalty to the existing regime. If there was dissatisfaction amongst them, this related to the infringement of their clan interests and not to the infringement of their people's interests. In this situation women often adopted the outer characteristics of the modern way of life; they found traditionalism irksome. But protest against traditionalism was only manifested at the level of the family.

The technical and scientific section of the national intelligentsia appeared similarly russified, at least as far as its professional activities were concerned. While this group grew in number, even as late as the 1980s it was unable to
occupy a leading position in the fields of production, science and technology. There were various reasons for this: the numerical superiority of the Russian intelligentsia in the technical and production spheres, in science and economics; the practice of allocating the most advanced productive resources for the Union rather than for the Republics and corresponding cadre policies; and, the insignificant number of workers of local nationalities needed to support the national technical intelligentsia.

In some instances, there was the matter of individual choice, facilitating the 'brain drain' from the Central Asian Republics. Well-educated youngsters who were capable of working independently refused to accept the rules of the game that involved patronage, clan loyalty and traditionalism. Often in their family lives they adopted the characteristics of the modern way of life, especially if their marriage was transnational. They tried to construct their lives outside the parameters of their family and relatives. The national concept evoked in them an aversion because for them it was associated with traditionalism and primitive religiousness. The majority of the female part of the technical and scientific intelligentsia played an ancillary role and experienced particular pressure from those supervisors who were men of their own nationality.

WITH the advent of the 1960s, the state announced the 'complete and final resolution of the women's question'. As proof of progress, it presented statistics regarding the number of women possessing post-graduate degrees and of women's participation in such traditionally prestigious fields as science (such as it was in the USSR). While the absolute figures are undoubtedly inspiring, as closer examination raises a number of troubling questions.

Most importantly, official data were not disaggregated according to nationality. If one were to conduct a quantitative comparison of the standard of the female intelligentsia in Central Asia with the other former Soviet Republics, the kind of optimism that pervaded official Soviet accounts rapidly evaporates. Given that educational standards among women of local nationalities remained poor due to factors such as early marriage, repeated child bearing, traditionalism within the family and in the relationship between women and men, the representation of women of local nationalities in the intelligentsia was far smaller than the Soviet average, a fact which Soviet statistics attempted to obfuscate.

The table overleaf presents the percentage of women scientific workers out of the total female population of the Central Asian region in late 1987. It must be noted that the quoted figures present the total number of women in any given republic with no disaggregation within that republic on the basis of nationality.

Invariably the number of women of local nationalities working in scientific spheres comprised less than half the total number of women in the Central Asian republics' scientific cadres. If one takes this factor into account, from the statistics overleaf one can estimate that in 1987 the percentage of ethnic Uzbek, Tadjik and Turkmen women with a doctorate was roughly only a fifth of the percentage of women in the RSFSR (Russian Republic) with a
doctorate. In the case of ethnic Kazakh and Kyrgyz women, the situation was only slightly better.

Percentage of Women Scientific Workers out of Total Female Population of Various Republics, 1987

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the States</th>
<th>Number of Women &quot;000&quot;</th>
<th>Number of women</th>
<th>Number of women Having the highest Academic Degree</th>
<th>Number of Doctors and Child Specialists per 10,000 Children (0 - 14 years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage of total Women</td>
<td>Doctor of Science (D.Sc)</td>
<td>Candidate of Science (Ph.D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>149185</td>
<td>608</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>6214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSFSR (RUSSIA)</td>
<td>77648</td>
<td>417.3</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>4256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UKRAINE</td>
<td>27560</td>
<td>81.6</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BELARUSS</td>
<td>5358</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UZBEKISTAN</td>
<td>9639</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAZAKHSTAN</td>
<td>8372</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KYRGYZSTAN</td>
<td>2115</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAJIKISTAN</td>
<td>2427</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TURKMENISTAN</td>
<td>1703</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARMENIA</td>
<td>1741</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEORGIA</td>
<td>2774</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


An examination of the internal contradictions within the national intelligentsia, reveals a sense of isolation in the face of the power of the authorities on the one hand and the people's submissiveness on the other. At the beginning of the century and in the 1920s, the radically reconstructed intelligentsia rose on the wave of history to play its part as the vanguard of its people. But it was subsequently forcibly severed from society in order to completely suppress the spirit of resistance towards the new form of colonial domination. The next generation of the new Soviet intelligentsia had been deliberately raised on the concept of the suppression of national self-consciousness, so as to pre-empt the possible emergence of an intellectual vanguard from within the dependent nation. These circumstances led to the creation of a psychological barrier between those engaged in intellectual activities and the socially subordinated people, a barrier which gradually grew because the educated sections of the dependent nations until the very end failed to understand the difference between the intellectual and moral responsibilities of being a true member of the intelligentsia and simply being an educated clerk whose primary goal was not serving the people but unconditional loyalty to the regime.

A 'cultural revolution' took place, supposedly opening the door to culture, but what kind of culture were the people being offered? In place of their own spiritual values, people were instead offered an awkward mixture of Russian
culture, which was itself mutilated to serve the lie of the Greater Russian
state, and strictly monitored doses of western culture selected from the point
of view of a vulgarised Marxism. Tragically, the culture, moral qualities, high
standards of professionalism and independence of thought which
characterised the pre-revolution Russian intelligentsia were eradicated, and
replaced by people whose sole aim was to attain high office. 'Ideological
consistency' which in the Soviet context signified conformity and
unscrupulousness, became intrinsic to all Soviet intellectual pursuits. The
educated faced a dilemma: either rise to the heights assimilating the moral
norms dictated by ideology, or live one's life as a poorly paid worker and
executor of all manner of directives, ranging from the development of new
equipment to historical research convenient to the system. 'True science'
there was almost none. And this holds true for the whole of the Soviet
intelligentsia, irrespective of nationality.

The education system was Russian-centred, with formal education in Central
Asia being imposed from the outside and failing to evolve from within
existing systems of indigenous knowledge. The new education, especially in
the 1930s, lent itself to servicing the totalitarian empire. The new national
intelligentsia had two different cultures as reference points for its
consciousness, feeling itself undervalued in both. Subsequently, as the role of
the Russian language grew in society, the new national intelligentsia felt itself
increasingly alienated from its own people. But because of its lack of
confidence, the national intelligentsia it was unable to overcome this
alienation, and many intellectuals attempted instead to compensate for their
inferiority complex through rising to top administrative posts.

That section of the intelligentsia which had been educated in Russian schools
was essentially more a part of Russian culture than of the national culture. As
for the other section of the national intelligentsia, even though it considered
itself part of the national culture, this was only in terms of language. Pained
by the situation of the national culture, both sections of the intelligentsia
began to display characteristics of national nihilism, idealising everything
positive and negative about the history of their peoples and retreating into
conservatism. Soviet culture was either judged to have been inferior or was
rejected outright.

THE lives of educated women were replete with contradictions. At work and
in their professions, these women learned the norms of modern life, but in
their families they met with tradition and its norms. Since public protest
against russification was impossible, families resisted by preserving the old
ways, by retaining patriarchy's most negative practices - including those that
placed enormous burdens on women. The split personality that was a general
characteristic of totalitarian society, in the case of educated women reflected
the dichotomy they faced between society and home.

The traditional way of life with its vestiges of medievalism had only
grudgingly accepted women's yearning for values which departed from
traditional gender stereotypes. Social attitudes compelled women to submit
to established norms or face complete isolation. Instability, loneliness,
divorce and drama characterised the personal lives of women of the
intelligentsia. As a result, the worth of higher education for women began to decline rapidly in the eyes of traditional society. Parents discouraged their daughters from entering professions that demanded constant self-education and a high level of professional qualification; their aim was to protect their daughters from a future ridden with professional pressures, and also to prevent them from rebelling against family life which, irrespective of social background, consisted of numerous traditional duties and responsibilities for women. Parental influence in choosing professions for their daughters is reflected in the latter's preference for professions in the sphere of the humanities, which being dominated by ideology, limited women's personal development. Professional success for many women was thus not due so much to their analytical powers and true research capabilities as to their traditional capacity for submissiveness and consequent ability to meekly carry out state directives.

Open discrimination against women's identity within the family was, simply continued in the form of hidden discrimination in public society. Conflicts between what was desired, what was possible and what actually existed filled the lives of women with grief and dissatisfaction. Small Not surprisingly, traditional society was inclined to regard sound education for women as being more of a curse than a blessing.

SOVIET President Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of perestroika and glasnost brought about a visible stratification within the national intelligentsia. Within the middle layers of the national intelligentsia working in the fields of the humanities, there was a strong awakening of national consciousness, which began to see a causal connection between their backwardness and the rejection of spiritual values, the lack of a spiritual continuity with the past, and dependence on Russia. Its most radical section declared its affiliation with Muslim culture and a revival of religion. Its radicalism fed not so much on cultural impulses, ideological reconstruction and profound moral challenges, but more on the sense of its socially subordinate status, the sense of social and cultural inferiority, on resentment and protest. It was precisely this part of the intelligentsia which opted to unite with the Islamists and in retrospect was a cause of the tragic events in Tadjikistan in 1993. Similar tendencies are now also visible in other Central Asian Republics.

Unfortunately, during the years of perestroika the period of glasnost was very short in Central Asia. The consolidation of the national intelligentsia did not take place in the region, and therefore this period did not produce substantial intellectual work on redefining the concept of independence. As a result, the ruling elite seized the initiative and succeeded in retaining its hold, also displaying a remarkable ability to adapt. By discarding the old ideological principles and (in its own interests) upholding the idea of independence, the elite managed to mobilise the people's support.

Against this background, the more educated russified scientific and technical intelligentsia did not seek a place for itself in the nation's political life. Instead, it unsuccessfully attempted to voice its interests and position with regard to the concept of national revival. It was wounded by accusations that it was russified and was unable to express its position in the national
language. It was not able to take a stand against the Islamisation of society's consciousness, nor was it able to distance itself from the positive changes society had undergone during the years of Soviet rule, changes that it had been more conscious of than anyone else. This section's support for central leadership in its battle against corruption in the republics in the closing years of the 1980s, isolated it from both the supporters of independence (including the local ruling elite) and the nationalist-oriented opposition. Its political passiveness was suicidal and it found itself focusing increasingly on the issue of employment because the economic crisis led to calls for cutbacks in the number of job opportunities in the sphere of intellectual activity.

In the years of perestroika, only the middle layers of the female intelligentsia became active in the struggle to establish the status of the mother tongue. Whereas in the Baltic states the creative intelligentsia declared itself to be a strong independent political force with broad popular support, the Central Asian intelligentsia was unable to mobilise such support. One factor was its attraction to the notion of Islamisation, with the unattractive characteristics of the leaders of the opposition being blown out of all proportion by their political opponents.

Women in the intelligentsia were unable to formulate their own position, indicating not so much their own limited maturity, but more their lack of self-confidence and general social passivity. This is why there was no vocal opposition to the anti-women stand taken by certain politicians and journalists who proposed a revision in the concept of women's equality. The protection of women's interests - as a distinct social group - was not on the agenda of a single one of the political forces emerging after 1986.

In the preceding pages I have presented a general overview of society and the position of the female intelligentsia as they stood just before the independence of the Central Asian Republics. It goes without saying that each republic of the former Soviet Union had its own peculiarities, but one can broadly generalise that the women of the Central Asian national intelligentsias were caught between the forces of modernity and tradition. If they happened to live in a republic that was more homogeneous in terms of nationality, such as Uzbekistan and Tadjikistan, then their lives were dominated by traditionalism with all its consequent impact on the status of educated women. In republics such as Kazakhstan, where the indigenous Central Asian nationalities were in the minority, the modern way of life engendered a greater sense of ease in educated women both in the family and in society at large.

Given that in the Soviet period the intelligentsia was denied the backing of autonomous professional institutions such as an independent press, free trade unions and creative associations, it could not, nor was it prepared to, play an influential social and political role capable of bringing society abreast with the modern era. In a totalitarian society, in which the possession of power was given far greater weight than the acquisition of knowledge and the mastering of a profession, the role of the intelligentsia was belittled in the eyes of the people as well as in its own eyes. As a result, the significance of those moral values which were essential for the accomplishment of the intelligentsia's mission of enlightenment was gradually lost upon its members. This led to the isolation of the intelligentsia and a moral
disintegration among the people. Such was the price of conformism. Intellectual potential became redundant, no longer being used for the good of society nor even for an individual’s own interests. These glaring contradictions in society and the prevailing political suppression led all those who regarded their own fate as linked with the fate of their peoples down a dark and lonely cul-de-sac.

The majority of the women who were engaged in intellectual work faced one of three choices: remaining in their profession, returning to the domestic realm under the protection of their husbands, or rejecting the ‘boon’ of their education in the pursuit of commercial ends. In the post-reform period, the contractual system of employment has led women to become completely dependent on their male superiors since research and work in higher educational institutions has remained limited to the state sector, and the creation of job opportunities in alternative sectors is still not on the cards. The emergence of private laboratories and workshops has prevented contracts involving intellectual work from being concentrated in the hands of state financed organisations. A female applicant’s chances of winning a contract are determined not only by her professional and educational qualifications but equally by her supervisor’s personal attitude towards her. Against the background of general social corruption, women often have only one thing to offer them. Such a situation has forced a segment of the Russian female intelligentsia into emigrating from the country, while the national intelligentsia has been compelled to improvise or look for other means of subsistence.

Women find it difficult to return to the domestic realm and come under their husband’s wing not only for psychological reasons, but also due to the instability and crushing poverty currently affecting their countries which has made their salaries are vital to the family’s survival. The commercialisation of society has been psychologically accepted by only a certain section of the national intelligentsia; the rest of the intelligentsia regards the necessity of such transactions as somehow degrading to their professional value. Therein lies the danger that professional habits will be lost.

The issue of a ‘brain drain’ of the national intelligentsia is now practically non-existent because this had already taken place during the earlier period of perestroika. Moreover, the brain drain only affected highly qualified specialists. The main force preventing the out-migration of the national intelligentsia is their insufficient command over foreign languages and ignorance of the pre-conditions for emigration. If the open-door policies in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan allow the support of foreign aid programmes to overcome the problem of preserving intellectual potential, in other Central Asian countries such financial opportunities are practically non-existent. Even where they do exist, decisions regarding the allocation of such funds once again fall into the hands of the academic and scientific bureaucracy.

The period of perestroika and the proclamation of independence was also a period of economic crisis and a sharp decline in production. The collapse of the Soviet Union disrupted the intricate economic, scientific, and cultural linkages between the former state’s constituent republics, while the proclamation of economic reforms and the withdrawal of price controls profoundly affected living standards in all the former union states. The
struggle for survival, the tragic events in neighbouring Tadjikistan(4) and the fear of instability led to a sharp reduction in the level of politicisation in society. The intelligentsia was the first in line to feel the impact of falling living standards courtesy of the cutbacks in budgetary allocations for science and higher education, the reduction in state orders for industry, and cutbacks in employment, especially in the field of intellectual activity. Over the past five years, there has been an increase in unemployment among the intelligentsia, especially among its female half, bringing them face to face with the question of their very survival. The result has been the drift of educated people initially into the field of production and subsequently into the service sectors. The first to suffer were the members of the technical intelligentsia engaged in the technological and departmental institutes operating at the Soviet level. Subsequently, the problem of unemployment even hit the prestigious Academy of Sciences network. All institutes began being reduced to almost half their original size, including strategically important institutions of higher education in the fields of medicine, agriculture and technology which sharply reduced enrollment, in turn leading to redundancies among teachers. Scientific workers were compelled to abandon their professional careers and go into trade or business. With fiscal policies almost universally failing to stimulate the economy, entrepreneurial activity focused on petty commerce and the middleman. Corruption in the state administration reached unimaginable levels and suffocated small businesses focusing on the production and exploitation of technology, science and patent research. The input of intellectual work in small businesses thus became insignificant.

The commercialisation of all spheres and of the general consciousness spontaneously led to an increase in the cult of money, mindless consumption and the subversion of the culture of honest work, especially in the intellectual field. Although independence and sovereignty led to an increase in national self-consciousness in the new states, these changes nevertheless failed to guarantee a corresponding increase in each individual's sense of worth, and of the possibility of realising their spiritual, moral and intellectual potential. Those who had worked in the fields of science, technology, culture and preventive health, became rapidly disillusioned, sensing their work now to be even more lacking in prospects and utility than it had ever been in the past.

The as yet unresolved problems facing the national intelligentsia in general and its female half in particular can be summarised as follows:

1. The national intelligentsia in Central Asia has failed to play a leading role and has not become a true intellectual force in the economic life of their republics.

Throughout the developing world, the intelligentsia has its 'pro-West' and 'traditionalist' trends. In Central Asia, on the other hand, these trends have not become part of the discourse regarding the future of the nations, but became part of individual consciousness. Therefore, when new norms of social conduct became standardised, the former became a symbol of belonging to officialdom and the latter became a symbol of those who supported a return to traditional society. Such a situation has only further deepened the backwardness of the lower classes and primitive traditionalism.
2. The national intelligentsia has lost its spiritual links with its own past. By either totally rejecting or idealising its past, it has helped promote backwardness amongst its peoples. Finding itself between two cultures, it is unable to find its own identity and independence of thought, and is thus unable to direct its strength to the cause of advancing its backward society. It has become a cause and consequence of its people's economic backwardness and cultural dependence. The result is its isolation and fragmentation. The intelligentsia's conformism has obstructed progress in its search to determine its future path.

The authorities sought to bring about the intelligentsia's moral atrophy by encouraging parochialism and clan-loyalty, and by creating artificial contradictions between peoples of different nationalities and provinces. Even within the most respected ranks of the intelligentsia, divisions have emerged between people of different clans.

3. The male half of the national intelligentsia has not abandoned the traditional attitude of regarding women, including female colleagues, as a second class sex, alienating the most educated and independent women. While always permitting hidden discrimination against its female colleagues, in recent years the male half of the national intelligentsia has openly called for a revision of the concept of women's equality.

4. In the absence of social and political institutions facilitating the development of society and individuals, the conservative nature of traditional society and the family have obstructed the quantitative and qualitative growth of the women's intelligentsia. With civic consciousness growing only slowly, mass propaganda has often produced opposite results. Hence, in spite of the policies of the Soviet rulers and their honest desire to emancipate women from the dictates of tradition, their success was not as sweeping as propaganda claimed. The historical imperative was immensely strong, and improvements in women's education standards and professional participation, and the development of women's identity only took place in a very restricted section of the population, according them little social impact and authority. The prestige value of holding power and money, that led to the cult of consumption, has undermined the conditions which could have swelled the ranks of the female intelligentsia.

The peculiar circumstances under which the female intelligentsia evolved, laid the grounds for the appearance of distorted stereotypes of educated women. This has obstructed even the most talented and professional eastern women's successful competition against women of other nationalities, particularly Russian women. Hence the vast majority of women in the national intelligentsia have been deprived of the real benefits of their education. The quality of their lives is lower and thus more closely subject to traditionalism and the suffocating world of general backwardness.

5. Traditional concepts regarding the role of women in the family have led to open discrimination against women despite the existence of laws setting forth women's rights within the family. In many instances, traditional family interrelationships have prevented them from working. Also linked with these factors is the internal conflict which afflicts educated women, and their rebellion against family structures in which their individual identity is denigrated and they are deprived of any moral and material support.
6. Today, one of the greatest challenges facing the intelligentsia in general and its female half in particular, is that of employment, bearing witness to the backwardness of the society that was created during the Soviet period. It is the reason behind the de-politicisation of the intelligentsia and is therefore one of the factors impeding the democratic process. The forces which are squeezing women out of active life are strengthening the trend of Islamisation.
Chapter 2

The Family:
A Source Of Both
Support And Stress
The Family: A Source Of Both Support And Suffering

Questions:

1. What does ‘family’ mean to you? What are the foundations of the family.

2. What do you understand by the crisis of the family? Does this crisis affect you personally? Please analyse any family crisis that you have come across.

3. Have you ever witnessed discrimination against women in the family? If so, in what form?

4. What is your attitude towards infidelity? What do you regard as its causes? What are the kind of sexual problems characteristically confronting families today? What are the causes of the phenomenon of broken homes? Does the phenomenon of ‘female loneliness’ (1) women exist in your circles? Is there a place for prostitution? Should these problems be openly discussed?

5. What is your attitude towards inter-ethnic marriages? Please explain your position.

6. Do you think that family relationships have changed in the post-Soviet period? What problems have emerged due to the changes society is undergoing?

Chapter 2

The Family: A Source Of Both Support And Suffering

The family is one of society’s most conservative institutions and any changes that take place within this institution are reflective of changes taking place at the broader level of the general social consciousness. And thus the family is one of the indicators of the level of societal development. Within various social strata and among the different peoples of the Central Asian region, family traditions have revealed themselves to be quite consistent: new notions regarding the role and structure of the family have emerged only very slowly.

The family is one of the factors contributing to a person’s development, influencing the concepts girls and boys hold about their future roles in society and in the family. We wanted to ask our respondents questions on topics that, to us, were important to the modern family and society. Their answers often raised issues to which there were no straightforward answers. Almost all those interviewed responded to the family section of the questionnaire, rendering very difficult the task of accurately selecting those answers that reflect the variety of viewpoints and interests. Respondents spoke with greater interest and honesty on the topic of the family than on other topics, with their answers revealing their analytical abilities, their life experiences and their intelligence.

Dildora Alimbekova

President of the Association of Business Women of Uzbekistan; an economist by qualification; owner of a business; divorced with two children; 35; Uzbek, living in Tashkent.

1. & 2. The family is the most valuable asset in the life of every person. Specifically, it provides a person’s spiritual foundations and stimulates their aspirations. Many of our endeavors, initiatives and decisions are undertaken for the sake of our dear ones, first and foremost for our children, and their material prosperity and psychological security. The family determines a person’s position in life, bringing out his abilities and character. It is here that the factors leading to future success and failure are located. This is why
mutual understanding and mutual support within the family are critical. Being part of a family is a daily labour of love. When this is not understood by members of the family, then a crisis is inevitable. I have also been affected by a family crisis - that of divorce. I accuse myself of not having enough wisdom at that time to understand what I later came to understand, by when the family had already split up. I have experienced in full measure the negative consequences of a family break-up.

4. Even though myself a woman, I have a different attitude towards men and women accused of infidelity. Men are naturally inclined towards having many women and their nature cannot be changed. Women on the other hand are the protectors of the hearth. Women's infidelity destroys the family from within, shattering its stability. When the wife is involved in a relationship a change takes place in the house which is a sign that she no longer values the family, and does not love her husband and children.

Infidelity on the part of the husband is a manifestation of his lack of love towards the family and his wife, but is often simply a desire for something new.

If the problem is that the husband has another love then, in my opinion, polygyny is not as bad as it's supposed to be. The husband retains all of his responsibilities in respect to his first wife and children and, in addition, takes on the new responsibilities deriving from the other woman and any future children they may have. This is certainly better than extra-marital affairs, which degrade the other woman and place any children born to her in an unequal social and psychological position in relation to the children born in wedlock.

The factors behind men's infidelity are usually linked to the fact that the majority of marriages are arranged ones. Often, the moral justification for marital infidelity is said to be the absence of love in a forced marriage. A sense of responsibility towards the family is inculcated by one's upbringing and marital infidelity is the result of bad upbringing and the erosion of moral norms.

Broken homes are a dangerous social phenomenon. Today, perhaps the only means of eradicating this is polygyny which would bring an end to fatherlessness. I am in favour of polygyny because it puts the responsibilities on the man, with the wife retaining the right to demand from him material and moral support for herself and her children.

Loneliness is a tragedy for many women. I do not think there are any women for whom loneliness means happiness. The causes of a woman's loneliness lie not only in her character but also in the fact that our society is very closed, providing only a narrow circle within which the young and, especially, the not-so-young can meet. This is why the majority of marriages are arranged by the parents. Those who do not have parents, or who do not want to accept such a marriage, often find it difficult to build their personal lives. Earlier, spinsters were a rarity among Uzbeks. Now there is quite a large number of them. Thus, I think, that society is also responsible for the fact that there are many solitary people, including women. Society has a negative attitude towards the unmarried, regarding them as somehow damaged or not quite whole beings. Amongst their relatives they are constantly put down, and
being single often obstructs their upward mobility both in their work and in society.

I believe that sexual problems should certainly be discussed and not be kept out of the family as taboo dictates. Such discussion should be part of one's upbringing. Children should be prepared, and this side of life should be discussed with parents and near ones rather than being learnt about through the dirty words of strangers. I am particularly against the kind of pornography, which has started to creep into our lives through television.

My attitude towards prostitution is complex. I regard it as a social evil but whether I like it or not, it does exist. If it were to be legalised, it would be easier to control. Unfortunately, surveys confirm the assumption that illegal prostitution - which has always existed and will continue to exist - is a powerful criminal phenomenon. The absence of legalised prostitution also increases the number of sexual offences. People do not have accurate information about this, which is why this whole issue needs to be openly discussed, discouraging prostitution as a means of pursuing easy money and a 'beautiful' way of passing the time.

4. I am against inter-ethnic marriages, because the children suffer. The situation is generally complicated by the question of cultural identity. Such families rarely achieve a cultural synthesis, especially when the husband and wife belong to contrasting cultures. The children of such marriages feel their duality. Often the outer symbols come into conflict with that what they themselves feel. This is thus either manifested as aggressiveness or, alternatively, as an inferiority complex. It is difficult for them to build their family on the defined cultural foundations.

5. I think our children's future is hazy but that their life will be radically different from our own because of the processes already underway in our society. I am not sure if their life will be better than ours - probably quite the opposite. To achieve success in life, they will have to possess entirely different qualities than those essential for us. This is why we may turn out to be bad advisors and set a bad example for our children. They already regard our experience as negative. This is a very difficult question. I ask myself this constantly. Things will be very difficult for those children whose parents are financially unsound.

Zamira Valieva

25, Uzbek, engineer, doing PhD research at the Institute of Civil Engineering, divorced and living in Tashkent

1. The family is one of the most important assets in my life. The family is a person's life-blood, proving the warmth of nearness, and a feeling of being needed. The family is especially important for men because it gives them faith in life. For women it provides a sense of security. This presupposes, of course, that the family is built on mutual understanding between husband and wife. Earlier I thought that most important thing was love. Love is the most powerful feeling, which can unite different people. Now I know that
even though love is essential for building a family, it is not enough. In Uzbek society the possibility of spouses mutually choosing each other is very limited as there are limited opportunities for making acquaintances outside one's circle. This is why in the majority of cases the family is founded on the parents' choice. The problem is not that parents chose a spouse for their offspring but in the fact that the choice depends to a large extent on what they think those around them will think of the choice. These days, placing a premium on what others - relatives, friends or neighbours - say, means that the personal relationship with the person being chosen is relegated to second place. These are signs of our culture, where society's opinion is given greater weight than personal opinion. Our dependence on the impression created by our actions often leads to mistakes among not only the youth, but also the not-so-young. Respect for one's own worth and for that of others is annihilated. Others' opinions are even allowed to influence the unity of the family, but their intervention cannot make it happy. By being so concerned about how others think, we also often waste precious time on the observance of custom and rituals instead of focusing on what interests us and benefits our near ones. Excessive preoccupation with the need to conform to the opinion of those around us often leads to conflicts between husband and wife, destroying the love between spouses. In my case, for example, it would have been easier for me to understand the pressure my ex-husband placed on me if it had been for the sake of his own wishes rather than for the sake of the attitudes generally held in his circle regarding the place of the wife and her responsibilities. This I could not tolerate. Such external pressure from one's surroundings was largely the reason behind the break up of our marriage. This is why I consider it very important to choose a spouse from one's own class. In any case, women are better prepared for complying with society's generally accepted norms. Generally, the lower the class, the stronger the conservatism in adhering to antiquated forms of social conduct within the mohallas. Among the lower strata there is less respect for the autonomous individuality of a person, especially a woman. Giving a daughter in marriage, marrying off a son, is considered the parents' responsibility. Remaining single is condemned and if their children remain unmarried parents consider themselves as not having fulfilled their responsibilities.

2. I have already partially explained the crisis in my family. I want to add, that in Uzbek society my generation have strong respect for the superficial aspects of prosperity: wealth, being a member of the ruling structures and conspicuous consumption. Often society accords authority not to those who are truly noble, generous or knowledgeable, but to those who, although spiritually worthless, are in senior positions and have power. This leads to the corrosion of moral values, and society deteriorates, by emulating not its best members but only the prosperous. All interests are directed towards material satisfaction, leading to the growth of vile materialism in human relations, including within the family.

3. In my parents' family there was no discrimination. Discrimination is when a woman's individuality is suppressed. This could have happened to me also. In my own circle there are family conflicts, but they can usually be overcome. But discrimination in the form of the oppression of on one's identity cannot be overcome.

4. I am absolutely against marital infidelity. It would have been difficult for
me to forgive my husband and I even regard it as inconceivable that I should be unfaithful. I presume that in some cases infidelity can be accidental, due to jealousy or as a sign of conflict within the family, in which case there are circumstances somewhat mitigating the blame. But having lengthy affairs or several liaisons is evidence of a bad upbringing or a depraved nature and the preponderance of our animal origins. Families in which there is such infidelity are unhappy ones. The mark of shame is borne even by members of the family who are not directly involved. In Uzbek society, infidelity is quite frequent. Any family built not on love and mutual understanding but on the desire for an appropriate match and on material interests, is doomed to infidelity. Marital infidelity, whether by the husband or the wife, for superficial gain is more morally condemnable than divorce. In both cases the children suffer. Male infidelity is more frequent because there is greater social leniency towards men.

If sexual problems do exist within the family - and I presume they are not that rare even though they may be hidden because of the secrecy pervading our society - the cause is often that the family was founded on coercion. If, despite the problems, mutual understanding grows between spouses, then the way to avoid this problem is to discuss what does not satisfy each other. I am against the public discussion of these problems, as is now taking place, when all stores are full of erotic and pornographic literature (which are often one and the same thing).

Broken homes mean trouble for society. However, society is heavily responsible for such trends due to poverty, hypocrisy and its lack of openness. Single-parent families are considered inferior, explaining why children from broken homes have trouble adapting to society. They have inferiority complexes, adversely affecting their development. Girls from single-parent families have trouble getting married and when they do get married, as a rule they repeat the tragedy in the new generation. Often it is not only the woman who is responsible for the creation of such families. Men's attitudes lead to divorce or to children born out of wedlock, although the consequences lie on the shoulders of the woman, so I cannot agree with those who maintain that the state benefits and privileges granted to single mothers encourage the phenomenon of broken homes. Legislation regarding single-parent families and children from such families must remain humane. Ways must be found to reduce this phenomenon.

Prostitution is evil. I do not understand those who use and those who offer such services. There is no justification for this phenomenon as it destroys the dignity of both women and men. Public discussion of this problem should not be in the form of sensationalising prostitution but with an accent on the educational aspect of the problem. To reduce prostitution, it is essential to reveal its true face.

5. I have a positive attitude towards inter-ethnic marriages although I, myself, would not have opted for such an arrangement because in our society these families have the additional problem of how the children feel about themselves. The family is to build it upon mutual love, irrespective of nationality, and that is normal. However, in the social set-up especially as it exists today, when inter-ethnic relationships are strained, the family, and especially the children, undergo even greater problems.
6. The future is not clear, but I am optimistic that the next generation will have a better life than us. Families will always have problems linked with the interaction between two people. Every family will confront the issues of love, mutual understanding and mutual support as if it was the first family in the world, with youngsters highly critical of the experiences of their elders. It is clear that, as society transforms, the relationship between family and society will also change. I think there are changes in what people expect of their spouse and that situations will arise which we cannot foresee today.

Guzal Sarkisova

37; Uzbek; married with two children, qualified as a teacher and formerly director of a small enterprise but currently President of the Foundation for National Diplomacy

1. The family is my life and all that I live for. My family are those closest and dearest to me, a haven from all that is bad. Upbringing lays the foundations of the family, teaching the son and daughter that one should be patient with the shortcomings of one's nearest and share with them one joys and sorrows. From their earliest days, children learn this by observing the relationship between their parents. Unfortunately, now other norms in human relations - personal gain, advantage, consumerist attitudes - have entered the relationship between people who ought to be very close to each other. This is leading the family towards crisis.

2. Thankfully, there has been no crisis in my family, although there have been quarrels, fights and misunderstandings. But we were able to overcome all this because we were close and were able to discuss and resolve our problems together. The cause of the conflict was often a lack of money, which is why I regard material well-being (which allows one to lead a normal life and bring up the children) as an important condition for family stability. The husband and wife should always have faith in their ability to overcome life's obstacles together.

3. We live in the East, which is why the superficial norms of the inter-relationship between husband and wife are different compared to those in European families. Unfamiliar with our culture, people can regard this as discrimination against women. My husband is an Armenian. He thinks that Uzbek women make very good wives. They never rub their husband's noses in the dirt in front of his friends. They are always particularly respectful towards their husband. I always conduct myself appropriately. For instance, I never sit at a table where there are only men, nor do I allow myself to pass comment on my husband even in a joking manner, and so on. Thus, I myself create what is superficially taken to be 'discrimination' but what in reality I do simply to ensure that my husband never has to feel uncomfortable in front of anyone.

4. Sexual problems can arise in the family and this is why in bringing up children it is important to carefully draw their attention to this side of life. Better still, is that near ones talk about such problems so that when such
issues do arise, one can turn to one's near ones for advice.

The existence of prostitution needs to be recognised. There should be no hypocrisy and this topic needs to be discussed in order to understand the sources of the phenomenon. I suppose that there are certain categories of men who have to rely on such services, which is why a ban should not be imposed on it. Legalised prostitution is better than illegal prostitution. And anyway not every woman is capable of becoming a true prostitute - it requires professionalism and a vocational calling. That is why I feel let there be prostitution for those who cannot live without such services.

Marital infidelity can arise for two reasons. Firstly, when external conditions for a family are not conducive and secondly when something is not right in the husband's (or the wife's) understanding about moral norms. The first is preventable if the sides analyse their actions and arrive at suitable conclusions, preventing the family from breaking up. The second is in practice not preventable, particularly in instances when a pathological thirst for change coincides with an uncontrollable urge. Such a family is doomed to collapse and it is better for its to break up than to suffer all throughout one's life. Children are very sensitive about their parent's infidelity and I even know cases of suicides.

5. I am in favour of inter-ethnic marriages. My own family shows that this is the right position. A family's strength depends not on the nationality of the spouses but on their personal qualities. More to the point, Uzbek girls are wrongly warned against inter-ethnic marriages; in such marriages they are more respected.

6. The family futures of our children, I think, will depend on the traditions of their parents' families. Usually they follow these traditions, taking their parental families as models which is why it is important to have family traditions and to try to pass them on to one's children. The stronger the family, the easier it is to overcome negative changes taking place in society.

Adolat Azimova

Uzbek; 45; Pro-rector of the Tashkent Institute of Oriental Languages; a lawyer by education; married with two children; born and living in Tashkent

1. 2. & 3. For me, family life has been happy and family is the most important thing in my life. There have been no crises in my family, nor any discrimination. At present in practical terms there is no discrimination against women within the family amongst the educated.

4. My attitude towards marital infidelity is not neutral. People change, but it should not be taken for granted that the husband (or wife) is a piece of property. There are instances when infidelity can be forgiven and instances when this is impossible. Fidelity is a matter for the conscience. I am critical about women remaining unmarried and I hate women who have children without a husband. I saw many such single mothers exploiting their rights when I worked in the Ministry of Information. These are brazen women who
have no conscience, who use motherhood as a means of getting privileges! Open discussion of this issue is needed so that such condemnable phenomena no longer exist! A broken home repeats itself which is why there is need to know who and why a woman becomes a single mother. As a rule, the cause is prostitution.

5. I regard inter-ethnic marriages as inferior unions. In such a union there are numerous barriers to the formation of a normal family such as language, culture, etc.

6. My son is a medical student and my daughter will finish school next year and I hope their families will be built along the lines of my family.

As regards the changes taking place in family relationships, I suppose the Islamic type will remain stable strengthened by custom and traditions that will not change. I do not see anything wrong in tradition. For example, kalim is now not a payment for the bride, but a means of helping the young family obtain furniture and other necessities. One should not reject the old ways if they are beneficial.

Radim Zhabaeva

38; Balkar(2); economist working in commerce; unmarried; born in Kizil-Kie and living in Bishkek.

1. My family consists of my parents, brothers, sisters-in-law, my nephews, my closest relatives. My mother lives in the Caucasus while my father is here in the city of Kant. I live with my family and brother in Bishkek. The basis of the family is mutual support amongst relatives.

2. A family crisis affects me personally - I am still unmarried.

3. I have seen discrimination against women in my brother's family. My brother demands a lot from his wife. She cannot do anything without his approval. She is Russian. When he returns from work, everything must be clean and ready and everyone must wait for him.

As regards myself, I do not allow myself to stay outside the house after work, nor can I invite my friends home. My brother constantly controls everything and keeps an eye on me and on my circle of acquaintances so that I, God forbid, do not ruin the family honour.

4. It is difficult for me to answer the question about marital infidelity. I know that my brother is unfaithful to his wife and he does not even hide it. But I also know that he would never abandon his family and that he worries about his wife and children. This means that it does not trouble them.

5. I think it is possible to marry a person of another nationality. In my view, such marriages are happy and the children of such marriages are beautiful and intelligent.
1. I myself am not married and have never been married, but I can base my opinion on my observations regarding the families of my parents and friends.

The family is safeguarded by three pillars: trust, mutual understanding, and love. The ordering I gave these factors was not inadvertent, because no matter whether she marries out of love, a girl above all entrusts her destiny to her chosen man. In the young family, things initially take a little sorting out due to habits acquired in the parental home (in some families the parents were indulgent while in others they were more demanding). And in the process adapting to their new responsibilities, only mutual understanding between the newly-weds and patience can reduce the period of adaptation.

2. A family crisis happens when the three pillars crumble. External irritants also play a significant role in family crises; these can be the envy of others; intrusive interference on the part of relatives or ‘well-wishers’ pushing their noses into the family’s private matters; or social disorder or need. The higher the spouses’ level of moral and cultural development, the more capable they will be of facing the ‘blows of fate’ with honour.

Let me give you an example of a crisis in a family I knew. The couple were both born in Russian villages, and met each other in Tashkent and got married. For about three to four years they lived together in an apartment. During this period they had a daughter. Later they received a three-room apartment but with a sitting tenant. At the beginning of the 1960s, these kinds of communal flats were quite common. Five years later they had two sons, after which they became the sole owners of their apartment. Neither of them had been trained to do the domestic work and so there was no friction between them on the issue. All physical and technical work was supervised by the husband while washing, cleaning and cooking was the domain of the wife. They did the shopping together. They did not spoil their children and brought them up in the same way as their parents. And from the start the children understood the words “not allowed”, “allowed” and “must” with rare exceptions.

After fifteen years of life together had gone by during which they acquired all one needed in life - and even a little more - when a scandal exploded in the family. Some ‘well-wisher’ secretly informed the husband that his wife had been unfaithful to him for 10 years! Mutual recrimination and further interference by others followed. In the end, after two, two and a half, years they divorced - but continued to live in the same apartment. The daughter took her father’s side, while the mother took the son as he was still very young and weak in health (the other son had died in childhood). From time to time brief arguments would break out between the former spouses.

Each cooked and washed for themselves. The wife, of course, managed better. What could the husband who never had stood at a stove cook for himself? In Russian families it was extremely rare for men of the older
generation to do the cooking. He was an ordinary, conscientious crane-operator at the factory and the poor quality of canteen food and whatever cooking he managed at home did not give him the energy essential for physical labour. Added to this was his constant preoccupation with the past. The 15 days internment he got for hitting his wife brought him to the attention of the Comrades Court(4) and led to his photograph being removed from the factory roll of honour. Constant reflection on his suffering and recollection of happier times led to the accumulation of stress, ultimately leading to a sense of guilt. His health started to be deteriorate visibly.

The daughter started to do badly in her studies and took to smoking. She was rude to her mother and even didn't think highly of her father. The son - receiving only the mother's attention - grew pampered and spoiled and became a sneak. He was also not much at his studies. As the son did not communicate with his father, he did not learn to do his bit around the house and missed out on all the things a boy has to learn.

Then one summer the father caught pneumonia and was hospitalised. For some time he had to stay at home. But being a reliable person, he submitted a request to the director of the factory and before he was fully recovered went back to work. This immediately affected his health, the illness was diagnosed as cancer. By the age of 48 he was a thin, weak old man. On the second day after the new year he was no more. All of this was the result of that family's crisis.

3. Unfortunately, discrimination against women within the family is a part of our way of life. The lower the family's cultural level, the coarser and more physical the form it takes. Women in inter-ethnic marriages in particular suffer from this discrimination (I am thinking of Russian women because I have not met any Uzbek wives in Russian families). Accustomed as they are to the set-up in their parents' family, there is much in the Uzbek family set-up that is incomprehensible, unpleasant, and often alien and barbaric to them. Love is blind and only marriage opens a woman's eyes. It is advisable to remember the wisdom of ancient philosophers before one blindly enters a family from a different ethnic or religious background.

Let me give an example from the life of two of my girl friends whose husbands are Uzbek. Both of them bear the major burden of the physical work around the house, such as repairs to the home or apartment, because their husbands are either foul tempered, or are roaming around making merry with their mates, what we call gap. Despite this, both women unanimously claim that for their own parents their husbands, without urging, do everything, even more than what is asked of them. Putting their parents' family before their own families greatly demeans their Russian wives. Both women find their financial dependence on their husbands very humiliating, especially given that both have children who long to have the sweets they see on the advertisements.

Many believe that Uzbek men love Slav women very much. But even after having Russians as wives, these men still allow themselves a free rein with other women who they find attractive. There are also other examples of discrimination within these two families, but I do not want to prying into their private affairs.
Discrimination also exists in Russian families. It is even stronger than in Uzbek families since the men almost never help in the kitchen and in doing the shopping. It is a shame but I only see Russian women overloaded with bags and carriers on public transport and on the road. It is only about Russian women that I have heard the supposedly praising phrase "She will go into a blazing hut and calm a terrified horse". It is awful that discrimination is directed not against an individual or human values, but against the very nature and essence of femaleness.

4. Marital infidelity is very painful. It is condemned by all religions, and no matter what the factors motivating the infidelity, the unfaithful partner can never get any fulfillment out of the illicit relationship.

Often the cause of marital infidelity is sexual dissatisfaction, licentiousness, or financial and material problems.

Instincts should not control people, but people should control instincts. One's daily bread is not the only part of a person's life. Often, it is even possible to do without or at least to do without some expensive piece of cloth or unnecessary luxury. One can also do without all that is expensive and unnecessary. One must work and not tempt fate by envying someone for their lack of need.

As regards sexual problems there is no point in saying much. They will remain as long as people remain ignorant and illiterate about the topic. I do not know how it is in Russia, but in the East mothers teach their daughters the intimate details and in India there are even harems of love - "Enter and be enlightened". But with us enlightenment about sex has been limited to counting out the erogenous zones and the dangers of not observing genital hygiene. It is a great shame that many men are even ignorant about the physiology of the female organism which is why there are often tragedies in young families after the first nuptial night.

The single-parent family is a national crisis.

The impact of every divorce falls upon the children. Their vulnerable souls are very sensitive to the 'blows of fate'. It is always hard for them to love either of the parents. I am not thinking about those families where there is a profligate mother or a gallivanting or drunkard father. I am talking about those families with ordinary joys and sorrows. Thank God, the era of propagating materialism is now past and with it the empty soap bubbles of ideology. Now, when we analyze the prosperity and well-being of the country we count not only productive indicators, but also indicators which relate to the psychological state of each family and person; awareness regarding these factors will help in the reduction and elimination of the phenomenon of single-parent families. Many centuries ago, thinking people had already noted the cyclical appearance of major crises in families occurring in the first, seventh and eleventh years of marriage and so on. Perhaps I am have got it somewhat wrong. Aware of the cycle of family crises, the spouses can be ready for them and can handle them less painfully.

But the most important thing is the kind of upbringing the spouses had. This is confirmed by the simple wisdom of the Uzbek proverb "A bird repeats what it saw in the nest of its parents". Men are taught manliness by the father and women femininity by the mother.
As regards the human phenomenon of single women, I myself was never married. I was not an object of male attention. Whenever the matter came to proposals of 'hand and heart', I did not hide that I was sterile and these circumstances somehow quickly cooled the ardour of the lover. No matter what happens, I live and enjoy my life. Naturally my inner peace and values clearly differ from the outlook and life values of my married friends, but from this I do not feel this is to my detriment.

Not everyone can reconcile themselves to remaining unattached. Some take the path of prostitution. Terrible! This devastates a person's soul and lower women to the level of mere objects. I pity those who convert their flesh into merchandise, and ask myself whether a soul live in such flesh? I cannot help quoting the words of the great saint Johan Kronshtadski:(5)

The flesh blooms, but the soul fades;
the flesh is diffuse, but the soul finds itself constricted;
the flesh is sated, but the soul is starved;
the flesh is adorned, but the soul is deformed;
the flesh is fragrant, but the soul is diseased;
the flesh breaks into laughter, but the soul is surrounded by sorrow;
the flesh stands bathed in light, but the soul finds itself in darkness;
the darkness of hell.

Prostitution is a tragedy and an evil. One shouldn't keep quiet about it but one must be very careful about how to tackle the issue. Many do leave this distorted path for the straight and narrow, regretting their past sins. But it is very difficult to live in society with the lable 'prostitute' around one's neck - even more difficult than actually being a prostitute. This problem must be handled with great delicacy, so as not to waste the chances for self-reform of the soul.

5. It is better not to enter into an Asian household with a 'Russian yardstick' for one's expectations. This is simply ludicrous. No matter how great the love, the sacrifice required will also be great. I once had the opportunity to observe the Uzbek way of life from close quarters for two days. Not long, but still, I am more or less familiar with the culture and different aspects of its traditions. Of course much is unfamiliar, but one has to work at it, just as in any family of any nationality, and that's that. The observance of custom is another matter; here one has to call upon all of one's feminine wisdom, patience, and internal culture. Of course, many habits are materially and financially very wasteful. Not infrequently, Uzbek girls themselves have told me about this. One should immediately refuse to participate in such activities or then take part and not regret any subsequent difficulties one faces.

Generally inter-ethnic marriages are found among youngsters whose families have become europeanised. In such families one can meet extremely unusual inter-national combinations. In principle, I am not against such marriages, but only if in the children's upbringing the culture of one nationality is not accorded a lesser place than that of the other.

6. In the post-Soviet period, not everything has happened as they should, but still. Now we have private ownership, the *nouveau riche*, inflation, unemployment, bankruptcy, excessive prices, surpluses of foodstuffs and consumer items because of their high price. Then there is the curtailment of
certain sources of happiness such as fewer visits to relatives now in neighboring countries as a result of the rising cost of travel. All this affects each and every family. It is not possible to leave contemporary problems outside the home; the topics discussed at tea-time have changed. All of this, and of course other things are bringing about changes in the relationships between family members. Whether the change is positive or negative depends on whether there is harmony or discord within the family.

Now with our stores filled with imported goods, our wants have come to dominate over our actual needs. All this strongly influences the inter-relationship between the spouses and between the children and their parents.

Another problem is the need to raise the level of people's spiritual and moral development. Let me give you an example. In one family, the daughter as a young girl allowed herself some indiscretions in life. Then in 1990 she came into contact with the church and discovered that this was a source which could cleanse, nourish and heal the soul. It is very difficult for a person to go on the narrow path of self-rehabilitation, not straying from time to time in the vortex of old habits. With time, figuratively speaking, her step became firmer and deviation from the true path became less frequent. Other members of the family saw her internal changes, saw the literature which she read, but did not seek such change for themselves and, even worse, made it difficult for her by taunting her 'No matter what you do, you can't wash away all your sins!'. And if she did stumble, then their glee could not be contained. The hostility of her relatives - her own mother and to some extent her brother - is growing day by day, with only brief respite. What will happen in the future, only time will tell.

Shakhlo Sadikova

38 years; architect; married with two children; currently unemployed; always lived in Tashkent

1. Family is my whole life and I cannot imagine life outside of the family; I have never lived alone. From my parents family I came into the house of my husband's parents. Now we live in a separate apartment. Even though my role in each was different and not always easy, my experience in these families has given me a sense of being needed by my nearest.

The foundations of the family are build on a complex matrix of qualities inherent in spouse: mutual love, shared opinions regarding the children's upbringing, mutual understanding, material well-being, concern for one's near ones, the ability to make a future together. Psychological security within the family is based on mutual trust.

2. A family crisis is inevitable if one of the factors I have listed above is missing. The wisdom and desires of each side determine whether the crisis will lead to the break-up of the family or whether it will successfully weather this experience. Both major and minor family crises are unavoidable, but the ability to overcome them strengthens the family and makes its members wiser.
3. One often finds discrimination against women in the family, especially in Muslim families. This can be at the daily level (the woman is a domestic servant, waiting not only upon her husband but also on all members of his family, and often not receiving even perfunctory thanks); or at the spiritual level: the wife cannot continue with her education, carry on working or grow professionally; a daughter's right to choose her own husband or to receive an education is curtailed; the sister cannot have claim an equal share of inheritance from her parents nor receive the same kind of education as her brother. The women of the family are not allowed to wear European dresses, trousers, etc.

Of course, it is rare that all these forms of discrimination are found together, but partial discrimination exists in every Muslim family - not just in the lower social strata. Often discrimination against women is passed off as national custom, an 'Islamic upbringing' and so on, which is why open protest against it is rare. Protests do appear in such terrible forms as self-immolation and force society to think about the topic of discrimination against women in the family.

4. Personally, I do not have any particular stand on the question of infidelity. Usually women are more understanding about their husband's infidelity, than men are about their wife's infidelity. In a majority of cases infidelity is not the cause of divorce. There are deeper reasons, i.e. those I spoke about with respect to the foundations of the family. If such foundations do not exist, then the immediate factor in the break-up of a family might be thoughtlessness, being attracted to another, or sexual problems.

Single-parent families are evidence of the problems in society: alcoholism amongst men; their childishness; their material and psychological dependence on their parents, caused by their social insecurity. Often men, even if they want to, cannot marry a woman who is expecting his child without the permission of his parents because he himself does not have a place to live and his salary does not allow him to obtain one.

In contrast to European women, Muslim women seldom dare have a child out of wedlock and bring it up alone. Remaining single is very demeaning for Muslim women. It is a burdensome lable for a Muslim woman as she is condemned by social opinion, with the blame for this situation being placed on the woman or her parents. This is why women are very keen to get married.

Prostitution does exist. If society is disturbed by this problem, then it needs to be voiced. I myself consider that this is a problem for the vice squad and medical profession to handle and is not a social problem. I do not think society is responsible for this phenomenon - it is a matter of the nature of some women.

5. I am strongly in favour of inter-ethnic marriages but feel that such families can only by fully accepted in a democratic society, where all nationalities have equal opportunities for development. There are two problems in inter-ethnic marriages. Firstly, the relationships between the spouses need to include mutual respect for each other's culture; secondly, social attitudes and how people react to such families and the children of such families.

6. Yes, things are changing, because the Islamisation of society is taking place
along with a re-thinking on the place of women in the family and in society. Also the problems of chauvinism might appear. The institution of the family enjoys considerable status and this will continue to rise. The trend of early marriages is gaining strength, which will lead to a lowering of women's social role, because this will cut short their education and professional training.

Baret Irgalieva
Kazakh; 45; Director of the Executive Committee of the Democratic Committee for Human Rights; librarian; living in Almaty; married with one daughter

1. The family is most important thing in my life. The foundations of the family are mutual understanding and a sound economic base. Everything is up in the air right now after the break-up of the Soviet Union. The crisis facing the former citizens of the USSR who today are inhabitants of new nations, and who, just starting to stand on their own two feet is the threat to the institution of the family. But can the family remain the most important thing in life for women if one takes away their jobs and material independence? I do not know. I myself come from a military family, and the problems families face are particularly aggravated in such a situation.

2. A family not only consists of the husband, wife and children, but also other relatives: parents, brothers and sisters. The current economic situation does not allow people to keep maintain constant contact. Relationships are being lost because unwittingly people are seeking to renounce their responsibilities including their material obligations towards others - especially if there are elderly, sick, or young ones in the family who require attention and greater expenses. Look how many elderly people have been abandoned and left to the whims of fate - even though many have children and relatives. Today it can be said without doubt that if the family is to survive, it is necessary to stabilise the economy. Today with a young family, it is virtually impossible to stand on one's own feet or to have a home of one's own. Today, women are afraid of having children. Poverty and need constitute a very real and terrible threat for the family, and the number of poor is growing day by day. In such conditions it is difficult to speak of a 'normal family'. When a person is hungry, the desire for truth is lost with people seeking to survive by using all means possible. Is this not a threat to the family? Commercialisation cheapens true human feelings and human interaction. Today, the cause of crises with in the family is the economy.

3. Today, discrimination against women is not so much found in family but more in society. Women are the first to lose their jobs and find themselves in the poorest paid positions. It is more difficult for them to start something new or alternatively, they may be considered a competitor and attempts will be made to sideline them.

4. In the past, among Kazakh households it was considered shameful to have old maids in the family because marriage was what nature had ordained for women and, therefore they must be allowed to fulfill their destinies. This is why it often happened that a girl's the parents would not take her feelings
into account and, if there was no other person available, would give her in marriage to someone who was perhaps not exactly suited to her. Today there are many single men and women, for which society is more responsible than they themselves. For example, at the Almaty Fabrics and Paper Factory, 90% of the women workers are Kazakh. Many of them come from far-flung areas and live in hostels for up to 10 or 20 years. Their chances of being given an apartment are very limited. In such conditions, it is difficult for them to create a family. Life in a hostel undermines one's individuality, because such a life is incomplete; one has no privacy and has to live in close proximity with and be dependent upon total strangers. For the majority, the only future is work. Under such circumstances, the majority of mothers are unmarried - the child gives them a chance to be given an apartment and meaning to their lives. Why should they be condemned? Life has dictated their decisions; they themselves are not bad. It is much worse if illegitimate children are left to the state orphanages. Today, half of all abandoned children are Kazakh. These children are deprived not only of parental care but also of a sense of national belonging.

I can say the same about those men who spent the better part of their life in hostels. Old bachelors are often the fathers of abandoned children. It is difficult for them to make a family without a home. They acquire dangerous habits: alcoholism, narcotics, irresponsibility, cynicism and sometimes also take to crime. When a person is trodden upon, it is easy for them to fall. Society is to be blamed for seeking to control each and every thing while ignoring the individual's needs.

Human interaction in the hostels is crude. Sensitive girls are broken, their spirit becomes corrupted and they become less resistant to temptation. Today, yesterday's village girls, after living for two to three years in the hostels, are ready to work in the casinos or brothels whose flashing signboards declare them to be some commercial enterprise. Such is the path determined by society.

Money can be earned, if one is able and willing to work. Prostitution is an easy way of earning money. Girls who do not want to think are easily taken in by the bright lights. Naked perversion, which has become commercialised, is a dangerous phenomenon and it is on the increase as indicated by the increase in AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. This is worrying. In certain social settings being a prostitute has become prestigious (!) Public advertisements, obliquely offering such services indicate that society is losing its sense of shame. A sense of propriety was part of the Kazakh tradition which regarded shamelessness as equivalent to being without a religion. What is taking place today is the result of our recent past, when there was hypocrisy in society, when to have a successful career, women had to be mercenary and depraved. The rejection and persecution of religion lowered society's moral standards. The lower a person's culture sinks, the easier it is for one to transgress what was called 'nomus' - a concept which includes both honour and propriety.

In Soviet times there was a conscious perversion of women in the higher echelons of power. Women often paid for success in their careers through offering 'special services' to their boss and mentor. The fact that this practice happened in full view, and coupled with the rejection of religious norms,
contributed to its spread in society as a whole. Similar services were often offered by housemaids and nurses and similar female staff in the exclusive rest homes and sanatoria in order to have a good salary and access to foodstuffs; or by secretaries and working women, to get their promotion or an apartment. Those who were too proud did not last for long in the top ruling institutions. For those whose moral qualities were not so sound, there was the great temptation: if that woman who's in a higher position can do it then why shouldn't I? I pity them and can even defend them, because they lost much. They also squandered their own emotions. This too was prostitution. And how many men were there, who pushed their women into similar activities in order to succeed in their own careers. The family's superficial prosperity was based on prostitution (what else can one call it?). It seems to me that the root causes of the current flourishing of prostitution lie in the lack of morals and spirituality, which was characteristic of the previous regime and this problem must be discussed openly. Prostitution, just like mass repression, man-made famine and the persecution of those who think differently, were part of Soviet life and the consequences are no less frightening. Prostitution is dangerous in that it has become a part of contemporary life.

The most terrible thing is that those who yesterday contributed to the decomposition of our society, now say that prostitution is characteristic of Islam and even that the desire to offer such services is natural for Muslim girls. No, no and no! They back up their statements by pointing to the existence of harems. But harems were never brothels. These did degrade women, but did not pervert them. The women had a patron and belonged only to him; they were dependent but also had protection.

I hope that the harem does not return, but nevertheless polygyny does have some support in society - even among women. There are many arguments in its favour. With polygyny every woman had the possibility of having a husband and children who no one could call illegitimate. A man who is already married but economically sound can marry another woman for whom he has feelings, take care of her and then she doesn't have to hide from people when meeting the father of her children, and can share with him responsibility for the children. From the past I know that children of polygynous marriages felt the blood ties that bound them and had a sense of responsibility towards each other. I am for polygyny. If my husband were to take another wife, I would not feel jealous if he continued to respect me and love my children. It would be far worse if he were to be unfaithful to me with some unknown woman. But if the husband is an idiot, then even one wife is too much for him.

5: I have a complex approach to inter-ethnic marriages. In principle I am not against them, but such marriages must be upright. Such families usually stand out, with people forming an opinion about inter-ethnic marriages on the basis of their actions. If a woman marries into a family of a different nationality, then she must teach her children love for that culture also and not only the culture of her own peoples. If this happens, then I approve of such a marriage. But I have come across very different examples, where the children became alienated from the father's culture and language and identify themselves only with the mother's nationality. Today tragically many inter-ethnic marriages have met with tragedy due to the break-up of
the country. Today I see how the children of mixed Russian-Kazakh marriages feel hatred towards their Kazakh father's nationality. Many of them find it difficult to reconcile themselves to conversing in his language. Often the break-up of a mixed marriage leads to hatred not only for the parent responsible for the break-up, but also to people of his nationality. In such a situation there is then not only the problem of the children being fatherless, but also of their having an unbalanced attitude towards everything connected with him. This deforms a child's identity. So from this point of view, I am against inter-ethnic marriages, as it is a factor working against understanding between the nationalities.

Narbibish Shammaeva
Turkmen; 42; scientific worker, teaching in an higher educational institute; married with two children; living in Chardjoi

1. For me the family is everything, and is my whole future is linked to it. The foundations of the family are mutual respect between the spouses and children.

2. Family crisis is characteristic of the first year of marriage when a women enters an alien home and adapts to the traditions of the new family. Because of their youth, the spouses have difficulty understanding each other. It is difficult for them to take upon themselves new duties and responsibilities. Conflict happens when one of them seeks to live as they did before the marriage. Then there are the complexities in the interaction between the daughter-in-law and the parents of the groom. The only way to prevent such a crisis is by being determined to preserve the family; by analysing one's actions, compromising, and accepting one's partner as they are and not attempting to change them overnight into one's ideal (this is impossible anyway!). One should change oneself. Quarrels and tears are the greatest threat to a marriage; smiles and friendliness strengthens it. Marriage is a daily compromise. To run away from one's problems is a sign of cowardice and stupidity.

3. There is a great deal of discrimination against women. In our surroundings, it is accepted as normal. The daughter-in-law is a dependent creature. In many families she does not even have the right to speak independently with her husband's parents. Discrimination against women within the family takes place in all strata of society, although it takes a variety of forms, because stereotypical Muslim attitudes accord women a subordinate position. This is the source of both physical and spiritual discrimination.

4. Although it is difficult to generalise, the reasons for marital infidelity include a lack of understanding within family, different levels of education and conflicting outlooks on life. In Turkmenistan infidelity is more common among husbands; infidelity on the part of the wife usually leads to divorce. This problem is not debated widely and never very openly because marital relationships are taboo for outsiders. It is unseemly to talk about this topic, and about the issue of sexual problems within the family. I myself regard this
as a personal matter, although I do think it exists, especially for women. Often marriages are arranged by the parents. The newly-weds barely know each other, which is why theoretically the problem must exist; but I haven't once heard women speak about it.

Single-parent families are rare in Turkmenistan. Traditional attitudes are intolerant towards them. The cause is thoughtlessness on the part of the girl. She must be ready for the fact that premarital relationships with men in almost 95% of cases do not end up in marriage. Divorce, leading to the phenomenon of broken homes, is likewise condemned by society so divorce is rare when there are children. Such a situation makes women very dependent. Suicides in the form of self-immolation have long been practised in Turkmen history. I have often seen women with the scars of burns on their necks and faces. This is terrible! There is another side to the image of the institution of marriage as a bulwark against insecurity, and this other side takes the form of discrimination or infidelity.

5. Regarding inter-ethnic marriages I would prefer it if there were fewer of them, not because I am categorically against them, but because for the majority of ordinary families the lack of acceptance of the national characteristics of 'the other' is yet another cause of instability within the marriage. If my son loves a Russian girl, for example, I would be against such a marriage, but if the marriage does takes place, I would treat my son's wife like a daughter and would try to ensure her painless adjustment to a domestic lifestyle based on alien cultural traditions. But I could not protect her from the attention and critical gaze of those around us. The entry of a non-Muslim girl into a Muslim family is very complex process and not every girl can accept that fixed pattern of interaction within the family which in the Soviet period underwent some change but largely remained unaltered. Theoretically Muslim girls find it easier to go become part of a European family, but such cases are extremely rare because the upbringing of girls in Muslim families practically eliminates such a possibility. I believe that inter-ethnic marriages can be stable only between people of higher intellect and education, allowing them to overcome prejudice.

6. I suppose, that in the post-Soviet period in Turkmen surroundings, family relationships are not changing because family traditions are very strong and I do not at present see the basis for change, no matter how strong the desire on the part of some social groups to bring about such a change.

Khairiniso Ganieva
Uzbek; physiotherapist working at the Tashkent University polyclinic; married with three children; 42

1. Family is basis for the future. It is a mini-state in which just like in a drop of water the surrounding society is reflected. This is why diseases of the society lead families towards crises.

The foundations of the family are mutual understanding and thankfully this exits in my family. This helps balance the interests of all members of the
2. In my family it has been possible to avoid crisis. I know of examples where one spouse foisted their views on life, interests, and their superiority over the other and when this ended in the 'victory' of one spouse, the family could not withstand such pressure and broke up. The 'victory' of one spouse ended in the defeat of all of the members of the family and everyone suffered.

3. In Uzbek families there has always been discrimination against women. Young brides face certain expectations: they are to wait on all members of the family, serve tea and food, forget the word "No", be completely deprived of the right to voice their opinion on anything which concerns them and their new family. In other words, getting married means the ideal bride must completely surrender her free will. The reaction of the more than 99% of Uzbek girls who find themselves in such a situation varies; some become patient, flexible and command respect and, once the children are grown up then even assert their own will; others, completely denying all respect to their new family members, become calculating and mendacious taking on the characteristics of a future despot in their son's family.

4. I am generally critical of marital infidelity, but a person is not perfect and each has the right to make a mistake. Men find it especially difficult to control their biological urges. Marital infidelity, accompanied by the exploitation and blackmail of the other irrevocably leads towards the break-up of families. Men often are unfaithful because their wives are very busy. The wife is unfaithful if she is constantly pestered due to a despotic husband or mother-in-law. Women always go towards whatever offers them some sort of comfort. Decent men do not go to others if there is kindness and comfort in the home.

Sexual problems in Uzbek families begin with the first nuptial night. The blatant interference and control over the newlyweds takes place in every family. The bride's chastity must be proved not only to the husband, but before all relatives. The very necessity of displaying the wedding night bedsheets makes sexual relations a source of anguish for a sensitive girl or young woman and can later influence sexual relationships within the family. This is a degrading and cruel medieval custom! Any attempt to protest is viewed as a desire to cover up the crimes of a girl who was guilty of losing her innocence before marriage. A girl's virginity is very valuable, but people must realise that if this is the only thing valued, it is not enough to ensure marital happiness.

Prostitution exists and it has a very ugly form, but this should not be equated with 'female loneliness'. Often a woman remains single if she does not want to give in to the tough life of women in Uzbek families; or if she has great expectations of her spouse, or seeks a higher emotional relationship between husband and wife. This is why the most beautiful, educated, and talented women remain lonely. Society, with its uncivilised attitudes, is responsible.

Further, society is intolerant towards single mothers. There are different reasons for the phenomenon of single-parent families; sometimes the woman is to blame and sometimes the man. The problem exists and needs to be openly debated, but single mothers shouldn't be handed over to female sharks - who are hostile to anything beyond their comprehension - to be
I have a positive attitude to inter-ethnic marriages if the marriage is based on love and respect for each other as representatives of another culture. The imperfections in our society, and its conservatism regarding family interrelationships affect the stability of such marriages.

6. I think family attitudes have changed recently. There is an increased tendency to make the wife a piece of family property. This is the source of all future problems in education or a girl's choice of professional career.

1. The family is a bedrock of support for every woman and I what I mean by a family includes not only one's spouse and children, but also the families of one's parents and children. Being a daughter, a wife, a mother, a grandmother represents different roles for women at different stages in their lives. In each of these roles, therefore, women need and seek support and understanding from their nearest, and do things for them and count on their concern and love. Only if she has this can a woman successfully - and without complexes - grow as an individual in society. Then she won't have to take her success as some sort of compensation for her deprivation, but can value it for what it is and her work can help her realise her potential.

2. I am divorced and, of course, this is proof of the fact that a family crisis has affected me also. But, thankfully, we separated not as enemies but having preserved a sense of mutual respect for each other. Divorce did not become a tragedy for either of us, even though great love never united us and did not become the basis for a long marriage.

3. Of course, there is discrimination against women in the family. It can often be seen simply in terms of the domestic burdens each woman has. Discrimination against women within the family exists in all social strata although it takes different forms. It exists openly in the lower strata, whereas it is hidden and has motivating factors amongst in intellectual circles.

4. Self-respecting spouses never demean their partners through infidelity. Above all the reason for infidelity is a lack of disrespect. Although of course, there can be no ideal relationship between spouses, a psychologically superior relationship is possible and is the result of a long and skillful parental input. When a child's upbringing has not been adequate or does not work out, then an undercurrent of dissatisfaction appears and one of the effects of this can be the appearance of sexual problems between the spouses. If they have sufficient trust in each other and discuss the matter, then it can be resolved.

Sexual problems in the family are also linked to the question of family
planning. Having numerous children affects the quality of life in. A family
should only have as many children as they can guarantee normal upbringing
and living conditions. This issue is linked with people's sexual practices.
Responsibility for their future children lies with the parents. This also means
that openness regarding the discussion of sexual problems is vital for the
propagation of the concepts of family planning and regulation of childbirth.
Children should be wanted! Healthy women and healthy children ensure
socially healthy families. I consider it very important to educate men and
women in matters of sexuality. Due to a false sense of shame, we do not
connect the existence of sexual problems with social problems, with the
nation's health and an improvement in the population's living standards and
quality of life.

The are various causes of the single parent family, the main ones being
alcoholism and the moral decline of men. In such situations, a single-parent
family is better than a complete family that is constantly in conflict, and
remains under constant threat of the unexpected, of physical beatings and
violence.

The phenomenon of the single woman is the result of incompatibility
between dreams and reality. In this sense, the idea of polygyny as a means of
eliminating such loneliness is not well-founded. The propagation of this idea
through the initiative of Islamic women's movements attracts some, but I do
not believe that polygyny can solve such a complex social problem as
loneliness. There is a joke that "Men are for polygyny, because one wife
cannot feed the husband". It's a good joke!

Prostitution exists, even though I do not consider it widespread in my
country. Prostitution in my opinion, is not a social phenomenon, but a
question of spiritual and moral values. Discussion about it should be
concentrated in this direction.

5. In civilised countries the issue of inter-ethnic marriages is not an actual
problem, because the choice of national identity is not accompanied by so
many complications. The democratisation of society is changing stereotypes
and attitudes on this question and the pain of it can be survived. As to my
own attitude, the fact that my daughter is married to a German and lives in
the Federal Republic of Germany, speaks for itself.

6. In the post-Soviet period, the main threat to the institution of the family
has been the economic crisis. The necessity of survival has relegated to
secondary place the meaning of things such as morals, morality and culture,
without which the fortress of the family stands undermined.

Aigul Sultankulova

Kyrgyz; 34; economist working in the Ministry; born in Osh, living in Bishkek

1. In a word, the family is everything. This means my children, parents,
sisters, husband and all of my near ones. The well-being of these people is the
basis of my peace of mind. I regard the foundations of the family to be
mutual understanding and the fact that one can rely on one another.

For me, family is that place and that circle of people among whom I can be as I am - weak, sick and even stupid.

2. According to me, a crisis in the family happens when there is no shared sense of responsibility for its prosperity.

Traditionally in Kazakh families, divorce is regarded as an extraordinary event. As a rule, all the close relatives of both sides participate in resolving such an issue. A conjugal life for the sake of the children - and not just as a tribute to convention - is part of one's responsibility to one's children and parents. To support one's family is both a matter of duty and honour for Kyrgyz men. But in our troubled times, when every person is forced to look out for himself, traditional values are gradually disappearing.

3. If a Kyrgyz man earns money and provides for the family, then the wife's functions consist of looking after him and the children, and completely fulfilling his desires and being sensitive to changes in his moods. Examples of this are the families of my friends where the husband is the provider. In their families they are nothing more than servants, without the right to an opinion. The women have to solve all the problems themselves - including monetary ones, and any supplementary earnings the women may contribute to the family's income is strictly earmarked for household expenses and the children.

4. If there is no stability in society, then there is none in the family either. With us there was never the cult of an ideal family, so there was no necessity of conforming to such an ideal. Spousal infidelity has become an everyday notion. Many women have had to come to terms with it. Most men believe that if they provide for the family, then they have the right to a lot of other things.

In my opinion, the sexual problems of modern Kyrgyz families are caused by the absence of a culture of sex, i.e. the technical side dominates the emotional side. However, the intellectual level of the spouses in each individual case is of basic significance.

I believe that the reasons for the emergence of broken homes and the phenomena of the single woman are generally similar. In other words, if the man does not come up to the woman's demands and expectations, then she prefers the more difficult path of being independent. This is often the individual choice of the woman.

Open discussion of the problem of prostitution is vital, especially now that many restrictions have been removed. Prostitution is flourishing right before our eyes. The moral aspects of this profession are being overshadowed by the beautiful and plentiful life that it offers; it is not simply a matter of a yearning for a stable income but also as they say "a love of one's work".

5. I am against inter-ethnic marriages. I believe that the difference in the upbringing, traditions, and religious conduct of people in Kyrgyzstan is very significant. Not all of us were taught to respect alien cultures or alien languages. In these areas we are not very flexible.

6. I would like to think that family attitudes will change for the better. Perhaps, especially in this period, we are gradually moving towards an
understanding of the fact that it is easier to survive in today's world as a family; the survival instinct will save the family.

Gulnara Abdrasilova
Kazakh; 34; teacher in a higher educational institute; married with two children; living in Almaty

1. For me the family is the most important thing in life. The foundations of a family are love and respect between relatives and one's nearest.

2. Luckily, crisis has passed my family by. But still, I know of examples of families having broken up when the men attempted to shed responsibility for the family. Such crises manifest themselves in the form of alcoholism and greediness and men's pursuit of pleasure; they spare no expense for themselves but leave the family to live on whatever the mother earns.

I want to focus on the links between the establishment of patriarchal society, and the greediness and miserliness of men. The status of men who devote themselves and all their means to their families is lower than the status of those who spend their time with their mates and waste their money on them. This pervert kind of a situation deprives families, especially poorer families where the men have an overblown sense of pride, the means of survival. Male self-assertion takes place in the company of their friends through their over-generous expenditure on typically male distractions - and this is always at the cost of the family and the children.

Sometimes it seems to me that existing prejudice regarding the social conduct of women and men is immutable, halting all progress in family attitudes.

3. I have not witnessed open discrimination against women in families around me.

4. I am critical of marital infidelity, but I can understand its reasons. The basic reason for physical infidelity is the fact that the spouses lose the sense of each other's novelty. One spouse gets fed up of the monotony, and the relationship remains at one level as the wife, engaged with children, gives little attention to herself and falls in the eyes of her husband. This is why someone correctly wrote that "The wife's old clothes and her worn out slippers are the causes of the husband's infidelity".

Sexual problems exist in families, especially between couples who were married in the 1970s. At that time, it was taboo to talk about the relationship between husband and wife. There was no literature, and according to contemporary films, children were born from kisses. There was complete sexual illiteracy. As a result dissatisfaction grew, especially among men. Women, busy with the children, became distanced from their husbands. Today, when pornography is leaping out of the pages of newspapers and journals and being openly showed on television, even experienced men are being swept along with this tide. The demand for sexual services has risen sharply, in the face of wives' reticence regarding erotica. This is the source of marital infidelity, sexual problems and prostitution.
'Female loneliness' is primarily linked with the nature of women, especially the intellectual ones, who have a superior emotional standard. They expect the man to make an effort to make her love him. But men are making less and less effort, and hence there is an increasing number of single women. It is a sorry state of affairs that the most beautiful, clever and educated women remain single. They could have raised such beautiful children! Of course, society is responsible for all this. This is why it is necessary for there to be an open discussion of all the issues that are the cause of some people's unhappiness. However, there is the clear danger that the press is sensationalising news of disasters, vices, assaults and sex. This practice will pervert people.

5. I have a positive attitude towards inter-ethnic marriages as long as the spouses love and understand each other and respect all those who are dear to the other person. Nevertheless, I feel that the children's cultural identity leans towards the mother's side, because the mother is more closely involved in their upbringing. For the children to love the cultures of the father and the mother equally it requires a conscious effort on the part of the mother, father as well as their relatives and near ones, who should accept the children as part of their motherland.

6. I think family attitudes will not change. Kazakhstan has strong family traditions.

Aida Pak
Korean; 50; furniture production technologist; have three children; born in Uzbekistan and living in Kazakhstan; currently not working.

1. Family is the foundation of life. The foundations of the family are love and money.

2. I got married at the age of 18. Life has had its ups and downs but I have never had the desire to leave my husband. But I have witnessed a painful crisis in my son's family. My son often goes out on field work, my daughter-in-law could not stand this separation and the family broke up. The causes of most divorces are foolishness, a misunderstanding between the spouses and a lack of love.

3. Discrimination does exist. The roots of the family are patriarchal. In the family a woman is like a servant - she works in the field and at home. Men drink, and beat their wives accusing them of infidelity and other offenses. Previously, women used to put up with everything, but today they quickly leave and attempt to build a new family, but often meet the same fate as before. Thus the best is to make every effort to try to preserve the first family.

4. Unfortunately, there are very few decent men. In the majority of cases, the cause of a broken home is the man himself. The girl is abandoned with a child on her hands. This is precisely one of the factors behind prostitution. The girl either remains a single mother, or leaves the child in an orphanage and starts seeking an easier life for herself.
There is also another reason for women remaining unmarried: the shortage of men. For example, my daughter is 29. Many men of her age were combatants in the Afghan war and did not return. Those who did return were almost all deformed, both physically and mentally. They find it difficult to return to civilian life and build a family. This is why I do not see any chances of my daughter leading a normal family life, even though she possesses wonderful qualities.

5. I am not prejudiced about inter-ethnic marriages. As long as they love one another, they will be able to sort things out.

6. I think that in the post-Soviet period the family will be strengthened. Take me, for example. Previously I would have had to work until the age of 55 in order to earn the maximum pension, while today I have not been working for several years, giving more time to my family. I get a supplementary income from different part-time work which I can do at home. As long as one is healthy, life these days offers many opportunities and it is no longer necessary to hang on to a government job and that too for a small remuneration. This is why today, when women can choose whether to work in the state sector or in the co-operatives, or do something at home, they will be able to have more free time for the family.

Lilya Kuchuk

Jewish; 49; biologist; married with one child; living in Bishkek; working in a National Research Institute

1. In my view a family should be strong, and there should be mutual respect and love for each other. If this does not exist, then, looking at the example of my girl friends, it is better to live alone.

But if there are children then under all circumstances there should be a family. For its foundations are in the children. Then one has to go out on a limb, to compromise and bring up ones children.

2. This is related to the question above. For the sake of the children, one has to preserve the family, not lead it to a crisis. Because a crisis means divorce. But if there are no children, then divorce is preferable.

3. I see discrimination in the form of the active enslavement of Soviet women in the household. This is a social question and needs to be addressed by improving the domestic sphere, its entire structure. This also means improving the material prosperity of the family and of course all people.

4. I don't have a simplistic attitude towards marital infidelity. If I came to know that my husband was unfaithful, I would survive. Characteristically, I don't suffer from sexual problems; I got married late. I don't think my husband is my property, he is more preoccupied with his beloved work and in earning money.

I think the reason for single-parent families lies in the emancipation of women. Materially, a woman can bring up a child alone, but the absence of a
father-figure does have an impact later on. The phenomenon of the single woman exists among us and the reason is the same.

Prostitution also exists and the only attractive side for those who opt for this path are the material rewards. I think that when a family does not teach the concept of hard work and fails to introduce simple moral values, then prostitution grows on the soil of individual souls. Without morals children become the playthings of fate. Society's hypocrisy and the power of those who are capable of 'double-thinking' have facilitated this. But still, would an open debate on this problem change anything?

5. I have a positive attitude towards inter-ethnic marriages. But the current socio-political situation in the former Soviet Union has complicated this question.

6. Family relationships will remain a matter for with the family and will not have any influence on society.

**Maiyam Izbasarova**

Kazakh; 57; married with three children, retired Civil Engineer; living in Almaty

1. Family means a lot to me. But in my life there were, and are, other interests. The foundation of the family are goodness, honesty, and mutual understanding between all members of the family.

2. I myself am from a large family and in my life time I had to go through a lot. Crises in the family mainly happened due to external influences: migration, decisions about where to live, job transfers, or adolescence. Every ripple in life rocks the family boat, but every crisis can be survived if the problem is addressed wisely. It requires great patience to ensure that the family does not break up. The advice of those who are close greatly helps one to survive difficult situations. My sister suffered a divorce and there was no way to prevent it. Her husband had grown up without a father and it was very difficult for him to build his own family - he made too many demands on his wife and himself assumed little responsibility. My parents agreed to my sister getting divorced, even though she also had a child. I consider a divorce better than constant quarrels. Our own parents were an example for us. If there was any problem between them, then they resolved it behind closed doors. We never heard yelling in our house.

3. & 4. The above is an example of discrimination against women. Why do broken homes happen? Because of the immaturity of men. This is why one must be vocal in debating the issue behind divorce. The institution of the family must be backed up by some form of social protection. From this perspective, the attitude of the state and society towards prostitution must be unambiguously negative and there must be laws shutting off the path towards prostitution. For a long time, prostitution was a forbidden topic, which is why in recent times films and publications have appeared in which this topic has been rehabilitated and is even being made appealing. This should not be. People need to be oriented not towards the beautiful life, but
towards the family. I for example, very much liked Mikhail Gorbachev's inherent respect for his wife; through it he confirmed the importance of the family institution. But, such respect is not appreciated in our country and men take out all their anger against people on their wives. Is this not evidence of the low status of women and wives?

5. The most important thing is love between people of two nationalities, and this is tested in the husband or wife's attitude towards everything which is dear to the other spouse - motherland, people and culture. When getting married to a person of another nationality, a woman should be well aware of what she's getting into.

6. I suppose the status of family will become higher. But I do not agree with the idea that, in the name of the family, everyone should have a husband or that polygyny should be legalised. I think the custom of kalim is coming back into use although I do not regard it as bride-price but just a way of providing some material support for the young couple as it is spent on the wedding and on gifts for the bride.

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**Svetlana Monosova**

Russian; 33; economist; married with a son and parents still alive; born and living in Tashkent

1. The closeness of kindred spirits provides the basis for creating a family. In order not to make a mistake, one needs to look at one's future life partner with open eyes and to accept him for all his strengths and weaknesses. The foundations of any given family is mutual understanding and forgiveness of the many blunders which one is bound to make during the course of one's life.

2. Crises take place in practically every family. As a rule, these are generally deceit, infidelity, disharmony or material instability. It is difficult to avoid this. With the passage of time, situations change for the better as well as for the worse. It is, however, possible not to bring a crises to an explosion. This depends, in the first place, on the upbringing of the spouses. The use of force in such a situation can only make it worse, which is why there is need for restraint and patience.

3. What does discrimination against women mean? Constant washing and cleaning, making the food, looking after the members of the household, on top of having a job. The majority of women bear all these burdens. This huge pressure is what constitutes discrimination; there is no other form.

4. I have a tolerant attitude towards infidelity. Immediate reproach is not necessary; the situation can be analysed and conclusions reached later.

Humans are highly evolved creatures as indicated by their ability to love only one partner. Being in love stimulates a person, inspiring them to seek something more but life in the family shell often has the opposite effect. If a person has some natural attraction, then it is not necessary to constantly punish them for it.
For myself I have only one desire: to always look attractive and see that spark of affection in the eyes of someone near to me. But one more thing: if you are a faultless sex-partner, then family happiness will always be on your side; although being experienced in sex is not always a plus (sometimes a quest for something 'salty' is essential after endless 'pastries'). One also needs to be prepared for the fact that a compatible sex-partner can look for some other diversity in life.

The majority of women whose men leave them for some reason or the other, especially after long conjugal lives, usually don't seek an active sexual life. I suppose casual relationships might be more convenient as they don't lead towards responsibilities (no need to do the washing, tending to their needs, do the cooking and so on). And after having wasted their energies on the loved husband who deserted her, such relationships do offer some sort of compensation.

Remaining single, is just a matter of laziness. If many suffer from loneliness, then it is only because they do not understand what a bitter fruit family life is.

Prostitution exists, but only concerns those who are involved in it - providing it does not harm people around. It is not for an average person to debate this problem, but those whose job it is - doctors and the legal profession.

5. I am against inter-ethnic marriages, even though sometimes they are successful. There are notions such as national character, national family culture, traditions and habits, which differ radically from nation to nation. To acquire or adapt towards them at an age when one is already a conscious human being is difficult and, for some, even impossible. This is why such marriages are rarely stable.

6. Social custom influences interaction within the family in a very specific way. The penetration of free western thought into the minds of the former Soviet people has somewhat changed their outlook on family prosperity.

Some of them, seeing the beautiful western life on television sigh and long to have those comforts in their own homes. But for most this is beyond their pocket. And thus begins constant reprimand of the husband's failure to provide materially.

Our worn out women with their heavy bags of shopping do not attract the admiring looks of men. If life were to become easier for our women and men's eyes roved a little less, then the family would also be strengthened.

**Natalya Sultanova**

35; artist and teacher; living in Bishkek; Khakass(6); separated with two children

1. For me, the family is not 'everything', but I live according to the traditional canons passed down to me by my predecessors, my parents. Having dedicated more than half my life to my family, I am currently experiencing a re-evaluation of my role in the family and I feel that I did not realise my
individual potential, my expectations of life. Convention, domestic lifestyles coupled with the constant problems of building a family life, lead to the continuous undermining of a woman as an individual, towards the degeneration of her moral qualities, neglect of her appearance and ageing. A typical example (although in an exaggerated form) came in the film 'Little Vera', where the mother is grotesquely depicted: with an old perm and wearing an old dress, constantly nagging and droning on, with a duster in her hands.

In my view, the foundation of the family is mutual understanding between all members of the family, from the smallest to the most senior. With this established, there is room for differences of opinion while most importantly preserving respect and understanding for each other.

2. My family went through a crisis. The basis of the crisis was economic caused by my husband's moral and material inability to bear responsibility for his family.

My husband was practically not involved in the children's upbringing, and spent most of his time on his work or meeting his friends. He also often drank. He was incompetent as a husband and father and remained an immature child. He did not consolidate his career, even though he was a talented person. These were the main causes of the crisis. Essentially, I am now the father as well as the mother.

3. Discrimination exists everywhere and appears in different forms. In civilised families, for example in cities, it is veiled. In the rural areas it assumes an open face. In its place this reflects on the upbringing of future generations. In Asian families parents were always the model for one's conduct. But often this has a discriminatory aspect relating to the relationship between the elder and younger members, between men and women.

4. I am tolerant of marital infidelity. It happens for a variety of reasons. Physical infidelity is possible without moral infidelity. Perhaps, infidelity is due to an absence of mutual understanding between the spouses, although they continue to live together. The reason may be children, adjustment to family life. All the same, the spouses do not have to know about each other's infidelity, and it's better not to let it get around.

From childhood we were taught that in our country there is no sex. Sexual problems were neither discussed nor considered an important matter for the family. The subject has always been avoided, with people keeping quiet and being too embarrassed to discuss it and particularly amongst Asian families even to this day this topic is taboo. I think that all this is due to the distorted socialisation of the Soviet person. One of the excuses for keeping a lid on this is the growing phenomenon of broken homes. There are also some other factors behind the single family - and that other phenomenon, female isolation - material, moral, sexual and alcoholism. In families with a feudal structure even after a woman is married, she still experiences loneliness, even through she herself does not always understand this. She is constantly oppressed.

The cost of the Soviet ideology is the silence that surrounds the existence of prostitution in the country. It is essential that problems connected with this be discussed, the earlier the better, in the family and in society, because
prostitution is flourishing and increasing.

5. I have a positive attitude towards inter-ethnic marriages, as long as there are no problems between people of different nationalities in the society. At the same time I am critical of a situation where people who constitute the majority consider themselves superior. In such circumstances it is most unlikely that a mixed marriage would be successful and happy.

6. Any change in society is always reflected in relationships with the family. True, not all families react to these changes. Clearly, everything depends on whether the changes have a positive or negative impact on material circumstances, society's morals and education levels.

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**Kurolai Ibrahimgova**

Kazakh; 43; Head of department in a National Research Institute; married with two children; born in the countryside, living in Alma Almaty; studied in Moscow

1. Family and work are what my life consists of. If I were be deprived of either one, my life would be not fully realised. The foundations of the family are trust and mutual responsibility between husband and wife. A common profession, circle of acquaintances and life orientation help to strengthen my family. My husband and I have become stronger together. We know each other almost from childhood and this has helped us.

2. Of course, there have been difficulties in the family, but neither my husband nor myself brought things to a head. This is what allowed us to, more or less, successfully avoid them. A crisis leads to disenchantment and mutual coldness. This happens when the wife, preoccupied with the family and home, stops growing as an individual or, more rarely, the opposite occurs, i.e. when attempts are made to place all of the family problems, among them also material ones, on the wife while the husband himself continues to live as he did before marriage. Family life is also an on-going process and when there is no progress in feelings or emotional commonality, then the marriage decays and falls apart.

3. I have not witnessed any specific discrimination. Being limited in my contacts to a certain level prevents me from generalising about this matter. Nevertheless, I want add: what Russian women consider to be discrimination, I - and the majority of Kazakh women - do not see as discrimination. This includes things such as cooking supper and serving my husband at the table. Even at work I do not feel that it demeans me if I make the tea or breakfast for colleagues when we're on tour. This is a display of my female nature and is as natural as my male colleagues carrying my heavy baggage and worrying about transport and so on.

4. Infidelity on the part of my husband, would be a personal blow, and I myself would never allow myself to insult my husband in such a way. I consider infidelity to be betrayal. Still, infidelity exists, which is why, to avoid it, one has to understand its causes. There may be different reasons including the poor teaching of morals, boredom, chance, an absence of harmony in the
family or the lack of children.

I believe that the cause of single-parent families is the absence of a sexual culture. Often casual pre-marital liaisons are a factor, but above all single-parent are due to divorces brought on by alcoholism among men.

There is also a demographic cause. I read somewhere that today there are over 40,000 unmarried Kazakh women over the age of 28. These women have practically no chances of getting married as the number of bachelors of equal age is significantly lower. Remaining single is also characteristic of well-educated girls because of the elevated expectations they have of a future partner which prevents them from making a timely choice. Marriages with women of other nationalities is also widespread amongst Kazakh men, further aggravating the demographic situation since, for many Kazakh women, marriages with persons of other nationalities is not desirable. The loneliness of women - especially amongst the educated - is not only their personal problem and this issue needs to be studied and debated openly. Personally, I reject the solution of polygyny. I think there are few girls and women who would want to have a competitor.

There is prostitution, but its existence is shrouded in silence, and this at a time when it is a cause of venereal diseases and AIDS. There must be some law that would control the spread of this phenomenon.

5. I am against inter-ethnic marriages because this compounds the problems of family and inter-national relationships. Such marriages are in the 'risk group'. Such marriages last with difficulty and the consequences of the break-up of such families is even more damaging for the children. They become enemies of not only the guilty parent, but also his/her nation. Children of such marriages are particularly suffering today following the break-up of the Soviet Union. They are beset with the choice of what to be, where to live and how to relate to the independence of the country in which they live.

6. I suppose family attitudes will change. To some extent the patriarchal family is becoming strengthened. Parental choice is coming to have a greater say in the formation of the young family. Social stratification, increasingly visible today, will erect class barriers between young people. In the socially lower classes, the old customs and rituals of family relationships will be resurrected.

Elmira Turkmeneva
36; working as a scientific researcher; Kyrgyz; divorced with two children; living in Bishkek; Biochemist

1. Family is the basic foundation, for women in any case. In my view, no matter how much nice it is be at work, no matter what satisfaction one gets from one's favourite profession, still a woman cannot be happy if all is not well in the family or worse, if there is no family at all.

For a woman, irrespective of how courageous and rational-minded she is, it is inherent that she will constantly worry about someone (children, husband,
parents), worry about herself and seek to be indispensable to her family. The more a woman gives herself to the family, the more she accumulates happiness within herself.

The foundation of the family is love. Many say that for a family to be a happy one, it is enough that there be respect between the spouses. It seems to me that this is not enough because in the same way that it is not possible to love without respecting the other, so it is not possible to respect without having love within the family. Without love between the spouses, or between parents and their children, even in the presence of very good material conditions, the family does not exist; instead there is just a group of people.

2. I have also experienced a family crisis. When one stops loving, the desire to understand each other also seems to disappear. When the mind or the heart starts to feel resentment, quarrels begin, with the result that people living under the same roof becoming alien to each other. In our case, my husband started to have a different attitude towards life and its values.

3. The source of discrimination against women, in my opinion, lies in women's forced equality with men - no matter how paradoxical this may sound.

Woman is the keeper of the hearth and the moral source of warmth and well-being within the family. But in our society? 'Social equality' has taken the form of women becoming slaves to their work. For six to eight hours, they - quite literally - sweat at their workplace, then for two to three hours run around in search of bargains, standing in huge queues, then they run home to cook, clean, wash clothes and look after the husband and children. Meanwhile, the husband, after a long day's work (even though this is similar to his wife's), lies on the divan and reads the newspaper, waiting for his wife to fetch supper. The domestic life in the majority of Kazakh families has few labour-saving devices. Added to this, on a minimum of two to three days in a week, the family plays host to uninvited, unexpected relatives and guests, who also demand attention. Further, one should not forget that the prosperity of the suppressed majority of Kyrgyz families is far lower than average standards. Thus the poor level of cultural development, absence of mechanisation both at home and at work, and poor living standards facilitate women's enslavement. As a result, women almost inevitably fail to realise their full potential in the creative and social spheres. Often there is not even time for the most important things, for one's children and for mental communication with them.

4. I am unable to discuss the problems of marital infidelity since I myself have never been confronted with the problem. An abstract discussion on this topic would be dishonest. I think the problem of marital infidelity needs to be looked at differently in each individual case. The causes, as I see it, are simple. For years, the desire to experience that which taboos prohibit induces the desire to experience something new, something other than what already exists and is known. Apart from this, new partners also bring novelty into sexual relationships.

I am not very enlightened about matters relating to sex and I think that liberalism in the matter of sex is actually the basis of sexual problems in the family.
5. I am against inter-ethnic marriages even though, according to my own way of thinking, I am an active internationalist.

Each nationality has its own ethnic peculiarities that are sometimes due to historical conditions. Just on the strength of my upbringing and education, I can think of many negative characteristics of our people, allowing them to be criticised. Nevertheless, I think it would be painful for me to listen to this kind criticism from people of other nationalities. One would always have to be sensitive so as not to offend one's spouse, in effect needing to be constantly on one's guard. In marriage there are already many problems, why multiply them?

6. I think that in view of inertia of the Kyrgyz, family relationships will not change in the foreseeable future.

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Orzugul Amanova

Turkmen; 40; cardiologist; married with four children; doctor at the district polyclinic; living in Chardjoi

1. Family is the basic stimulus in one's life. The foundations of the family are trust between the members of the family, sound material circumstances and, of course, children.

2. A family crisis means the disappearance of the happy relationships between the members of the family when it has become impossible to trust one of the members, one of the spouses' unwillingness to meet their responsibilities towards each other, the children and relatives.

3. I have witnessed discrimination. All the heavy domestic work and the upholding of all rituals and customs lie on the shoulders of the woman. In order to prevent this discrimination from suppressing a woman, it is essential for her to work. Work is not only about a crust of bread, but something more.

4. Marital infidelity is the basic reason behind a family crisis. Trust between the spouses disappears with all the consequent results. The reason for infidelity lies in the male biology and also in the distorted upbringing men are given in the family. Beginning from early childhood, the man is convinced of his superiority; he has greater freedom than a girl.

The phenomenon of the single-parent family is also caused by the distorted upbringing of boys as well as girls and the romantic tendencies of girls and men's exploitative attitude towards women. Herein lies the cause of contradictions, conflicts and outbursts; and the children pay for it.

In our society the vast majority of married and unmarried women are lonely. Even though prostitution is outside the law, it exists. In principle, glasnost changed very little in our society. No matter how much we say "Halva, halva" ('Sweet, sweet'), the mouth does not taste sweet; so, too, we talked and talked about social vices, but they continued to flourish, even more than during the period when we did not talk about them.

It is difficult for me to talk about sexual problems in the family, not because
they do not exist, but because they do exist and are not acknowledged. This is another unacknowledged illness: something hurts, but where and what is not clear. The thing is that marriages based on love or mutual inclination are not as common a phenomenon as was thought in Soviet times. In the foundations of marriage we often find not a sense of the unity of souls between a man and a woman, but the desire to use women for the satisfaction of natural urges and purely biological functions. Here the problem with men is that they look for variety outside the home. Infidelity on the part of husbands is quite common. As for the wife, she is lonely, dissatisfied, caught up with her many children and domestic responsibilities, and in the final analysis, dependent upon the whim of her husband. Also linked with this are other problems such as the practice of cousin marriages. Not everyone realises the dangers involved. This is a blow to the health of the nation. Children who are life-long invalids are a heavy burden on the mother. The reason is same i.e. that the marriage is arranged by the parents. The promotion of marriages outside the family has not been effective given the dictates of ancient custom such as kalim, childhood engagement and so on. Thus talking about the sexual problems of marriage is a narrow approach to the issue.

5. I have a positive attitude towards inter-ethnic marriages. If this happened with my own children, I would not oppose it. My sister is married to an Uzbek, my brother to a Kazakh.

6. I think that family attitudes in the post-Soviet era will change along with the ideology: they will become more pragmatic and romance will disappear from the family.

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Sara Nursapaeva
Kazakh, 43; married with no children

1. Without a family a person feels done out of one's fair share. The foundation is love and common interest.

2. This is a difficult question. There are many reasons for a family crisis, one being material instability. This raises the level of stress, induces a lack of faith in tomorrow, makes people egoistic, pitiless and aggressive.

3. There is discrimination. Often it is when the husband is against the wife working, when he wants her to be dependent upon him in everything.

4. The reason for the phenomenon of the single woman is not simply demographic, as people are trying to prove, but the high expectations women have of family life. Loneliness does not give peace of mind. On the contrary, a single person has difficulty in achieving success because the soul suffers. Prevailing morals do not allow women to seek alternative ways of avoiding loneliness other than marriage. They cannot even adopt a child to minimise their loneliness or infuse meaning into their existence because the law does not allow it. Single mothers are the object of veiled condemnation and disapproval. This is cruel!

5. I am against inter-ethnic marriages. With age mutual alienation increases
in such families, especially when the children start to grow up and their choice of cultural orientation does not please one of the parents.

6. Kalim, class prejudice in the matter of marriage and material interest have started to become visible considerations in concluding marriages.

Zulfia Rakhmonkulova
Tajik; 29; married with three children; teacher who worked at a kindergarten; born and grew up in Kulyab; at present living in Bukhara with my husband's relatives

1. I came to understand the value of the family in the most difficult moments of my life. Family means both love, support and concern. My city, neighbours and family have survived fear, pain, hunger and tears. It is a tragedy for mothers to suffer the death of their grown-up and small children, and so many have died unborn. The prosperity of the family and its foundations is peace in the country. The war destroyed so much happiness and happy families, separating near ones and sowing bitterness. The foundations of the family are children who have grown up: they are like a bastion which protects the mother and father in their ebbing days from the vagaries of life. Through one's children one lives many lives. A strong, friendly, and large family helps and supports the weaker members, those who lose their way in life. This is strength.

2. Eight men, three women and three children perished in my family. A crisis in the country means a crisis in the family. We were fortunate to have relatives in Uzbekistan. They gave me and the children shelter. A family crisis is when the house that one has built with one's own hands is destroyed, when one's nearest and dearest are killed.

3. Discrimination against women occurs when they are considered a commodity and sold. How many girls were abducted to Afghanistan to be sold for weapons? The most terrifying discrimination against a person - be it a woman or a man - is when the right to life is taken away, or when someone else decides your fate.

4. The causes of marital infidelity lie with men and Islamic laws which give men too many rights. In the mountain areas, there are hardly any men or women living in a monogamous marriage. Polygyny is commonplace. Men treat women - even their own daughters - like commodities which can be sold. What can a woman feel towards those with such attitudes except to see them as liars, quarrelsome and unfaithful. I know of instances where wives were beaten to death. They live according to other laws, laws of centuries ago.

5. I have a positive attitude towards marriages between women and men of different nationalities, but this is not the case for everyone, particularly today. Forget about mixed marriages - they do not even want to sell their biscuits in the bazaar to Russians or Uzbeks! People are now very scared. To those who are extremely narrow-minded on account of their poor education, a person of
another nationality is either an enemy or a hostage. The Islamists want to interfere in everyone's private lives, telling them who to live with, who to be friends with and who to marry.

6. I pray to God that Tadjikistan returns to what it was even ten years ago. If Soviet laws are relegated to the past, then the life of women will become hell. We have already seen what they want to do with us. The Tadjik family is very conservative and if there are no laws to protect women, they would return to family slavery and misery.

IN the above pages, you have heard the voices of women themselves, talking about their attitudes towards the issue of the family and their problems. Women among those reading this book will probably have seen their own problems reflected in their stories, because women the world over have much in common and there are similar challenges related to the nature of the male-female relationship. But there is also much which probably appears very unfamiliar, exotic or even terrible to the reader. The specific characteristics of the family in Central Asia may seem as if it exists simultaneously in two worlds. The modern educated women returns home, removing her European clothes and donning domestic dress, she transforms into something similar to her mother, grandmother or mother-in-law who lived according to other laws of life. This contradiction is not limited to the outer attributes of domestic life and people's general way of life, it is also ingrained within the consciousness.

According to local perceptions of the laws of Islam, marriage (arranged by the parents of the children) is the duty and responsibility of every believer. The family is an intransient value and this is recognised by all of the respondents. However, the respondents display a varied analysis of the family, marriage, family relationships and the factors that threaten the stability of the family. The divergence in outlook, which in turn impacts upon the changes which have and are taking place within them, are determined by each individual respondent's level of maturity, her life experience, character and nationality as well as by whatever each woman regards as currently most important in her life.

The respondents' answers indicate that even though in the Soviet period the 'Islamic' foundations of the family was shaken, the basic idiosyncrasies of patriarchal society - the enduring nature of family ties and the high ratings women give the institution of family - have been preserved. The induction of women into social production placed new responsibilities upon them, but within the family there has been little qualitative change in the inter-relationships between its members. The failure to take into account the fact that women also work outside the house, has led to the multi-faceted discrimination against women that most respondents refer to.

The challenge of survival facing each individual in conditions of strict
hierarchy, the closed and static nature of society, general poverty and shortage of all types of goods has led to the preservation of the 'Muslim family', characterised by the allocation of authority to its male members and elders, along with the subordination of women. The responses contain oblique reference to the preservation of the stereotypical Muslim family, in all its positive and negative aspects. Contradictions between traditional perceptions regarding the role of women in family and their social conduct leads to crisis within the family or towards their remaining single.

For the majority of respondents, the family is seen as women's primary destiny and sphere of realisation, but not all note that this is the sole means of realising one's individuality. The majority of women see the foundations of the family as lying in love and mutual understanding between spouses. They do not restrict of family circle to husband, wife and children, but include other relatives which reveals the important role relatives play in Central Asian society.

Respondents link the sickness of the family institution either with the conservative nature of family custom and the preservation of a superior status for men, or with general social conditions including the decline of moral norms. There is a tendency to exaggerate society's negative phenomena and their impact on the stability of the family. Almost none of the respondents cite any progress in family attitudes and some even appear to favour phenomena such as polygyny.

Along with responses in which there is tolerance even towards prostitution, there are replies expressing intolerance towards single mothers. Many do not accept the need for the open debate of problems afflicting today's families, effectively a symptom of civic immaturity.

There are particularly divergent viewpoints on the issue of inter-ethnic marriages. Opponents of such marriages attempt to hide their intolerance by highlighting the negative aspects. But the very existence of such intolerance towards inter-ethnic marriages in itself bears witness to the sense of deprivation of national values exaggerated by the respondents.

Women responding to the questionnaires, clearly feel the transformations taking place in society and express their alarm about their negative impact upon the institution of family. The answers bear witnesses to the fact that the family has never been and is still not the subject of social policy. In several replies there are clearly expressed justifications regarding the necessity of such a policy. Particularly interesting are the respondents who link society's general backwardness with the backwardness of family attitudes, focusing on the problems of numerous children, contraception, and the widespread practice of marriages between relatives. Their replies are evidence of the profound impact of what are perceived to be Muslim moral norms on women's approach to the question of family.

Of particular interest are the replies of women from other nationalities living in Central Asia. They have different attitudes towards issues such as marital infidelity, prostitution and single-parent families. Nevertheless, they share the general analysis of family life, in which women are overburdened and subject to discrimination due to the backward domestic way of life.

The women's replies make up a mosaic portraying the true position of
women in the family. Today, those problems which continue to face the contemporary family, and which have remained unresolved due to the stagnation of society and the absence of social policies, are only a part of the profound crisis encompassing the former Soviet Union, an end to which is not foreseeable in the near future.
Chapter 3

Looking Back Into The Past
Looking Back Into The Past

Questions:

1. What was the status of the women in your community in the past, including that of women in leadership positions?

2. Knowing the history of your own family, do you know what the lives of women in the family were like?

3. What is your personal opinion regarding women’s emancipation in the Soviet period, including its legal aspects and the situation on the ground?

4. Who is your ideal example of a woman in the history or literature of your people, and why?

5. How do you feel about the idea of revising women’s equality that is currently being propounded by the mass media?

Chapter 3
Looking Back Into The Past

Today Central Asia is on the brink of change. Independence and the rise of national consciousness compels us to search our past for what will be the essential elements of our tomorrow. There have been both gains and losses...

Between the 1960s and 1980s, Soviet society claimed to have completely resolved the women’s question. However, during the period of perestroika, statistics and facts came to light indicating that women’s equality in the Soviet Union primarily consisted of their equal right to hard and poorly paid work, and their being denied those civic rights that men were denied. However, the authors of many publications on the status of women, by highlighting their tough living and working conditions consciously or unconsciously began to link women’s problems to the bankruptcy of the concept of women’s equality, rather than analyzing the issue in terms of the political system. This system approached the problem, first and foremost from the perspective of the economic goal of securing a cheap work force. But the authors of these papers closed their eyes to the fact that the resolution of the women’s question, even in this limited form, profoundly altered the psychology of women and allowed the development of their intellectual potential and the growth of their self-esteem, not to mention the fact that women played a leading role in the country’s modernisation.

For women of the Muslim republics of the USSR, the world of their peoples opened up, creating a path that was to lead them out of the Middle Ages into the new era. Formidable historical distances were travelled by the Muslim women of Central Asia. To return now to the world restricted by the walls of home and family would be impossible without detriment to women’s individuality and without detriment to the economic and social development of the newly independent country. This is why the question of transforming the rhetoric of women’s legal equality into reality is now very real and one of the important preconditions for the building of a legitimate state.

But not all women and politicians recognise this. The calls for a revision of the notion of women’s equality being made by writers and journalists in both the official and opposition press reveal the prevailing social attitudes regarding the role of women in the post-Soviet period. These authors engage in polemical mud-slinging directed against women, painting a negative picture of women’s status and demanding the return of women to their ‘natural’ vocation: rearing children and serving the family. There is a tendency in the mass media to depict women, especially educated women, as having negative qualities or in a satirical form. Attitudes towards women in senior posts take the form of comments critical of their conduct, which might be equally true of the corrupt representatives of the male sex. Seeing the problem presented in this way leads one to conclude that these outbursts are
not so much the result of honest concern for their sisters, but more the result of a perceived threat to the male ego. It is also proof of the mentality of the concerned authors and editors who essentially view women as a subordinate sex and who seek to ensure that their status remains low in the future.

But the appearance of such opinions should not be viewed as the result of new policies towards women, but simply as the emergence of the hidden discrimination against women that existed during the Soviet period. The clear discrimination women suffer in a patriarchal family has shown itself to be very resilient in Central Asia due to the backwardness and stagnation of social attitudes within the totalitarian system.

Unfortunately, prejudiced assertions such as these find considerable support today among certain sections of society. The trend of romanticising and idealising the position of women in the Muslim past presents a danger to society because - given that patriarchal traditions have proven to be very strong, and not only among the socially subordinate - sooner or later this can lead to the actual and legislative rejection of the concept of women's equality. Despite the dependent position of women in Central Asia during the Soviet period, and despite the massive physical stress they faced, one is still alarmed to find such romanticisation even amongst educated and well-qualified women. The fact that there is little rebuff in the press is evidence of their position.

It was against this background that we distributed the questionnaires asking respondents to elaborate their attitudes concerning the concept of women's equality and the history of the women's question. In response to these questions, we received extremely detailed, analytical and emotional replies, revealing markedly different points of view, as can be seen in the following pages.

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Miyassar Razzakova
Soloist of the Tashkent Opera; Uzbek; 28; born and living in Tashkent

1. Uzbek women were never free. They were hidden behind the walls of their homes in a subservient role. Even if a woman had outstanding qualities, she was deprived of the opportunity of completely realising her talent. It is not a coincidence that in folk songs there is the constant motif of women's heavy lot in life. Someone had to have composed this poetry and music. Only a woman who had suffered could have found words that continue to echo in the hearts of the listeners to this day.

Even today women are not free, but it is another kind of imprisonment. It might be strange for you to hear this from me, a professional singer, performing on the stage, surrounded by all the attributes of external success.
But in my private life I live according to the same laws, subordinate to the same rules which apply to the majority of my country women.

2. I can tell you about my mother. She was a very gifted person. If, in her time, she had received a good education, she would have achieved much. She was one of those people who could have carved her name in her people's history. She was gifted with great energy, hungry for knowledge and with a yearning for the new. Compelled to conform to a woman's traditional role - subordinate and dependent for everything upon her husband and mother-in-law - she nevertheless sought to pass on her dreams to her children and live through them. There she was, a mother of ten children, living in a mohalla in which the prestige of European operas, was - to put it plainly - not high. And yet she detected in me an innate aptitude and in order to guide my future, she took me, a 16 year-old girl, to recitals at the conservatory. I had no musical education. Nevertheless, she was determined that under all circumstances I would sing like Saodat Kabulova, a famous Uzbek opera singer. It must have been rare for an Uzbek mother to take this step because there was prejudice against performing arts such as the theatre and especially opera. These were regarded as purely European arts and even more so in the traditional Muslim environment. The career of an actress was not exactly considered the best for one's daughter.

3. The Soviet policies of emancipating women opened up the world of arts to Uzbek women. They gave women the opportunity to express their natural talent and allowed them contact with their own as well as global culture. I cannot assess other aspects of the emancipation policies because I am not involved in politics. This is not my business. Regarding the true status of Uzbek women, I have already said that in our society, the woman, irrespective of all the laws, remains in a subordinate role. This is how she is brought up.

Independent women are not loved, wise ones even less so. Men are forcing them out of senior positions, especially today. Women are being driven away from those places where they could have made a positive impact on society.

4. For me, the ideal woman is the mother of good children, a spiritual support for her family, complete as an individual with a sense of her own worth, respected and respecting these feelings in others, capable of protecting her rights, her opinions and her position in life. But I have not come across such a woman in our literature.

5. Behind the notion of revising the concept of women's equality, lie traditional perceptions of women's subordinate role - a characteristic of Muslim culture. In Asia there never has been, nor is, equality for women. Women who sing at the opera, or perform in the ballet, still have to obey the rules of society in their ordinary lives and live according to Islamic laws so as not to become outcasts. If a woman failed to conform, life would become full of complexes and psychological insecurity; her children would not have a future and she would find herself isolated. The majority of men do not want to accept that women can be talented (though professional men might be an exception), they do not value talent in women. For this reason, actresses find it difficult to have ordinary private lives. It is difficult to have male friends; gossip and tales start circulating and one's reputation is marred for life. Uzbek men don't regard acting and singing in the opera singer as respectable
professions for women. They become friends simply out of curiosity and nothing more.

Dildora Alimbekova
President of the Association of Business Women of Uzbekistan; an economist by qualification; owner of a business; divorced with two children; 39; Uzbek living in Tashkent

1. We have been taught and repeatedly told that our grandmothers were oppressed and suppressed. Their lives were hard according to present perceptions. But then they lived according to different laws. They had a different world-view and therefore to them their life did not seem as hard as we think it was. They were brought up and prepared for the kind of life which was pre-ordained for them. But we were prepared for a life which was actually make-believe. Our upbringing did not prepare us for life as it really is. From this perspective, they were more satisfied with their lives than we are with ours.

With respect to the fate of outstanding women in the history of the Uzbek people, I feel that for all their superior qualities and abilities, they were unfortunate because their expectations of life could never be fulfilled. But being outstanding, they were happy, reveling in their sharper sense of beauty and harmony and thankful for the beautiful moments in life, their hearts beating strongly out of love. This is why I feel that talented people are always happier - and therefore more unfortunate - than people in whom intellect and feelings have been deadened.

2. The women in my family lived well and were comparatively wealthy. My grandmother studied at a Russian gymnasium. For a long time they lived in the suburbs of Moscow; my grandfather was a merchant. We still have Grandmother's ball gowns. She did not live in seclusion like the majority of city women. Even though she was not Grandfather's only wife, she considered herself happy. They did not want for anything, being under her husband's wing protected her from the vagaries of life even when the family was deprived of its property.

3. The tragedy of women in an epoch of change and cultural transition is great because emancipation, for which Muslim women were not ready, shattered many lives. If the fruits of emancipation were reaped by anyone, then it was by women of the next generation, women of my age and younger. Value systems had by then altered; we received a good education, became economically more independent. But we never felt ourselves to be free. The laws protecting women were good, but life is far more complicated, which is why in our society there are many problems, including discrimination.

4. I have no ideal and even when I was very young I did not seek role-models in literature, because the heroines of classic literature were so far removed from me in time, while Uzbek literature of the Soviet period was full of false heroines.

5. I am against the revision of women's equality. Even then, there are some
difficult moments, when I want to lean on someone's strong and reliable shoulders, and shift all my responsibilities onto the nearest male.

**Baret Irgalieva**

Kazakh; 45; Director of the Executive Committee of the Democratic Committee for Human Rights; librarian; living in Almaty; married with one daughter

1. Kazakh women are the most freedom-loving amongst Muslim women and attitudes towards them are quite different to attitudes towards women among other neighbouring Muslim peoples. The birth of a daughter is an occasion of great happiness in the family and she is regarded as a temporary guest in the paternal home. She should not be punished because the father knows that a life which is not going to be easy awaits her in the future. Kazakh women have never veiled their faces. After marriage a woman could remain as a guest in her parents' house for a long while. She did not need to have anyone's permission, but just had to announce that she was going. Kazakh women took part in sports competitions, musical presentations and amateur competitions side by side with men, and in times of war Kazakh women rode with the cavalry to protect their homes and villages. In the Soviet period, many Kazakh women took part in the Second World War. Among them were many heroines who were decorated highly. And they perished alongside the men.

Female Kazakh students also took an active part in the events of December 1986.1 It was they who forced their male class fellows to return to the square where the soldiers were standing, with shouts of "Forward!". They were side by side with the men when the beatings started, and many girls were also amongst those affected by the post-December repression.

There have always been outstanding women. Their names are immortalised in legends. But Kazakh women were able to manifest their talents particularly in Soviet times, when the path to education was opened up to them. Today, there are many learned women, writers and musicians whose talent is known outside Kazakhstan as well. Women have shown themselves to be quite receptive to everything new that the revolution brought. The Women's Pedagogical Institute in Almaty became a place where every Kazakh woman, even from far-flung villages, could receive an education fully sponsored by the state.

There was great faith in the ideals of the revolution, but the revolution also killed many people, especially in the North. People were deceived and robbed in the late 1920s during the period of collectivisation, when millions died as a result of famine. Such was the cost of the new way of life. For those who survived, the path towards education was opened. Today, more than half of those having higher education are women.

2. Unfortunately, I do not know anything about the history of the women in my family as my mother was still a young girl when she was orphaned. Her parents perished in the famine of 1929. Mother lived a life full of challenges. We were well fed and clothed, but she did not have extra time for us.
3. The kind of equality which we have was an attempt to change the nature of women. The freedom of women became the right to heavy physical labour. The most regrettable result of 'Soviet-style liberation' became the abrogation of women's right to realise themselves as mothers. Perhaps our laws do protect women, but in reality, very few took advantage of this protection. The majority of women face a life harder than that of men. An eight-hour working day and primitive unproductive labour at home wear women down. This leads to growing bitterness towards the children, husband and life itself. There were no laws allowing women to work less, but if they worked less they could not feed themselves.

4. I am wary of the word 'ideal'. Quite a lot has been said about this in our not so distant past. Our ideals turned out to be false.

5. Revising the concept of women's equality is legitimate from the point of view of what I have just stated above. But if women were to return strictly to the world of their family, society would also suffer. This is why it is necessary to frame laws which will allow women to become equal members of society rather than simply guaranteeing women the right to perform men's work. Laws must allow women the time and means for their domestic duties, children and self-improvement.

Galima Musina

Tatar, professor at the Tashkent Pedagogical Institute; DSc in philology; born in Bashkiria but living in Uzbekistan from the age of two; spent childhood in Shahrikhan, Fergana; worked as a teacher in a school in Andijan; later teaching at the Andijan Pedagogical Institute; spent five years in Tashkent.

1. My husband and children are Uzbek. I have four children, two work in Tashkent, one in Moscow and one in Pakistan.

I studied women in the history of Central Asia as part of my doctoral dissertation, dedicated to heroines of the people's era. Outstanding women are not an exception in Central Asia's three thousand year history. Strabo(2) records that there was a female ruler against whom the ruler of Khorezm wanted to conclude a military alliance with Alexander the Great. Historically Central Asia (Turai) is a region of great contrasts, where both settlers and nomadic peoples lived; a region which became the route of massive human migrations; the remnants of matriarchy, which was particularly strong in nomadic culture, have also left their stamp on local attitudes towards women and amongst the peoples of the region. In the period when there was spiritual and political unity between the nomadic and settled peoples, the status of women was high among the followers of all religions. It was then that women emerged who left their mark on the political and spiritual life of our people. Women rulers, regents, deputys, viziers, poetesses and musicians are but a few of the social roles taken up by outstanding women. Belonging to the aristocracy, they had those qualities and knowledge that allowed them to take up top positions in society, leading us to conclude that they were not without rights. Dependence among the women of Central Asia and their not having their rights is characteristic of the periods of crisis and political
isolation which rocked these states and is linked to their marked backwardness.

I have uncovered a great deal of historical evidence regarding women's supervision of state education in the territory of modern Central Asia; there are more than twenty women whose names stand out, starting from the 4th century B.C. up to the 16th century A.D.

There are many facts in the history of Central Asia that should not be judged from the perspective of modern interpretations of women's equality. This needs to be regarded as a political concept from modern history, which came from the industrially developed West. I am convinced that this concept can also thrive in the East.

2. My mother and grandmother, even though literate, were very dependent within the family. Their life was difficult; the domestic world was the only space in which they could display their qualities. This is why, from my point of view and from the standpoint of my contemporary experience, it is difficult for me to span the distance and imagine what their life was like. We are separated by a whole century.

3. I have great respect for the Soviet rulers' policies regarding women's emancipation and I fully recognise what they gave to me personally. Mainly it gave me the opportunity to receive an education and awakened in me the need for serving not only my near ones, but also other people to whom I wanted to transmit what I know. But I regard the legislative aspects of women's equality as being incomplete. Laws only gave one the right to work, but did not give the right to choose between working or looking after the family. The option of doing part-time work and leaving some time for the family was limited. This is why for many - and, I am not afraid to say, for the majority of - women, such laws turned out not to mean equality, but slavery to the state. Legally, women have the right to be elected to organs of power, have the right to study, the right to refuse to marry someone they don't want to. This is good, but in reality they are often forced to reject these rights under pressure from the family as well as that very same state which passed these laws, and this is bad.

4. My ideal is a courageous woman, aware of her own worth and careful about her honour, clean in thought and action.

5. I am disturbed by the idea currently being propagated in the media of women's return to what is their 'natural' calling (as if it is alien to them to be human above all); specifically by the fact that it is precisely those who earlier praised the policy of the Soviet state regarding women, who are today painting that policy in a negative light.

I wrote an article against the smear campaign in the newspapers entitled 'Was the Khudjum Necessary?' and took it to the journal Saodat.(3) There I was told: "Equality of women is a thing of the past and your article is irrelevant today". You see, in this women's journal, men are in decision-making positions. I hope that the concept of revising women's equality is a temporary occurrence; sooner or later, everyone will understand that the notion of women's equality gave each woman an alternative measure of her own worth. It is currently the fashion to criticise women's equality of the Soviet period. People say that these rights were only a formality but this is no
basis for rejecting them. Is it possible for millions of women working in medicine, people's education, science and production, to return to the domestic realm? What would then become of us? Who would be the male supervisor's subordinates! There is no road back to the parandja. This is clear to every sane mind. The loss to society would be colossal. The goal of this is to make women dependent upon the thinking of men.

The cause lies in the fact that during Soviet times, due to the corruption of society, women who rose high in their careers often paid with their honour and with their flesh - the easiest thing they had to offer. Men also paid, but they paid with money, gifts, and even with their wives. From here stem the negative attitudes towards women and the idea of revising the concept of equality.

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Narbibish Shammaeva
Turkmen; 42; scientific worker, teaching in an higher educational institute; married with two children; living in Chardjoi

1. Turkmen women had an elevated status as head of the hearth and brought up their sons like real men. This was their predestiny, and from this stemmed the tremendous physical burdens which constituted their lives.

2. I can talk about my mother; my grandmothers I do not remember as they died early. My mother grew up without a mother's care, which is why she held her children particularly dear and was afraid of hurting them by words or actions. When my mother became a widow, she was left with a whole brood of children. She did not get married again as she didn't want for her children to be insulted by anyone just for the sake of a crust of bread. We are very thankful to her for this.

Outstanding women also existed in Turkmenia's past. For example bakshi story-tellers and musicians. But talent often forces women to reject what constitutes happiness for the average woman. Thus, the well-known legend about a bakshi woman who participated in a competition while pregnant. Her relatives begged her not to take part in the contest since these competitions were of a long duration and entailed considerable stress. She won this competition at the cost of motherhood and she was happy.

3. At the time of the revolution many women revealed their abilities. The emancipation of women allowed many Turkmen women to receive an education and enter the field of science. Famous in the Republic is the academician Bibi Palvanova, an historian and author of books about the history of women's emancipation in Turkmenistan. Zuleikha Bakieva, linguist, expert in Turkish, was also an expert in English, Russian and many Turkic languages. In the 1930s she had a brilliant academic career. Such examples helped to raise the level of society's consciousness and to discard prejudice.

But Soviet policies regarding women's emancipation were not entirely positive, they also had a negative side which today forces one to regard
women's equality as incomplete. It is no secret that before the revolution there was no prostitution in Turkmenia and children were not abandoned to the orphanages so that their mothers could get married quickly.

4. My ideal is my mother, a strong woman. She denied herself a personal life for the sake of her children.

5. If the concern underlying revision of the concept of women's equality is children then there might also be a need to review the possibility of distinct legislation allowing women to give more time to the family. But if it is simply ambition that lies behind this revision, then I am against it. Patriarchal norms lead women to dependent roles, and the loss of any single one of our existing rights facilitates the denial of other rights as well. Here the danger is clear and this must be understood above all by women, who support a revision of the concept of equality.

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**Zamira Osonbekova**

Kyrgyz: physiotherapist; post-graduate, working in an institute of higher education and at a garment factory; 40; unmarried; born and living in Bishkek

1. No one knows exactly what the status of Kyrgyz women was in the past. If one is to believe what we were taught in school, then it was tough. But if one is to believe today's historians and nationalists then, what we were taught is also wrong and their life was good. How can one judge the past from the contemporary perspective? I believe that no matter what life was like for our grandmothers, if it was alright with them, then it means that their situation was alright; children, home and the respect of relatives compensated for their labours.

2. If I compare the lives of my grandmothers and mother with my own then, certainly, their lives had greater meaning than mine. They were the heads of their homes, mothers and grandmothers, while I have a pointless existence; just numerous responsibilities which I have taken upon myself, many labours for which no one is thankful to me, and petty pain and bitterness caused by others. My life has been a quest for something illusive while for them it was the pursuit of something conventional and tangible.

3. I think that even without the state's intervention, women would still have got emancipated. Because life itself dictated the need for studying and being one's own person. Perhaps if things had happened this way, then everything would have been better.

4. I do not have ideals. I want to have those qualities which I lack.

5. Female equality is a sick philosophy and a dream which stems from the idealisation of either the past or the future (which we take to be as it is in the developed capitalist countries). Today there is talk of re-conceptualizing whatever 'equality' exists, or struggling for some new kind of equality. Few are interested. Everyone simply dreams of surviving - often at the cost of others.
Saule Kenesbaeva

Kazakh; 50; philologist specialising in Eastern Studies; divorced with a married daughter, working as head of department in the National Research Institute of Philosophy and Law; President of the International Association of Work and Cultural Co-operation (LIANA), Almaty

1. In spite of the fact that Kazakh women did not wear the traditional Muslim veil, they were unable to take independent decisions regarding their lives. Women were oppressed within the family. Women were dependent in everything upon the father, husband and even on grown-up sons. There were outstanding women in the history of the Kazakh people, one of them being Dina Nurpeisova, a traditional story-teller famed for her folk recitatives.

2. Many consider the lives of my mother and grandmothers to have been fortunate, because they survived despite famine and repression. They lived perhaps a better life than millions of their country-people as they were able to preserve their family, near ones, and themselves.

3. The policies on women's emancipation led to a significant change in the consciousness and lives of Kazakh women. The dynamics were staggering. This period certainly cannot be judged simplistically. People had tough lives, the human losses were great, but the changes and achievements were also immense. Can one deny the rise in the level of women's education? State protection of women allowed them to play a significant role in society, science and culture. There are dozens of names of outstanding women in every generation - musicians, writers and doctors. This is the result of the policies of women's emancipation. Legally speaking, women's equality was strengthened both by the laws of marriage and family, as well as through legislative acts. In this area the advances have been greater than in other countries - not only of the East, but also the West. But the real status of women was not as high as this legislation envisaged. Women's participation in government was limited to their being nominated to posts filled through a quota system (5) and as a result they were relegated to subordinate, administrative positions. They were not appointed to real decision-making posts. Inertia of thought also prevented women from gaining social respect. The real position of women is influenced by many other local factors; women are forced to choose between the family and society.

4. A woman who is educated and self-confident is a source of great moral support for the family. She also exercises a positive influence on society, on all aspects of its life, culture and sense of humanity, bringing harmony and preventing confrontation.

5. The Soviet form of women's equality did not take into account varied cultural traditions, with the result that the notion of equality was vulgarised. From this flow the attempts to revise the concept. A rejection of what was achieved during the Soviet period would be a great mistake, indicating the immaturity of our sovereign state. This is why it is essential to have an objective analysis of the Soviet experience of the women's issue. The very fact that discussion is taking place on the issue is evidence of the topicality of the concept of women's equality.
1. Even though I my knowledge of history is incomplete, I know that Uzbek women had fewer rights in comparison to present times, but they were not downtrodden. Proof lies in the poetry and numerous folk songs which were undoubtedly composed by women. The position of women from different social strata varied. They were subordinate, yet the kind of complete oppression we face today did not exist. They had no rights in the choice of husbands and were married off very young. They did not even see the face of their future husband until they were married. They were not even asked whether they agreed to their husband taking a second or a third wife. But still, the authority of the mother was very great. Women from well-to-do families received an education. They had their own world of interests which gave them the opportunity to display their personal qualities. Our outstanding women poetesses recognised their unequal position and their suffering, their happiness and their dreams were reflected in their works.

2. I do not know much about my maternal grandmother. She was from a well-to-do family. She was literate. She was given in marriage without her consent; no one asked her if she wanted to get married at the age of fifteen. As a daughter-in-law, she obeyed all the orders of a demanding and cruel mother-in-law. Material well-being aside, she had very little happiness because she was always dependent. The revolution with the full force of a historical cataclysm hit her husband and children. Grandfather was repressed, and his sons died in the Second World War. She was left with four minor daughters and no breadwinner. She went to work at the factory and died at the age of 48. Not an easy fate.

3. I have a positive attitude towards the policies of women's emancipation. Legislation strengthened women's rights. But in real life, equality was superficial and there was hidden discrimination. But women, if they had sufficient will and character, could forge their own destiny in many areas. Whether women were ready for freedom and the responsibilities this entailed is another question.

4. In my youth there were the ideals which we were taught at school. Now I understand that these ideals caused us great harm because they primarily focused on professional achievement. The role of mother and wife was somehow secondary in life. This is why I regard my ideals as somewhat incomplete and have myself, experienced the full extent of the contradiction between one's ideals and real life. The role of being a successful woman became a source of tension for many. One also needs to be prepared for this contradiction between being a specialist in one's profession on the one hand and a mother on the other. For women, the main sphere of self-realisation is the family. The domestic realm must also be accorded social prestige. Had my childhood ideal been that of being a beautiful woman for whom a husband and children were the main things in life, I would have faced less criticism and suffering in my life.
Aigul Sultankulova

Kyrgyz; 34; economist working in the Ministry; born in Osh, living in Bishkek

1. Naturally in the past, the position of Kyrgyz women was hard because life itself was poor and difficult, although women of noble families, on account of their wealth, lived quite well and their husband's relatives always took their opinions into consideration. This was because behind these women stood powerful clans who would not have permitted anyone to offend them.

2. My father's mother was from a poor family. She was Grandfather's second wife. She had three children and she considered her life to be a good one until the time Grandfather was imprisoned as a kulak. She particularly mentioned the fact that she did not know where he died and is buried. She was helped by relatives to bring up the children.

My maternal grandmother was a Southerner from a prosperous family and, in the words of Mother and my aunt, an outstanding woman who had considerable influence among her relatives. Hospitable, good and wise, she gave refuge and advice to any of her relatives who needed it. The family is indebted to her for its respected position. The only thing from which she suffered all her life was the petty tyrannies of our grandfather, a person of quarrelsome disposition.

3. The so-called Soviet policy of emancipation didn't give women anything. In fact, to the contrary. While women's functions in the feudal period were simply reproduction, bringing up the children and tending the domestic hearth, they are now also enslaved by their jobs.

Both at home and at work they have enormous responsibilities, which are often in my opinion unnecessary.

4. My ideal woman is a wealthy woman, who is independent, confident in herself and in her future. But for this to happen she must be genuinely free.

5. If they want to write in the newspapers about the revision of the notion of women's equality, then let them write. Yesterday they wrote something quite different. Anyway, life doesn't really depend on what's written in the newspapers. Women need to realise what they need - to find like-minded women and to unite - and to themselves say what they want in life.

Aida Pak

Korean; 50; furniture production technologist; have three children; born in Uzbekistan and living in Kazakhstan; currently not working.

1. Conditions facing Korean women were just the same as those facing Muslim women. Women were a subordinate being with their lives being dominated by poverty and mothers-in-law.

2. Koreans are hard working people. Even in the first year they had a good
harvest. Mother worked on the kolkhoz and at home. I now think that she had
talent. She possessed a wonderful voice, but she could not unveil her talents
then. A life of need means one can think of bread alone.

3. On the whole, negative. Women are torn between work, home, children
and the need to earn a living. Husbands have become lazy louts, not wanting
to be responsible for anything.

4. I do not have any ideal.

5. I am for a revision of women's equality. It is not necessary for women to
work eight hours; it is not necessary for them to feed themselves. And then
why should they elect anyone or be elected? This is just a tall-story: it was
those who were nominated who would be elected! In the political sense,
equality anyway does not give women anything.

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**Gulnara Abdrasilova**

Kazakh; 34; teacher in a higher educational institute; married with two children;
living in Almaty

1. In many respects, Kazakh women were equal to men. Usually they were
physically strong, they rode on horses, even fought in wars, and participated
in different competitions. Women of noble families had a right to voice their
opinion not only regarding the affairs of their own family, but also the affairs
of the tribe. After her husband's death, the woman was considered the head
of the family. They took up almost everything that men did.

2. We are from Eastern Kazakhstan. My grandmother exercised great
influence among her relatives. My grandmother on my father's side is
considered the head of the family line since all the elder men have died. She
resolved disputes between relatives. The status of the head of a family line is
very high. She is invited to all community councils where problems are to be
resolved, problems affecting not only the village but the entire region.
Similarly, at festivals, memorial services, and such gatherings, she
participates side by side with men and sits at the chief table or in the special
tent. My mother-in-law is a wise woman, capable, courageous and highly
respected. Even strangers come to her for advice and help because she is also
considered the head of her family line.

3. The policies of emancipation gave women greater opportunities for
education. This is significant. While earlier, Kazakh women's talents were
manifested through handicrafts, now their sphere of activity is impressive, as
long as they have the will. Many of our well-known opera singers are girls
from the village. Could it have been possible, at the start of the century, to
predict that Kazakh women would be singers who would sing on European
stages? Modern Kazakhstan is an insignificant country. A lot of extremes
meet here and the country very successfully assimilates the best of what
comes from the outside. I think the notion of women's equality and the
policies relating to women found extremely fertile soil in Kazakhstan; the
growth of consciousness has been enormous. The change can be seen on
women's faces. I, as a teacher at a higher educational institute, see how elegant and beautiful our girls are and they have a great thirst for knowledge.

4. My ideal woman is wise, loving and kind-hearted.

5. Underlying a re-thinking of the concept of women's equality - evident in calls for women's return to the hearth, a revival of polygamy, segregated education and so on - are the lack of self-realisation and the complexes both men and women have suffered as individuals. Men who reject women's right to be full members of society and their right to choose their fate, manifest the harm that their self-esteem has suffered. Many people attempt to blame others for their own unhappiness. These others are often women. Many understand the equality of women as a conflict of the sexes, this is not so and must not be so.

According to me - I hope I am wrong - those who support the revision of women's equality are those who want to sideline women as competitors for senior positions and interesting work.

Zebo Kasimova
Tajik; 35; married with two children; Biologist, working at a college; living in Dushanbe

1. In all eras there has been good and bad; that goes for women, too. For prosperous women, life was more delightful and happy. In the lower classes, life for women has always been difficult. Women of these classes faced exploitation and degradation. The question is what was the relationship between them. Naturally, in a backward society the exploited and the poor were significantly more - and there's your answer. There were prominent poetesses and authors writing in Farsi. They all belonged to the Persian-speaking world.

2. I do not know how my grandmothers and great grandmothers lived, but in the my mother's family almost all the girls had higher education and worked in the fields of medicine, culture and education.

3. I grew up with Soviet ideology and consider the emancipation of the women of the East a momentous event, opening up the path of education to women. From these policies the previously suppressed minor nationalities gained a lot. Had there not been the revolution and freedom of women, would it have been possible for such a large number of educated Tadjik women to emerge? If not all girls can forge their own lives, then the fault lies with their families and their upbringing and not with Soviet laws, which protected the rights of women in the family and at work.

4. My ideal is an educated and goal-oriented woman. Only such a woman can bring up her children in the spirit of progress. Events in Tadjikistan indicate how frighteningly uneducated and unenlightened the masses are. There were also women among those who took part in the protest on the Shaheedan (martyrs) Square. It is the uneducated fanatics who cannot tolerate anyone who does not behave like them, think like them, or who speaks in a different
language. I could say more but I am afraid. Today, when we have passed through a civil war and seen so much blood and so many deaths, fear surrounds us. We have seen how, just because of their independent opinions, people’s lives were taken away, they were accused by this or that side of being traitors. This is why I am not disclosing my real name.

5. The revision of the notion of equal rights for women is supported by the Islamists - narrow-minded and fanatical people.

Gulchekhra Nurullaeva
Uzbek; married; academic background in philology; poetess

1. My late mother said, "Man has been created for society, woman for the family". The women of my people lived primarily according to this rule, bringing up the children and running the house. The burden of providing for the family lay completely on the men, as responsibilities were divided between men and women. But the difference between what my mother learnt and what I learnt, was as great as between the earth and sky. That's what I now think. I do not wear a parandja, like my mother, I do not offer prayers five times a day and do not fast in the month of Ramadan. But it was my mother (she was born in 1894 and died in 1979) who gave us education and self-confidence. No one understood me better than her. Her understanding of honesty, justice and culture was higher than it is among we who were educated at an ideological school. According to her, the main criteria for honesty was persistent work, a sense of disgust regarding dishonesty, a sense of honour, independent thought and a respectful attitude towards others. For her, it was impossible to accept the Soviet way of life, in which the meaning of honesty, greatness of spirit, dignity and kindheartedness became distorted. "You yourself were one of the poor, so why do you praise the past?" I once asked her. She answered, "Because then, the rich worried about the poor and they had a conscience. Today all are poor in soul, and have no sense of proportion, neither about food nor about material goods, and have become greedy and envious. Earlier, the poor had dignity and their eyes were satiated. Today, even the highest placed people bow like a slave and does not want to look in the face of truth, does not hesitate to cheat or rob even children".

In my view, the past should not be idealised, but it should also not only be depicted as dark. The best should be taken and we should move forward.

With respect to outstanding women, these were mainly educated aristocrats: drawing-room hostesses and other noblewomen. Our great poetess Lady Nadira is an example of both artistic ability and social activism. She showed us women's potential in the arts and in politics. In all eras there has been both light and darkness, happiness and sorrow, fortune and bitterness, and this was also experienced by outstanding women in their lives.

2. I do not have any information about other women in my family. Unfortunately, my Soviet upbringing did not foster an interest in the past and I did not attempt to listen to my mother's recollections about the past. Today, I am ashamed of myself for my lack of curiosity.
3. Women and society in general were forced to deviate from one path to a completely different one. True, it should not have been done like that. I am against the methods with which the emancipation of women was handled in the 1930s. So, women abandoned the parlata, came out of the world of the family and entered public life, even taking up male professions. What did they get in return? Instead of just doing one job at home, they in effect worked a triple shift: for the state, the children, and the husband. As I see it, women are completely unsatisfied with such 'freedom'. Unfortunately there have been no proper fact-based studies of social thought nor any publication of the results. Had this happened, the situation would have been clear. Such social research is needed!

4. It is difficult for me to instantly come up with an ideal. In my understanding, the ideal woman is someone who combines those qualities which link her both to the past and to the future; where the achievements of the past and the dreams of the future are harmoniously combined. This woman, whose words match her deeds, is someone whose main goal in life is the enlightenment of the nation. Much of my ideal woman is found in Vasila Inoyatova - one of the activists of Birlik.(7) But is there a possibility of the ideal undergoing some transformation? Because for the entire period that I have known her, she has been undergoing some ordeal or the other. Now, with three children, she has been forced to emigrate. As an individual, she was especially courageous and selfless, righteous and uncompromising. But what awaits her in the future? This worries me.

5. Many seem to want women to return to the domestic realm and similarly there seems to be specific support for such an idea. But water does not flow backwards! Women need truth, justice, love and freedom in the real sense of the word. They are tired of lies and false concern about their prosperity...

Radim Zhabaeva

38; Balkar(8); economist working in commerce; unmarried; born in Kizil-Kie and living in Bishkek

1. Women of the Caucasus were without rights and remain so. From what I know, in the history of the Balkar there are no names of Balkar women.

2. Grandmother, my mother and myself - all of us were dependent and are dependent upon our fathers and brothers. Women cannot take even a step without the approval of their male relatives. All questions which concern us women are resolved by men. Women place the responsibility for all matters outside the home on the men, which is why immaturity and dependency are characteristic features of the Balkar woman.

3. The emancipation of women did not, I think, take place. I am talking about the women of my community. If some women did get the fruits of freedom, they were Russian women. They were well-aware of their rights, but even they were given only limited freedom. I think this happened because the laws did not take into account the fact that more than one hundred nationalities lived in the Soviet Union. They had different levels of development, and
different cultures and traditions, which is why the changes and the same laws could not produce similar results among all peoples.

4. My ideal is to decide everything for myself. To be independent. But if I managed this, then I would be left completely, but completely, isolated. To build my own life myself is not really possible: it is very difficult for people to tear themselves away from their circle, and women move in such restricted circles. Being introduced to new people, even more so to men, is a big event.

5. Why should one revise something that does not exist? What is voiced in the media are really just statements of the fact of inequality. It is true, for example, that women's sphere remains restricted by family and relatives. For them, work is only a means of earning food and clothing. Work gives women very little independence. So what we need to talk about is not so much that people want to snatch away our freedom, but that this freedom never existed. Freedom can only come if society changes and there are no longer any exclusive cliques in society, when people can freely change jobs, move house, travel, or change their sphere of activity, when there is no prejudice towards the unknown. This will not be soon.

Mayam Izbasarova
Kazakh; 57; married with three children; retired Civil Engineer; living in Almaty

1. In the Kazakh setting, prominent women were not rare. There are famous names such as Ulkam, a ruler of one of the Kazakh Khantes, and Kizjibek, who made it possible to unite the Kazakh tribes. In their collective memory, women of these races have always occupied a high position in their family and have been considered the head of the tribe. The vestiges of matriarchy are clear from the fact that even after the acceptance of Islam, women's cults from past religions have survived; the tombs of priestesses are still visited.

Kazakh women never covered their faces and the physical demands of nomadic life required them to be healthy, explaining why women participated side by side with men in sports competitions and in contests between poets and singers.

2. My mother was raised by her stepmother who was from Kustania. I do not know the details of her life. She was respected and went everywhere with an uncovered face. Amongst the Kazakh there is a custom that when a brother dies, one of the other brothers marries his widow taking her and his brother's children under his protection. This custom is called amangerlik - marriage on the basis of inheritance. This is what happened in my mother's family. After her father's death, her uncle took my grandmother as his wife. Grandmother soon died and her children were brought up by the wife of mother's uncle. I consider this a kind-hearted custom and there is no need to be ashamed of it.

3. The emancipation of Kazakh women opened up the path towards education. My mother went to study in Tashkent. There she got married to her class-fellow. People were greatly committed to learning. Many talents
were discovered. The stage became the calling for well-known singers of today. People had confidence that tomorrow would bring a brighter future. The souls of our new generation were inspired. Laws protected women and a woman could choose her own path in life.

4. My ideal has always been my mother - Sharipa Alipaeva. She was a hard-working and kind-hearted example to us. She could have achieved a lot in life, but she devoted all her strength to the family. During the war, father - a Party worker - had gone off to the front right from the outbreak of war, and Mother supported not only her own family, but also the family of her brother who had been killed. For a year an elderly Bashkir woman, who had lost her family, lived with us. Mother let her go only when her relatives came searching for her. She was the children's best friend. She always had the courage to take on additional responsibilities. We learnt goodness and bravery from her.

5. I do not agree with those who are trying to revise the notion of women's equality. Rejecting this concept would be a step backwards. But I do not support that kind of equality which gives women the 'right' to heavy labour and denies them everything that allows women to feel themselves to be complete persons. This should not be allowed to happen!

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Adolat Azimova

Uzbek, 45; Pro-rector of the Tashkent Institute of Oriental Languages; a lawyer by education; married with two children; born and living in Tashkent

1. To be an outstanding woman one needs to have the material foundations and the support of one's parents. This is how it was in the past, this is how it is today. A girl can achieve much if the desire exists within her, and if she has the material support of her family.

2. I know that my mother lived a good life, notwithstanding material difficulties, because my parents loved each other.

3. The policies of women's emancipation brought positive change in women's lives. The laws quite adequately strengthened the rights of women in the family and at work. I believe that single mothers are granted too many benefits and these need to be removed. In life women have become equal.

4. My ideal is the former Minister of Justice, Mamlakat Vasilova. She is the mother of five children, a Doctor of Sciences, a professor and for twenty years has occupied senior posts. Not everyone can achieve this!

5. I have a negative reaction to the idea of revising the concept of women's equality. Men do not like it when women occupy senior positions.
Kurolai Ibrahimova

Kazakh; 43; Head of department in a National Research Institute; married with two children; born in the countryside, living in Alma Almaty; studied in Moscow

1. Women always have been dependent and they can never be men (although I would never want to be a man). This similarly applies to outstanding women.

2. I do not know anything about the life of past generations of women in my family because my father's and mother's entire family died in the famine.

3. My attitude towards the policies of women's emancipation is not a simple one. The majority of Russian women interpreted the concept of equality in their own way - and became more free sexually. This appeared amongst us Kazakh girls also. But we were brought up with other cultural attitudes and therefore, I view free interaction between the sexes negatively. It was precisely the policies of women's emancipation that led to the homogenisation of the national character of women. We lost a lot due to the fact that we had to prove that we were just like the Russian women. From this stem the attempts to copy them in appearances, their crudeness and even shamelessness.

4. I have no ideal woman.

5. I am generally skeptical about the women's question. This issue stems from some women's consciousness of their inferiority and from their resistance to their own nature.

Guzal Sarkisova

37; Uzbek; married with two children; qualified as a teacher and formerly director of a small enterprise but currently President of the Foundation for National Diplomacy

1. I believe that the status of women in the pre-Soviet period was very low. They suffered much due to their oppressed situation. Women's poetry from ages past is evidence of this. Women at the age of thirteen or fourteen were already mothers and at the age of thirty, they were old because they were cruelly exploited, and treated like slaves. Outstanding women faced a fate that was no different. They were outstanding because they attempted to assert their dignity and were able to reflect this in their poetic works. I react negatively to the idealism of some contemporary Muslim women activists who want to subordinate modern women to their retrograde ideas, and withdraw them from public life.

2. My grandmother suffered a lot because my grandfather was repressed. He was a military commissar who tried not to take young village men into the army if they were the only males in the family or came from families with
many girls. She brought up my father and uncles alone and worked a lot.

3. I have a low opinion of the Soviet method of liberating women. There was wage levelling. Women were forced to work hard both outside and at home. Nevertheless, women developed a lot in terms of consciousness and education, and became independent.

The positive aspect was the equal right to education. Fortunately, women even in difficult situations know how to be happy. A yearning for the beautiful has remained in them. They laboured in the name of the family and its prosperity, and this consciousness allowed them to preserve their dignity.

4. 'Do not create for yourself idols' (11) and in the light of this commandment, I reject role-models. I do not need them because I know what is best for me.

5. I view the revision of women's equality negatively. A woman must not be made to sit at home and limit her interests. Nor is it necessary, as was done in the past, to drive her to work and make her refuse to have a family, husband and children in the name of some abstract social good. Give women the right to choose; there is no need to use force as women's 'new well-wishers' declaim!

I find it very important to maintain current education standards for women and the sense that society needs women. Resistance to the retrogressive forces must be made collectively, because no one listens to individual voices.

Lola Hamidova

Tajik; 41; married with three children; lawyer working the legal system for past fifteen years; living in Leninabad

1. Women had a very tough time in the past. In vain our nationalists attempt to idealise the situation of Muslim women. It was their particularly difficult conditions and their oppression which influenced the character of Tajik women today, with their fear of scandal, hysteria, despotism and sense of rivalry. Even our most famous women who hold senior posts display these qualities. The preservation of traditional family attitudes that view women as servants or subordinate within the family, and the despotic attitudes of mothers-in-law oppress the young woman in the family. Later, when she herself becomes older, the woman replicates the same kind of attitudes in her treatment of her new daughter-in-law.

2. My mother and grandmother lived only for the family and to serve it. My maternal grandmother was from a mountain village. A beauty, she possessed a very strong character and had a great influence over her sons; their wives trembled before her and hated her.

3. Notwithstanding all the efforts of the Soviet rulers, the women of the East could not become free and equal to men, especially in the family. As a lawyer, I daily come across so many examples of the suppression of women that I could write a whole book. All the negative qualities of our women are the result of oppression and an absence of cultural development.
4. My profession does not allow me to have ideals. For me the ideal characteristic in people - whether women or men - is a sense of justice. Most people lack it.

5. Behind the revision of the notion of equality lies our usual stupidity, when we cannot recognise the true reason for our misfortune. We have never had equality of women, so why revise something which has never existed! Our women superiors often showed themselves in a negative light. They being the ones who are specifically considered to be emancipated, it is not surprising that such a form of emancipation is being rejected by society in the countries of Central Asia.

Khairintso Ganieva

Uzbek; physiotherapist working at the Tashkent University polyclinic; married with three children; 42

1. Uzbek woman were always oppressed. Even to this day they have not freed themselves of this oppression. We were always dependent and depended upon the opinions of men. This was also the case of prominent women in the past. Their lives were difficult and some people pointlessly attempt to idealise the life of Lady Nadira. Her own tragic fate refutes all illusions. While among the lower level of society women experienced physical oppression, among the aristocracy, spiritual oppression undermined their individuality.

2. I know how Grandmother lived. She aged early due to Grandfather's despotism. In her old age she lived with one of her sons, and Grandfather with another. She endured quite a lot in the family. Both my Grandmother, aunts and other women of my family were slaves to the family. And today, still 80% of Uzbek women remain slaves to their families. There are very few men who sympathise with their wives. In the villages they have more pity for their livestock than for their wives.

3. The process of emancipation was of great significance. Women leapt over many historical epochs thanks to Soviet rule. Even if only for the liberation of women, Soviet rule deserves thanks. Unfortunately, history needs time to strengthen the achievements of the revolutionary breakthrough. Very little time has gone by. In the legislative sphere, things have gone far ahead, while reality - which they tried not to look at too closely - has remained far behind. Each woman must remember what Soviet legislation has given her. One more thing: the Russian language helped Uzbek women rise out of the past. This, too, we must not forget. A rejection of the Russian language, through which we learned about western civilisation, would be a grave mistake with far-reaching consequences for women.

4. My ideal woman is cultured, and therefore a humanist. These are the two things which promote unity among people and prevent evil and aggressiveness.

5. Behind the revision of the concept of equality lies people's resentment of women who have achieved something. Not every man can be as hard-
working and goal-oriented, as women can be. For a woman to attain success she needs to apply greater effort than a man.

**Sharipka Dilmurodova**

Karakalpak(12); 29; married with two children; teacher; living in Nukus

1. Like other women of the East, Karakalpak women had no rights. But they had to be more independent as life among the small nomadic nations such as the Karakalpak at the beginning of the 20th century was very hard. The history of our people goes back to ancient times. It has still not been studied as completely as the histories of other neighbouring races due to the extreme backwardness and oppression of our people, which has still not been overcome. The existence of outstanding women is evident in the Karakalpak ancient city site known as, Kirk-Kiz which means 'forty girls'.

2. I know very little about how the past generation in my family lived. I know only that my great grandmother was a third wife and that she was taunted by Great Grandfather's other wives. I know that she gave birth to ten children, of which three survived. I know one of my grandmothers studied at the workers' institute, but did not work after marriage. Mother studied in Tashkent. She is a medical worker.

3. I think that much of what is considered to represent women's freedom actually constitutes great dependence. But it is impossible to deny that Karakalpak women found themselves a new life and that the quality of that new life is unquestionably higher, even if it continued to contain much that was difficult and bad. True, it is still difficult to call this life 'modern'. We have misconceptions about modern women. Women who drink equally with men and mimic men in their private and public lives are abnormal, even though many seem to think this is what the modern woman should be like. It seems to me that the equality of women is only on paper, and in real life they have to work twice as much as men, both at work and at home.

4. My ideal is an educated and wise woman, occupying some senior state post.

5. I do not know about what you term the revision of women's equality. As far as I'm concerned, the newspapers only remember women on the 8th of March. It would be better not to write about equality, but about how to lighten each woman's load and give her the feeling that she is a woman.

**Zamira Valieva**

25; Uzbek; engineer; doing PhD research at the Institute of Civil Engineering; divorced and living in Tashkent.

1. I think that their situation cannot have been that bad if they were able to leave their mark on history and display their abilities and talent. This is what
makes them outstanding. They lived according to their times and that life was different; growing up in a different culture, their expectations were different. Those conditions may seem unappealing to us, but this is just a matter of our perception.

2. I know how our grandmothers lived. Their youth coincided with the process of the emancipation of women and, on the wave of this process, they received an education. My paternal grandmother made not too bad a career for herself. She lived according to the ideals of her times and worked in the field of people's education. After the death of her husband (whom she loved very much) in the war, she took his path (he was also a teacher). She devoted herself to her work and became the director of a school. She lived for her students and was their friend and mentor.

My other grandmother was also educated in the Soviet period, but she devoted herself to the family and was happy concentrating on her husband and children. She gave the children a good education and upbringing because she herself was well-brought up and educated.

3. The emancipation of women was an important step on the path of our people's progress. It is another matter that the necessity of freeing women from their sub-human status was not recognised by all, and even now in the eyes of the majority of men women constitute inferior beings. From this stems the current attitude which regards emancipation as something negative. Men, and indeed also women, attempt to blame society's negative features on the fact that women are liberated and work. They do not see the other more obvious reasons for fatherlessness, divorce, child crime and prostitution. Such an uncivilised understanding of social problems generally leads to demands for women to return to the circle of family and children, and for their subordinate role in the family and society. That there are quite a few such people terrifies my friends - women of my circle and my education.

I find the legal aspects of women's equality inadequate because I see contradiction of the standards set by legislation and society's level of development. The point is not that the laws are bad, but that society did not use them for the purposes which it should have. Our laws often view women as objects, needing some form of support or privilege; and there are no laws which encourage women's initiative and social activity, their desire for success. This is why the true status of women in our society remains low. They are not properly respected as individuals - and this is discrimination.

4. I do not have an ideal woman, perhaps because in our society we were tangled up in false ideals. I knew little about the history and literature of the people of our generation and therefore did not seek out my ideal. All that was in the past which we have rejected, but little has remained for our present generation.

5. I have a negative attitude towards the revision of women's equality. I do not understand why there is a need to reject what was good about our lives instead of whatever it was that was holding our development back. Modern Uzbek society's isolation from civilisation is stimulating a return to the past. An uncritical attitude towards history and, at times, simple ignorance are leading to the idealisation of Medieval times. They are pushing us women on the path of degradation.
1. The position of Kyrgyz women in the past and today is primarily identical. Kyrgyz women never wear paranja, and in the home their opinion was taken into account; as mothers they were greatly respected. In the Kyrgyz people's history, there have been outstanding women. At the turn of the century lived Kurmanjan-datkho, a queen. She was a powerful and wise woman and was able to rule in the south for a long period.

There were prominent women in the Soviet period as well: Urkuya Saliveva, the first woman president of a cooperative farm who was murdered by the Basmatch(13); the academician, Bubuna Orozbaeva; Kakish Riskulova, a famous surgeon; Saira Kiiisbaeva, an opera singer; Sara Beishenalieva, a ballerina; and many others who went down in the history of Kyrgyzstan.

2. The women of my tribe were beautiful and rich. In the family they commanded respect, love and attention.

3. The policies of women's emancipation produced wonderful results. Kyrgyz women are today successfully working in all spheres of life and have even become representatives at the United Nations.

4. My ideal woman is Margaret Thatcher.

5. No revision of the notion of equality can possibly return women to the confines of family responsibilities. Women who have a profession and are educated want to work and be useful for as long as their strength allows them. This is because work determines their status in the eyes of society and even in the eyes of their relatives. Unfortunately, women have little choice about what they can be: there is work for the state and the home. They need other spheres where they can realise themselves. There are still no women who own a business, no women philanthropists, or patrons of the arts.

THUS, although in their assessment of the past the respondents have different outlooks, the majority acknowledge the fact that Soviet policies for the emancipation of women had a major impact on the fate of each woman. The glaring dissimilarities in the women's assessment of these policies is explained by the current circumstances facing women in their everyday lives. Almost all of the women point out the huge pressures which they are under.

Women's perceptions regarding the life of past generations occupies a special place in their responses. They proceed both from the experiences of their families as well as from what information they have gathered from their education. It needs to be noted that those whose responses proceed from the
experience and history of their family, have a more realistic assessment of the past and are less inclined to idealise it, compared with those who have little knowledge about the life of women in their families and, therefore, whose assessment is based on evidence found in literature. The majority of the respondents have only the most generalised understanding of the legislative aspects of Soviet policies regarding women, and this does not allow them to make concrete observations regarding the existing legislative basis of women's equality. Their contradictory assessments flow from this shortcoming. This is an indication of how poorly developed the culture of equality was among the respondents, yet almost all feel that, in reality, women's equality did not exist, referring to the discrimination against women in society and the family. Many of the respondents are inclined to think that the notion of women's equality is either unrealistic or not applicable within the framework of the existing system.

Women's equality is regarded as an attribute of an alien society, culture, or political system. This indicates that the generally scornful attitude towards the women's question which was found in Soviet society in the 1970s and 1980s became lodged in women's consciousness. The significance of the concept of women's equality is recognised by the most educated and highly qualified women, who have considerable life experience. They believe that the notion of women's equality did not penetrate society's internal culture in the countries of Central Asia.

A majority of the respondents have a negative attitude to the notion of an ideal woman; some reflecting a general protest against the state's habit of declaring certain people to be public ideals who were later discredited or proclaimed false. Others, who associate the concept of an ideal woman with the heroines of literature, demonstrating their rejection or lack of knowledge of folk literature. One small segment of the women find their ideals of womanhood among their near ones or in renowned modern women.

The majority of the respondents have a negative reaction to the revision of the notion of women's equality, while those connected with the traditional cultural surroundings consider such a revision justified. Some of the respondents consider the revision of women's equality to be connected with the inapplicability of this concept in an underdeveloped society - which is how they categorise their own societies.

Women's profound exhaustion in the face of the problems of everyday life is felt in the respondents' replies and hence their general lack of enthusiasm and unconstructive approach. Scepticism and pessimism predominate. Thus, women are not ready for a clear-cut assessment of the past, indicating that they are unprepared for an active struggle and for the creation of a broad women's movement. There is a certain wait-and-see attitude, conditioned both by the existing social environment as well as by their lack of experience in making independent assessments of contemporary problems.
Chapter 4

Women’s Lives: Determined By Religion, Culture Or Neither?
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Women's Lives: Determined By Religion, Culture Or Neither?

An issue that evoked a highly complex set of answers from the respondents was the question of whether the basis of contemporary morals lay in culture or religion. On this topic, the women had a great deal to say - some responding with bitterness and some with pride. There is truth both in these and other assessments. The respondents' understanding of culture and religion itself differs both in terms of what is implied by these concepts and how the respondents link these to the society around them. This situation also bears witness to the fact that the relationship between culture and religion was an extremely sensitive topic during the Soviet period.

Consequently, today the intelligentsia has recognised that the continuity of cultural traditions in society was shattered and that the state's anti-religion policies were nothing more than policies directed against the historic culture of the peoples of Central Asia.

The Arabic script had been the basis on which Islamic civilisation's cultural unity had been synthesised. Therefore, the change-over from the Arabic script was not coincidental but was aimed at wrenching the peoples of Central Asia away from their spiritual heritage, their ethics, world-view and culture. This influenced their ethical attitudes towards reality as it was shaped by history. The religion of the elders gave people a vital anchor in this world. It provided people a means of understanding about their lives, a sense of one's place in the world and one's humanity. Forced secularisation led to the suppression and the unravelling of the invisible thread that linked individuals with the past. The new culture that entered Central Asia was antagonistic towards religion. By gradually rejecting their native language and relegating it to the status of a subordinate 'household language', the new generation ceased to read their national literature. The native language degenerated and transformed into a lifeless shadow of that rich language which had been spoken at the beginning of the century. The change of script signalled the beginning of the destruction of the nations, while russification reduced Central Asia to merely a geographic notion.

The destruction of this ancient culture became a means of pushing the local nationalities away from control of the economy. Central Asia came under the economic rule of people who were indifferent, if not hostile, towards the indigenous peoples who had lived there for centuries. Under these circumstances, the newly implanted 'official' culture managed to survive only with great difficulty and, moreover, was unable to penetrate those areas of Central Asian society where the remnants of the past remained preserved, at least at the level of the personal.
The clash between the old religious prejudices and the newly propagated Soviet culture meant that the people's common culture decayed. The old culture was preserved only in its outer form, minus its content; in the same way, only the outer form of the new culture was assimilated. In the mass media and in official phraseology, the notion of 'culture' often only signified European culture, in fact a mutilated form of Russian culture. European or western culture entered into the life of the Central Asian peoples not as a necessity, nor as an enriching supplement to the native culture, nor even as a manifestation of the universalism of human values that were simply being confirmed in other forms, but as something that was designed to change the region's past culture.

But a meeting point and mutual attraction between the two cultures existed within the narrow surroundings of professionals - people of the arts. Here, the results were splendid. New topics and methods, new melodies and rhythms, new colours and subjects entered into the art of Russian masters and new names appeared in the world of the arts among the peoples of Central Asia. But nevertheless, the flourishing of the national culture of the peoples of Central Asia was a long time coming because true creativity and talent were suppressed by ideology and official directives regarding the arts. The social backwardness of the masses prevented them from recognising artistic achievement as having a specific value and utility. Hence, among the respondents we find women who either completely deny the existence of a cultural environment or who point only to the successful assimilation of those forms of the arts which come from the West. The absence of an objective, scientific analysis of cultural issues is due to the influence of propaganda in the past which did not allow anyone to present an objective assessment of the processes that were taking place in the sphere of culture. Right up to the present, the propagandist approach to culture still persists.

One of the most distressing issues, as pointed out by the respondents, is the situation of the so-called imported culture, which today finds itself under considerable pressure and in a state of crisis.

Saule Kenesbaeva

Kazakh; 50; philologist specialising in Eastern Studies; divorced with a married daughter; working as head of department in the National Research Institute of Philosophy and Law; President of the International Association of Work and Cultural Co-operation (LIANA), Almaty

1. Culture moulds people's outlook on life and their morals. Religion is a multi-faceted phenomenon. The kind of Islam that exists in my country grew out of prejudice and conservative traditions, and at best all one can get out if it are some of one's moral principles. As a complex world-view which
regulates all aspects of an individual's life, religion cannot become the only
guiding basis in the life of a contemporary person, although it is vital to
develop within secular culture a firm belief in the immutability of those
simple moral truths, which have been tested by humanity over the centuries.

2. Women play the primary role in the moulding of their family's culture.
With respect to society, the influence a woman exerts on the moulding of her
community's culture depends upon her active participation in the political
processes taking place in her country.

3. In my youth I was offered a chance to act in a film, but I turned it down
because the popular perception of the art world is of a world ruled by easy
morals. Society is biased against this world. Possibly such a perception is
partly justified, but it hampers the realisation of the artistic potential of many
talented women, and they suffer. By coming out in public, a woman
somehow defies these biases and her life is very difficult and suffocating.
This too, is a reason for the failure of many women artists to realise their
potential.

The talent of Kazakh women has been notable in the theatrical arts. I consider
the Kazakh ballerina, Altinai Aselmuradova, to be absolutely outstanding
and I feel proud of her. I also like the singer, Shamal Usenbaeva, a prize
winner at a vocalists' competition in Barcelona.

4. We are open only to our national environment, and the level of cultural
development here is poor. The reason being language. The language of the
official culture was Russian, yet a national culture must start with a language
common to the people.

5. I find this question about the inter-relationship between religion and
culture difficult. This depends upon many factors, above all on politics.

Kholida Khodjaeva

Tadzik; 32; married with one child; scientific worker; studied at the Agricultural
Institute; living in Dushanbe

1. You have asked a very difficult question. Of course the easy answer would
be that religion moulds a person's moral principles, and culture their outlook
on life. But my generation has been alienated from both our religion and from
our culture. We were moulded by communist ideology. For us, this was
religion and culture - at least outside the home.

But within the family, the spirit of religion has always existed. If people have
a conscience then this is a vestige of religion. From the viewpoint of real life,
everything is complicated because this consisted of the fact that people were
expected to think as little as possible and simply obey orders. In reality, one
can judge people's outlook on life and their moral values from the civil war,
which indicated how little there was of either religion or culture in people.

2. I think that today a woman plays no role whatsoever in the moulding of
her people's culture. In the family too, the spiritual links between parents and
children are being lost due to poverty, which is why there can be no discussion of women's special role in the moulding of their children's culture.

3. Frankly speaking, your questions irritate me with their abstractness. What can be the artistic potential of people who are poor and deprived of their own culture? Poor, of course. If one speaks of talent, of course it exists. But it is not possible for the official culture - which is alien to the majority of the people - to awaken this.

In my opinion, there are no outstanding talents - meaning people known to the whole world - among my people. In theatre, painting, cinema and at the provincial level, there are no locally grown personalities, only people who are total imitations of the Moscow model.

4. Only our past culture allows us to be considered a cultured people, but it survives only among a few.

5. Understandably there are contradictions between the official Soviet culture and religion, which is why Soviet culture, such as it was during the Soviet period, is certainly withering away.

The rebirth of our past culture is obstructed by the fact that we Tadjiks have been deprived of our heritage; we have been robbed. I shall explain. During the Bukhara Emirate(2) there were immensely rich libraries owned both by aristocrats and by the citizens. Some of these collections, put together over the course of three centuries, totalled thousands of books. Where are these books now? The majority of them were destroyed and the most valuable are in Russia, scattered in different collections. In Bukhara alone, there were fifteen public libraries - all of them destroyed.

To develop a secular culture, one still needs to further enlighten this belligerent nation. Yet, at the moment, religion has possessed people in its most fanatical form. Now is perhaps not the time to speak about this because in speaking of the past, one may rouse some new enmity. Nevertheless, the roots of today's cruelty lie in the past. All our riches, the most valuable works of art, were taken out of Central Asia and placed in the major museums and collections in Russia, under the pretence that here they could be lost. Indeed, all this was possible because those who were placed in charge of culture were people who were alien to all forms of culture. And our intelligentsia was destroyed. This is the way we were introduced to 'culture'. We remained one hundred years behind the world because on top of this they also corrupted us. It will take a tremendous effort on our part and many years before we will be able to reach the level of a cultured nation. Hence, both peace and hard work are vital.

Maiyam Izbasarova
Kazakh; 57; married with three children, retired Civil Engineer; living in Almaty

1. Both religion and culture mould one's morals and outlook on life; each at its own level. In families with poor educational backgrounds, it is religion, while in educated families, culture. Families that have a lower intellectual
standard always have ethical problems which religion can resolve since it presents simple truths, obliging people to believe in them. Not all people are capable of analysis and of logically working things out.

2. The role of women in the moulding of their people's culture is similar to that of men.

3. Kazakh women have immense potential in the arts, but this has not been fully realised. The arts require major sacrifices and hard work, which is why women, faced with a choice between the arts and family, often opt for the latter. Those who choose to follow their calling, often deprive themselves of a family; not every husband values talent.

Within my own country, I regard as outstanding the talent of Rosa Baglanova, Rosa Beiseitova and Shara Djadarbekova - three singers who over the years have graced the Kazakh stage.

4. The cultural environment of Kazakh society has still not attained the heights it is capable of.

5. I do not see any contradictions between religion and the development of secular culture in Kazakhstan; there are all the conditions for the development of both. There is no mutual exclusion since both religion and culture occupy their own distinct place.

Aigul Sultankulova

Kyrgyz; 34; economist working in the Ministry; born in Osh, living in Bishkek

1. According to me, a person's morality and their attitude to life is formed by religion. A person who is a believer has specific norms, which they cannot transgress. Religion and conscience are closely interlinked notions. A person who is cultured but a non-believer can turn out to be immoral because they are not familiar with the notion of 'sin'.

2. I have difficulty in answering this question. Today, at least, a woman has absolutely no influence on the moulding of her people's culture, even if she is the Minister of Culture.

3. I regard the artistic potential of the women of Kyrgyzstan as insignificant. The only woman who can be said to be a leading talent is the ballerina Bibisara Beishenalieva. The rest appear and then disappear, and there is no sense of loss.

4. There is actually no cultural environment; everyone is only concerned about their prosperity. A cultural environment cannot exist where there is no spiritual search and suffering based on one's sense of imperfection. For the present, our people are suffering for want of bread; a small section of the people are suffering because they are not as rich as their neighbours.

5. A certain contradiction exists between secular culture and religion. The Muslim religion and the traditions of the Kyrgyz people do not accept many aspects of the Russian or western cultures.
1. Culture moulds one's moral values and outlook on life. But in the past, culture and religion were closely connected. In our society, religion counters some of the values of secular culture and attempts to return society towards medieval values. This is why I feel that the modern person, their morals and conduct, are determined not so much by the assimilation of religious norms but more by the assimilation of contemporary culture which synthesises all values generated by all humanity. And often the norms of religion and culture do not contradict each other.

2. Women have a definite and important role in formulating their people's culture. It is especially for this reason that they must be sufficiently well-educated and participate in the formation of contemporary culture: in public life and in the arts.

3. The women of my country have immense artistic potential. They have already featured in the fields of poetry, literature, theatre and the fine arts. Women who freely express their thoughts and perceptions may be able to change society through the very fact of their existence. The presence of women in active public life makes its customs less harsh.

It is difficult to instantly name those of my compatriots whose talent I consider to be outstanding. True, our dancers have attained immense success in the arts. One of them is the folk dance performer, Malika Akhmedova. She has shown herself capable both as a dancer as well as a choreographer. I also like the painter Iskra Shin. Her work is full of light and some kind of secretiveness. She is an ethnic Korean but grew up in Uzbekistan.

4. The cultural environment is not uniform. My country is as if standing between two cultures which have not been synthesised. The manifestations of one culture are at times incomprehensible to those adhering to the other culture. The majority remain the children of an Islamic culture, which manifests itself in the domestic sphere and in people's inter-relationships. But, in the Soviet period, the majority of people experienced a loss of the better part of the past culture, and at the same time they did not take the best from the existing culture. This is why, on the whole, our culture remains poorly developed.

I myself am a Muslim woman, at least this is how I see myself. But for me, the notion of a clash of cultures is repulsive. I do not consider it vital for all aspects of life to be completely dictated by religion. I am in favour of the development of secular culture, so that no religion can interfere in the sphere of a person's life.

5. This question seems very complicated to me. Here, one has to examine the inter-relationship between three types of cultures: on the one hand, Christianity and its extension, Soviet European culture (including the mass culture), and on the other, Islamic culture. There cannot be an ideal
interaction between them: there was the aggression of one and the resistance of the other. In this process much was lost and there was little opportunity for their blending. One should not regard one culture as being better than the other and therefore justified in displacing the other. But this is how things were for seventy years. This has therefore resulted in today's paucity of culture.

Narbibish Shammaeva
Turkmen: 42; scientific worker, teaching in an higher educational institute; married with two children; living in Chardjoi

1. Religion and culture play a major role in the moulding of a person. They allow a person to relate to this or that nationality. Without culture there cannot be traditions, national pride, human dignity and respect for these attributes in others. Religion, meanwhile, disciplines a person, and its restrictions are linked to long historical experience. There is great beauty in religious customs, specifically in the sense that they maintain interaction between people of different stature and social position. There is great humanism in religious traditions; they fulfill a protective function and seek to become the basis for the education of the flesh and the spirit.

2. The position of women in the moulding of their people's culture is the highest because it is the mother who brings up a true man.

3. Turkmen women have great artistic potential, their attraction towards the beautiful is manifested in the applied arts. From childhood, girls weave carpets and do embroidery. Even the simplest peasant can surround herself with beauty, produced by her own hands. The ability to blend colours and produce harmony in their dress is visible both in young girls and aged women. I regard the art of Turkmen women carpet weavers as outstanding.

4. I feel that the level of the cultural environment in Turkmenistan is high. People have preserved their indigenous lifestyle, but are gradually bringing in new things from the cultures of other peoples, adapting it to their own lifestyle and world outlook.

5. I do not see any contradiction between culture and religion.

Zamira Valieva
25; Uzbek; engineer, doing PhD research at the Institute of Civil Engineering; divorced and living in Tashkent

1. Culture and religion are interconnected. They unquestionably influence the moulding of a person's individuality. But I believe that normally, religion shapes fanatics who regard everything unknown as alien and dangerous. Unfortunately, this is the source of intolerance. Secular culture is no more elevated than religious culture. It orients a person towards general human
values.

2. The culture of society depends on the culture of the family. Women play a leading role in the moulding of the family culture and, thus, in that of society. Similarly, men have more influence on the economic aspect of the family and society.

3. Women have great creative potential; it is especially difficult to imagine modern arts without women. We have so many interesting actresses, poetesses and painters that I have difficulty in identifying any one name.

4. I think the cultural level of Uzbek women in Soviet society was very low. People were never truly enlightened, which is why the cultural atmosphere and the perceptions of the majority remain largely medieval. But people are not responsible for what has happened. The people and the bearers of culture - the intelligentsia - turned out to be located in different cultures. For the majority, the new was associated with oppression and they, therefore, preserved all perceptions associated with the past. In reality, there was no spiritual movement or progress of the people in terms of culture. There was, instead, much prejudice and uncivilised behaviour.

5. There are great contradictions because, I repeat, there was never an enlightenment in the European sense and, therefore, the true secularisation of society did not take place. There is no interest in the imported culture. A dramatic situation has arisen: they who create the culture are alien to their own people. There is a great gulf between them and they have completely different mentalities.

Baretta Irgalieva

Kazakh; 45; Director of the Executive Committee of the Democratic Committee for Human Rights; librarian; living in Almaty; married with one daughter

1. There is some truth in the slogan 'Religion is the opium of the people'. Religious norms also have a negative side. They crush one's individuality and obstruct the realisation of the individual's artistic potential, especially of women. They accord women a subordinate position and thus force them into adopting a passive outlook on life. Pressure is not a means of fostering moral values. Culture facilitates a recognition of the individual's self-worth. It fosters a capacity to distinguish good from evil - and this is an active process which attracts free individuals and not the oppressed. Those who find themselves crushed by the weight of religion struggle to survive and this is often accomplished by contravening moral norms. Freedom is a condition for the existence of both morality in a society and for individual identity. Culture is the characteristic of a free society; a lack of culture is the characteristic of a society undergoing oppression and coercion.

2. Women have the capacity to greatly benefit the moulding of their people's culture. But unfortunately, women, as 'equal' members of our community and having the same low quality education as everyone else, cannot single-handedly cover up the reality of society. Women come under society's
influence and this deforms them, fostering their negative qualities, that are, however, necessary for adapting to life in this society. From this flows the kind of influence they have on their children, meaning women themselves introduce uncouth elements in their children.

3. Kazakh women have huge potential in the arts. We have outstanding women musicians, painters, poesesses and actresses. But they cannot discover their full potential, because the state today cannot lend them support. This is why they are constantly preoccupied with how to sell their work. The arts are becoming commercialised, indulging the rather base tastes of businessmen clients, the *nouveau riche*. Ballerinas are going into variety shows, painters are doing forgeries, and writers are once again lauding whatever is profitable. I regard the singer Rosa Baglanova's talent as outstanding. During her long life on the stage she sang both classical and folk songs and was immensely popular throughout the former Soviet Union. She was not only a singer, but a person of great social influence - she is one of the founders of the alternative women's movement in Kazakhstan. One can contest her position, but one cannot deny her honesty.

4. A corrupted society cannot be cultured. Cultured people do not worship ill-gotten gains and do not extend their hands to bribe-takers. There is no cultural environment in our society.

5. There is no strong contradiction between religion and culture, but there are contradictions between religions. Various Christian sects have gone on the offensive against the traditions of Islamic Kazakhstan.(3) Even though Kazakh women were never orthodox Muslims, their national identity and culture is linked with Islam and their children's conversion to another religion could be a national crisis for the Kazakh.

![Shakhlo Sadikova](image-url)

38 years; architect; married with two children; currently unemployed; always lived in Tashkent

1. Religion is part of culture. Even if a person is an atheist, they are still brought up in the surroundings of a specific culture, the moral values of which are hostage to religion. If we are talking about modern Uzbek society, then in terms of its current condition and moral values, it is dominated by Islam on the one hand, and on the other by secular culture which was moulded during the Soviet period. This is where the contradiction lies. There was no continuity between the secular culture and the religious Islamic culture; secular culture did not appear as a result of the development of society, but was introduced from outside by the Soviet state which opposed religion. A particular enmity was displayed towards Islam because, in the period when Soviet rule was being established, Islam was the banner under which resistance united. From this stems the notion found among many citizens of our young republic - especially those who are Russian speaking - that Islam is opposed to culture. This is not true.

Secular culture, which was promoted in the Soviet period, developed under
the strong influence of Russian culture and therefore, for a specific part of the local population, can be said to have been predominantly alien and unintelligible. For this secular culture to have been assimilated would have needed not only time but its rapprochement with traditional Muslim religious culture, regarding the latter's ethics and philosophy. In spite of the fact that, in theory, Soviet culture claimed it was loyal to the 'progressive traditions' of the past, in actual deed, it assimilated only the superficial elements of these traditions. This is why I believe that Uzbek secular culture is still in the process of formation, but there is a danger of losing that which came into our lives from the 'other' culture, which consists of general human values. From this perspective, only education and the true enlightenment of society will allow us to overcome the psycho-cultural isolationism that existed in the Soviet period amongst the majority of the population, especially the peasantry.

The notion of secular culture, (seen as being of a European orientation), became suffused with an ideological 'court culture', which renounced general human values and often fostered fanaticism and intolerance, giving false ideals and idols preeminence. One needs to reject this 'court culture'. But today, the people who represent this approach are very much alive and have successfully adapted themselves to the new political situation. Their tenacity discredits the very notion of secular culture and can take our society towards new destructive processes, as has happened in Tadjikistan.

2. Women must participate in the moulding of their people's culture. The notion of 'culture' is very broad; in the framework of your questionnaire it would have been better to pose the question as, for example, 'What is the role of women in the moulding of morality in society and in the family'. Then I would have answered as follows: women must receive a good education so that they can bring up the new generation to assimilate the cultural values of their people while also being prepared to accept the cultures of other peoples. In this sense, women are capable of playing a leading role in the moulding of their people's culture.

3. The creative potential of Uzbek women in the arts is no less than that of men. But social conditions do not allow them to fully realise their talents especially in such spheres as architecture, the cinema and the fine arts, because these are traditionally male spheres of creative endeavour. However, women's potential is realised in performing arts such as acting and music. We have many good actresses, singers, ballerinas and dancers. I find it difficult to name anyone in particular. If one is to judge a culture on the basis of the names which are world famous, I cannot think of any such name from amongst my contemporaries.

4. The cultural environment in Uzbekistan cannot be called low, but it cannot be considered elevated either. If one compares Uzbek society with the average well-developed culture, then the human interaction, domestic lifestyles, family relationships, and the state of morals of Uzbek society are not sufficiently tuned to the standards of modern knowledge and education. Uzbek society is not prepared to accept whatever is better of the cultures of other peoples; a respect for alien traditions is combined with a reluctance to accept whatever is good in them. This still needs to be worked upon, and for this a large mobilisation of people needs to occur.
1. Both culture and religion mould a person's moral values. From religion and culture a person draws knowledge, but whatever gives a person wisdom and an understanding of life must not be excluded.

2. Many outstanding figures in literature and the arts, involved in the enlightenment and the sciences have been women. This is why I believe they have an equal input in the development of their people.

3. It is difficult to imagine the worlds of poetry, theatre, film without women. As a person of today's world, I want to see women in the arts - unchained and free. It is precisely the talent of these women that I consider to be outstanding. Out of the Russian actresses, I love Alla Pugacheva; I do not know Uzbek actresses. Unfortunately, I do not see any outstanding women in poetry.

4. I do not regard the level of culture amongst the European population of Uzbekistan to be very elevated. The majority of the audience at cultural events in Tashkent, at the theatre and at exhibitions, is all the same.

5. I do not see a contradiction between culture and religion.

1. In the formulation of your question you have somehow placed religion and culture as opposites. I would not have done so, because I do not see any contradiction between them. It is specifically religions - Christianity, Islam and others - that have built civilisations. Today's culture is an extension of a religious culture and is another, higher level of its development. In the 20th century, an integration of cultures is taking place. Those who place cultures in contradiction with each other, attempt to return humanity to the past. Another issue is religious fanaticism and intolerance which repudiate secular culture; this is a danger to culture and therefore any such perception of religion is a rejection of moral values.

I think religion lays the foundations of a person's basic moral values while secular culture develops them, provides corroboration of these values, and inculcates in people the means for their protection - i.e., one's outlook on life. This is why I believe that a person who has not assimilated secular culture, remains a passive witness to what is happening. A cultured person is one who actively exhibits their affiliation and finds the means of bettering their life and their society. But a person who rejects religion, as a rule, brings the notion of destruction into society. Perhaps I am mistaken, but notions such as goodness, repentance, and kindheartedness are not at all old fashioned, but
conversely, are a reality of modern life.

2. A woman plays a leading role in the moulding of her people's culture because she is the one who brings up the new generation.

3. I regard the artistic potential of women in my country as being immense. It has not appeared as yet. There is much hidden potential which needs only to be given an outlet in the family and in society. One should not prevent girls from being what they want to be. One should not tie a girl's hands and feet with prejudice and scorn for her and her choice.

I consider Halima Nasirova, Nazira Akhmedova, and Saodat Kabulova to be leading performers; women who, with equal adroitness, took to their listeners the musical masterpieces of the East and the West. The immense delight which their art gave, has made them legends in the memories of my parents' generation.

4. Unfortunately, I do not have a very high assessment of the cultural environment in my country. In 1991-92 there was a discussion in the mass media on whether opera was needed by the Uzbek people, given that opera was alien to them. The very question speaks about the cultural level of people who regard themselves as intelligent. Only the personal intervention of the President of Uzbekistan saved the opera. I believe that due to such 'intellectuals', our people have remained alienated both from our own culture as well as from global culture. The level of culture fell due to the rise of nepotism in the cultural field during the years of stagnation, when the mediocre - and not the talented - were promoted. This explains the absence of obviously famous names in this period. The last decade has seen a reorientation of society towards materialism, and a consequently sharp decline in the prestige - and perceived utility - of culture, particularly the theatre.

I find it extremely painful to see half-empty theatres at performances and very few Uzbeks among the audience.

It is well known that the world over, the elite of society demonstrates its devotion to culture. Attending the theatre, exhibitions and concerts increases the prestige of politicians, businessmen and others in authority, and society follows their example. This was how it was in Uzbekistan in the 1930s; leaders of the republic often attended premieres and demonstrated their devotion to culture and their patronage of the arts. Today this does not happen.

5. Yes, there is a great contradiction, although the point is not so much about culture and religion, as about the arts and people who demonstrate their devotion to religion and their Islamic roots but who are not true believers. Contemporary people have to be tolerant and take an interest in the new. Unfortunately, religion is becoming a weapon in the struggle for control over people. Religion in the hands of people of low intelligence and base deeds can lead to a spiritual isolation from everything good achieved by global science and culture.

People now talk of a return to the roots. I think it is important that these roots be preserved but then one should look ahead rather than backwards. There is a need to reassess history and how it was interpreted for seventy years, but
there is no need to idealise the past as is being done by some ill-meaning or truly misdirected and inadequately educated people. So as to be worthy of our great ancestors, we must catch up with the world; cultural isolationism will only push us backwards.

The rejection of secular culture that some are calling for, has above all a negative influence on society's spiritual climate and can lead to a new stagnation. Secular culture is the medium of the new and more elevated level of human interaction. It is no secret that, notwithstanding the state's support for them, people of the theatre especially women, do not enjoy high prestige in Uzbek society. This does not fully allow for the emergence of the talent that our people are rich in.

I believe that if religion's influence over society becomes stronger, then the development of secular culture may come to a halt because religious taboos curtail the flow of new talent into the arts. Moreover, culture, in the sense of information which is not one-sided and biased, is not available to us. After independence, many previous cultural linkages were broken while the economic crisis is impeding the emergence of new linkages. All of these factors interfere with the national culture and its development today.

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Antonina Zlobina

34, Russian, Christian, unmarried; working as a machine operator; fond of reading spiritual writings

1. Culture is the totality of material and spiritual values created by human society, and which characterise that society's specific level of development.

If a genuine belief in God is lost, then its counterpart emerges: a belief in man and science, in the possibility of making a perfect society without God. On the face of it, it is undoubtedly a hedonistic temptation, a world outlook of frustration, substituting something false for something real. But centuries of religious traditions continue to exert their influence upon a humanity which has lost its belief in God. Religious values, courtesy of a continuity in human consciousness and all manner of cultures, remain truly meaningful.

Good or evil, light or darkness, sin and grace, beauty and chaos are all mixed up in our world. Since people have different spiritual feelings, for some even the form of sensual beauty can become a means for becoming close to God; for example the works of the artists of the western Renaissance can play this role in a modern secular society.

Beauty will save the world? It was precisely beauty that saved the ancient icons from oblivion.

Society, deprived of the spiritual leadership of the clergy, is gradually going towards both hidden and blatant idolatry, when the desire for the fruits of the temporal world, (property and money, security and diversion, power and earthly glory and so on) are becoming the determining factors in one's life. By the way, the Soviet state pursued just such a path, in the period of so-called 'developed socialism'.
2. The people's culture cannot be moulded without women's influence and participation. By their existence, women have inspired poets, painters, sculptors, composers and even architects. And women themselves - what amazing things they do! Woven carpets, elegant embroidery and unusual lace - all made by the common hands of women who seem so ordinary. Nor do they lag behind men in the fine arts - poetry, painting, music and applied arts. How many of those who have helped our cultural progress are unknown and unrecognised? These include teachers in conservatories, curators of art collections in the Houses of Culture, in schools; there are even those who help organise festivals, exhibitions, and concerts within the country and abroad.

I am not wrong in saying that culture begins and ends with women - from the lullabies sung while rocking the cradle at the start of each person's life path, to the tears of remembrance on their demise.

3. Women's artistic potential has always been high. Sadly, not all can reveal the talent they have within themselves. This is prevented by all types of obstacles, beginning with the prejudices of their parents. If a daughter, for example, wants to sing or dance, then the parents endeavour to force her to enter a prestigious institute in the field of economics or medicine. If a young woman does manage to find the space to develop her talent, then her way may be blocked by the envy of her colleagues, or petty intrigues, or some other dirty trick which our lives are unfortunately full of. Still, quite a few women do get the opportunity to develop themselves in this or that field of culture, for some do succeed in realising themselves fully and for a reasonably long time thrill their admirers with their talent. Some flash and burn out, like falling stars. At present, things are tough for many talented women: inflation, corruption of the higher-ups, the struggle for attention, cutbacks in the state budget, unemployment, fear of what the future holds for their children. All this compels women to sacrifice their talent to the matter of survival. And how many have gone abroad!

Among the talented I can pick out Nasiba Abdullaeva. I can recognise her voice among thousands. I find an immense sense of inner calm whenever I hear her songs. The pleasant timbre of her voice, without the more popular screeches and shouts, transports me back into the distant past of our East.

4. The cultural environment of any society cannot be imagined without the generation gap, their interaction against the background of their different characters and moral environment. That this problem is as old as the world itself is revealed in the following statements:

"I shall lose all hope in the future of our country if today's youth takes the reigns of government in its hands, for this youth is unbearable, unbridled and simply terrible".

"Our world has reached a critical stage. Children do not listen to their parents anymore. It is clear that the end of the world is not far off".

"The youth today are corrupted to the depth of their souls. The young are crafty and negligent. The young generation cannot preserve our culture".
To whom are these quotations attributed? The first is Hesiod the 8th century Greek poet, the second an Egyptian priest from the 2nd century B.C., and the last is the most ancient, discovered in the ruins of Babylon.

It is clear that generations of ‘bad’ people have always alternated with the ‘good’, and although written history is silent about the latter, ruins and surviving architecture from these people, their works of literature, and paintings speak about their way of life and rituals. What remains of the seventy years of the Soviet Union. This shows what our cultural environment was like.

5. I do not see any contradiction between the development of secular culture and religion. Mosques and churches, which were once turned into museums, clubs, and libraries are being returned to the believers (I am not talking about those which have been defiled). Sacred things such as icons and church-plates are being given back to the churches. Church music and religious programmes are being broadcast on television and radio. Is this not the intertwining of culture and religion? But they can never combine given the strength of their various perceptions regarding material and spiritual values.

I am an acquaintance of Burkhanov, a musician working at the Tashkent conservatory who, at the same time, was a conductor of the Uspensk choir of Tashkent. Thanks to him I came to know that the relationship between the intervals of the frequencies in the diatonic scale found in choral music coincides with characteristic human neuro-physiology. This is precisely why the diatonic scale in choral music has such a therapeutic effect, i.e. the capability of tuning and harmonising a person’s equilibrium.

This unfortunately cannot be said about rock music. Scientific studies have reached a unanimous conclusion about the negative, stupefying action of the loud rhythmic noise on a person’s organism; it produces pressure on the mind, blocks its controlling centres, destroys the physique and frees people’s destructive instincts. Rock music intoxicates in the real sense of the word.

Gułñara Abdrasilova
Kazakh; 34; teacher in a higher educational institute; married with two children; living in Almaty

1. In the moulding of each person’s identity, including their outlook on life and moral values, both religion and culture play important roles. In the formulation of the question, religion and culture are placed as opposites because, until recently the attitude of the state towards religion was negative, but religion did not recede from people's lives. In any case the majority of Kazakh considered themselves Muslims, and the Russians Christians and so on.

Russians and Kazakh also had different attitudes towards modern culture. The Russians believe they brought modern culture into Kazakh culture and enlightened us. The influence of Russian culture on modern life in Kazakhstan is no doubt huge: not only are we forgetting our language and
changing our way of life, but also our way of thinking. But still we are people of another culture. In this lies the contradiction, which is in all those who grew up in the Soviet era. We assimilated to a greater or lesser extent whatever we learnt at school. There has always been and always will be a national Kazakh culture. Its moral values were not always understood and accepted by the official culture, which from the beginning was hostile to Islam.

2. Women play the leading role in moulding the cultural environment within the family, while men play the leading role in defining their country’s cultural policies. Cultural policies have never been of a high calibre.

3. Interestingly, the potential of Kazakh women was especially developed in the fields of music and cinema. They are good musicians, vocalists, composers and actresses. In other spheres, women’s abilities have not been realised; women particularly avoided the ideological spheres of the arts. There are many leading names, but I have difficulty in singling out one or two.

4. To some extent, culture is for the elite; in its better forms it has still not taken root in the lower social strata. It is therefore difficult to regard the cultural environment as being of a high calibre, even though standards in the musical arts and young cinema were very high.

5. I do not see any contradiction between the religion of Islam and the development of secular national culture because they are inter-related.

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Farida Pirmuhammadova

Uzbek; married with one daughter; PhD in Chemical Sciences; currently working at a small establishment as both the head of laboratory and laboratory assistant; studied in Moscow, otherwise living in Tashkent

1. Religion and culture is what prevents savagery, a lack of discipline, permissiveness and the tyranny of brute force. Both religion and culture tame base desires, discipline the soul and stimulate a person’s yearning for the ideal and for harmony. From this point of view, these two phenomena are close to one another. Every culture is connected with religion. The blossoming of past civilisations and the cultures of individual regions are linked with the ideals of the dominant religion - not in spite of, but in accordance with religious norms.

Confrontation between religion and culture has often led to crises. The river of religion flows into the sea of culture. The shallowing out of this river leads to the drying up of the sea. But when a weir stands upon the river of religion, the remaining half-dried riverbed does not carry life-giving moisture. The river remains a river only in form, without substance, and those who consider the riverbed to be the river itself, are condemned to a slow death. Something similar to this took place in Uzbekistan with Islam. People continue to think of the superficial manifestations of religion as Islam and doom themselves and their children to spiritual helplessness. For a whole
century, the river of Islam has been flowing into a different channel while the sea of culture of the modern world is fed not by one river alone, but by many. They who live by the sea are, therefore, in a better position than those who travel the path of the dried-up riverbed.

2. An educated woman, raising her children, familiarising them with the spiritual values of her people, plays a leading role in the development of her country's culture. A woman who is downtrodden and humiliated because of her lack of rights, cannot give her children a positive impression about the world. This is why women's role in the moulding of their peoples' culture is small.

3. Central Asia is the homeland of great geniuses and enlighteners, where an independent culture developed. But now it is home to a creative female intelligentsia, thanks to Soviet rule and the best representatives of the Russian intelligentsia who taught them!

We cannot allow our cultural property to be handed over to physical and moral freaks and cripples. We cannot allow regression and anarchy. The economic and spiritual crisis has obstructed the artistic potential of our people. Today, unfortunately, I see no shining and original talent which our people can proclaim for the world to see.

4. The cultural environment among the working class is far higher than among the higher echelons of society, whose lifestyles are simply characterised by the superficial aspects of culture. In spite of their poverty, among the people a high level of cultural interaction, mutual help and support has been preserved. But the penetration of modern culture is hampered by poverty and the alienation of the intelligentsia from its peoples.

5. There is no contradiction between religion and culture if religion modernises itself. Fundamentalism is alien both to culture and progress. As far as mass culture is concerned, I am certainly not unbiased. It contains much vulgarity, open pornography, violence and cruelty. It is shameless. This is why I find so much about it distasteful and I am against its spreading in my country; it is capable of suppressing and destroying the weak roots of the elevated aspects of modern culture. It identifies itself with western culture and thus treats Islamic moral norms, perceptions and interaction as something alien.

Aida Pak

Korean; 50; furniture production technologist; have three children; born in Uzbekistan and living in Kazakhstan; currently not working

1. Religion not only contains culture, but also morals and philosophy. Religion to a large extent determines a person's culture. I say this because, we, Koreans, appear to have been deprived of both religion and culture. I felt this particularly strongly when the American Evangelists opened a church and my daughter started to visit it. She has changed a great deal - for the better, both outwardly and internally. I, as a mother, started to learn
tolerance, real kindness and gentleness from her.

2. Undoubtedly, the primary role. But in my family I, myself, could not teach my children anything, because I know very little about the culture of our people.

3. There are many gifted people among the Koreans. There are good painters and singers. But we ourselves know very little about them because there was nowhere for us to find out about them. At present, there is a cultural centre in Tashkent where Koreans from the villages, hamlets and other cities can come and learn about their culture and about what the Korean intelligentsia is.

4. It is difficult for me to assess the cultural environment of Koreans living in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. It is undoubtedly low because we are Russianised Koreans. We think more about feeding our physical rather than spiritual side. But the Korean domestic lifestyle preserves a high level of interaction, concern for one's elders, hospitality, and patience, and this, too, is culture.

5. I do not know. But it seems to me that the religion which is today entering the life of the Koreans - Christianity - will stimulate an interest in western culture, its music, arts and the cinema. But I fear that we will be losing what was part of our heritage.

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**Galina Musina**

Tatar; professor at the Tashkent Pedagogical Institute; DSc in philology; born in Bashkoria but living in Uzbekistan from the age of two; spent childhood in Shahrikhan, Ferghana; worked as a teacher in a school in Andijan, later teaching at the Andijan Pedagogical Institute; have spent five years in Tashkent

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1. Both religion and culture mould a person's spiritual substance. Truly religious people are people who adhere to human values - and the same can be said about cultured people. If religion and culture are compared with education, then religion is the primary school and culture the university. Religion and culture are the means with which we assess the world around us - firstly with the help of arithmetic and secondly with help of higher mathematics.

2. Of course, women play a leading role in the moulding of their people's culture.

3. Culture is a portrait of the nation. The works produced by a culture - whether they are material or in the form of poetry - give the peoples of other countries a window onto the ideals and artistic potential of that people. While the peoples of Central Asia were able to tell the world about themselves in the 15th century through the masterpieces of Samarkand, today's creations are not as impressive. In order to realise the potential of our peoples - including our women - we need to find out far more about and learn a lot more from nations which have outstripped us.

I regard as outstanding the talents of the poetess Zulfia, my contemporary
and fellow country-woman. She has managed to convey the strength of that wave which altered the lives and minds of Uzbek women - the emancipation of Muslim women by Soviet rule. She has been able to reveal the soul of Uzbek women.

4. I do not regard our cultural environment as poorly developed. In spite of its outward poverty, the absence of fashionable clothes and modern hair-styles. Ancient civilisations live on in the lives of the Uzbek people. One can see how well-planned and clean the homes of the Uzbek are, how they are open and generous even with strangers as long as they come in kindness; how they are sincere, sharing their sorrows and joys; how they are good both to their own children and to those of others; how warm-hearted they are towards the needy, and respectful towards elders. Over the centuries, hard working Uzbeks converted this arid land into flowering oases. What a pity that the people's labour was not rewarded. They are still just as poor as those who could not, or did not want to work. It is the fault of the latter that the people have not been able to enjoy the fruits of culture.

5. If one is talking of true religious consciousness, then there is no contradiction between religion and the development of secular culture. But if one is talking about that 'culture' which recommends violence, baring of the flesh, stupifying music, then it is alien to our ethics, our understanding of beauty and harmony.

It is not Islam which is bad, but people who exploit religion for their own interests; the same should be said about communism. You see, it was precisely in the Soviet period that the culture of other peoples of the world was opened up to us. Life has changed radically. This is why I am against those who posit religion and culture as opposites. Today, certain religious activists and writers, who are calling for the believers to revert to the national culture, seek to deprive their people of the good things that happened here over the past seventy years, including modern culture. Can one really reject painting, opera, and the ballet? Then one should also reject electricity and aeroplanes and modern science, which we also did not have earlier.

Jentila Sandjaeva

Turkmen; 51; philologist; PhD and university teacher; married with three children; living in Ashkabad

1. The source of a person's moral perfection lies in true culture which assumes the suppression of humankind's animal origins.

2. Women should occupy the main place in the moulding of a people's culture and for this a woman must be educated and have sufficient time to raise her children.

3. Turkmen women, who have chosen the arts as their sphere of activity, have displayed great talent, especially opera singers. We have wonderful theatre and film actresses. The talent of Maii Aimedova, a film actress, I regard as outstanding.
4. Turkmen communities have a cultural atmosphere. The Turkmen have not lost contact with their heritage. In their lifestyles, in the family and in their social interaction, they follow norms developed over the centuries.

5. I do not see any contradiction between the development of secular culture and religion because Islam does not have the same influence here as it has in neighbouring Uzbekistan or Tadjikistan.

Sara Nuraspaeva

Kazakh; 43; married with no children

1. Culture inculcates a thirst for knowledge and desire for truth in a person. Religion, as the basis of modern culture, is a matter of historical interest.

2. Women play a prominent role in the moulding of their children's culture. The emergence of a desire for self-perfection in her children depends on a woman's ability to be receptive to everything new. Culture is a dynamic process. In this, the inculcation of feelings is the task of the mother. I am fortunate: I grew up in a rural area, but since childhood my mother instilled in me the desire to better myself. For me, nothing anywhere was ever boring. I always managed to take an interest in the world around me.

3. The artistic potential of the women of Kazakhstan is high. This country, where different cultures have come together, gives them the opportunity for development. My interest in the history of Uigur is linked to my familiarity with its culture. Unfortunately, there has been no global recognition of women artists, although many performers were famous in the former Soviet Union. I regard as outstanding the talents of the singer Rosa Djamanova and composer Gazziza Djubanova.

4. Culture has still not penetrated the lower strata. From this stems the crudeness of morals and the primitiveness of their expectations.

5. There is no contradiction between religion and culture. In Kazakhstan, there is no basis for fundamentalism. The development of secular culture is progressing intensively. The activists of the art world command respect and have far greater influence on society than religious activists.

Anara Nasirova

Kyrgyz; 30; married; an economist by qualification; working in the United Nations office in Bishkek

1. In any society customs modulate culture. Religion also has a formidable influence on a nation's moral values, as long as it is not extremist. This is why I see nothing wrong in religion. In the soul of every person is God - one's own moral orientation - thanks to which a person has faith that evil will be punished. This is precisely why a people live in harmony with themselves.
2. It is the woman who instills a sense of good and the higher sentiments in her children, which is why women play a leading role in the moulding of their people's culture. Society means the sum total of its families. The higher the cultural level in a family, the higher it is in society.

3. The arts are a portrait of the nation, in which all of its achievements and imperfections should be reflected. Much has been said about the achievements of the arts, but little about its imperfections. Which is why I do not regard the creative potential of our artistic people as having been fully realised. The same applies to women authors, journalists, painters, directors and actresses. The arts have largely remained an elitist field and have not trickled down to the community level.

4. In the context of what I have said above, the cultural atmosphere in my country is not very high, perhaps not high at all. I do not hold the people of Kyrgyzstan at all responsible for this, but the fact that my country, to use the words of V.I. Lenin, by-passed the stage of capitalism in its leap from feudalism to socialism. Culture cannot be imported, it should accumulate inside the people. In our society, neither an industrial proletariat nor an intelligentsia was formed. Therefore we carried over into the present, tribal forms of social inter-relationships and many other remnants of our past. Much in the imported culture is artificial to Kyrgyz society, which is why it exists only within a narrow layer of society.

5. In that section of society which has not been embraced by the imported culture, there is a vacuum which, today, is fast being filled by religion - not only Islam, but also Christianity of different sects. Here is the contradiction that is still not fully recognised.

**Elmira Turkmenova**

36; working as a scientific researcher; Kyrgyz, divorced with two children; living in Bishkek; Biochemist

1. Both religion and culture define one's outlook on life and one's moral values. Culture and religion are inseparable notions. The culture of any given people evolves under the influence of religion. Culture, separated from religion is purely a manifestation of the modern era in Europe. In Asia, such a separation has not taken place because society was at the stage of feudalism. Culture, as something alien to religion, appeared in Kyrgyzstan during the Soviet era. It was precisely due to this that it penetrated the nation's consciousness with such difficulty.

2. The mother moulds the children's culture within the family. This is why among all Turkish peoples the national language - the medium of culture - is called the mother tongue.

3. I am afraid I may be biased, but I do not see outstanding women in the Kyrgyz arts.

4. The cultural environment in Kyrgyzstan? Below average!

5. The influence of Islam on the Kyrgyz was significantly lower than among
other neighbouring peoples. This impacted greatly on the state of culture among the Kyrgyz. There were many pagan cults among Kyrgyz belief systems, which are strangely similar to Muslim customs. The cultural traditions of Islam were not reflected in the material culture, and in the spiritual sphere they had an equally shallow impact. This is why we, as a people, very rapidly became russified. Within society's upper echelons the native language was practically lost, and to a certain extent, so was family stability. Even though, in their way of life, our urban intelligentsia assimilated a great deal from the imported culture, nevertheless, we still strongly differ from the Russians. The culture imported from Russia was absolutely out of tune with Kyrgyz lifestyles and Muslim perceptions regarding ethics, aesthetics, and norms of human interaction. But if the principles of Islam and the commandments of Christianity were to enter our lives, there would be no contradiction between culture and religion.

**Zamira Osmonbekova**

Kyrgyz; physiotherapist; post-graduate; working in an institute of higher education and at a garment factory; 40; unmarried; born and living in Bishkek

1. For the intelligentsia, the main root of morality is culture, specifically world culture, which has amassed the best of humanity's achievements. For the general people, religion still moulds their moral norms. While religion preaches submissiveness and patience in one's outlook on life, culture is the result of the activism of outstanding individuals who have overcome the narrowness and routine of ordinary life.

   Brought up in the spirit of atheism, we lost our basic guidelines, culture, religion and moral principles. For us the notions of good and evil became confused.

2. I do not think it is vital for women to play a leading role in the moulding of their people's culture, for a woman may find - like any other person - that their culture can have objectionable features, alien to the ethical norms of true culture. In the family, children identify with the head of the family, irrespective of whether it is a man or a woman. If there are idiots in the family, then the fruit they bear will be the same. The same applies to society. Still, the major role in lowering people's moral qualities in the former USSR, was played by the country's leaders. Stalin gave birth to cruelty and Brezhnev, to a love for honours and - laughably - unearned titles.

3. I regard the artistic potential of my country as low. I would like to say the opposite but, with bitterness, recognise it as low because culture did not penetrate down to the people. All the supposed achievements of culture are only superficial phenomena. Soviet Kyrgyz arts are the product of a successful apprenticeship under Russian masters. This is why there are no real students of the arts amongst our present artists. Thus it is not worthwhile speaking about the artistic potential of Kyrgyz women. People who have something original to say become masters.

4. I have already said that there is no cultural environment in our society.
Superficially European in our dress, going to the theatre or to exhibitions - these are not a spiritual need, but a prestigious form of self-assertion.

5. Given that both culture and religiosity are the qualities of only a few, there is no true contradiction between them. But just as religion has been destroyed under the banner of culture, so too, in the name of religion there is now the temptation to destroy that thin layer of culture which appeared in Soviet times.

Now it would be more correct to speak not about the inter-relationship between culture and religion, but about the inter-relationship between the multitude of faiths which currently exist in Kyrgyzstan. It is a known fact that in Kyrgyzstan, only half of the population is the offspring of people who professed Islam in the past. It is difficult to call the Kyrgyz true Muslims. In their lives and their world outlook, Islam did not become what it was for the Uzbeks, for example. The other half of the population is made up of Christians of different sects, because during the period of colonisation and in Soviet times believers of the Orthodox Church and other sects came to the area. Now all kinds of missionaries are working in the country, not only among Christians, but also among the Kyrgyz, which is causing immense displeasure amongst both the older generation of Kyrgyz and the Muslim spiritual leadership. Against this background, there is the threat of future conflict on religious grounds. Unfortunately, the government does not recognise this threat due to the number of economic problems which exist today.

Khairiniso Ganieva
Uzbek: physiotherapist working at the Tashkent University polyclinic; married with three children; 42

1. Culture is unimaginable without religion. Religion determines the individual's cultural orientation. Particularly a religion such as Islam influences not only the mentality, but also domestic lifestyles and the general way of life. Culture is the manifestation of a consciousness even higher than religion, but not that which opposes it. A highly cultured person always knows which religion they adhere to and perceives the world through the framework of the morality, and the ethical and spiritual criteria of their own religion.

2. Women occupy a major place in the moulding of the culture of their people. Family is the embryo of society. If in each family people were brought up to have moral values and to be aware of their potential in life, then the culture of that society would also be high. This is why the state, so as to have an educated and highly cultured nation, must encourage the development of women's individuality.

3. The artistic potential of women in my country is high. It is difficult to even imagine how much they could have achieved, if there were fewer obstacles along their path to the world of arts. Without the participation of women, the arts are incomplete. Women are not only a source of inspiration for art and
music, but are, themselves, creators of art. Thus for example, we have the famous performer of classical Uzbek music, Munozhat Yulchieva, who came from the depths of the countryside. How thoughtful and meaningful her performances are! Every word and every note comes from her heart. This is why she has had such huge success, and not only at home. The arts are a language understood without translation. Through it people of different countries learn about each other.

4. The cultural environment in Uzbekistan is not low, especially as regards the field of human interaction. We have preserved our wonderful traditions of hospitality, courteousness and respect for one's elders and the young, concern for one's nearest and dearest, mutual support and generosity. But, we are losing our respect for education and beauty. Greed, conspicuous consumption, and a thirst for power have appeared. We have lost our sense of cultural enlightenment, we know little and are not proud of the geniuses born in our country. We do not have enough real patriotism - not that conceited and ostentatious form - but the sense of national dignity. This is often especially lacking in those who decide our fates. I find it a real pity that there are so few truly cultured people among the leadership, especially among those in charge of culture.

At present a reassessment of the past is taking place. One of the manifestations of a rejection of this past is the wide-scale removal of monuments. Sure, in Soviet times there were too many of them. Not all of those for whom monuments were erected deserved this honour. Perhaps the clumsy sculptures should have been removed, but why remove artistic works of superior quality? Let them stand; this too is history. One just has to let the truth be told about them, about Frunze, Kuibishev and the others. I'm really sad that the Karl Marx monument was removed - it was one of the most beautiful monuments in Tashkent. It would be sad if they now removed the statues of Pushkin and Gorky.

The cultural atmosphere in our society is also debased by men's behaviour towards women. There is little true respect for women: for their dignity and individuality. A great deal of work needs to be done in this area and unless there is a major breakthrough in attitudes towards women, it will be difficult to call our society truly rounded, civilised and cultured.

5. There is no contradiction between religion and culture. But Islamic fundamentalism is both dangerous for culture and for religion itself. Islam is a good religion and fundamentalism makes it seem barbaric, fanatical and intolerant while historically Islam was the most tolerant religion. People must not be taught to hate - this contradicts the laws of Islam, deprives it of true faith. There is a contradiction between true belief and the growing obsession with ceremonial rites (which only further aggravate the worldly worries of people, especially women) and unnecessary expenditure which are made at the cost of one's family.

Islam prohibits the abuse of other religions; others' beliefs have to be respected. God is one, and the language a person offers prayers in is not important. Islam itself requires its followers to move ahead in keeping with the times. Whoever does not understand this is a disgrace to their religion. The legacy of intolerance is the legacy of faithlessness; women understand this more often than men.
FROM the respondents' answers it is clear that when the peoples of Central Asia were pulled into the Russian orbit, this had a significant impact both on their culture and religion. The rejection of the religious culture of the past and the development of secular culture took place in the shape of a revolution. The cultural environment of the past and the cultural practice of the Soviet period came into contradiction with each other. The respondents point out the destruction of the traditional narrowness of the national cultures, and the penetration of European culture through the Russian language into the spiritual lives of the peoples of Central Asia. But almost all of the respondents equally point out that the spiritual values of the western (Russian) world became the property of only a small section of the region's population, because force and conflict with the religion that had dominated the region for centuries were the means used to introduce the new culture. The use of force became the reason for the people's alienation from the new culture.

The respondents do not have a unanimous interpretation of the interrelationship between culture and religion, resulting from the state's policies towards religion and culture. The inhuman totalitarianism which dominated society also influenced people's attitudes towards spiritual values, which is the substance of culture. The spiritual crisis of the empire is used by many respondents to justify their rejection of the Soviet cultural experience. The respondents show an interest in the rebirth of their cultural heritage and a return to their national roots. While assessing the role of religion and culture in the moulding of an individual's spiritual outlook, there were similarly disparate views, with the respondents falling roughly into two main groups: those who pose religion and culture as opposites; and those who equate these two notions.

Although the respondents regard women as playing a significant role in the moulding of their people's culture, they note that even in the post-Soviet period, women are not playing any significant role in defining the state's cultural policies. There is an equally diverse range of opinion in the respondents' assessment of the creative potential of the women of Central Asia. However, as a rule, the respondents generally identify women who have pursued careers in the art world as examples of outstanding women.

The survey allows us to conclude that the influence of religion remains strong in the subconscious of the majority of respondents, evidence that in reality the secularisation of society did not take place. The influence of the secular culture which emerged during the Soviet period is not uniform throughout all the Central Asian countries, with the responses indicating that it is stronger where the traditional influence of religion was less significant. Although the respondents' life experience rather than their nationality was the main factor determining any similarity of opinion, there was also evidence of an ethno-centric perception of the surrounding world as well as an outlook which takes the past as the reference point. In conclusion, one can perhaps trace these answers back to the desire for a spiritual unity that is based on both the Muslim past and the Soviet experience. And this breathes optimism into the future resurgence of the culture of the peoples of the new Central Asian states.
Chapter 5

Education:
Bane Or Boon?
Chapter 5

Education: Bane or Boon?

Socialism gave birth to its own social myths, aimed at making the reality seem more attractive than it really was. Thus, the USSR was portrayed as a society where there was universal literacy and high standards of education - the greatest achievement of the October Revolution. One cannot refute that achievements in this sphere were made, specifically when the idea of socialism was in the ascendancy. But in reality, much remained simply a distant - and ultimately unfulfilled - goal.

The significant differences in the standard of education available in the Russian metropolis and in Central Asia that had existed in the pre-revolution and the pre-war periods, steadily began to diminish in the post-war era. But by the 1980s the trend again began to reverse itself although manifested in a less blatant form.

The examples of individual educated women of local nationalities which had shone so brightly in the 1930s and 1940s, had by the 1980s completely disappeared. In the earlier years of Soviet rule, girls were guaranteed entrance into prestigious colleges, access to achievement in the cultural sphere, all opportunity for leisure, and the promise of a personal pension. While earlier educated women had been accorded senior posts, by the 1980s many educated women faced the palpable threat of unemployment, hidden discrimination preventing them from being allocated interesting work, tough competition in the labour market and problems in their personal life. Linked to this and due to circumstances both within the society as well as within the family, education standards among Central Asian women started to gradually decline.

Given that, in demographical terms, the local population of Central Asia remained largely rural and that stereotypical local perceptions were consequently governed by this rural background, it is understandable that women did not take advantage of the fruits of education. Yet it is impossible for women to truly achieve what they are capable of - and not just in terms of legislative equality - without the spread of education and, as a consequence, recognition of the need to broaden their civil rights. Thus, as a whole, the women of Central Asia are as far from real equality today as they were in the 1930s, the reason now being seen as the quality and level of women's contemporary education.

In Central Asia, the concept of universal and free education penetrated only gradually. In the pre-revolution and pre-war periods, the cruel traditions, domestic lifestyles and the tenor of life facing Muslim women ensured that access to education was limited to well-off or progressive women with strong wills.
In Uzbekistan and Tadzhikistan, where the notion of the ‘Islamic' family with numerous children prevails, discrimination against girls' education is even more visible. The majority of parents want to give their daughters an education that will allow them to enter the popular professions, with priority being given to teaching or medicine. In Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstanz the situation is somewhat different because the reasons for discrimination are different. This includes a family's material circumstances, which often do not allow for all their children to study the full five year college course, as well as early marriages and child birth. Muslim girls are brought up to place a priority on marriage and children and not on education. They are also discriminated against by male students, teachers and elder relatives. Even though the crude number of women of local nationalities with higher education has grown significantly, as a percentage of the total female population their share remains lower than that of Russian women living in Central Asia.

THERE is a single, continuous system of education in Central Asia from kindergarten to college. Pre-school education, which runs from age one to six or seven, consists of rudimentary instruction and is followed by nine years of middle schooling at the gymnasiums or lyceums, followed by higher education at college or university. For day classes, the colleges accept students up to the age of 35, and for night-classes or part-time studies, until the age of 40.

Compulsory middle education consists of nine years of general study, with Xth and XIth Class children opting for courses according to choice and focusing on their future professions. Competitive entrance exams have now been introduced everywhere. For those seeking a vocational education, there is a multitude of institutes offering specialised and professional technical education.

In pre-revolution Central Asia higher education had existed, but in the form of religious education, which was available only to men. Nevertheless, within the relatively short period leading up to the 1940s, compulsory middle education, the so-called 'seventh standard', became universal. During the years of Soviet rule, higher education continued to evolve and today there are numerous institutes and universities in the capitals and major cities of Central Asia. But while the first generation of teachers at the Republic's colleges had studied from central Soviet institutions, and hence had high teaching standards, the quality of college teachers has declined in recent decades.

Until recently, only free, state education was available. But with the transition to a market economy in the 1990s, paid education in the private sector is being selectively introduced. As a rule, however, these are special education institutions - often former special schools and party schools - which offer individually tailored education programmes and extensive technical facilities.
In higher education, native languages and Russian are used as the medium of instruction. All colleges in Uzbekistan and Tadjikistan, were bilingual (the national language group plus the Russian/European language group). The option of studying in the native language has recently been introduced in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan in some colleges for people of indigenous nationalities. Over the years in Central Asia, those who studied in Russian, while retaining a command over local languages, as a rule adapted more quickly to active public life. This was particularly so of those who graduated from the central Soviet colleges in Moscow and Leningrad. Access to superior facilities and studies abroad were limited to these colleges with all branches of the sciences being concentrated in Leningrad and Moscow.

Khairiniso Ganieva
Uzbek physiotherapist working at the Tashkent University polyclinic; married with three children; 42

1. I was born and educated up to 11th Class in Chimkent, Kazakhstan. School standards were significantly higher than in Tashkent - a fact which surprised me when I went there to study at a medical college. I think the reason was that for school children were sent out to the fields one to two months to pick cotton, and had to abandon their studies. My school in Chimkent not only gave me education, it also took care of me; I am an orphan and the school bought clothes for me and coal for my family.

In those days, standards at the medical college in Tashkent were high. The demanding and strict attitudes of the teachers made even the laziest and most feather-brained responsible toward their studies. But here too, involvement in cotton production disrupted our studies quite a lot. The medical college was the first to 'voluntarily' start a cotton picking brigade and the first to terminate it. In 1969 we picked cotton for three to five months, right up January 1, 1970 by which time it was deep winter. We lost so much - both knowledge and strength - during this period.

At the college the courses for the improving one's qualifications were really over-subscribed, which is how it should have been since people felt there was some point in it all.

2. I am in favour of single-sex education but for reasons which completely differ with those of the religious activists. There is a need to speak of many things with girls which are not interesting for the boys. Single-sex education allows girls to feel themselves to be women and boys, men. Previously, when there were single-sex schools, a boy from the gymnasium would never allowed himself to hit a girl.
Single-sex education allows for the more appropriate professional orientation of students. But at primary school, boys and girls should study together. It should be up to parents and children to voluntarily choose between single-sex schools or co-education. This is why it is essential to have both options available.

Unfortunately, in the last two decades, education standards in the vernacular schools have proven to be inferior to standards in the Russian schools. I regard the causes as being, firstly, the corruption of higher education, especially among the indigenous groups. Here, the student body largely comes from the provinces, where their school education has suffered from the disruption caused by cotton production. In the colleges, even at the entrance exams, teachers introduce the students to the practice of bribery which then persists throughout the full five-year course.

The status of acquiring knowledge is declining. Entire departments are made up of teachers related to each other through family, clan ties and so on, and not according to their level of knowledge. What can such teachers teach? In the national schools, the textbooks were adapted from those used in the Russian schools, with the net result that their entire content was poorly assimilated by the school children. Our children are no less capable than others, but the teachers are not capable of imparting the full volume of knowledge because of their own lack of preparation.

3. Education gives women a sense of their own worth, an understanding of life and a profession. Only an educated woman can recognise her achievements and her shortcomings. Education allows her to take responsibility for her own and her family's fate.

4. Yes, one of the factors obstructing women's access to education is early marriage and the parent's preference for an early marriage. From childhood, parents start suggesting that only having a family makes a woman a complete and valued member of society; that a woman must serve her husband, and that education for women is of secondary importance - pointless in fact. This kind of upbringing has a life-long impact on a person's psychological perspective. It prevents the girl from aspiring to a good education, from pursuing her self-education in the future, and from taking a responsible attitude towards her professional duties. As a result women are consigned to a lower position in life and thus women's potential contribution to society's development is wasted. It is a vicious circle, dooming women to a secondary role. But there are no legislative obstacles in the path of women's education.

Another factor obstructing women's education is that there are many teachers who are lechers and who want to exploit the dependence of girl students. They try to blackmail them into becoming their lovers by failing them in the entrance or semester examinations. Such practices become public and parents, so as not to subject their daughters to these advances, withdraw them from their studies. I myself had to retake history because my teacher asked the impossible of me. Some despicable teachers seem to get malicious pleasure out of subjecting girl students to embarrassing questions during oral exams. During my anatomy viva, as if by some evil design I was landed with a question about the male sexual organ. My examiner was openly amused. I answered, not raising my eyes, but the examiner found more and more
questions to ask me about this topic. I was ready to spit in his face and run away. This doesn't happen only in the medical colleges.

5. Education is in need of basic reform. It must be made free of corruption. If the higher-ups do not understand this, then they are pushing their country and their nation towards a catastrophe. Earlier, it was considered a matter of pride to give one's daughter in marriage to an educated person and, now, the biggest honour is to give one's daughter to an illiterate but wealthy man. Those who openly advertise: "Student seeks to buy diploma" should be ashamed but such practices are becoming common. So as to raise the status of education, there must be open discussion of the problems of education, especially in higher education. The notion that education is good not just for individuals but for society as a whole, has yet to be recognised by our people. In the process of the struggle to raise Uzbek to the status of our state language, the role of Russian in education has been downgraded. This is wrong. Today, Russian is also the bridge to modern knowledge, if only because science books in Russian are more accessible to us than books in other global languages. New language programmes are essential for primary and middle schools. This would allow our citizens to be educated in whichever country they choose, just as in schools in the minor European countries where two to three languages are taught.

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**Saule Kenesbaeva**

Kazakh; 50; philologist specialising in Eastern Studies; divorced with a married daughter; working as head of department in the National Research Institute of Philosophy and Law; President of the International Association of Work and Cultural Co-operation (LIANA), Almaty

1. I finished school in 1950. In those days, it gave one a sound foundation of knowledge. From my generation - those who did their middle schooling at the end of the 1950s to the beginning of the 1960s - there emerged wonderfully learned people; physicists, mathematicians, geologists and chemists, today famous throughout the former Soviet Union. The knowledge we received at school allowed us to get into the better colleges and universities. Many of my classmates studied at the Moscow State University, and I myself graduated from Oriental Faculty of Moscow University. I studied for my post-graduate degree at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. I am grateful to fate for this opportunity, which was available to those of us living in the Soviet republics; we were able to study in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev and so forth.

Today, we somehow forget precisely those good aspects of life which Soviet rule gave us. Without this fundamental knowledge, which was available to any citizen of any nationality, we could never have even spoken about the scientific course which is today being developed in Kazakhstan. One should not paint the past only in a negative light: the Soviet Union not only opened up the road to knowledge, but also raised the possibility of developing science, industry and education in places where a modern system of education had not existed. It is this knowledge which is today opening a door
for us onto the outside world. From this point of view, it is precisely our Soviet past which allowed us Kazakh - and I think also the other peoples of the former Soviet Union - to leap frog time and join modern civilisation. What we today accept as given, was an almost unattainable dream for the enlightened of our region at the beginning of the century. Education has penetrated every village and every corner of the country. We have an Academy of Sciences. Our scholars, especially in the basic fields, have contributed works of the highest global standards. Progress in the area of basic education was enormous. Today the question is to strengthen this progress.

Yes, there was repression, famine and war. But one should not assume that all who survived were conformists or traitors. Among them were great scholars who did a lot for their people, their education and development.

2. Co-education of boys and girls leads to a single standard of education for both men and women and children grow up without complexes.

3. Education is equally important for every person and for women too. It gives a woman confidence in life, helps her find a profession and become the master of her own fate. It is education that moulds the personality, one's outlook and convictions. From this point of view, the advantages of co-education become evident. Regarding the religious schools, it is the freedom of conscience that has allowed them to appear. But I am afraid that the large-scale establishment of Christian, Islamic and Jewish schools may lead to divisions among people and alienation. In this lies the danger of future confrontation.

4. Clearly the factors obstructing women's education, are primarily economic and are due to the social divisions within society. But this factor equally affects the education of men. As to the issue of discrimination within the family against daughters being educated, there is little likelihood of this happening in Kazakhstan as the influence of Islamic traditions - notably, son preference - is somewhat different here.

5. The existing education system has many defects which have led to plummeting education standards. The situation in the schools is particularly unfortunate. The professional abilities of teachers has been eroded. There are various reasons, including the low status of teaching and their poor salaries; corruption, the lack of contact with students and out-dated syllabi; the problem of ill-equipped schools, especially in the rural areas. All of this influences the attitude of the students towards the process of knowledge itself. Teachers face spontaneous opposition from students. In higher education, the main problem is corruption, both in the appointment of teaching cadres and in the selection of students. If corruption is not eradicated, the collapse of education is inevitable which could have unbelievable repercussions for our young state.

I would like to see a change in the psychological environment in the schools. It is essential to replace the concept of teacher as overseer with the notion of teacher as mentor. Undoubtedly new teaching methods, programmes and new teaching concepts are needed. In higher education, a new form of interaction between students and teachers, which is based on respect for the individual, is similarly needed. This would promote conditions conducive to the freedom of interaction, artistic initiative and the development of the
student's individuality. In the process of learning it is essential to strengthen independent work and for this stimuli must come from outside the higher education system. The commercialisation of education is not the best method of reforming higher education.

Zamira Osmonbekova

Kyrgyz; physiotherapist; post-graduate; working in an institute of higher education and at a garment factory; 40; unmarried; born and living in Bishkek

1. I had a wonderful education at school, at the medical college, an internship in Frunze and my post-graduate studies in Moscow. I did not always feel this way and used to be dissatisfied with my education, but later, having worked for a year in Spain, I realised that my education has been of a very high standard. It is difficult to get such an education abroad. It takes an enormous amount of money. Nor can every millionaire access this, as such education calls for great effort and time. In my Soviet country we received such an education almost for free. We could continue to study for as long as we wanted.

2. What does segregated or non-segregated education mean? According to language or sex? Whichever, the point is that education should be good. I do not have any children which is why, for me, this is an abstract question.

3. Education means independence and a means of existence.

4. The main factor obstructing education is the lack of a desire to study, to perfect oneself, and to work.

5. I think one of the main achievements of socialism in the East was education - the mass education of women. The door to education was opened up to women, wherever they happened to live. If a Kyrgyz girl wanted to study in Moscow, she was welcome and all her expenses were covered. There was no discrimination on the basis of nationality. On its own, Kyrgyzstan or even Uzbekistan, would never have been able to achieve such a standard of education and could not have created the type of educational system that was created by the Soviet Union, thanks to the revolution and socialism. Today, it is important that this system is not destroyed, that cultural space is preserved and that linkages are not lost.

Bashorat Mahmoodova

Uzbek; teacher; 39; teacher of German language in a college; living in Andijan

1. There were serious shortcomings at every stage of my education; in school there was the problem of education in a foreign language; at college, there was no system of sound professional preparation. In postgraduate studies it was a question of self education.
2. I am in favour of co-education at school. But at the level of higher education, perhaps there should also be single-sex institutions. I have read sociological surveys conducted among women's colleges in the USA which indicate that in their future life, their graduates are comparatively more successful.

3. Education gives one the opportunity to earn one's living; it makes a woman independent, and helps one have a sense of individuality. Education is essential for women so they can bring up their children well.

4. Today there are no visible factors obstructing women's access to education. But, clearly, they exist because of the blatant stratification of society. While today obstacles to women's education exist within the family in one form or another, tomorrow, if the Islamisation of society gains strength, the negative attitudes towards higher education for women will be strengthened. The male elite views educated and talented women with suspicion, and attempts to side-line a woman as a competitor, especially if it is a question of getting a job. The state's protective position regarding women must be preserved in future education policies.

5. The system of education itself and its structure do not need any major reorganisation, although I would like to see the following changes: the basic preparation of the teaching cadre needs to be fundamentally changed; schools and colleges must be equipped with facilities which meet modern education methods; computers and libraries will be useless if teachers cannot ignite a thirst for knowledge in the children.

No system and no amount of reforms will have any impact if the grounds for a sound good education are not laid by the family, by parents and by society.

Baret Irgalieva
Kazakh; 45; Director of the Executive Committee of the Democratic Committee for Human Rights; librarian; living in Almaty; married with one daughter

1. Our education is suffocating. Life has already shown this. The education system is corrupted right from the school to the post-graduate levels. Who wrote the school books? They contain many lies. Over the seventy years of Soviet rule, children had it drummed into them that only the revolution had given us culture and knowledge. There was no other way of being - the best minds were shot dead. History, psychology and philosophy were all tainted with ideology. The desire for truth did not become one of the goals of knowledge. Schools have to follow a single syllabus and a single method, and produce identical people whose natural originality is suppressed.

In higher education, the graduates receive identical diplomas. It often turns out that a person with sound knowledge becomes an outsider in life and is obliged to spend their whole life working for some completely inept person. Average types become leaders and title holders, because it is easier for them to adapt to the rules of the game, the main one being not to criticise the orders of the higher-ups and always bow before them.
In post-graduate studies one is greatly dependent on one's supervisor, upon whom the entire future depends. This is why a post-graduate scholar often ends up playing the role of a servant. This is a common occurrence and when such people themselves reach positions of importance, they reinforce that same system of interaction.

Law and medicine are specially corrupted fields of education. This is particularly dangerous for society because then the sense of justice and kindness - the essence of these professions - atrophies.

2. Let there be various schools: co-educational as well as segregated. Here there needs to be flexibility. Let people have a choice, then they will themselves understand what is better. Why shouldn't there be schools for women's specialisations, e.g. medicine and teaching, and for men's specialisations, e.g. construction. I am against religious schools. For example, in Almaty evangelical churches have opened religious schools where preachers teach. I was there once to hear how the class was conducted and do you know what the priest said? "The teachings of Christ should enter minds everywhere and the people of the whole world should speak the name of Christ". This, in an ethnically and religiously diverse country like Kazakhstan! Religious schools, one way or another, will facilitate conflict between people of different faiths. Even the tsarist authorities did not launch any missionary work among the Kazakh. Even though the Kazakh are not fanatical followers of Islam, they closely associate their national identity with Islam. Today religious schools, specifically those with an evangelical orientation, are attempting to attract Kazakh youth. It is difficult to imagine how this will affect the civic peace which still exists in Kazakhstan.

3. Education is required to give women equality both in terms of social and economic status.

4. To eliminate any obstructions in the education of women, the family, which still constitutes a basic obstruction, first needs to be enlightened.

On the other hand, Soviet legislation (which remains the basic legislation on education in Kazakhstan), provides for positive discrimination in the field of education.

5. Reform of education should above all be directed towards eliminating corruption. Without this, no reform will be effective.

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Svetlana Monosova

Russian; 33; economist; married with a son and parents still alive; born and living in Tashkent

1. Much too much time has been spent upon a completely inadequate education, not to mention the effort and nerves wasted on it. So many unnecessary subjects are studied which are useful neither in one's life nor in one's job.

I am in favour of women studying the humanities - history, music, literature,
social skills and how to act in different situations. Women must be educated in the culinary arts, and study clerical work and foreign languages. All of this prepares a woman for family life.

If a woman has a technical bent of mind, which sometimes happens, then there is no need for her to waste time studying anything except the technical sciences. One needs to concretise professional studies.

2. Only co-education! Contact between children of different sexes helps them in their future adult life. There is something unnatural and artificial in segregated studies. In children, and people in general, there is an attraction towards the opposite sex. If this is suppressed or expressed with difficulty, it can lead to a lot of trouble.

3. Education gives a woman confidence in herself. She deals with any given responsibility better and communicates more easily. She can take care of her own affairs. In people's eyes, an educated woman is superior to an illiterate one. Even if she does not use her education to the public good, thanks to her education she can bring up her children far better. This is still quite a lot.

4. I do not see any factors obstructing education for women in Uzbekistan. On the contrary, girls of local nationalities have advantages in terms of entry into colleges.

5. I would make many changes in the education system, but above all, I would direct girls towards a knowledge of the humanities and a profession.

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**Narbibish Shammaeva**

Turkmen; 42; scientific worker, teaching in a college; married with two children; living in Chardjoi

1. My education primarily consisted of self-education. In this vocation, in order to awaken in students the desire to study independently, a teacher must infuse them with the desire to gain knowledge because not even the most perfect school can provide a pupil all the knowledge they will ever need. I was able to have a good education, courtesy of my first teacher and life itself. I saw how my mother did three different jobs in order to raise us. She was uneducated, which is why her work was heavy physical labour. I told myself 'I must study, so that I can live differently,' and I succeeded. Education gave me the possibility of having an interesting job and having enough in life without having to use my physical strength.

2. I am for co-education so that girls can become genuine women, indispensable in the eyes of men.

3. Education gives women the ability to support the family. The laws of physics dictate that when a building has two supports, it is stable. This also applies to the family. Education allows women to realise themselves in their chosen sphere. An educated woman is interesting for her husband. Education allows one to successfully overcome the crises of growing up, and to uncover the meaning of life. It is a constant process, one's impressions change and
there is the joy of discovering the new. Education - this is too immense a subject for a simple and immediate answer.

4. The primary factor obstructing the education of women is the woman herself. There should be the desire to learn and then she can overcome all obstacles. If there is no desire, no amount of advantages or privileges can help her gain knowledge. Only those who do not have a genuine desire to be educated find obstacles in their path. But it is very important that this desire is nurtured in a girl within the family, in the process of a child's socialisation.

5. Schooling should no longer be dominated by ideology - this is important. The process of education must have practical goals. It is not necessary to encumber the mind with unnecessary knowledge. Schools must handle children's individuality with care. Individually-tailored work must facilitate the development of a child's identity. For this it is essential to have various syllabi and new teaching ideas. The syllabi must also allow for education in aesthetics.

Kurolai Ibrahimova

Kazakh; 43; Head of department in a National Research Institute; married with two children; born in the countryside, living in Alma-Ata; studied in Moscow

1. Everything is relative. Perhaps there were gaps in my education at school and in college. But my post-graduate studies in Moscow supplemented what I lacked. This was due not only to my own studies, but also to Moscow's cultural atmosphere: there were libraries, and the thirst for self-perfection - which emerges in an atmosphere of relative freedom from traditional domestic lifestyles. All this significantly boosted my education. But the main thing was that it all depended on my own approach. For a person who has no desires it does not matter where they live, but for a person who seeks knowledge, Moscow gave - and can still give - a lot.

2. My opinion on single-sex education in not a simple one. It is possible that a particular strata of society feels the need for it, but for the majority, co-education is preferable. Single-sex education has a specific purpose: it is closer to the expectations of oriental culture.

3. Education gives women a sense of being a complete person. The family atmosphere also depends on the extent of a woman's education.

4. There are no factors obstructing women's education in my country. But I myself believe that it is best to complete one's education before marriage. I am grateful to my parents, who took upon themselves the task of caring for my children so I could complete my education.

5. I do not consider the existing education system imperfect. As a whole it meets the needs of modern life and imparts knowledge based on the latest scientific achievements, particularly in the spheres of the exact and natural sciences. However, the humanities syllabus needs revision. I would like to see the physical education part of the school syllabus expanded and, of course, I would like teachers' salaries to be more closely linked to their level
of initiative and the quality of their work. Poor education is the result of a lack of conscientiousness among teachers in the middle schools and colleges.

Elmira Turkmanova

36; working as a scientific researcher; Kyrgyz; divorced with two children; living in Bishkek; Biochemist

1. I studied at a very good special school and later in the Second Moscow Medical Institute and took up post-graduate studies in one of its leading departments. This is why I had a good education, even though in my view, it was one-sided. For example, I only have a poor understanding of the arts, and I am weak at foreign languages. Recognising the gaps in my education, I believe that the multi-directional development of children is essential and that they should be taught foreign languages even at the pre-school and primary school levels. A love of the arts needs to be instilled in school. The existing education system does not have such aims and not all parents can themselves give their children such knowledge.

2. I suppose that in principle there is no difference in the quality of education in single-sex and co-educational institutes. Nevertheless, I think co-education is better for the moulding of girls' and boys' future social interaction as men and women; it helps define their social roles. Even in the smaller classes, children already have an attraction to the opposite sex; the girls become feminine and the boys, noble. In a co-educational system, it is easier to evolve new norms of conduct for men and women, but at present our schools are not given such a task.

3. A person must be educated, irrespective of their gender. This is evident. But while education is a pre-condition, it is not the sole factor guaranteeing a woman's independence and sense of self-worth.

4. The main obstruction to a good education - and not just for women - is the emergence of poorer teaching standards in the middle schools. The schools often do not have a full complement of teachers, are not properly equipped, etc.

5. As long as there is an economic crisis, political instability and anarchy, the situation in the field of education cannot improve. In spite of the emergence of new lycees, gymnasiums and colleges, there have been no significant changes in education. At present, there are attempts to set up elite institutes at the cost of lowering the quality of teaching in public schools.

Miyassar Razzakova

Soloist of the Tashkent Opera; Uzbek; 28; born and living in Tashkent

1. I studied in an Uzbek school. I had wonderful teachers and I regard my education in school as having been of a good standard. An atmosphere of
benevolence and strict discipline allowed all my classmates to become capable people.

I graduated from the Tashkent conservatory. I had to study seven years, as I did not have a musical education. Our teachers' high expectations and the spirit of creative competition allowed one to learn a great deal. The teachers at the Tashkent conservatory are top-class maestros. Our graduates are part of the Soviet Philharmonic Orchestra and also work abroad. Those who want it, can have a wonderful education. It all depends upon the person themselves.

2. I cannot say whether I am definitely in favour of either segregated or co-education. Perhaps people should choose for themselves.

3. Education must impart modern knowledge and an understanding about the modern world. Being an educated woman and a keeper of the hearth - these two concepts are not opposites, but in fact complement each other. A poorly educated and badly brought up woman cannot be a worthy custodian of the family.

4. The basic factor obstructing women's education, is the family. Sons are preferred in Islamic families and, if there is a choice of giving education to girls or boys, then families opt for the latter. Families consider it necessary to marry off girls young, especially in villages. This way, the country possibly loses many talented individuals.

5. I am convinced that it is education in particular which will offer my young country a brighter future. This is why I regard it essential to preserve all privileges for women in terms of access to higher education. The quality and quantity of educated women must not be reduced; on the contrary, it must be increased.

Olga Radchenko

Teacher at a pedagogical institute, specialising in Russian language and literature; married with one son

1. I regard my school education as having been inadequate. Standards in schools over the last decade have become extremely poor compared with previous standards, the reason being the stagnation in the teaching profession. Schools became very conservative and experimentation has been completely excluded. National schools are in an even worse state. Their syllabi were based on just one third of the syllabi of Russian schools. As a result, in reality, schools produce uneducated people - covered up by the embellishment of indices which exist in the education sector just as in other fields. Society's general sicknesses such as indifference, corruption and the lack of spirituality also destroys the schools. This process has been facilitated by the fact that schools are in the hands of those who were not teachers by vocation but merely by diploma - former Party or Comsomol (3) workers for whom the teachers, the students and the process of teaching itself are all irrelevant, and whose own careers are more important. A dictatorial style of management and teaching was introduced; schoolchildren could be sent off
to harvest vegetables or sweep the streets when some big-shot was due to visit.

Education standards in the Institutes is even worse. I had a child and this greatly disrupted my studies which is why, after graduating I had to do a lot of self-education so that I could get a professional job. At present, I teach Russian language at the Institute and still have to develop myself professionally.

2. Education must be mixed. Boys and girls, studying together, learn to mix with each other. I think that single-sex schools foster complexes, unhealthy interests.

3. Education - this means women's independence.

4. In Kazakhstan there are no factors obstructing women's education. Girls of local nationalities are given privileges when competing for entrance to the Institutes and can take advantage of the special quotas. Only, not everyone can take advantage of the opportunities provided by the state due to their own laziness of mind. Even when studying at the Institutes, some try to take the easy road to a diploma and do not get a genuine education because they do not see the point of education. They want a diploma only for the sake of the prestige.

5. To improve the quality of education it is necessary to reorganise the schools, where one gets one's basic education.

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**Jemila Sardjaeva**

Turkmen, 51; philologist; PhD and university teacher; married with three children; living in Ashkabad

1. I regard my education as having been relatively rounded for the times. In 1961, I graduated from a Russian school and in 1966 from the university. Wherever I am, my education has helped me to adapt quickly. As a result, it allowed me to achieve professional recognition.

2. Education must be mixed, but I am not against single-sex institutions and, where possible, various specialised studies which are predominantly feminine (nursing, midwifery, kindergarten teaching) or masculine (carpentry, joinery and so forth). I believe professional study must prepare boys and girls for adult life.

4. In society there are no factors obstructing the education of women.

5. The system of education itself does not require specific changes, but the syllabi must be reviewed. Many topics and areas can be excluded without detriment to education, but subjects like the native languages and national history need new syllabi. Students must be able to choose whether to study the humanities or the natural sciences.
1. I regard the education I got at school and at college as having been good. Education depends upon the person themselves. Intellect depends upon the person - either you have it or you don't. It is possible to give people exactly the same education, but the quality of its outcome among more developed people will be better. Good education requires a teacher who teaches a person to think; the rest - technique and books - is all secondary.

2. Education must above all be of a good standard and if separate education in different languages can provide it, then let it be so. Let there be both single-sex and co-education schools and if people want, let there be a choice. What is important is that money is invested in education. Only schools can promote culture. The negative attitudes held by teachers are reflected in the children. It is necessary to open up the path to innovation, nonconformism and new syllabi, but how should this be done? It is necessary for a teacher to stimulate students to seek self-perfection. Religion must be part of education. People must not be ashamed of their beliefs, if they have them.

3. Education moulds the individuality and this applies to women as well as men.

4. The commercialisation of education allows a greater choice to those who seek education. There must be private schools, colleges and universities; in this way the state monopoly will be broken. People will know what they are paying for and they will pay only for quality.

5. Firstly it is necessary to depoliticise education; secondly it is necessary not only to teach knowledge, but also the ability to apply this knowledge; thirdly, it is necessary to offer specialisation at different levels of education; fourthly, to allow talented teachers to follow their own syllabus; and, fifthly, to improve the technical equipment in schools.

1. In the process of my own studies I experienced all the changes which took place in national schools: the change in the script, the change in the syllabus and the change of an entire generation of teachers due to repression. When I was studying at the Institute I was already married. I faced many problems due to my family responsibilities. I did not attend post-graduate classes and prepared my PhD thesis while working at a school. I defended my doctoral
dissertation when the children had grown up. In the process of my professional growth, the main factors were self-education, the desire to learn something new, and the moral support of my family, above all my husband. I am thankful to him for my happy family life and for the success I had on my path towards knowledge. Even more so, because I know that in my husband's family the women have only been able to partially realise themselves in their professions and achieve recognition.

2. I am in favour of coeducation for boys and girls as this gives girls a rounded education, stimulates their spirit of competition and desire to excel in their studies.

Regarding schools segregation on the basis of the language of instruction, unfortunately, I have to say that the standard of education in the national schools is generally a poorer standard. I shall try to explain. National schools, especially when they were being established, underwent certain processes which the Russian schools did not. The founders of the national schools were enlightened people who dreamed of giving their people modern knowledge. They relied upon the existing teaching traditions associated with the national culture. But in the late 1920s and early 1930s the schools were deprived of these people. Two waves of repression against the intelligentsia completely swept them away along with their methods and programmes. In the 1930s, an atmosphere of instability, fear and a lack of confidence was sown in these schools, rendering them incapable of guaranteeing a rounded education. This process deprived the national schools of their own identity, and thus their spirit weakened and the content of what they taught quickly declined. They become second class in terms of the quality of knowledge they offered, and gradually the indigenous teaching culture disappeared.

However, in the 1940s and 1950s, the national schools settled down once again. Wonderful teachers emerged and the desire for education in our people was enormous. But beginning with the late 1960s in both the national and Russian schools, there was a gradual surrendering of their positions as schools began to lose status. Often those who did not regard teaching as a vocation become teachers, because it is easier to get into the Pedagogical Institutes than into others. Higher education has been corrupted and the diseases of society also affected attitudes towards the profession. State controls over schools have increased, followed by new reforms, a new syllabi and, once again, the schools are becoming unsettled. All of this is taking place against the background of the falling status and authority of teachers. Their poor salaries and the schools' lack of adequate facilities affect the students.

Higher education is becoming increasingly corrupted: bribes during college entrance, bribes at the time of assignments, bribes to get one's post-graduate degree and bribes to get an appointment: everyone knows about this, but it is impossible to stop it. Bribery - a crime difficult to prove - is the reason that there was a fall in the prestige of having an education and a loss of that trust which is essential between teachers and students. In such a situation, honest teachers who loved their work suffered the most. Their efforts were often wasted. Talented people left the schools and, again, children suffered.

How to stop this process? I am a person of the old school and think that to some extent it is necessary to be harsh and use a strong arm to clean up our education and society.
3. Education enables a woman to feel herself to be a full member of society. Education is essential for a woman so that she can bring up her children to be cultured and developed persons. An educated woman awakens in her children the desire for knowledge, for truth and justice.

4. The obstacle to women's education is the poverty of the family. The desire for education emerges in a girl if there is a pro-education environment in the family; a family that is focused only on material values, money and consumerism, prevents the desire to study from appearing in a girl. In society, the corruption of the social consciousness regarding education obstructs women's education.

5. The existing education system, created in the Soviet era, is capable of providing sufficiently complete knowledge even with its lack of adequate facilities, but only if it overcomes this problem of corruption. Lycees, colleges, private schools, and the opening up of experiments in teaching methods can only be effective when knowledge and truth - and not just material well-being - are made the ultimate goal of education.

The education system can work well if an effort is made to preserve the libraries and archives that are in a terrible condition today and not just due to the present crisis. They have been neglected over the past twenty years. Replenishing the budgets of the libraries, especially in the provinces, was a very slow process. The libraries and archives have no modern equipment. Forget about the equipment - their very buildings are old and in need of repair. In these conditions self-education - a major part of the people's education process - becomes an almost impossible task.

Maira Abdjalilova

Kazakh, economist by academic training and director of a small enterprise; married with two children; born in Jambul, living in Almaty

1. Today education is worse than it was in our times. I see it through how my children study. There are very poor text books, especially in the humanities. I think my school education was good. It gave me a foundation for my development. The demands were high and it imparted basic knowledge in mathematics and other exact sciences which became the basis for logical thought.

The education I had at college was not significant. If I had had the possibility of choice, then I would have wanted to study with only two or three teachers. The remainder not only had a poor command over their subject, but they also had no desire to spark an interest in it in their students. Teachers of the social disciplines, who in the colleges had a privileged position, attracted particular hostility. At the post-graduate level, I studied in Moscow at the Mekhanov Institute of Economics. Here, I learned much afresh. But my family responsibilities did not allow me to complete my dissertation. Research work must play a special role in the colleges; it teaches one independence and the ability to formulate a problem and solve it.
2. Let there be single-sex schools as well as coeducation. There must be alternatives in everything. If people want, let them have it and they can be convinced of the rights or wrongs of their choice. Obliging people to follow one or the other meets with resistance. Those who see this as their path, let them study in religious schools, but this should not be made binding for everyone.

3. Education is everything, what more can be added.

4. Free education is democratic. It allows capable children from different strata to develop themselves. Paid education infringes upon the rights of children who seek an education and want to live better than their parents. Paid education is the road to the division of society and can become an obstacle to the education of women.

5. Reforms in education must recognise the need to break the state monopoly on education and on study programmes.

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Natalya Sultanova

35; artist and teacher; living in Bishkek; Khakass(4); separated with two children

1. My education cannot be regarded as rounded, as at school the child's individuality is made to conform to some standard norms. The same happens in higher education. The education I received sought to inculcate a herd instinct in everything: in one's thought, conduct, dress and so on. In our education system, women's identity is not taken into account.

2. I am in favour of co-education. Children of different sexes have a positive influence on each other, thanks to their mutual interest in each other. But the discriminatory attitudes of boys towards girls begins in the pre-adolescent age. If there were to be single-sex schools, I think discriminatory attitudes towards girls would be even stronger.

3. Education gives girls inner freedom, if they already have a well-developed sense of self-esteem, and especially if they are from a traditional family. They become self-confident in life. For girls with an average or poor self-esteem nurtured in their families, education is essential to enable them to bring up their children and create a more cultured atmosphere in the family. They can develop in their daughters an even higher self-esteem and help develop their individuality.

In the conditions under which we lived - and continue to live today, it is not possible for a woman to combine being a mother - the person who creates an atmosphere conducive to the education and upbringing of her children - and an artistic individual - who must focus on her personal self-education, self-confidence and on achieving success in her profession or public activity.

4. There are no visible factors obstructing women's education. There is no discrimination in entrance to educational institutions. But there are a series of factors, such as the traditional way of life within the family and the basic education system, which do not allow an artistic nature or a yearning for
knowledge to develop in girls. These days, there are additional social factors, specifically the limited material resources of the family.

5. My attitude towards the existing education system is that there should be more male teachers in schools. This is possible if the state raises the prestige of school teachers and increases their salaries. Because Soviet schools had a poor social status, the teaching cadre mainly consisted of poor, bullied and overburdened women. They could not bring up manly men and feminine women. Such schools produced infantile creatures with a poor understanding of their future social roles and their roles in their future families.

### Vera Charieva

Turkmen; 54; doctor and professor with a doctorate in medical sciences; widow with two grown-up children; living in Ashkabad

1. I received a good education at school, college, and in my post-graduate studies, which allowed me to pursue a good professional career and to move ahead. For a good education, it is essential to have the desire for and interest in a profession.

2. I studied at a girls' school and do not think this was bad. I am also not against co-education. In some things it is even better: girls try to be more feminine.

3. Education must give one a profession.

4. I do not see any obstacles to women's education.

5. I believe that the Soviet system of education gradually changed according to the needs of the times. This is as it should be. The new generation do their bit for progress. I think it will be the same in the future: true professionals do not stand idle. Quality education means giving every schoolchild and student an understanding of what they need to learn for themselves. The social climate dictates the extent of the desire for knowledge.

### Maurye Tulegenova

Kazakh; 36; divorced with one child; graduated from the Moscow Institute of Petroleum and Gas; working in a factory as an engineer; living in Chinkent

1. At school we were taught badly, and the people who taught at my college almost never worked in their area of speciality. My post-graduate studies also were not up to modern standards. Education is deteriorating because no one is interested in the quality of the material students are absorbing. Bringing ideology into education led to the fact that subjects such as the history of the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union) or Scientific Communism turned out to be more important than subjects which a person
was going to use in their future work. On the other hand, I am against narrow specialisation. It makes people dogmatic. Good education could be had at the central Soviet colleges. Now even this opportunity has become limited.

2. With single-sex teaching, girls end up being deliberately worse off since their syllabus would be limited. Even at present there are people are asking why teach women technical disciplines?

I am against the commercialisation of education. The rich are becoming even richer and the poor even poorer. For the poor the question of going to a better, expensive university or a bad one won't even exist; girls will not be able to go to university at all. The question will be whether one can afford a higher education or not. The rich, studying in expensive universities, might not become wiser.

3. Education for women is as essential as it is for men.

4. The Soviet education system is sufficiently effective, but education reforms are still needed. It is above all essential to raise teaching standards. Competition between those seeking to teach the colleges must be real. I think this is an essential element of the contract system. But no reforms will be fruitful, if corruption remains.

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**Cholpon Ainakulova**

Kyrgyz; 22; university student; Bishkek

1. I regard the standard of education I received both at school and at university as having been quite low. But there is now zero prestige in having an education. While five years ago the state at least spoke about the need for educated people, the new 'democrats' in reality completely reject educated people's right to exist. I do not know what I will do after finishing university because there is huge unemployment among the youth. Everyone who wants to become someone has contacts outside Kyrgyzstan; they try to leave the country, in order to get a job according to their speciality and earn enough to live on. Kyrgyz girls are ready to marry anyone who will take them away from the country. Extremely crude and arrogant people are flourishing, people who were filling their pockets even during socialism.

2. What a strange question! I think that as far as today's rulers are concerned, the people need no education whatsoever. If education still exists, then it exists due to the inertia of the former system.

3. Ideally, education must give a woman interesting work and independence, but in reality it just gives her huge psychological problems. Educated women live in conflict with society, which obstructs their development and their very existence.

4. Yes, I regard the frequent absence of spirituality in society as being the main factor obstructing education in general and of women in particular. Even among those who are comfortably-off, the only thing which is valued is
material wealth; parasitism has become people's ideal. Those who, during the period of developed socialism, lived well at the cost of others, are even better off during the current period of undeveloped capitalism by robbing those close to them. In such a situation the factor obstructing education is that the uneducated can be exploited easily. Poor nation!

5. I do not know how even the existing education system is surviving. It seems that the quality of education even in the past two years has declined. I feel its effects myself.

**Sara Nursapaeva**

Kazakh; 43; married with no children

1. I studied at a school in a workers settlement. The standard of education there was low. Even though I got into a technical college in Leningrad, it was very difficult for me to study there. The standards were high and I could not maintain the pace needed to fill in the gaps in my school education and assimilate new things; I dropped out of college. Later, I entered the faculty of history at the State University in Kazakhstan. Here it was easier to study. Although today I see how much time was wasted by useless subjects and how little there was of what could have prepared me for my specialisation - the history of the Uigur people. The syllabus had no place for the history of the small nations, including the history of the Uigur of Eastern Turkmenistan, part of whom live in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. I really regret that the colleges do not stimulate independent work, and much had to be supplemented later. In higher education, the teaching method was demanding, which destroys ones interest in learning.

My specialisation was determined during my post-graduate studies, when I developed a genuine interest and when scientific research work awoke in me a sense of purpose; the unknown and the search for the truth allowed me to see all of my individual confusions as a passing phase. Now I see that I did not spend those years in vain.

2. I am for co-education.

3. Education gives women emotional satisfaction, it moulds their world outlook, expands their contacts and in the end, determines their social status.

4. In Kazakhstan I do not see anything obstructing women's education. It all depends upon the woman herself. Respect for education is strong among all social strata. There never was nor is there today any obstruction to girls' education from the part of the family. For now, the state provides everyone an opportunity to be educated.

5. To improve the education system in my country, there is no need to reinvent the wheel. We should use the best models of education available in the humanities and technical subjects as the basis for our schooling.
1. I had a good education. I studied at a Russian school. My father was one of the few who graduated from Moscow University in the 1930s and then attempted to give a good education to me and my brothers (one became a well-known film director, the other a well-known sportsman). At the college level, I studied in Tashkent. Compared with the quality of education at school or later during my post-graduate studies, the quality of education was lower. I did my post-graduate studies at the Central Committee of the CPSU's Academy of Social Sciences. This was an elite institution to which only those from the nomenklatura could enter; it provided a very good education in the humanities. It had the best professors in the country and there was a wonderful library. I regard my studies at the Academy to have been the best years of my life. I had access to a huge amount of largely accurate information. I had a circle of acquaintances who had come from all across the USSR. I felt that I had access to tremendous cultural wealth, concentrated in the capital of one of the world's greatest countries. Only one hundred students get in every year. For each student there were almost three teachers and it had the very latest equipment. The Academy turned out highly educated people destined the top ranks of the nomenklatura.

But this education did not work in the republics. It was not enough for securing a key post. One had to have patrons. Even though I later became the Minister of Education, the deciding factor in my nomination was not my Academy education, but my years of work after graduation. My education helped me a great deal in my work at this high post, even though I was unable to put a lot of my ideas into practice. It was my good education that allowed me to leave that high post painlessly. Now I am a DSc and am doing what interests me, heading a non-governmental organisation.

2. I am for coeducation in schools. But I believe it is also essential to create elite schools, where it would be more expedient to have girls taught separately. Such schools can create women aristocrats, who can become highly cultured by learning music, painting, good manners and dancing. This school can prepare them for life, to become a wonderful wife and a secular woman. Such women would also value their dignity very highly, and would be free from all our complexes. The sense of being inferior to men, which is instilled in us by the traditional family and the present education system, would completely disappear. This is why I am sure that such women can struggle for their rights and true equality because they would feel genuinely independent. But it goes without saying that such schools would have to be fee-paying.

3. Education can give women a lot, enabling them to achieve in life. But while education is essential it is not enough; what is important is to be goal-oriented.

4. There is a major section of society which strongly opposes women's
education, especially women's higher education. Complete school and immediately get them married is how such fathers plan their daughters' lives. In the Ferghana Valley there is an entire district where there is not one woman with higher education nor any women with middle technical education! Ten to fifteen girls out of every hundred do not finish middle school (XIIth Class) due to marriage. This is a big problem.

5. The Soviet system of education in the 1940s and 1950s was known as the best in the world, but later it started to seriously lag behind. Today our education system could once again take a leading position provided schools were modernised. The main weakness of our education has become the fall in the prestige of education and teaching. Our schools are surviving on the old teachers, who work selflessly and devotedly due to their love of children. The corruption of society has penetrated the higher education system including teacher training. New teachers have turned out to be below the standards of a person to whom society entrusts its future. This also disturbed me during my ten years as Minister of Education. My attempts to change things were unsuccessful. Corruption is particularly strong in the administration of the provincial education system. The bane of schools is the race for trumped-up statistics and assessments.

One more shortcoming in the area of education, in my view, is the state's attempt to provide everyone a complete middle school education. It is clear that this is an unattainable goal because children's abilities are different - not all are capable of completing this level of education. This has resulted in a fall in the quality of basic education.

Schools do not need reforms but a revolution.

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**Maiyam Izbasarova**  
Kazakh; 57; married with three children; retired Civil Engineer; living in Almaty

1. I had a good education. School gave me a good grounding in mathematics, physics and chemistry. Standards were high, which is why I did not find it difficult to study at college. I did my higher education at the Leningrad Engineering and Construction Institute, and my post-graduate degree at the Moscow Engineering and Construction Institute. In both places, I received a good professional grounding. This very quickly allowed me to be given independent work which I did successfully. As a result I consider my career successful.

2. Single-sex education, it seems to me, would not permit the normal development of one's personality. I find their psychological atmosphere unhealthy. When I worked on construction sites where there are mainly men, I observed that the presence of women eliminates crude behaviour.

3. Education gives a woman social status and this is no small thing.

4. I believe the current commercialisation of education, may become a serious factor obstructing the education of girls from the villages, provinces and from deprived strata of society. This applies equally to young men.
5. Today the education system is already changing; lycees and colleges with special syllabi have appeared, providing their students a good intellectual grounding. But this is still limited to the capital. If it were possible to create such a teaching environment in the provinces and villages, this would bring a qualitatively new standard of education to Kazakhstan. But for this to happen there has to be a general improvement in the economic situation. Without successful economic reforms, any reform in education will be impossible, the most perfect syllabi cannot be put into practice. Education requires a modern material base.

SUMMARISING the replies, it is possible to assess what unites women. All women suffer, struggle and survive and at the same time sincerely appreciate improvements taking place in society. All the countries of Central Asia currently confront an array of cataclysmic problems of social, political and economic dimensions. Women are passing through a difficult period and are conscious of what is taking place. Today there is a re-assessment of people's values, including the role of education.

In answering our questionnaire, the women have various assessments of their own standard of education, with the psychological factor of their own self-criticism playing a significant role in their assessments.

Those women who are critical of their own level of knowledge and of the education they received, are in reality fully intellectually qualified specialists. Most of the respondents are part of the second generation intelligentsia. The remaining portion of the respondents - let us say those belonging to the first generation intelligentsia - felt that they had received a good education and were satisfied with education standards in local colleges. However, one respondent, a doctor from Kyrgyzstan, mentioned that she only really came to understand the advantages of our education when she went abroad and worked there for some time. This allows us to conclude that a free higher education is more important than a fee-paying one; it still allows every person to have access to it. What is important is to study and to take up supplementary self-education.

Those women who studied at the central colleges in Moscow or Leningrad have a high assessment of their education, and a poor assessment of their higher education in local colleges, reflecting the major differences in education standards in the central and local colleges.

The backwardness of women of local nationalities is both the cause and consequence of the perceptibly lower standards of education in Central Asia as compared to the metropolis.

Access to better education seemed to be restricted due to language, with graduates of vernacular schools finding themselves in an educational blind alley. The fact that in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan effectively everyone studied in Russian schools explains why there are some 10,000 more Kazakh
and Kyrgyz women with post-graduate degrees than Uzbek, Tadjik and Turkmen women. The equality of bilingualism did not exist. The Russian language displaced the vernacular due to the qualitative difference in education standards in the Russian and national schools. People's aspirations to leading positions in society and in political life went to the advantage of Russian language education. Thus, a higher quality education indirectly led to cultural assimilation.

The respondents' replies indicate that all of them regard higher education as an important factor for social change; but this could not operate in the corrupted environment of a totalitarian society. They also note that education standards and equality are issues that are interlinked, and, pointing to women's lack of equal opportunities, feel that inequality is bound to increase against the background of the crisis and polarisation taking place in society.
Chapter 6

The Right To Work: Achievements And Disillusionment
The Right To Work: Achievements And Disillusionment

Questions:

1. Are you satisfied with your work? Do you consider your profession feminine? Is it suited to your nature?

2. What can you tell us about the women in your profession: what does society think of them, is their status high?

3. What is the attitude of your male colleagues towards you and other women?

4. Did you achieve a lot in your profession and did you realise your full potential? What helped and what obstructed you?

5. What advice do you have for those who choose your profession? Are there employment problems in your field of speciality?

Chapter 6

The Right To Work: Achievements And Disillusionment

Soviet policies ensured women's right to work - sometimes even against their will. When the Soviet state was on the rise, the legal right to work was backed up by the creation of a huge number of job opportunities, specifically for women. But as the state matured - and later stagnated - the correlation between the number of posts designated for men and for women became more fixed; and in Central Asia's labour intensive regions, job opportunities for women were even reduced. The inefficiency of the economy resulted in a situation where, while in the former USSR women's employment level reached 92%, in Central Asia women's employment levels were significantly lower(1) and in the period 1989-93 they dropped further following the fall in production and the crisis that seized all unproductive spheres.

Educated women regarded their work and profession not only as a means of earning a living, but also as a means of self-expression and asserting themselves as individuals. However, in giving eastern women the 'right to work', the state failed to recognise the need to provide them equal opportunities to realise themselves as individuals. As a result, women's employment became not so much a means of attaining economic independence and equality, but more an additional mechanism for their ineffective exploitation and discrimination, furthering the inequality of women in the traditionally patriarchal Central Asian family.

It was specifically in the field of women's employment that the distorted notion of women's equality was most keenly felt. Women's 'liberation' for the majority of women did not bring the possibility of liberating themselves from their social, economic, and emotional dependence upon men. Soviet propaganda presented women's right to work as a great social boon that perhaps women did not even deserve. This attitude is particularly noticeable today when women, specifically educated women, are being displaced from the labour market.

Women suffer colossal stress and disillusionment because their jobs and professions deprive them of their precious time and spiritual strength, often to the detriment of the family and children. This is why the respondents' reflections on their jobs and their professions describe situations which are not only interesting in themselves, but which are equally revealing about the society in which they live. Many of them are perplexed in the face of changes which are unfavourable for women.

In the Soviet period there was in effect no labour market, as the only employer was the state. The state Plan determined the number of posts in different spheres of employment as well as the methods of controlling the
economy and social development. The introduction of ideology into the sphere of physical labour and the politicisation of the role of the working class led to a lesser role being accorded to intellectual and highly qualified labour.

State bureaucrats regarded intellectual work and educated and qualified people as servants of the bureaucracy, who were needed to supervise their precious directives. They perceived any form of knowledge or independence as potential disloyalty. Under the conditions of totalitarianism, society became de-intellectualised, and administered by those who were not very educated, not very cultured and completely uncommitted to the people's needs; by those who saw in the intelligentsia an obstacle to their egoistical ambitions and a potential opponent to their way of life. This is why they appointed their own people to key administrative positions in the fields of science, technology, education and health. Competition for some posts in the fields of science and education was nothing more than a fiction. With the sphere of intellectual work becoming strewn with inconspicuous, average types, talented people were increasingly exploited as insubordination led to excommunication from the profession.

Because of the factor of poor salaries, the status associated with intellectual work has been falling over the last fifty years and particularly rapidly since the 1970s. Specialists in professions with a significant influence on the economy's efficiency - such as engineers, scientific workers, doctors and teachers in schools and colleges - have lost their previous wage superiority over the bureaucracy and the working class. And today, compared with the nouveau riche from the commercial sector, they are completely impoverished. In the upper class, knowledge and competence have always been undervalued, but the bureaucrats' urge to acquire post-graduate qualifications completely devalued the prestige of science, professional qualifications and competence, as well as post-graduate qualifications and doctoral titles.

In a poor country, in which there was a declared priority of the mass over the individual, employment occupied a large place in the life of almost every woman; it was supposed that work alone was the main vehicle of self-realisation, a notion which came into conflict with the cultural environment of the Islamic milieu.

Only about 70% of respondents answered the survey's section relating to work. Women not wanting to respond excused themselves by citing their precarious situation at work; the disillusionment they are experiencing today as a consequence of a re-evaluation of the Soviet past; and the unpleasant changes currently taking place in the labour sphere, especially the declining prestige of honest labour, and the miserable payment for intellectual labour, as a result of which there is not even emotional satisfaction in a profession which does not feed them.
Miyassar Razzakova
Soloist of the Tashkent Opera, Uzbek; 28; born and living in Tashkent

1. I love my profession. I am satisfied with my work even though I have yet to achieve all that I wanted. I aspire to new roles and work hard. I regard my profession as a manifestation of my nature. Even before large numbers of women started working in the area, opera singing was one of the few outlets for women's character and talent. This is why I can confirm that this is truly a feminine profession.

2. A talented singer has always had her audience and admirers, and been honoured by them. An opera singer can always and at any time find her audience because opera is part of the classics. But in my country, especially at present, the audience remains limited. Singers are not as well known as writers and politicians, but their popularity lasts for a long time. The names of many are legendary which is why I think their prestige was high in the past. Women opera singers - from soloists to the choirs - have to work very hard. There is very little time left for anything else. Success drains one's strength and time because the artiste almost never belongs to herself. Today, the prestige of actresses and especially opera singers is not very high. Very few have heard of them which indicates that opera is still not an organic part of our people's culture. The reason for this is primarily people's poverty which prevents them from developing elevated tastes - but this is another issue.

3. Immediately after my studies at the conservatory, I was invited to join the theatre as an opera soloist. Even in my first season I sang lead parts: Rozina in The Barber of Seville, Tilde in Rigoletto. Now I sing lead in classical performances and in the operas of Uzbek composers. My latest role as Violet in La Traviata gave me great joy. This was a real challenge for me.

I have participated in all-Soviet and international competitions and received awards and diplomas. I am currently preparing for a competition in Barcelona. My first triumph - in 1989 - at the Glinki Competition of Vocalists brought me fame and recognition. Irina Archipova herself (a famous Russian singer) noted my talent and subsequently followed my career. I hope I will achieve even more' my artistic potential is still not fully realised which is why I work so hard and with such dedication.

During the existence of the Soviet Union, cultural ties were quite broad. I had great opportunities as a singer. Singers who were prize-winners at international or all-Soviet competitions were invited to tour the most famous theatres in the Union. At present culture throughout the former USSR is in a crisis. Cultural ties are collapsing and I have limited opportunities for expanding my reputation. Still I hope this situation will not last for ever. Despite the economic situation, I am still being given the opportunity to participate in international competitions. The rest then depends upon me.

What helps me? My belief in myself, a desire to work and the support of my nearest. What hampers me are the intrigues typical to the theatre. I try not to pay any attention - one should not waste one's talent on these things. Intrigue
is the lot of those who are without talent and therefore envious. I want also to
tell you about the delight experienced even by those who appear only once
on the opera stage. When one completely immerses oneself in great music
then, at that moment, the artist lives a different, beautiful life, before which
the reality of ordinary life appears to be a pale image.

4. My male colleagues, my partners, respect me. Everywhere I feel I have the
support of true musicians and artists.

5. I did not choose my profession. I can only thank God for this gift; this is
providence. For those who are greatly gifted, I wish them success and hope
their talents are not squandered on insignificant things. Success is achieved
through hard work. I would hope that they not give up, that they recognise
their talent and perfect it. There are periods when doubts appear, when belief
in oneself disappears. This also happened to me at the conservatory. I just
wanted to have an ordinary human profession; although a fourth year
student at the conservatory, I sat the entrance examination to the University
law faculty. But I did not join because I understood that I could not be
anything else other than a musician, a singer.

I do not have a problem of free time: my day is completely taken up with
practice, performances, concerts and classes. I am very busy but happy
because of it.

The problem of employment faces those who are not professionally ready for
the type of employment they have chosen. In the theatre, selection is tough,
even if one has patronage.

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**Saule Kenesbaeva**

Kazakh; 50; philologist specialising in Eastern Studies; divorced with a married
daughter; working as head of department in the National Research Institute of
Philosophy and Law; President of the International Association of Work and
Cultural Co-operation (LIANA), Almaty

1. By profession I am a specialist in oriental languages. I really love my work.
Professions in the humanities are more suitable for women and correspond to
their feminine nature because their great emotional content inspires one to
move ahead. My specialisation is in the acoustics of linguistics. This speciality
combines both the exact sciences and the humanities which is why I had to
work hard to develop my knowledge. I think it has a great future since,
thanks to modern technology, the humanities will have to be assimilated
within the emerging field of information technology. Today, the humanities
will also have to make use of computers, meaning that mathematics also
becomes the language of the humanities. But in order for science to forge
ahead, a material basis is essential. The current state of the economy does not
allow research institutes access to appropriate technical equipment.

2. Today, in Kazakhstan many women are very fruitfully engaged in the field
of science. Among educated Kazakh women, many are recognised scientific
authorities. Women are among the authors of monographs and books, and
hold patents and copyrights. Women who work in the sciences are highly respected by society and are recognised as scholars. This is very important for women's self-assertion. Fortunately, we have been able to weather the crisis in science, when there were cutbacks in the number of highly qualified scientific workers, including women. The Government of Kazakhstan understood the significance of preserving the scientific cadres as a basis for developing the country's scientific potential, and so it supported the continuing work of the Academy of Sciences.

3. I am both a PhD and a DSc, as well as being the author of various papers and books. Although it is against my own rules to be complacent and satisfied with my achievements, let us say that to some extent I have realised my potential.

4. I recently started thinking about the question of how my male colleagues relate to me. Previously there was no need. Wherever I worked - whether in Moscow or in Almaty, there have always been many women among oriental scholars and they are respected by their colleagues, primarily as scholars. Recently, possibly because science has gone through a crisis due to the economic conditions in the country, I have started noticing a sense of masculine pride among our scholars. As a rule, those from the provinces regard intelligent and educated women as somehow diseased, especially if a woman eclipses them in terms of education and research results. They try to denigrate her so as to raise their own self-esteem. They try to side-line her as a competitor by appealing to the need to preserve male dignity; they say, for example, that she talks to men as equals, that she does not respect men, and so on.

A man's culture is determined by his attitude towards his female colleagues and it can be manifested not only in such things as helping her with her coat or kissing her hand, but in respecting her thoughts as a professional and in cooperating with her - not suppressing her - as an individual. Here, genuinely egalitarian attitudes are in fact still distant.

5. When I started my post-graduate research, my supervisor told me that I should forget about my personal life if I was serious about research. I do not categorically say this is how it should be for girls who start working in science, but I want to advise them to persistently strive for their chosen goals and to stretch themselves to the limit. When I chose my speciality it was not like today, there was no technical equipment; one had to strain oneself physically, a lot was done manually. Today, the methodologies have been defined, circumstances have settled down and it makes no difference whether a man or a woman is working in the laboratory. It is important to have one's own ideas.

Zamira Osmonbekova

Kyrgyz; physiotherapist; post-graduate; working in an institute of higher education and at a garment factory; 40; unmarried; born and living in Bishkek

1. By specialisation I am a doctor, a physiotherapist. This is a wonderful job.
It is in tune my nature. I regard it as very feminine work, like many other medical specialisations in which many women are working with great success.

2. Nevertheless, I regard my colleagues as highly unfortunate people because their hard work is rewarded with very poor pay and they live on the edge of poverty, especially if their husband is also a doctor. This is the result of the low value the state accords this profession.

3. For fifteen years I worked in a scientific research institute and in a clinic, and fully realised my potential both as a doctor and as a researcher. I evolved a number of recognised methodologies for using physiotherapy as a curative technique. I faced no obstacles as I was full of enthusiasm and energy. I have a PhD in medical sciences, awards for scientific works and have been awarded prizes for my publications and inventions. But in the last two years I have come to understand that conditions conducive to work in science no longer exist. I have left research to concentrate on practical health-care and teaching.

4. In my recent years of work, I have understood that my successes and achievements irritate not only my male peers, but also my supervisors and superiors. Their jealousy and ill-will towards me and their blatant irritation also was one of the reasons for my leaving research. "You can't force them to like you", I thought, and decided that it was pointless to waste my time in conflicts, especially if those who had it in for me were my director and deputy director. Better to seek a new place under the sun - and a good doctor will always find one.

5. I want to advise women who have decided to take up science (no matter what specialisation they choose) not to get involved in pointless work.

Olga Diss

Russian; 31; economist and owner of a shop; married with two children; living in Bishkek

1. The fact that I work in a general store appeals to me. Commerce is a women's sphere. I have practically no men working with me. I have to interact with a huge number of people. I like this.

2. Women working in the field of commerce have very little prestige. But it is precisely they who support their families, because of which they are respected at home. I always help my friends to find goods that are in short supply.

3. I have achieved what I wanted. Many wanted to stop me from becoming a shop owner, but I managed to get what I wanted.

4. Men working in the trade respect me. I am capable of finding a common language with them.

5. I want to advise women coming into the field of commerce that they need to be able to talk with people; to be courteous, witty and - if needed - also
something of an actress. Currently in commerce there is high unemployment because of large cutbacks in staff. Stores are closing down, goods are in short supply. To have one's own business takes a large sum of money. This is why unemployed women from the commerce sector find it hard to get work. They often have to change their profession or go abroad, so they can trade in imported goods.

Tatiana Abramova

Russian; 38; married with one child; working at a design institute; born and living in Tashkent

1. I am satisfied with my profession. I made my choice and do not regard it a disappointing one. A profession gives one great satisfaction. As to whether architecture is a female profession, initially all professions were `male'. But women have gradually taken up those which appealed to them, which gave them satisfaction and a good salary. As to whether it corresponds to my nature, I find the question somewhat inappropriate; it would be better to ask whether architecture matches my abilities. I studied my profession with interest, but there is a lot of routine in the process of the work. I regard an architectural education as universal: it requires a lot of knowledge and ability. But practical work in large design institutes often undermines the imagination and dissipates one's interest in the profession because young architects have to just be submissive functionaries for a long period. To succeed in the profession, it is necessary to be disciplined, proud, assertive and energetic which gives one belief in oneself and allows one not to notice the hurdles in the way of an apprentice architect. One must have a great capacity for work, so one can complete one's routine work as well as take on competitive work, testing oneself with supplementary contracts, and attempting to find contracts which give one faith in oneself. This is often beyond women's powers and they fall off the fast track leading to success, therefore for years remaining a mere functionary.

2. Famous architects have high prestige. A woman architect, if she can also work hard, is accorded the same respect as her male colleagues. There is no professional discrimination; but only if they are talented, capable of working and persistent can women be successful as architects. The question of whether women architects are regarded highly is generally a very difficult one. This is why there are no self-made female architects, as there are female poets. Many women work better, but the payment for their work is comparatively lower. There are moments of discrimination. I can tell you about myself: At times, I have to do more work even though I am on a lower pay-scale than my male colleagues. But nevertheless I do not think it necessary for there to be some sort of union among the women in the structure of a professional organisation. This would mean an acceptance of one's lower status and worthlessness.

3. Everyone estimates one's range of options. I have not yet realised my full potential; it was not called for. I did not aspire to very much, but I have not even realised what I could have achieved due to factors beyond my control. I
have not made myself a career. When I was not married I thought that I had to develop my personal life. This prevented me from concentrating on my work and from giving myself to it completely. When I got married, the family, family problems and children started to drain my strength. My lifestyle was an obstacle but what helped me was the search for supplementary income, minor contracts which were quicker to complete than my projects at work. This helped me gain confidence in myself, in my potential.

4. The architectural field is very democratic. There are people of different nationalities which is why there is no visible segregation between men and women as I have observed in purely Uzbek fields. This is why the attitude of male colleagues towards women is usually comrade-like, they turn to one for advice, get interested in their ideas and offer their comments. Of course there are difficult people with big egos, but this has nothing to do with one's gender. When I came to work I was told, "A woman architect is no longer a woman, but is still not an architect". This made a great impression on me.

5. I would above all advise girls to recognise the difficulties involved in being an architect and to hone their professional aptitude towards the profession; this means not only talent, but also character and health. They will need independent reasoning and good academic background.

Today the problem of unemployment has become a real one for architects. The country's economic crisis has led to cutbacks in the construction sector. This impacts on all government planning departments. While the majority of contracts were previously concentrated in the hands of the state departments based in the capital, today there are many project cooperatives and private sector craftsmen throughout the cities of Uzbekistan, who are taking away quite a few of the contracts. But architects are survivors who adapt to the market situation. In this set-up it is more difficult for women, because they are more conservative and take fewer risks. Only one woman in Uzbekistan had her own private firm, but that too went bankrupt. In government organisations they have state benefits and job security which is why, despite the low salaries, they do not want to change their job. Some like myself, leave their jobs for a while and, financially supported by their husbands, do whatever work they can find that corresponds to their qualifications.

Gulnara Omarova
Kazakh; 27; historian working at the Presidium of the National Academy of Sciences, Kazakhstan, Almaty

1. My profession corresponds to my nature. According to my horoscope, I am Cancer and people born under this sign are philosophers. I, too possess a philosophical attitude towards life. History, philosophy and culture - these are the areas of my research interests. History, as a profession, can be both feminine and masculine. But women often remain stuck working in schools while men go further. The reason is not only to do with salaries, but in the allocation of social roles for men and women: men must strive for success while women need work which allows them greater time for the family and
children.

2. A woman historian working in academia has considerable prestige. Many of them have PhD's and are authors of interesting research papers. For example, O. Auezova, S. Satpaeva, Nurlanova, all with a DSc in historical sciences, and famed in the research world. Their work is highly fruitful.

3. For now I cannot boast of successes. Everything lies before me. My attachment to my profession is what helps me and my imperfection is what hinders me.

4. I do not want to isolate myself, but personally I have difficulty in finding a common language with my male colleagues. They regard me above all as a woman. They do not let slip any chance to emphasise this when I have my own point of view on a professional question. They try to give me little errands not concerned with my work, and want to see me only as some little functionary.

5. University only gives one a basic foundation, which this is why a person's future path depends on them alone. People with diplomas in history can be successful teachers, scholars, and state functionaries. This is a prestigious field. But the process of de-linking history and ideology has meant that many historians have been thrown by the board. There is now unemployment among historians. Many, primarily women, have been forced to re-learn everything and take up more practical professions.

Elmira Turkmeneva

36; working as a scientific researcher; Kyrgyz; divorced with two children; living in Bishkek; Biochemist

1. I work as head of laboratory in a polyclinic. The profession of a lab worker is absolutely feminine; one has to be meticulous, accurate and observant. But imagination and artistic thought are contraindicated and, therefore, I find little attraction in my work. Here my responsibilities are purely administrative. This work theoretically should correspond to my nature, but in today's life there are millions of obstacles to normal work: shortages of instruments, preparations and chemicals due to the poor economic linkages between the countries of the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) and due to a systematic withholding of salaries because there is no money in the banks. In short, everyone suffers, especially we lower ranking administrators who find themselves stuck between pressures from one's superiors and the pressures from below, from the people on whom the work itself depends.

2. There are many different types of women working in laboratories. Monotonous work does not make an educated woman stupid or an interesting woman less interesting, or the converse. But such work is simply not prestigious.

3. I regard my own potential as being quite high. With my education I could perhaps have found more interesting work, for example, in a scientific research institute. But these are not the best of times to work in science. There
are no funds and wherever scientific workers have money or relatives working in commerce they are leaving their field and going into trade. This is why I had no choice. My work is only marginally interesting, but it is my only means of existence.

4. Men do not work in the laboratories of polyclinics, factories and industry.

5. I would not advise girls to study biochemistry and become laboratory workers.

Feroza Alimova
Uzbek; 24; paediatrician at a regional polyclinic; married with one child; living in Tashkent

1. My work suits me. I am a third generation doctor: my grandfather and mother are also doctors. Here, being a paediatrician is a predominantly female profession. Only one male works with us at the polyclinic. In the central clinics there are more men. The poor salary can suit only a woman. If I had a choice, I would not work at all. I always dreamt of being the mistress of a large house, the mother of well looked after children and the wife of a well-paid husband. I hope that this is how things will work out for me in the future.

2. I am very familiar with the life of our women doctors: it is a very tough life. Take for example, my mother. She studied in Moscow. She did her PhD there too; she recently became a DSc and, at the age of fifty four, a professor. All her life she has given to people, science and her students. I really respect and love my mother, but I do not want to live a life like hers. It was her choice. My choice is completely different. Her interest and love for her work brought her tragedy in her personal life (my father left us); an unending struggle to survive (and today she is under threat of being laid off); and ageing before her time. We children saw little tenderness from her: she did not have the time. At a young age we were burdened with domestic chores because she was busy earning money for us to survive. She would come home from work laden with heavy bags and irritated after standing in the queues. She did not have time to do her hair nicely; a new dress was an event for her, because her priority was clothing us. The sick loved her and could call up morning and night. She suffered for them. When one left, others appeared, demanding her attention and concern. At work she had all the outer signs of success, but this success was at the cost of us three, her own children. With respect to the question of prestige, this is low: the poor cannot have prestige, even if they are professors.

3. I am least interested in how my male colleagues relate to me. They only see me as a beautiful woman. My women colleagues are jealous because my husband has a good salary and has bought me a foreign car.

4. I do not have any desire to achieve much in my profession. I will work for some years at the polyclinic, and then will go where I can work a half day, three to four days a week - in a school or in a kindergarten. As a doctor,
above all I want to raise healthy children. If things work out for my husband, and he continues to earn well, then I will work for some years so that I can have a pension and stay at home. I want to be beautiful, looked after, always desirable to my husband. Let him be successful and this success will be mine, too.

5. I have no advice for those who want to become doctors. People know for themselves what they want and know where they are heading. Today, all women have to have a profession. Things can turn out different in life - and even bad too. One should be prepared to earn one's own living.

From what I know, there are as yet few unemployed doctors. But there is a problem of how to find supplementary income; in our profession it is difficult to find such work. This is why doctors often get involved in selling medicines and take money for operations. All of this happens on the side. This is why I am glad that I am a doctor and would not become a victim of extortion or quacks. Perhaps I should not have mentioned this, but I do not condemn such doctors. Only I personally would not do such a thing. I do not see how to make things better for the average doctor. I think nobody knows. Otherwise, there would have been an attempt to reform our health care system.

Kurolai Ibrahimova

Kazakh, 43; Head of department in a National Research Institute; married with two children; born in the countryside, living in Alma Armaty; studied in Moscow

1. I am satisfied with my profession, even though I know that in some things I did not achieve what I wanted. In some situations I am timid, especially if my opinion does not correspond to the opinion of the majority. It costs me formidable internal strength to voice my opinion and defend it. Men in such situations are more courageous.

2. In society eyes the prestige of a male engineer is higher than that of a female engineer.

3. I do not think I have realised my full potential. I was hampered by my own complexes, perhaps by my upbringing which taught me to be reserved and not attract attention to myself. If I realistically assess myself, I think I lack sufficient resilience and confidence in myself.

4. My male colleagues treat me with respect. They have to take my knowledge into account. But I have noted that they often try to overload me, transferring their own work onto my shoulders, as well as taking for granted my desire to help them in emergencies. In both situations I suffer because I end up doing their work.

5. I would advise girls seeking a technical education to think again, because there is tough competition from men in this sphere and they are preferred. Personally, for me there is no problem in finding work, but many women engineers are now unemployed. They are having to requalify themselves, so as to find work. Times are tough for many women: female unemployment is
on the increase, specifically among women with top qualifications and those from the lower rungs of the administration; there is large scale unemployment among women geologists, topographers, civil engineers, mechanics, chemists, physicists and specialists in water management.

### Narbibish Shammaeva
Turkmen; 42; scientific worker; teaching in an higher educational institute; married with two children; living in Chardjoi

1. My profession as a teacher gives me great satisfaction. My speciality is English language. It has introduced me to the worlds of other peoples and has allowed me to constantly learn something new. My work, along with my family, gives meaning to my existence. It suits my nature. My profession is one in which women can achieve success. This depends on they themselves.

2. The prestige of being a teacher is high. In Turkmenia teaching is regarded as a high calling and a teacher has considerable authority. These days, there is a great deal of status attached to those who know English and there is a lot of work available for them.

3. My research work helps me advance. I think that it is through this that I have realised myself. My desire to perfect myself has always helped me and I have got everything I wanted through hard work; I defined a goal and went for it. Nothing came in my way. I was helped by my upbringing. I am doing what interests me and that is never tiring.

4. My male colleagues have a good attitude towards me, especially those one meets at conferences, symposia and so on, when there is the opportunity for meeting people and getting new information, exchanging opinions and finding out what about you and your work interests others. This is an important stimulus.

5. For the women who want to become English language teachers, I wish them success and bon voyage in the profession. They are very much needed by our people and it will give them a chance to have access to many achievements in the world, especially now that my country is independent and is opening itself up to the world.

### Tatyana S.
Russian; 34; married with two children; graduated from the institute of foreign languages; worked as a secretary with a senior administrator; currently not working; living in Almaty.

1. Being a secretary is considered women's work. My speciality - teaching German - is also a woman's speciality. I was good at my studies, but there were problems with work. Now there is great demand for those who know foreign languages. I have an open degree (that did not entitle me to get a job)
because immediately after the institute I had to give birth. My relatives arranged for me to be a secretary of the regional Party committee. Although the pay was not high, it suited me that I could use the canteen where I worked, where foodstuffs in short supply were available, and there were subsidised holidays and so on. Work for me turned out to be easy: running about with papers, stamping some. Mainly, I was expected to sit at the reception. It was uninteresting work, but for a woman with a small child it is difficult to find interesting work.

2. Being a secretary is a profession that is not respected, even if it is very prestigious for some. There is a reason for this. I met secretaries who were even more brilliant than PhD's. They are more influential than their bosses. They can get hold of things that ordinary people cannot and this depends upon the inter-relationship between these ladies and their bosses and other bosses. The boss may be changed, but the secretary remains.

3. Is it possible in this thoughtless work to realise one's potential? This is why many women working as secretaries lose their sense of personal dignity and fall to the temptation of being a 'Madam Pompadour' before the big chiefs and thereby make a career for themselves or get rich.

4. Male secretaries are to be found only at the very highest level, I did not have such colleagues. One's supervisor and other colleagues try to test one's chastity. They especially try to tempt a married woman, because she would have no expectations. It is revolting to talk about this! This is why I left. I could not complain to my husband: he himself would have accused me of being flighty and coquetish.

5. Women who are going to work as secretaries, especially in the top government organs, should be ready for uninteresting work and uninteresting attitudes. In terms of my own specialisation, at present there is much work, but again in the commercial sector. Women translators, women secretaries or women reviewers are being offered open contracts allowing them to determine their own terms of reference and conditions of service. A woman must not be attractive and formal if she wants to succeed in her work, specifically if she is not working in an independent capacity and is dependent on someone. There are many vulgar people in our society!

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Aigul Sultankulova
Kyrgyz, 34; economist working in the Ministry, born in Osh, living in Bishkek

1. Being an economist is a good specialisation. I think women can also work well in this field, but it all depends upon how they manage.

2. The prestige of a woman economist depends upon where she works. The work is very prestigious and well paid in the commercial sector, joint enterprises or if one has invested one's own money.

3. I cannot say that I achieved much. I work as something of a functionary.

4. In my work I am forced to take my male colleagues' opinions into account
because I am dependent upon them. This is why, whether I like it or not, I often have to suppress my emotions, opinions and initiative.

5. There is currently widespread unemployment among women economists, especially among those whose specialisation is linked with some sphere of production which is currently on the decline. The issue of female unemployment is acute.

This is why I do not advise girls to choose my specialisation; women are better off working in fields that are traditional to them: the handicrafts, sewing, knitting and so on. This gives them greater chances of having a solid salary.

Similarly, future economists of any speciality will work a full eight hours. But women need the kind of work that they can do at home or, if in an office, then at least where there is the possibility of working a half day. Thus they will have more time for their children and the family.

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**Baret Irgalieva**

Kazakh; 45; Director of the Executive Committee of the Democratic Committee for Human Rights; librarian; living in Almaty; married with one daughter

1. I am a librarian by specialisation and know how important this work is for raising cultural standards. Libraries came into the lives of the Kazakh people with Soviet rule. Especially in the pre-war and post-war years, people read a lot because they believed in the rapid transformation of life, and believed that knowledge would be needed in the future. Books opened up the world and libraries were a place which people flocked towards and where they interacted with each other. The government’s interest in libraries gradually diminished and they became poorer. Also, other means of mass information pushed books out of people’s lives. Libraries serving a broad spectrum of the population - children and teenagers - decayed or were torn down and the prestige of being a librarian fell. Today they identify with the poorest layers of society. When I state that I regard the cultural surroundings of our society as low, then I have in mind the condition of our libraries and archives, especially in the rural areas and small towns. Over the last decade new acquisitions to libraries have been halved and that too consists only of propaganda and ideology.

2. Today most library workers are women. Low wages and the lack of opportunities for getting a government apartment (while the government has allocated a specific percentage of apartments for doctors and teachers, there is no such quota for librarians) led qualified workers to leave the libraries for other spheres, often changing their specialisation. This reflects the low status of librarians.

3. I have worked very little in the specific field of my profession, but it nevertheless helped me greatly in my work in the Party structures and in my future progress in the democratic movement. In my youth I was a shining example of a communist and worked in the library as a true propagandist of
the ideas of communism. My foundation in library sciences helped me acquire systematic knowledge. Working in a library involves working with people, understanding their interests. At present, as a member of the Democratic Party, I constantly pay attention to the conditions of libraries and meet the people there, where I find both supporters and opponents. I believe that new ideas must come through new newspapers, journals and books.

It is essential that men return to the libraries. Throughout the world this is a respected profession, with a good salary. It is a profession that provides the opportunity for success in life. But if it does not become like this in our country, the quality of our libraries will fall and this can lead to our gradually becoming a society of barbarians.

4. I have hardly met any male librarians, even in the major libraries.

5. Libraries are not expanding, there is a falling demand for books in society, there is no concept of what computerisation and mechanisation will introduce. Meanwhile even keeping funding at present levels - particularly for public libraries - is becoming problematic. Unemployment among librarians is on the rise. A terrible fate! You can draw your own conclusions.

But I wish great patience to those who want to truly and honestly propagate general human values, who do want to remain indifferent to the snuffing out of spirituality in our society, who hope to cure our social ills with the aid of knowledge, and who choose this profession.

Zamira Valieva

25: Uzbek; engineer, doing PhD research at the Institute of Civil Engineering; divorced and living in Tashkent

1. I am satisfied with my profession, which I find interesting. I do not regard is as feminine; for a woman it is difficult to be an engineer because she has other responsibilities - that of mother and a wife - which consume an almost equal amount of time. As a professional, a woman often lags behind men due to reasons beyond her control. Even though better in her studies, she gets left behind in the process of work. Similarly at work, preference is always given to a man as he is more mobile. Personally I believe that the male intellect is quite different from that of the female; men are more practical, they easily establish working relationships and their work is more productive. Because society has clearly allocated men and women separate social roles, all social conditions work to men's advantage and in the field of professional success they are allocated more feasible tasks than women. Career, promotion, authority, recognition from colleagues and other things come easier to men. A woman needs to prove her value, professionalism and her abilities, at each and every step. In the perceptions of many, including women (and I include myself), women lag behind men in everything related to their profession. A woman who makes a good career for herself is always an exception. A successful career is often due not to her personal qualities, but to coincidence, patronage, or her assimilating a masculine style of social conduct - society lives according to laws thought up by men.
2. Women of my profession basically work as functionaries. There are those who have a relatively higher status, but they are few. Their success was often at the cost of an unstable private life. At present, there are no first-rate women engineers among the Uzbeks; there are exceptional examples among the Russians. Thus, the prestige of the women in my profession is not very high; there are few women engineers in decision-making posts and in the elected bodies. There are no well-known personalities among the women of my profession.

3. I have yet to achieve much. I graduated from college with excellent grades; I was one of the few who ventured forth into post-graduate studies and I am doing research in my chosen area. I have been helped by my genuine interest in my subject. Thanks to my being Uzbek, I had an open road to scientific research: the institute needed scientific cadres, proficient in Russian and Uzbek. But I have been hampered by inadequate equipment needed for research work. Research work involves considerable financial investment, and I have no one to support me. This is the problem, even though I am regarded as a bright hope. Nevertheless had I been a man, I would have been treated as an equal. Perhaps I will never match up to these hopes, which will confirm people's opinion about my lack of talent.

4. My male colleagues treat me with interest and nothing more. As a whole my male colleagues are indulgent towards their female colleagues and only treat some as competition.

5. Women engineers at the construction site and women in a design institute confront not only professional problems. The work is difficult and one has to interact with different people. This is why many of my women colleagues are obliged to leave the profession, often to work in the bureaucratic structures where they are given the role of petty clerks. The design institute also offers poor prospects; research work is also limited. This is why before choosing the profession of an engineer, girls must be convinced that it is what they really want. Otherwise, they will become very disillusioned. With the current economic crisis affecting all spheres of the construction industry, there is massive unemployment among women engineers. What they will not do these days to survive. Unemployment has particularly hit young women who have small children and nowhere to send them; they have to change professions, to learn to do something else.

Vera Charieva

Turkmen, 54; doctor and professor with a doctorate in medical sciences; widow with two grown-up children; living in Ashkabad

1. Work has always occupied a major place in my life, especially now that the children have grown up. I have extensive experience in practical work and through this have achieved recognition. I increasingly understand that my profession suits my nature and I am fortunate that I chose medicine as my profession. It gives me genuine satisfaction. Work provided me my circle of friends, students and acquaintances. My patients remember me. Their gratefulness gives me a sense of pride and achievement.
2. Everyone understands that a doctor is a woman's profession, but, unfortunately in society's eyes obstetricians - especially those who work as district doctors, the majority of whom are women - do not have much prestige even though the health of many depends on them.

3. I did not get everything that I wanted in my profession. Many of my ideas were paralysed by circumstances beyond my control. This is why I think I did not realise my full creative potential. Having a family also drained much of my strength. But I do not regret this. I was always helped to move ahead by my desire to seek something new, and to discover my own methods.

4. My male colleagues treat me well, in fact very well, with particular respect.

5. Being a doctor is a very feminine profession because there is much kindness in a woman's nature. But this is not enough for becoming a good doctor; one also has to acquire knowledge. This is why I would want girls who opt for this profession to try to achieve perfection, to learn to observe, to analyze and recognise their own mistakes, and to conquer their sense of exhaustion and problems when in front of a patient.

I would urge my future women colleagues to strive to achieve the utmost that they are capable of. Today, they must be able to compete with men in order to preserve that place which they were able to achieve in Soviet times.

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Dildora Alimbekova

President of the Association of Business Women of Uzbekistan; an economist by qualification; owner of a business; divorced with two children; 39; Uzbek living in Tashkent

1. I love my profession. I give it my all, not stinting on time or energy. Entrepreneurial activity corresponds to my nature because it involves both risk and a variety of new experiences, calculation and a wide variety of interaction with others, since with each person, one has to find a common language. Sometimes one has to be very cruel and unreasonable to attain one's goal. Education and knowledge are not enough; character is essential. People with weak nerves cannot take the competition and the government pressure on entrepreneurs in the form of constant inspections and controls. Thus being an entrepreneur is a difficult profession for women, who still need to combine it with the profession of being a housewife.

2. There are not many women entrepreneurs, although their number is growing slowly but surely. They still occupy a modest place in society. To be involved in free enterprise, women need to have not only personal, but also social experience. The prestige of women working in business is not high. There are largely negative attitudes towards them, they are labelled 'mercenary'.

3. I think I achieved a lot. I finished from a Russian school, and even though I was not very good at my studies I was recognised as the leader. During my college years, all my student years I worked in the Comsomol committee, later during my post-graduate studies at the Plekhanov Institute of
Economics in Moscow, I was similarly active in college life even though by then I had a little daughter. Perhaps this is why I did not succeed in defending my dissertation. But I acquired great experience in dealing with people and sensed the coming trends in the economy.

Returning to Tashkent, I spent some time in a scientific research institute, but thanks to my personal contacts, established contact with young people who wanted to bring some changes into the sphere of production and I joined the survey branch in the 'Uzbekistan' complex where I worked for five years. I initiated the setting up of the corporation store for the 'Red Dawn' sewing complex; this was the first store to trade in a variety of fashionable clothes. Initially, there was no mass production but small batches which started to generate substantial demand!

During perestroika, small establishments were created based on the store's model. When the Union of Entrepreneurs of Uzbekistan was created, I was one of its organisers. Later with its help I organised the Association of Business Women of Uzbekistan. It also runs the Kamal Legal Centre and the Zumurad Cultural Centre which brings together talented painters, and which is involved in the search for interesting productions; it organises exhibitions, the sale of artistic works and paintings and takes abroad selected works of local artists and national masters.

I myself have organised and created some small enterprises, involving women as home-based piece-rate workers. On my desk right now are the documents for setting up 'Dildora', an establishment for sewing fashionable dresses for women to be set up in cooperation with Turkmen entrepreneurs. So I think I have achieved much, but even more needs to be done. It is difficult to compete with the government sector. But our work is essential. It is providing additional employment opportunities for women who are currently suffering from unemployment. The currently heavy taxes and tough credit policies makes it harder to develop production enterprises.

4. My business colleagues have a good attitude when they see that there is the possibility of cooperating on some venture. It is for them one and the same whether it is a man or a woman who does the work so long as the transaction has a potential for profit.

5. To be an entrepreneur, you need to have common sense above all. Business involves tension, quick responses and an ability to communicate. This ability is fundamental to success. Whoever has these qualities and loves risk, can try to become an entrepreneur. Opportunity comes to those who can use it and who are prepared for the rollercoaster of life.

Dilbar Mahmoodova

Uzbek; 57; journalist, working as a freelancer; three children; living in Tashkent; President of the Women's Section of the Union of Journalists of Uzbekistan

1. I love my profession. I am happy that I chose the challenging work of a journalist. A profession is neither masculine or feminine. In one's profession,
the most important part is played by the quality of the individual and results of their work. My work experience shows that often men have a superficial approach to problems and it is easier for them to work in one specific style. Women give more attention to detail, they are less categorical, which is why they work in another manner. Women journalists of my generation often display energy, determination and willpower. Even today I catch myself thinking that men are less capable of painstaking work. I will give you an example from my own experience.

I worked in one of the republic's newspapers. A letter was received by the editorial office from a disabled woman, who for ten years had been bedridden: she lost her health saving some children. Now she is forgotten by one and all and finds herself completely broke and all alone. I went to see her, wrote about her, got social support for her from the local authorities, helped her get awards for her feat and an apartment with all the normal comforts. This took an entire year of my time.

2. The status of female journalists is low. It is precisely to protect our interests that we have organised the Women's Section in the Union of Journalists. Women work as reporters; we have almost no women who are heads of departments. Today only one woman is the editor of a newspaper.

The reporter's lot is the most difficult: One has to go out into the field to collect information, and do a lot of drafting and re-drafting. Many women reporters are capable of becoming good editors, but not every male editor is capable of re-drafting all the work of the reporters. A woman is the first one proposed for dismissal while the men are first amongst those proposed for promotion. I worked as a reporter for twenty five years. I was not once offered a promotion. At the age of 50 I was made such an offer, but by then I myself did not want it.

3. I did not realise my potential. It was not only self-censorship which hampered me. Many of my ideas turned out to be impossible to realise. I have seen life. In my heart there remains much that is unsaid. I want to work and can do it. In our society there is no tradition of assessing a woman according to her qualities rather than her sex. I believe that women have a well-developed aesthetic basis. My heroines were not the secretaries of regional committees, but women from the lower classes who carry on their shoulders the burden of the times. I try to write - as far as conditions permit - about the deprived and down-trodden, those who create the wealth of my country. But I have not been able to say everything about them; I was prevented by men who were afraid for their position, men who envied what I did. Unfortunately, it turned out that men are more jealous than women.

4. I have said enough about the attitude of men towards their female colleagues.

5. To those girls who want to become journalists, I wish to say that theoretical knowledge is not enough for becoming a journalist. One has to be extremely well-read, have a broad outlook and a desire to investigate the riddles which confront us, for every case is a dilemma. One must be able to show one's attitude about what is happening. One must not write about things which do not move people. A journalist is not an observer, but a participant in events. This is why a journalist often needs to respond.
There is now an acute unemployment problem. The entire print media is still state-run. The economic situation of all newspapers and journals is highly unstable. There have been sweeping cutbacks, and the first in line have been women.

The independent press is insignificant and their staff are very few. Women are leaving journalism, forced out by circumstances.

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**Natalya Sultanova**

35; artist and teacher; living in Bishkek; Kyrgyz; separated with two children

1. I am not satisfied with my work because the syllabi which I work with do not provide students a multi-faceted grounding, do not stimulate their intellectual growth and standards of professional instruction remain poor. No, the teaching profession is not feminine work. Even though I am popular among my students, my work does not correspond to my nature.

2. There are many genuine intellectuals among teachers, as well as those for whom contact with teenagers is inappropriate because teenagers have a sharpened sense of justice; when they meet people whose moral qualities are lower than average, they become cynical. This is very dangerous. The moral side of education has been reduced to second place. I find this disturbing. In the light of what I have just said, the prestige of teaching is falling. Today the most important thing has become money. Those who have money and power and occupy a senior position have considerable prestige.

3. In the sense of being creative, like a painter, I was unable to realise myself. What hampered me was my low self-esteem; I underrated my potential. I am now trying to overcome this but too much time has passed by and been wasted. In our situation, work is the only means of self-assertion and of interacting with other people. This is why I do not want to leave my work. One can earn money sitting at home, but then one has to deny oneself the chance to meeting other people.

4. My male colleagues treated me well, with respect and interest, as a colleague.

5. Today, few find being a college teacher attractive because one has to work hard and the pay is poor. There are many vacancies. Anyone who wants to become a college teacher (these are former vocational institutes), must love children and have a profession, so they can teach the students a vocation.

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**Khairiniso Ganieva**

Uzbek; physiotherapist working at the Tashkent University polyclinic; married with three children; 42

1. I really love my work; it suits my nature. Medicine is my calling and
therapy is a woman's speciality. I regard surgery and gynecology as being both masculine and feminine specialisations. Operations are better done by men. A therapist not only cures but also talks. The doctor's attention and care is a more effective means of curing than drugs themselves. Women are better at establishing psychological contact with their patients. They know what the heart and soul suffers from.

I have to give lectures to first year students, among whom are many girls from different regions. All girls should have basic medical education. This is the basis for the creation of a culture of medicine, for hygiene and the health of the nation.

2. The prestige of women doctors is high in society's eyes. Girls studying medicine make very desirable brides. Even though half of those working in health care are women, their road to the elite sectors of the medical field - research and administration - is difficult. They are like salmon, swimming against the current, not many penetrate through the wall of male ego. Munira Tursunkhodjaeva, Abdullahkhodjaeva, Dekhankhodjaeva, Siddikova are professors and DSc's in medicine, outstanding doctors who have made a name for themselves. Professor Siddikova, being herself childless, chose the battle against infertility as the goal of her scientific research work and achieved wonderful results. Thanks to her, many women have been blessed with motherhood.

But there are also those women in the field of medicine who become administrators and lose their feminine attributes. They are not just strict but also cruel towards their subordinates. A woman who is not squeamish about the methods used to get somewhere in her career is a danger, and not just in the field of medicine.

3. I am respected by my patients who often turn to me and not only for professional advice. I think many even regard me as a relative. It's normal for a person to think that their potential as not been fully realised, and I do the same. In my professional activity, luckily nothing has hampered me.

4. I work a lot with men. Their attitude towards their female doctor colleagues is good. But quite often they are cynical. They often regard women's success as being a coincidence rather than the result of their knowledge. Personally, I noted that my promotion was dismissed as being more due to my good looks than to my professional abilities and competence.

5. I would say to girls who choose the profession of doctor, that they should be persistent in acquiring knowledge. And that they should always remain women: kind-hearted. Let them not be squeamish about undressing an old person and they should listen carefully to the patient.

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**Gulnara Abdrasilova**

Kazakh; 34; teacher in a higher educational institute; married with two children; living in Almaty

1. I am satisfied with my work. Teaching is a female profession. I like to work
with students. One must constantly work on oneself so as to always be ready for questions, not only about one's own subject, but also about life's various problems. My work is not only lectures and seminars, but also involves constant reading of new materials, which is why I am often busy; at times working for longer hours those who work an 8-hour day. I like the absence of routine in a teacher's work. I myself devise syllabi for the junior courses; these days the colleges have gained a number of new rights, including the right to follow one's own syllabus.

2. The prestige of college teachers is considerable. Women in the colleges are very independent, able to communicate. They are erudite, and have high expectations of themselves. Many women who earlier worked in the colleges, today have set up their own businesses and are working successfully. Initiative and a large circle of acquaintances allowed them to organise a variety of small enterprises, offering a large range of services, from designing to small-scale production.

3. I regard my work as successful because I have realised my potential. I developed recognised new methodologies for conducting special courses in modelling. But I can do even more, and for this I need more time. But this time is needed by my children and family. I do not want to shift my responsibilities onto my mother, as some do, in order to achieve success in my work. To say that my family is an obstacle would be untrue, because it is precisely from them that I draw new strength. My family gives me a sense of the fullness of life, which helps new ideas to emerge in my work and the desire to work not only for my nearest and dearest.

4. My male colleagues treat me as an equal and we have a good relationship.

5. I would not divide a profession into masculine or feminine. Any profession which one loves gives one's personality the opportunity to develop. With the current economic crisis the problem of unemployment exists in all professions. It is a shame that women are the first to suffer.

Svetlana Monosova

Russian; 33; economist; married with a son and parents still alive; born and living in Tashkent

1. I do not love my work, which was chosen by my parents (a typical situation). Their main argument was that there wasn't much competition for getting into the economics department at the college. Thus I did not get the prestigious education which I had dreamed about: becoming a designer of women's clothes.

I am by nature a designer. But at worst, just a seamstress. I love it when people's clothes sit well on them; a person in such a dress is attractive. The area I am actually working in - a construction economist - is extremely boring. Even though the profession of economist has now become fashionable and prestigious, I do not like it any better.

2. The prestige of being an economist was not high in the Soviet Union.
Economists everywhere were associated with book-keeping or traders. Women were always in a majority. The lack of DSc's in economics has done nothing to raise the profession's prestige. Economics is regarded as a shady business.

3. I work in a collective where there are only men, therefore I can say that we have friendly relations. Generally working with men is easier; they are unprejudiced about many things. There are fewer conflicts and quarrels. I am in favour of the supervisor being male because they are mentally more sober and flexible compared to women.

4. Today the profession of an economist is a popular one. But to be one, a person needs to be precise and have a tenacious mind. This profession needs to be chosen not at the age of 16 or 17 - after completing school - when one’s head is empty and it makes no difference where one studies; the choice must be made when the person has had some life experience and sees this profession as essential for achieving some concrete goals.

Shoista Kalantarova

Bukharan Jew; 34; music teacher; married with two children; living in Khudjand

1. I love my work because music and children are a very good combination. For musicians, earning a living and doing one's work are not easy which is why the demarcation immediately takes place: women often go into teaching and men into the professional performance field. In musical schools, almost all the teachers are women. Working in a school gives one greater opportunity for paying more attention to the family. But I cannot imagine my life without work, even though the returns for my labour are miserly. The work gives me emotional satisfaction and also to some extent, independence and my own circle of friends and contacts. If a woman does not work, she ages, becomes an appendage to her husband, she depends on him, it becomes difficult for her to assert her independence.

In our society, apart from work there is no other opportunity for meeting people (not counting the obligatory socialising among relatives). Without work a woman feels herself to be a secondary creature and lonely.

2. I have already said that in the majority of cases women who have a musical education go to work in a school. The path towards the career of a performer is very difficult and requires self-confidence. Often for the sake of a career, a woman has to tear herself away from the family. The prestige of music performers and music-teachers is not very high because the cultural atmosphere is poorly developed. The masses are not up to appreciating music nor arts. It was also like this before independence. And after the civil war in Tadzikistan and later, many of my musician colleagues are leaving, some to Russia, others to Israel.

3. I did not achieve anything professionally because I did not become a performer. The work of a teacher of music is obscure. When my students develop their abilities it makes me happy and then I regard my work as being
purposeful. Many are disappointed in life and then I feel that I have worked in vain.

4. I have not thought about this, as only three men worked at the music school. Our relationship was one of mutual respect.

5. Musical education enriches the personality and I salute those who want to give their children a musical education in school. But music as a profession must be chosen only by those who have clearly defined abilities. Even to be a teacher at a music school, one must be gifted. This is why girls seeking a musical profession must think hard about.

There have never been enough jobs for people of my profession. Now, cutbacks are being made especially in the schools; when there is little for one to live off, there can be little left for the soul. On the other hand, the school itself is starved.

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<td>Kazakh, 27; a geographer by specialisation; working in a small enterprise in Almaty</td>
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1. After graduating from University, I worked in a scientific research institute, but having taken my prospects into account, I began looking for my place in the new economic sectors. I worked in a sanatorium, then in a tourist bureau and in a hotel. My relatives were amongst the first to organise a co-operative. One aspect of their business was tourism; groups were collected for tours abroad, and trips for tourists from different parts of the then USSR and individual tourist groups from abroad were organised. Tourism became the main form of business for small enterprises. I find working with different people interesting and it suits my nature. And my work also pays well. I am involved in promotion, forming groups and preparing their documents. My relatives trust me, which is why all responsible work has been given to me.

2. We are people of the new world. There are few of us. We earn well, but competition is high. This indicates how prestigious my work is.

3. I never thought I would be working in such a field. I thought that in the other sphere, there would have been no chance of my realising myself. I have been helped by material stimuli and hampered by bureaucracy.

4. Only relatives work at our establishment, therefore the attitudes are as between relatives.

5. Not all women can do the work that I do. It needs a combination of circumstances and capital. But my work and our establishment helps women very much in our complex times. The majority of our tourists are women. Many have a higher-level education, many are not working. Their travels give them a means of survival. They go abroad and purchase things we do not have locally and resell them. This is not easy work. If travel means work for me, then it also means work for those who are tourists. Thanks to us, women who have lost their jobs, can, with a certain amount of effort, survive
and even amass some capital or the means of setting up their own business. You see, the state mainly supports men and commercial structures such as ours are oriented towards women. And if we cannot give them a job, then at least we can help them in having some income. The economic situation is now changing but I already have experience of commercial activity and in future will set up my own business. Together with my brothers and relatives we can survive in any economic situation. The market has taught us a lot and induced in us a feeling of confidence in our strength. If women overcome their fear of the new, then they can demonstrate their abilities in the new economy. At times we have more knowledge and energy than men. But in some women I see the opposite: a desire to place all responsibilities everything on their husbands.

ALTHOUGH many of the respondents are working in highly prestigious fields and positions, few of them regard their constitutionally guaranteed right to work as providing equal employment opportunities. No matter which of the Central Asian countries they belong to, from the women's responses regarding their professions, the reader can understand how difficult it is for women to realise this right to work in a society which has yet to overcome men's traditional domination over women. Allowing one insight into women's inner worlds, the respondents' replies reveal that external analysis of women's situation does not always correspond to the reality of their experience. The mechanisms for suppressing women's identity in the sphere of work is highly complex and almost all respondents acknowledge the existence of hidden discrimination.

The totalitarian regime lowered the significance of professional activities as a measure of the achievements of society's members; it especially lowered the importance of women's work to their economic freedom. Using their own examples, the respondents indicate that society exploits women's strength and health in the field of labour, but forgets to give woman true independence in exchange. Few respondents, even those who regard themselves as having been successful, express complete satisfaction with their professional lives - a fact that is mirrored throughout this book in their responses to other questions.

While a majority of women indicate that their professions suit their nature and that they feel they made a correct career choice, they equally feel they were unable to realise their full potential. Some note that they primarily lacked a desire to go far in their chosen profession - a phenomenon connected not so much with their own self-esteem, but more with the inertia of the traditional cultural milieu.

Speaking about the prestige of women in professions in the social sphere, culture and education, the respondents acknowledge that their professions have very little prestige, a matter linked to the poor salaries for intellectual labour. In the attitudes of their male colleagues, many women see a desire to
relegate them to secondary posts, to the rôle of mere functionary, as well as attempts to exploit their labour.

Side by side with their responses to the questions in the survey, the respondents also indirectly provide a wealth of information regarding issues on which no direct questions were asked. This includes the point that a woman's family responsibilities is a factor objectively obstructing their advance in their profession. The women's replies also characterise the peculiarities of totalitarian society with its hierarchical structure, clan interests and prevalent injustice. The respondents relate different facts about their life, which together paint a revealing portrait of the so-called 'Soviet way of life'.

The women have also indicated their concern about the changes currently taking place in society and the detrimental consequences on the established norms of life. They are acutely aware of their vulnerability and a particular sense of insecurity and tension appears in their responses regarding the currently vital issue of women's unemployment. Speaking about discrimination and the current problem of unemployment, respondents mentioned nothing about the role of trade unions, nor about possibilities of protest against the infringement of their rights. This says much about the post-Soviet society and the mentality of its members, including the women of contemporary Central Asia.
Chapter 7

To Be Or Not To Be: The Women's Movement
Chapter 7

To Be Or Not To Be:
The Women's Movement

Not all respondents agreed to answer the questionnaire's section on politics and public policy. Those who immediately and categorically refused to answer were notably women holding high office or related to persons in senior positions. This in itself speaks of how the atmosphere of fear - that just ten years ago paralysed society - is still far from being shattered. Those who did reply - and they were the majority - manifested different points of view, often very extreme. Even though no direct questions about freedom of speech, assembly or choice were included, it was freedom which nevertheless became a key word in the majority of responses.

'What is best,' asked Spinoza, 'freedom attained through knowledge and understanding, or emotional slavery?'. Following the great philosopher one perhaps should answer: the first of these, because without freedom women's equality and women's policies are unthinkable.

Soviet policies towards women were expressed through the provision of quotas for women in the power structures - the nomenklatura; the remaining women were simply the object of the often ineffective Soviet social policies.

The number of true political decision-makers in the totalitarian state was extremely limited and included practically no women. There were a number of women working in the organs of power, but, as politicians, very few had their own political identity. Gorbachev's perestroika politicised society, but a negligible number of women from spheres outside the established centres of power entered real politics. This is particularly visible in Central Asia. Even those women who were successful in forging careers in the state, Party, trade union or Komsomol structures, were gradually sidelined into organisations, foundations, and associations with no role in decision-making and policy formation. This did not bring them any closer to those whose interests they should have been expressing. Just as before, these positions turned out to be a sinecure, allowing them to live comfortably at the cost of not only the state budget but also of the commercial undertakings that were now being set up on the base laid by former state enterprises. As for the rest, because the democratic pronouncements were revealed to be nothing more than a means of feeding the personal ambitions of the new adventurists, women experienced a profound sense of disappointment. They no longer believe in the existence of any social enterprise whatsoever and, therefore, do not believe that feminism - as an expression of the democratic movement in post-Soviet Central Asia - will easily find its place.

Women working in the commercial sector have become increasingly articulate about themselves, but are using their nascent unity above all to
strengthen their personal status and gain entry into the privileged economic framework that is emerging within the world of joint enterprise. Given that the market economy is being constructed upon foundations laid by the 'privatisation' of state property and the legalisation of the black market economy, it is to be expected that the *nouveau riche* will only pursue their own interests in their associations and foundations. The female identity is conveniently exploited by women from the emerging commercial sector and the *nouveau riche* to compete with each other in the women's section of the *nomenklatura*, and to bolster their claim to speak in the name of their fellow countrywomen.

Today, with the women's movement enjoying international support, the women's issue is being used to play with official policies regarding women, without investing in these policies any sense of concern for the region's women, the finances needed for research into the problems facing women from the various strata of society, or for helping them in practical terms.

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**Zamira Akbakisheva**

*Kyrgyz; 31; Press Secretary to the State Committee on the Property of Kyrgyzstan*

1. I do have political views and am a member of the Kyrgyzstan Women's Congress. I am one of the founders of the women's movement in the country. I was a member of the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union) and worked in the Comsomol. I believe that women must defend their interests. We must become part of the international women's movement.

2. The last Kyrgyzstan Women's Congress was held eight years ago. The Women's Committee was liquidated under orders from the Communist Party leadership. In spite of the many changes taking place in our country, certain leaders of the former Women's Committee still believe there was no pressing need to convene a congress of women, which has now brought together all the existing women's organisations, such as Meerim, Kurmanai, the children's foundation, the Kanikei association, the Rukhania society, and others. The main objective of the Congress is the struggle not for women's rights which are not mere declarations but genuine rights; not to allow discrimination; to guarantee women's rights in public life and state affairs; to link up with international women's organisations; and many other issues concerning the rights of women-mothers. (1)

That the time for feminism is ripe is seen in the strength of the support expressed by women from all corners of the country for the idea of a Congress. By 'women's political activity', I understand the participation of women in the organs of government. Previously, this was in the form of women's participation in the *soviets* at various levels, and over the years
women comprised 30 to 42% of the number of deputies at all levels. In the last elections to the Supreme Soviet, only 7.9% women were elected. While previously women's political activity was determined by the nomenclature and quotas, today, women compete with men in elections, demonstrating their commitment to politics. Many women lost in the elections, which speaks volumes about society's attitude towards women. According to statistics from 1989, women only made up 5% of those in decision-making posts. For society to be stable, women should make up some 30 to 40% of those in such positions.

3. In Kyrgyzstan, women's organisations exist in the form of foundations and associations. Now they have been united in the Congress and are led by U. Baekova, President of the Constitutional Court and one of our most prominent democratic activists.

4. The women of Kyrgyzstan are in need of many things given the declining economy. Multifaceted assistance from the state is vital. Today 32% of the women who were employed in the national economy in 1989, are out of work. Many are obliged to take up any job, even if it does not correspond to their qualifications. Women prefer to work in state establishments, where social benefits are guaranteed. Work is a means of survival. Today, the most important thing women need is work but incorporating them into market attitudes is proving difficult.

5. Women's political activity depends on their level of knowledge. Women make up 55% of specialists with higher education; out of them, 70% are doctors and 72% teachers. And it is specifically in these areas that women must define state policies. A female politician must, above all, be educated.

6. I hope that working in the state administrative organs, I can provide concrete assistance to individual women and to women as a social group, especially since I was one of the founders of the Kyrgyzstan Women's Congress and The Congress of Women of Central Asia.

Zamira Osmunbekova

Kyrgyz; physiotherapist; post-graduate; working in an institute of higher education and at a garment factory; 40; unmarried; born and living in Bishkek

1. I do not have any political views, I have never joined any party nor do I want to have anything to do with them. Those who are setting up parties, associations, and movements in the former Soviet Union, are above all pursuing their own mercenary goals, masking them with beautiful words about the well-being of the people. Perhaps, in other countries things are different, but here where power was everything and a person nothing, there are many who want to have even a little power over just a few people, so as to humiliate them, and to exploit their pain to achieve their own goals. And they have only one goal: power.

2. Feminism today has no place in our country. There is no movement - including a women's movement - capable of solving even a single political or
economic problem. For women to be consciously engaged in social activity, they must above all be fed, clothed and have the basic essentials for their children. If a woman has no spare time, how can she be involved in social work, even if it is in her interests? This is why social activity is the pastime of those who love empty words about the good of the people, thanks to which they can feed themselves and live comfortably.

Women's participation in political structures does not have to happen in my country because psychologically, Kyrgyz women did not become free, and learn to respect other women's individuality and freedom. For the seventy years of Soviet rule, the constant pressure of Soviet 'culture' and undeveloped civic attitudes created a monster, which was termed the woman supervisor and who today has moved into politics. You remember what our leading women were like - unethical and uncultured liars who wore the mask of a simple soul; greedy, envious and malicious creatures! Today their descendants have assimilated the new democratic terminology, but their essence has not changed. God forbid that they should come to power!

All women from all levels of the nomenklatura were, due to their education, position and upbringing, suppressed, and when they saw other women receiving love and attention, when they saw another way of life and inter-relationships which they could never have, their sense of loss and incompleteness was manifested as cruelty, bitterness and rage.

3. A very difficult question! Women's policies are intimately connected with the development of society and they must be determined by time. Only a civilised society can be benevolent and think about the good of the weak and the discriminated. Our society is still far from this. It still needs one hundred years of development to be able to produce women's policies determined by the needs of each and every woman, and not only those prominent women who speak in the name of all. Today it is women in positions of power who are the main opponents of working women, women who suffer from unemployment or punishing work, from poverty and a cheerless existence, and who suffer for their children. These prominent women are taught by their parties to care only for the satisfaction of their own needs and desires. Each one of them - in the name of preserving their privileges - would give away, sell off, slander and destroy anyone who comes in their way. They do not need any activities which require sacrifice and which could threaten their wealth or position - that would be political activity in the true sense.

4. In light of what I have said above, a women's movement, in any form whatsoever, is not needed today.

5. I would like to see women politicians who are the polar opposite of today's women politicians. Such women would have to have been born and brought up in another country, where there was never any totalitarianism.

6. Even in my most terrible nightmare I would never want to be part of the ruling power structure. If I had money, I would above all give women sufficient opportunity for rest and to satisfy their inclinations.
1. Currently I am not a member of any political Party. Until 1991, I was a member of the CPSU. I have political convictions, but I do not intend to participate in any movement or party since, from my years in the CPSU, I understood that my involvement in the party would not change anything in the world around me. Glasnost opened my eyes to how party leaders ignored the views of the party masses, who were just instruments in someone's (rather dirty) hands. This is why I became disillusioned with politics which often is based on intimidation and the manipulation of ideas. In political parties the motivating force is someone's personal interest and not the interests of the people, who this or that politician represents.

2. I understand very well that the women's movement necessarily means the participation of women in the political power structures. But in our times, women's organisations were of less than secondary importance and women's participation in the political power structures took a distorted form. In the absence of democracy, any movement can be transformed into someone's political weapon to be used for attaining power. Such a situation cannot be avoided. This is why we are not able to get rid of our lack of faith in those who claim to speak in the name of certain sections of society. For now I cannot envisage a women's movement, nor what form it should take. Even those women who are sitting in the Supreme Soviet do not speak about women's interests.

Concretely, in Soviet Uzbek society, women's participation in the political power structures was an abnormal phenomenon because the genuine preconditions for their normal activity - both as politicians and as women - did not exist. This is why Soviet women's activists, who may at heart have been good people, became monsters with characters that were alien to normal women. Often a woman's success in the power structures was explained by the fact that she had offered her services to all those on whom her career depended. There were rare exceptions but even they were not politicians in the true sense; their influence was negligible. Also, if they had any ideas, these were impracticable and they themselves were no more than puppets who were yes-men or who exerted pressure on their subordinates. But I have no right to criticise or call it disgraceful as I myself was part of this voiceless society.

3. Regarding the form of a women's movement, one needs to study the experience of the global women's movement and organise it along civilised lines, as it is everywhere. One certainly needs to begin with like-minded people.

4. A woman needs exactly what society as a whole needs in normal life, so that she can have a choice in life, so that there is respect for the real equality that a democratic society can provide. I think that there are outstanding women but, unfortunately, I have not come across any.
5. There are excellent male designers of women's clothes; likewise I suppose that a woman, with character, knowledge and willpower, can become a good politician if she has chosen politics as a means of realising her inner potential. I was always irritated by the somewhat patronising and indulgent attitude towards women that existed in our not too distant past, which led to the odd woman landing up in politics thanks to the quota system. I believe that only an internal movement among women themselves should lead them into politics; only then can a woman be said to be a politician.

6. If I had had significant resources, then I would, first of all, have helped mothers with numerous children, not through foundations, but through concrete assistance from people who could help them; and also I would not give them roubles but technology to make their work easier. I believe that domestic work is the most thankless work but it is vital for society. This is why it needs to be made easier.

**Narbibish Shammaeva**

Turkmen, 42; scientific worker, teaching in an higher educational institute; married with two children, living in Chardjoi

1. I do not have fixed political views. I have not been and shall not be a member of any political Party or movement: I have neither the time nor the desire.

2. Feminism cannot exist in my country, for in Turkmenia Islamic traditions are too strong. Men must always be male, they must bear responsibility for the happiness of women. A woman must not humiliate a man, which is why it is better that women's participation in the power structures be limited to a consultative role. Our society is not yet ready for the active participation of women in politics.

3. Women's policies must be led by male politicians, but women research workers involved in social issues, should be included in the formulation of these policies.

4. I cannot perceive what form a women's movement in a country such as Turkmenia would take, as I cannot envisage feminism evolving here in the near future.

5. I would want the woman politicians in my country to be like the women politicians of Europe, for example Edith Cresson(3) or Margaret Thatcher, but this will not happen in the near future; a new generation has to grow up.

6. Oh this could never be! Still, if I did become rich, I would try to ensure that there are more women working in the field of science.
Baret Irgalieva
Kazakh; 45; Director of the Executive Committee of the Democratic Committee for Human Rights; librarian; living in Almaty; married with one daughter

1. I was a member of the CPSU. I myself did not take part in the December events,2) but when at their trial documents were presented against those involved, I openly declared my position. At that time I was working in the Party regional committee. I was not in agreement with some of the groundless and severe measures taken against those very young people.

I am not joining any of the new political parties because my convictions have changed little. I believed in my Party and its ideas are dear to me. I regard those who betrayed their Party as turncoats. For them the new parties are only a means of advancing their careers. I do not want to join their parties and avoid becoming their colleague because those who led the Communist Party often exploited my convictions for their own goals.

Thanks to my old contacts, seventeen of us set up the Democratic Committee on Human Rights where I am currently working. Its work is financed by some state establishments and social associations.

I have made it my goal to defend the rights of every person - irrespective of their conviction. My ideal politician is Andrei Sakharov; he reflects an unscalable height in the political landscape of the former USSR.

Often I find myself playing the role of Don Quixote and have to meet bureaucrats and have to tilt at windmills. Sometimes I wish I could leave it all and take up some ordinary human craft and produce something concrete (I am in fact an excellent dressmaker), but I believe that public work is vital and wish that more honest people were involved, not just careerists.

The new states of the former Soviet Union recognise human rights as one of the principles on which a legitimate state is founded, but the past still casts a long shadow over people's inter-relationships and their interaction with the state. This is why defence of human rights - of the rights of the elderly, children, people of different nationalities and social positions - is a burning issue and also involves a great deal of work. Our organisation was created on the initiative of a handful of people and we find its existence of immense import. We inform people about what human rights mean and that a great deal depends upon the people themselves; we urge them to join us and let us help each other - above all those who stand alongside us. Let people know that everyone has rights and not only the director or the owner of the enterprise.

2. Any political movement has its own rhythm of development. Our society is not homogeneous and, therefore, different social groups started to come together as soon as there was the possibility of freely expressing themselves about their interests. This allows us to now hope that political and social movements will further deepen, for at present all movements have a somewhat superficial character.
The same can be said about the women's movement which has appeared only very recently. The social basis for such movements exists, but for them to be strengthened much intellectual work is needed. Nowadays there are both official and non-government women's associations. Whether they will be able to cooperate and unite in order to resolve some shared objectives, only time will tell. If this does not happen, then it will become clear that the emergence of this or that women's association or collective was simply linked to certain women's ambitions of holding high office. If this is to be the case, women's participation in the country's political will remain simply a formality, as it was in Soviet times.

3. Women's policies must be formulated by women themselves, through women's organisations.

4. The organised forms that the women's movement takes can be varied and the more the merrier: associations, foundations, clubs, trade unions, women's sections in political parties, production co-operatives, and private enterprises.

5. Women politicians must be keenly aware of the needs of those whom they represent; They must be capable of interacting with a wide range of people; know about a great deal and see even more. For such a woman essential qualities include flexibility and firmness, analytical powers and a sense of personal responsibility for everything she does.

6. I would work on the creation of job opportunities for women, envisaging home-based labour and work in small shops which are either private enterprises or co-operatives. Today there is a need to ease women's economic circumstances. I would introduce highly favourable conditions for women's business, provide them tax breaks and offer similar facilities for businesses where female employees are in the majority, encouraging entrepreneurs to hire more women.

Dildora Alimbekova
President of the Association of Business Women of Uzbekistan; an economist by qualification; owner of a business; divorced with two children; 39; Uzbek living in Tashkent

1. I certainly do have political convictions, but I am not aligned with any of the existing parties. I am not involved in politics. I will explain why. I am an entrepreneur, which is why I am under the constant gaze of the authorities; if I were also to take up politics, then as an entrepreneur I would be finished. If I could realise my political convictions, I would create a new party of free workers, whose programme would advocate a person's right to choose work which they like and to be paid what they have rightfully earned.

2. A women's movement is essential, I think. But our society is not ready for the emergence of a women's movement with its own voice and opinion. People react negatively to women's attempts to enforce their rights, and find women's desire to decide their fate themselves absurd. A sense of civic consciousness is not sufficiently developed among women to enable us to
achieve this goal, which is also why in the female environment there prevails a strong sense of personal competition. Many of our prominent women regard other women, who are notable in their own fields or who have certain aspirations, with suspicion, seeing them as competitors who are eating away at their personal authority. Such an atmosphere exists even in the Uzbekistan Women's Committee. I myself am a member of the economic commission of this organisation and I witness intolerance towards the opinion of others, as well as incompetence. I do not see any unity of ideas in the Committee's work.

Clearly, voluntary organisations are needed, but currently they do not exist here and this indicates that society is still not ready for the emergence of feminism. A women's movement can exist only when there is a felt need to defend women's rights; also when women are ready to unite and there are some who are ready to take upon themselves the entire thankless task of organisation. But for this, who has the resources, strength and time? My Working Women's Association is not yet materially strong enough to support women's organisations. We ourselves barely survive under the burden of taxes; for now we can defend only ourselves and the right of women's businesses to exist.

I do not see a women's movement emerging in Uzbekistan. First, because women themselves are passive; second, there are no leaders capable of formulating the movement's objectives and attracting the sympathies of the female masses; and third, the politicisation of society has rapidly declined due to the economic crisis.

If a spontaneous women's movement nevertheless appears, it would face resistance from society, which is dominated by male opinion. It would meet the fate of the suffragettes, who faced mockery and hostility. Also obstructing its development is the absence of women's solidarity and the strong sense of mutual distrust.

3. It is difficult under these circumstances to say whether there will be a women's movement in future in my country, but for now it does not exist. Before it takes some organised form, women have to become aware of their legal and economic rights through a free press. I do not know whether there are women journalists working on women's issues. True, in recent years the question of women's employment has been brought to light by some Russian journalists, but Uzbek women know very little about it and also read them very little. And then even women journalists do not take into account the mentality of Uzbek women.

4. Women above all need respect as a woman (that is as a mother, wife and daughter) and as a person who has a profession and therefore their own opinions and achievements.

5. A woman politician can work in any sphere; this has been shown by the European experience. A woman who wants to be involved in politics must have civic sense, knowledge and femininity, and not ambition and a belief that she is unique. A sense of sympathy and love for people, a feeling of solidarity for both one's successful and suppressed friends, these are the attributes one needs which are the means of gaining people's trust.

6. If I had had sufficient means, I would have initiated the establishment of a
fund for the support of women, so that girls could receive a good education and women's research ideas could receive material support, and so that women who want to take up entrepreneurial activity, could set up their own business. If I were a member of parliament, I would have made laws against using foul language while addressing women, against anti-women statements in the press, against satirical portrayals of women in the cinema and in literature, and against the porn business.

Kurolai Ibrahimova

Kazakh, 43; Head of department in a National Research Institute; married with two children; born in the countryside, living in Alma Almaty; studied in Moscow

1. I do have political convictions: I am for democracy. I am not a member of any party or movement because my time mainly goes into my work and family. I am always ready to express my stand on political events which affect my life. Like in December 1986, I gathered signatures in support of Olzhas Suleimanov(4) at a time when people were afraid of actively declaring their position regarding what happened in Almaty. Due to this I sensed - behind my back - hostility and even hatred on the part those whom I had earlier considered my friends. I am not a member of a party or movement, because to be one means to give all of one's strength to putting one's approach into practice. I am not capable of this. I am psychologically not prepared for the constant tension and activity.

2. I do not see any prospects of a women's movement in my country. Women have similar economic and political problems to those of men. This is why women, like men, can also resolve their problems within the framework of existing parties. Above all, we people of the former Soviet must feel ourselves to be free.

I believe it is not only society, but also women themselves who are not ready for active participation in the political power structures, given their present psychological and physical potential; men are freer to arrange their time and psychologically more prepared for resolving practical problems. Women's participation in the political structures will always be a formality.

3. Policies in general must be determined by a scientific analysis of the problem, and this means by both men and women who are working in this field. The matter of taking decisions and accepting responsibility should be left to those who consider the issue in hand to be important - and this could also include men.

4. No Women's Councils!(5) This organisational form was humiliating to women, it accorded women the humiliating role of a beggar seeking a miserly tip or privilege. This kind of work with women - and this is precisely how the Women's Councils functioned - accorded them a secondary and subordinate role. I even regard a women's movement as a recognition by women of their inferiority.

5. I do not want to see any women politicians! Politics is an activity that
corresponds better to the masculine nature, psychology and intellect.

6. If one is speaking about the existing political power structures then neither I, nor any other woman, would be able to do much for the female half of the population.

Khairiniso Ganieva

Uzbek; physiotherapist working at the Tashkent University polyclinic; married with three children; 42

1. I am not interested in politics but I do have views on political events affecting everyday life. I approve of President Karimov's policies, especially on the national question, and I believe in the sincerity of his intentions because, thanks to his efforts, peace and stability have been maintained.

But I also know people from the opposition; one of them is Shukhrat Ismatullayev, a former teacher at the University; he is from the leadership of the Birlik movement. I think many of Birlik's positions were constructive and it is a pity that the government did not manage to get a dialogue going with them. In the opposition there were many honest and upright people and the reason for the confrontation between the President and the opposition was that those who wanted to preserve their own comfortable positions gave the President distorted information.

I am a students' doctor, and I know about the student demonstrations in Tashkent in January 1991 not just from hearsay. The opposition was not guilty: the students' speeches were provoked by other people, who were the cause of the violence. Birlik activists in fact tried to pacify the students. The guilty were those careless people from the college and University administrations who, knowing about the raising of prices, did not raise the students' grants. The day the prices were raised, the students in fact went hungry. Yet Birlik was accused of provoking the students and its members were dismissed from work. Shukhrat who had three daughters and was himself almost an invalid, was deprived of the means of earning his livelihood. Was this the way to deal with the opposition?

On the other hand we know how the Islamists exploited the democrats in Tadjikistan. This is why the population supports President Karimov, In spite of his confrontation with the opposition. I myself was not a member of the CPSU and have not joined any of the newly emerging parties because I see that, for many, membership of a party is not based on their convictions; they are primarily pursuing personal goals. This is why there are so many who have rushed to leave the CPSU; it is difficult to believe them!

In the 1980s I worked as the Deputy Head of the Polyclinic. For this post one had to be a member of the CPSU but I refused to join the Party as there were so many dishonourable people in it. Still, I was allowed to remain at this post because of my competence.

2. Our society is not ready for a women's movement. If it nonetheless appears, it would have only a small membership. Women demanding
equality for their fellow women would be regarded as black sheep and would face hostility. Women, in most people's eyes, are second-class citizens. My students told me that in the kolkhoz (cooperative farms) women always did the most demanding and poorest paid work. Girls are married off at an early age. They enter their husband's house essentially as a servant and remain tied up in their family duties and come to accept their lot. In the villages there is a saying "A young cow is easier to put in a yoke". It is precisely the practice of early marriage which hampers a woman's education and the development of her individuality. As long as the majority of women are in a subordinate position, women's participation women in the political power structures will remain a fantasy.

That there are still women in high office stems from the fact that men politicians understand that the participation of women in the organs of administration raises the country's prestige by offering evidence of its level of development.

3. Elevating women's prestige and status not only requires the work of activists in women's organisations. Every top-ranking politician has a wife, daughter or sister, and they could participate in the work of such organisations, especially in the philanthropical organisations, while not holding any formal posts. This way, these women would demonstrate the attitudes of their husbands, fathers or brothers towards the women's issue. This could perhaps also raise the prestige of the politicians themselves as well as the prestige of the women's organisations. If, perhaps, the wife of the President were to call philanthropic gatherings, spectacles, concerts or auctions, I suppose it is possible they would collect far more resources: many would follow her example. But the rich currently spend more on restaurants than on the needy.

I liked Raisa Gorbacheva, who was actively involved in social organisations. But the people were not used to this and did not understand her while Gorbachev's enemies tried to give her activities a negative twist. Currently, Sara Nazarbaeva (the wife of Kazakhstan President Nazarbaev) is involved in social activities and is regarded favourably in Kazakhstan.

4. The women of Uzbekistan need support from the government, not only to ensure equal rights but also to encourage the formation of non-government women's organisations. Government policies on women must be publicised in the mass media and in the speeches of leading politicians.

5. A female politician must remain a woman, the style of her work must be constructive, based on goodness, patience and flexibility.

6. If I had substantial personal means, I would try to unite women. I would travel to far flung areas of the country with lawyers and doctors in order to enlighten women about legal issues, give them elementary knowledge about medicine and teaching. There is a need for women to interact, so as to discuss their problems. Today women tend to meet in the context of rituals, where they compete in material terms. I would invest money in production, so as to give women employment. Men have managed to divide women but share much in common among themselves.

Perhaps if I was part of the power structures, I would direct my activities to the advancement of basic education in schools.
1. I was not a member of the Party and am not thinking of becoming a member of any other party either. I am a woman and I am not interested in politics.

2. My attitude towards the women's movement is negative. The question of women's rights has just been dreamed up. A women's movement - if it exists anywhere - must probably consist of ambitious women who cannot have, or do not want to have children or care about their husband and near ones. What does the struggle for equality mean? This is women struggling for the right to sleep with whom and when they want: that is, to be like a man. Behind what you call the women's movement lie the basic sexual problems of individual women who want to conceal their problem under a respectable cover. As for those women who want to occupy high office, above all they try to find themselves a man who will create a more comfortable life for them. These are usually girls who have seen nothing good in their childhood. This is how it was and is!

3. Women's policies - this is when domestic life becomes better and women can free themselves from the stupefying burden of domestic work.

4. I do not recognise the women's movement as something political.

5. I am highly critical of those women who aspire to a political career. Women are not capable of leadership, they are motivated by emotion and ambition. The women leaders that I knew were either hysterical or prostitutes. They lived and continue to live well: their highly-placed lovers have arranged for them to be placed in some joint enterprise, imaginary welfare fund or some social organisation working in 'national diplomacy' or 'cultural initiatives' where they live just as before: on our hard-earned money.

6. In order to live better, one needs to get rid of parasites, including those of the female sex. Then political problems will be fewer. Beautiful words and promises are cast about by those who are themselves worthless.

1. I do have political views. I was a member of the CPSU and my views have not changed. I was involved in social activity and, consequently, in politics. Therefore when war broke out in Tadjikistan, it was not possible to remain sitting on the fence; everyone had to make a choice and understand why blood was being spilt.
2. The civil war in Tadjikistan drew women into politics - often against their wishes and they demonstrated that they could have a positive influence on political life. The Women's Committee stood by those who experienced misfortune and was able to gain authority and respect. It distributed humanitarian assistance, saved the wounded and the children, and provided information to the population. Our pain united us, as many women showed themselves to be true citizens; women doctors worked in field hospitals. Much was lost. I cannot help crying when I remember those days when blood was spilt on the streets of the city where I was born. How many women, girls, and children were among the refugees. There were also girls who the Islamists sold across the border. Victory by Islamists would have meant the complete loss of rights for women. Still, there were also women on their side, who consciously or unconsciously wanted us to return to the dark past.

3. The Women's Committee, as a government organisation, showed its viability by uniting under its banner the conscious and the energetic.

4. Women, as members of society, above all else, need peace in their country.

5. For women who, today, take an active part in politics, courage is essential. In the circumstances of civil war, our activities were dangerous not only for ourselves but also for our near ones. A courageous woman - one who is both responsible for her acts as well as good - is how I would want to see the new generation of Tadjik women who are entering politics.

6. I am doing and will do everything in my power to help our mothers, sisters and friends.

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**Svetlana Monosova**

Russian; 33; economist; married with a son and parents still alive; born and living in Tashkent

1. I am far removed from politics. Social activism is not my nature. Generally, a woman involved in politics is not a woman; having failed in her personal life, she seeks to find herself in the vanity of politics; few such women are actually driven by the desire to help their nearest and dearest: they primarily want to help themselves.

2. What kind of women's movement can one talk about in Uzbekistan? There are few who generally know what it is. For the majority it is something highly amusing, humorus, women's stupidity. The constitution gives women the right to be elected and to vote, "Please become activists or become a leader - if you can".

3. Women's policies are at present similar to what they were in the USSR, only less discernable.

4. I am against a women's movement, so I neither know - nor want to know - anything about its organisational form. Women would be better off spending their time on their near ones or caring about their looks - this is true women's politics.
5. A woman involved in politics cannot realise herself as a mother and the mistress of the house. Here I am not talking about people like Margaret Thatcher - their's is a different life, and therefore people are different.

Marifat Ikramova
Uzbek; lawyer; Associate Professor in the Department of Criminal Law, Tashkent Law Institute; one son and grandchildren

1. I was a member of the CPSU, and my views regarding Communism have not changed. I joined the Party due to my convictions and not for the sake of a career, which is why I cannot be a member of any other party. I am thankful to Soviet rule for my education; for the fact that my country has torn itself away from the Middle Ages as things were only at the beginning of this century. Soviet rule freed my sisters from the fate of being slaves, living out their lives behind four walls. If my generation of women have achieved something - that I have felt myself to be human and have confidence in my strength - it is only thanks to the idea of communism.

2. The policies of the Soviet state towards women allowed Uzbek women to travel a path one hundred years longer than that travelled by Uzbek men. They achieved the possibility of being free. 'Freedom is the realisation of necessity', (6) not everyone realises this, and men realise it even less. The demand for freedom exists among a majority of educated women. Freedom is not only the possibility of walking out without a parandja, to see the whole wide world and breath with full spirit - even though this is also a lot. Freedom means to decide one's own fate and choose one's own path in life. At the age of 52 my grandmother was an old woman, a tough life had made her one. In 1936 she got photographed for the first time and returned home without a parandja. She said, "How wonderful it is to walk out with a bare face!"

This is why I believe that a women's movement must have state support. Over the seventy years of socialist rule, the psychology of our men in terms of attitudes towards women changed only marginally and now the state must reaffirm its protectionist policies regarding women by giving them social benefits. The other aspect of state policies regarding women must be the encouragement of independent women's organisations - but not those which seek to push women back into the narrow circle of their domestic responsibilities; such a tendency also exists. Women know all about their responsibilities, but very little about their rights. Only enlightened women can be articulate about the infringement of their rights, which is why the main goal of women's organisations must be the enlightenment of women in the sphere of rights, culture, and health.

Unfortunately, these days there have appeared some people who claim they are women's 'protectors', who want to push them towards polygyny and to restrict the circle of women's interests to the family and children.

Society - particularly its male half - is not ready for an active women's movement: progress in consciousness has taken place only among educated
women, while the majority of men do not even permit the thought that women are no worse than they are at anything. This is why the state must help women to realise their potential, whether this is in the sphere of politics, science or business.

3. For a women's movement to emerge, it is essential that there are groups of like-minded people who propagate their points of view through the press. The Uzbekistan Women's Committee has failed to attract women from various social strata to its cause. Secondly one only comes to hear about some gathering or conference through the newspapers or television, where only privileged individuals from the leadership participate - always the same people.

4. The Women's Councils are a good organisational form but there is a need to bring new content into their work.

5. I would like to see others as the women politicians in my country, rather than the women currently in our leadership. Such women should actually be politicians and not mere functionaries; shining personalities, with their own individual identity, with independent ideas, and undoubtedly progressive.

6. If I were in the upper legislative structures, I would append a clause to the labour law about restricting women from heavy physical labour. If I had the finances, I would help mothers with numerous children to have some leisure time with their children, so that they could see another life and other countries, so that the desire to change their lives and strive towards a different quality of life would develop within them.

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**Gulnara Abdrasilova**

Kazakh; 34; teacher in a higher educational institute; married with two children; living in Almaty

1. There are more interesting things in life than politics, although I follow events which concern me as a citizen with great interest. Within my own limits, I try to express my opinion, as in December 1986. Those events in Almaty strongly politicised my generation and girls were also not left on the sidelines.

2. I understand feminism to be a movement which must teach women to love themselves as women. To prepare society for women's active participation in public life, such a movement must evolve from the bottom and not the top. Women can - and are - ready to unite according to their interests or in the name of mutual support, but not simply for the sake of being commanded and suppressed by a woman instead of a man. Women have many problems, some of which they are capable of resolving themselves.

3. Woman's policies must, above all else, solve their domestic problems which depend not so much upon the state of the economy but more on the priorities set in the economy.

4. I suppose that the very best organisational structure would be women's
clubs in which women could, for example, learn about child-care, exchange children's things, discuss with each other how to adapt to the new environment, where to find work or get vocational training, and so on.

5. If a woman politician is professionally not subordinate to her male colleague, then she would be highly respected.

6. If I worked in the legislature, I would float the idea of a shorter working day for women.

**Saule Kenesbaeva**

Kazakh; 50; philologist specialising in Eastern Studies; divorced with a married daughter; working as head of department in the National Research Institute of Philosophy and Law; President of the International Association of Work and Cultural Co-operation (LIANA), Almaty

1. I was not, and am still not, a member of any political party or movement. I cooperate with democrats from different countries because I am keen for democratic principles to emerge and develop in Kazakhstan.

2. The women's movement can play a specific role in the development of humanity; it brings into politics new criteria for assessing on-going processes and new ideas. I consider it important to mobilise women to actively participate in the electoral process in their countries. Today, it is important that women have their say, as male politics have created various threats: environmental pollution, armed conflict, political extremism, and others.

In Kazakhstan there now exist all the conditions for the emergence of a women's movement; there are dozens of various types of women's organisations. Women recognise their own problems and unite, which is why I suppose there are genuine prospects for women's participation in policy formation in my country. Spontaneously evolved women's organisations provide information about themselves through the press and various free publications; They are aware of each other and coordinate their efforts.

3. Women are not only the object of policies, but also the subject. The state's protectionist policies towards women are inadequate. Only when women with their own clear-cut stand on the country's problems become politicians will one be able to speak about women's policies.

4. I see the women's movement as taking the form of official government bodies working on women's issues along with non-formal social organisations and women's groups.

5. In a woman politician I would want to see a radiant and creative being. She must experience the problems of her society and be concerned about its needs. Women in the power structures are egoists and have built their careers in the name of self-affirmation; they do not deserve to be called politicians.

6. Had I been part of the state power structures, I would have set myself the goal of ending the corruption in society. Being in power and having such a goal would be a Herculean task; one would have to be a *kanikaze*. 
Had I had substantial resources, I would have invested them in the development of the basic sciences which give huge social returns, because they allow a blossoming of society and its productive spheres. This is what Kazakhstan urgently needs today.

Farida Pirmuhammadova

Uzbek; married with one daughter; PhD in Chemical Sciences; currently working at a small establishment as both the head of laboratory and laboratory assistant; studied in Moscow, otherwise living in Tashkent

1. I was not a member of the CPSU, nor did I participate in any political movement during perestroika as my main interest in life is scientific research. Today, when it has become impossible to conduct scientific research work given the problems within the field of science, it seems to me that without changes in society, science will also remain fruitless. This is why I have recognised the necessity of alternative political parties and movements as a condition for progress in my country.

I shall attempt to explain why I did not participate in so-called social activities. I was disgusted by the fact that such activities were a mere formality: the energies of those who actually wanted to do some social good were very cleverly exploited by those who were pursuing their own material interests.

2. I am completely pessimistic about the emergence of a women's movement in Uzbekistan. I see that the interests of women as a social group have been strongly infringed upon, as women are in a dependent secondary position in production, in science, and even in sphere where they make up the majority of those employed. Many of the most competent and qualified realise that their rights are discriminated against, but what prevents them from uniting in some organisation is, firstly, fear and the burden of their daily struggle for survival.

Those women who are famous or who hold high office will neither be the organisers or participants in any autonomous organisation. For them the most important thing is to preserve their position, wealth and access to the benefits which their official positions offer them. At best they will be neutral; at worst they will persecute the organisers, labelling them self-appointed upstarts. Such individuals need the government's pseudo-public women's organisations as one more means of getting access to material benefits and junkets abroad. Only women who are poor and face insecurity in their lives are trying to unite, but they have neither the money nor the fame essential for setting up an organisation. In our society honest philanthropic motives do not exist because spirituality is at an all-time low. In the near future, women's participation in the power structures will remain a mere formality and at levels even lower than during Soviet rule.

3. In our situation, one can only talk about one's ideals; women's organisations must be spontaneous governmental and non-governmental organisations. Mutual cooperation could lead to positive results: raising
women's level of civic consciousness, the quality of women's lives and the realisation of their personal dignity. An additional situation which could lead to unity among women's organisations would be a broad opposition to the Islamisation of society. Despite the positive side of Islam as a religion, Islamist fundamentalists from all countries want to limit people's cognitive abilities and to place women on a lower rung by creating artificial boundaries which restrict a woman's physical and mental freedom. In Uzbekistan, contemporary religious activists, especially from the lower ranks, are very conservative. They retain a firm belief in the patriarchal family with male domination remaining their ideal. They do not understand that only a dialogue between those who are equals and free will lead to evolution and progress of the family and society.

Personally I would like to be involved in the work of a non-governmental women's organisation.

4. Women as members of society need equality, which as yet they do not have. Women, particularly those who for whatever reasons find themselves to be social outcasts, need moral support. This is why shelters offering social rehabilitation and emergency assistance are needed, so that a woman does not find herself alone in her misfortune. A woman who has no means of existence is always dependent.

5. A woman can become a politician only at a mature age, when she has been freed from her moral duty towards her children. Therefore, for women, there must be a minimum age qualification for election to the legislatures. As women politicians, I would want to see honest and independent individuals who have concrete programmes for ameliorating the lot of their sisters.

6. I would never call upon women to take up high office in the government or in industry. No, a leadership role demands huge sacrifices from women, as well as talent, and a high level of professionalism. Women's organisations, if given the right of veto, can and should exercise control over those functionaries who are responsible for preparing a bill for parliament.

I would not want to be part of the power structures; I have other interests. But I would gladly work with an innovative group of experts which has some sort of supervisory function in society.

If I were able to earn the necessary means, then I would perhaps try to help individual persons, and support their research ideas and inventions. I would also help the school in which my daughter studies - our schools are very poor and any material assistance would go to our children's benefit.

Vera Charieva

Turkmen; 54; doctor and professor with a doctorate in medical sciences; widow with two grown-up children; living in Ashkabad

1. I have political views as far as the fact that politics concern me, just like any other citizen. I was not a member of the Party - my father and husband did not permit it, even though both were members of the CPSU - perhaps, they
wanted to protect me from extra worries.

2. There are certainly no prospects for feminism in Turkmenistan even though there are quite a large number of educated and qualified women who are ready to support a woman's movement if it were to evolve.

3. Ideally, women themselves should determine women's policies as they best know about their own problems.

4. I do not know what forms a women's movement can take. Probably it should be in the form of women's committees, which use the support of the state and its finances. Without state support, it is difficult to create a social organisation.

6. If I were a political activist, I would have made a programme for freeing women from domestic drudgery, offering them incentives for setting up businesses which provide all forms of domestic services: home kitchens, canteens, restaurants, shops selling pre-prepared foodstuffs (of superior quality to home-made foods), cleaners, sanitary workers, the manufacture and repair of household equipment. At present, the domestic sphere taxes women's strength and nerves.

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Zamira Valieva

25: Uzbek; engineer, doing PhD research at the Institute of Civil Engineering; divorced and living in Tashkent.

1. I do have political views, but I do not have any concrete ideas about how to improve our lives. Youngsters of my generation are not politicised. Yesterday, the path towards the future was clear: they saw that their future success lay in conformism. But today something has changed. While previously careers depended upon whether the person was capable of getting into the ranks of the administration, today one can make money faster through the more attractive avenue of commercial trade. In the period of stagnation, professional knowledge was accorded a lower value and today success, in everything, depends not on one's professionalism but on disavowing one's convictions. Even contradicting official policies is dangerous. Today the youth is motivated by the question of survival and it tries to adapt to the tune being called by the uncivilised market.

2. As far as I understand, there is no woman's movement in my country due to the political environment which existed for some seventy years. Women, and even men, are not ready for active participation in political life. People accept pressure as a given. The majority does not even acknowledge it. For example, women accept, without resistance, the attempts of some writers to return to the Islamic way of life. Many women have rather hastily started to wear Islamic dress, covering their faces and not all of them understand what the repercussions of such actions will be. One wants very much for women to become conscious of what is good for them and what is bad - and not just follow the fashionable precedent set by their rich neighbour - so that they can look a little further ahead than the present day.
But I do not see any women who could perhaps awaken in their contemporaries a concern for their future. The educated, honest and intelligent do not want to be involved in politics, while the semi-educated, ambitious adventurists do not want to leave the field.

3. A woman above all needs respect, and for people not to be condescending or aggressive towards her, and for people not to be prejudiced towards her.

4. Former 'Party-crats' and entrepreneurs from the trade sector aspire to leadership of the woman's movement, but how can they protect the interests of those whom they hardly represent? This is why I have difficulty in responding to the question about what organisational form the women's movement would take if it existed.

5. I personally would not want to see women politicians turn out like the men politicians. If the male half of society does not recognise women's interests and problems, all women's efforts to change their situation for the better will be in vain. Women politicians should focus on social and welfare organisations.

6. I do not want to be part of the ruling structures. If I had money, I would organise a club where women could meet and do something they see as concrete and vital.

Alkyumyuush Zhankeldieva

39, Kyrgyz; lawyer; three children, living in Bishkek

1. I had the notion that socialism was the most humanistic ideology and therefore twelve years ago I joined the CPSU. My convictions have not changed today, even though I have made some corrections in my approach. Today I do not see a party which I could have joined with the same level of conviction as then.

2. It appears to me that the women's movement - in any case in recent years - has not become a political reality, even though society is formally ready for women's participation in the power structures. Today people are tired of all this unproductive politicking; it is all just intrigue, rumour and struggle for a cosy position, which is why women are so strongly oriented towards family and children - a woman's normal destiny. In such a situation, supporters of women's equality (in the western sense) are an insignificant minority - and I include myself among them - who people find irritating. Under such circumstances, women's participation in the political life of society will remain a formality, no matter whether women make up 5% or 75% of the parliament.

3. Women must themselves determine policies which affect them, but I am afraid that those women who promote a dependent role for their sisters, cannot be civilised in their political conduct.

4. What is important are the results and not the organisational form of the movement.
5. I would like to see honest and intelligent, competent and compassionate women politicians in my country. But for them to be like this, they would have had to be born in a democratic country.

6. If I had the resources, I would perhaps offer a stipend for talented girls so that they could have a real education and become capable of finding their own place in life.

Gulchekhra Nurullaeva

Uzbek; married; academic background in philology; poetess

1. Every time I met injustice in life, I remembered the hero of the Uzbek epic Alpmishka. I thought: "My poor people, they are so suppressed that they cannot show resistance to their oppression, and so they thought up such a courageous hero". I believed in the Communist Party and that it would deliver what it had promised. I joined in 1971, but did not find what I had sought in it: it was not able to offer people justice. I joined it not for the sake of justice, but for my career. It took me fifteen years to understand this. Members of the CPSU were expected to support the policies of the leadership and to implement them. If this policy had been true, then why not support it and implement it, but what if it turns out to be unjust and one has another viewpoint! This was how it was to live trapped between one's duty and one's conscience, burning up inside because one was not able to defend one's stand.

Then fortunately came Gorbachev and glasnost. We were able to speak out about the subordination of the native language, the cotton monopoly which was devouring my people, the dying sea and about the boys killed in peace time in the Soviet army due to bullying. A people's movement, Birlik, was organised which received great popular support. People spoke out about issues in public squares and meetings addressed by those who had suffered, and listened to those on whom the resolution of these problems depended. In Birlik I saw the valour of the legendary Alpmishka and I became its member.

2. The nature of women differs from that of men so it is absurd to strive for equality in this direction. The desire for equality must be based upon the right of individuals to choose and laws must be brought into line with this point of view. The right to choose is the kind of equality I want for myself. But today I do not think the conditions exist which can guarantee women's freedom of individuality. Because everything is determined from above and, therefore, everything is a formality. If a woman has her own opinions and can express them, then she is immediately excluded from the political power system. For the present, our society is not ready for any women's movement.

3. Women's policies must not be formulated from above, but should from below bring the state's attention to the difficulties facing women, because among the masses there are many intelligent, educated and confident women.

4. In 1989, within Birlik we organised a female unit called Tomaris, which
brought together the mothers of soldiers. It is precisely for such organisations that the road must be opened up, because within them women can unite to jointly raise and resolve what for them is a common problem. People have enough sense to articulate what worries them.

5. To be involved in politics and make it one's career, like any other field of activity one needs to have the capability. Personally, I do not aspire to such a role, but as a poet and citizen, I want to see my people happy. In my view, a woman politician must be honest and dedicated to her people, feel their sufferings and dreams, and should also believe in justice. Let anyone who turns to her receive genuine advice and understanding. She does not have the right to be indifferent! Neither riches nor glory must be the point of her activities. Only under such conditions can she inspire trust and respect.

6. I have no desire to be part of the ruling structures, but if such a situation were fated to happen, then I would dedicate every minute of my life to people so that there would no longer be any tears shed over an unjust hurt.

Elena Dontsova
40; Russian; one child; doctor working at the Republic's diagnostic centre; living in Bishkek

1. Even though there are women who take part in the political movements in Kyrgyzstan, I do not relate to them because I do not see any results. I have noted that to date politics serve the interests of a specific group of people whose principle interest is profit.

2. I think that a good mistress of the house, who would clean up the Augean stables of today's politics, would not prevent my country from standing up on its own feet. But society is not ready for such a woman.

3. At present politics in Kyrgyzstan are male-oriented just as in all the former republics of the Soviet Union and things will remain this way for a long time to come. Women-oriented politics can only happen in civilised countries, where women have experience of participating in politics through free trade unions, multi-party elections and so forth. We were told that every cook can run the government and this is precisely how it was. The participation of women with a cook's mentality in the administration provoked a lack of faith in women's ability to be involved in political activity.

4. I do not know what the women's movement means, nor what organisational form it can take.

5. We women, as members of the society, have lacked a great deal, which is why your question is incorrect.

6. If my voice were to count for something, I would favour a shorter working day for women.
1. I was a member of the CPSU, a Secretary of a primary Party organisation. I did not enrol in the CPSU for the sake of my career. I believed that by being in the Party I could do something for society. At present I am not with any of the existing parties in Kazakhstan, though the programmes of some of them correspond to my political views. I did not join them because one of the outcomes of the past system is intolerance towards women who have an independent point of view. Society can develop if it has a place for pluralism; we have far too few independent people. If the multi-party system is strengthened, then such people would emerge and would not be treated as something abnormal or some outcast. The new generation must have its own choice. I have not joined any of the parties and, therefore, consider myself responsible for everything that happened in the past - the good as well as the bad. I consider it dishonest to dissociate oneself from it. I do not respect those who rapidly changed their views as if they were shedding a coat, and who today promote ideas with the same kind of ardour with which they had earlier rejected them. Such people are dangerous because they are capable of subordinating any idea to their main goal: success and wealth.

2. In Kazakhstan, a women's movement has appeared in the form of various women's organisations but society is still not ready for an influential women's movement for two reasons: firstly, the passiveness of the majority of women and people's lack of experience of autonomous organisations; and secondly, poverty and stress which do not allow the majority, who are focused on basic survival, to look into the future. To follow up on ideas, one needs a full stomach.

Autonomous women's groups encompass a narrow circle of women. Many of them are more inclined to make demands rather than to act. There are already a few famous women leaders such as Alia Kayupova, Fariza Ungarsinova, Zeinab Arkinova, women who are of the same school of thought and who were able to find other like-minded women. They were able to place themselves at the head of the Kazakhstan Women's Union, the Babek Committee (the patroness of the committee is Sara Nazarbaeva), and the Social Council of Muslim Women. In the Kazakhstan parliament there is a women's caucus.

I regard women's participation in the political power structures as essential for democracy. I do not believe that women's participation in the organs of power was a mere formality. Many of them in the higher echelons of power influenced - and today still influence - decisions regarding social issues. The leadership of Kazakhstan understands that women - without unnecessary noise and demonstrations - do a lot to improve their people's situation.

3. Let women themselves determine women's policies! Today's most acute problem, i.e. the rise in female unemployment, demands scientific analysis. I know of economists who are well-versed in this problem. I am sure they are willing to pool the results of their research and come up with some concrete proposals. It is essential to have a centre for the study of women's issues,
which should be set up by women deputies and financed by the state.

4. A tried and tested form of women's organisations are the Women's Councils. All that is needed is for new issues to be brought into their work.

5. Women politicians must not imitate men politicians, who are power hungry and confrontational. I would like a woman politician to give her attention to humanitarian goals which could be achieved with the participation not only of the state, but also of the broad public. In such a field, they could display their flexibility, ability to communicate and their competence, just as Ella Panfilova, the Minister for Social Policy in the Russian government.

6. If I were in the government, I would focus all my efforts on ensuring that women were provided stable work, and that they were not required to do two or three jobs just to earn a living.

Dilbar Mahmoodova

Uzbek; 57; journalist, working as a freelancer; three children; living in Tashkent; President of the Women's Section of the Union of Journalists of Uzbekistan

1. I do not belong to any of the existing parties. Until the 1980s I believed that the Communist Party was actually capable of building a better society and I dreamt of enrolling in its ranks, but I was not allowed to do so. Intellectuals were accepted into the Party only with great difficulty. The quota system in Party membership effectively closed the door to those who wanted to actually serve the people. Only those whom the leadership considered necessary could be enrolled in the CPSU. I have my political sympathies. I believe our society does not show enough tolerance towards the convictions of others. I hate fanaticism in any form, as well as the ability to mould any idea to a personal goal.

2. The women's movement, as a social current, is vital in Uzbekistan because women's situation, especially in the villages, is very tough. There is no need to flatter ourselves that this will happen soon since the level of legal consciousness is very low. Our society for now cannot be termed civil: very few women feel themselves to be citizens. Women's Councils exist at all administrative levels, but they are very dependent upon the head administrator. There are many members of the Women's Councils who are active and who want to do something for women, but they are not allowed to spread their wings. This is why women with independent ideas and initiative are never appointed as head of the Women's Councils. And this is why women's participation in the power structures remains a formality. This also reveals men's stereotypical attitudes towards women; there is not one man who could bear to have a woman beside him who expresses herself and who has her own opinions. Under authoritarian rule everything depends upon the leader, and both the good and the bad regarding women stems from this.

For example, I was in Bukhara not very long ago; the President of the Women's Council had described the pitiable condition of a children's hospital
and I wanted to go there. But she was afraid of taking me there without the permission of the administrative head and didn't even let me go to see him. It came to the point that I had to inform him that I had already been in the hospital and needed to go there once again. This is why the Women's Councils have no authority. The activities and energies of individual persons are fruitless. Freedom is critical, without it there cannot be any movement forward.

3. Women themselves should bring their problems before the executive organs instead of someone being appointed from above to grant women little favours. For this to happen it needs autonomous non-governmental women's organisations which, together with the executive organs, could pose and resolve concrete problems. Then genuine and independent women leaders would also appear. For now, women's participation in administration through the Women's Councils remains a formality.

4. For a women's movement to emerge, the first indispensable thing is the need for truthful and objective information about how women live, working in the fields and behind machines. And not just information about the pathbreakers, but also about average women and why things are so difficult for them. A women's newspaper is also necessary. We do have journals, but it is difficult for a monthly journal to be feasible. These days with the mass press in such a dismal state, one cannot expect there to be a newspaper for women supported by the state. But to create an independent newspaper is practically impossible, even if the money exists. And without information, no kind of women's organisation could sustain itself because women need to know more about themselves and others.

If one is talking about the existing Uzbekistan Women's Committee, it is very weak. The president of the Committee, Halima Khudaiberdieva, is a wonderful poetess, but why should she also be President of the Committee and a People's Deputy, and Editor of a journal as well as the mother of five children? How can she do justice to all her responsibilities? Is it a small thing to be a top poetess? Let others who are similarly talented, share her responsibilities! Then we would have not one, but three leaders, and each would be doing something for us. Isn't the very fact that just one person has been appointed to three responsible positions, just a form of tokenism reflecting the existing attitudes towards women's problems? Let there be many famous women!

5. I would like to see many women take up the profession of politician, and I specifically say 'profession', so that our problems could be tackled professionally by genuine leaders, who know about life and who share our suffering. A real politician is not a philanthropist, who doles out funds and hand-outs, but one who respects people's dignity and who also has faith in her sisters' abilities, reinforcing women's solidarity. But such women emerge from below - and let like-minded woman join hands with them! For example, those of us in the Uzbekistan Union of Journalists, have formed an association of women journalists which supports and identifies the best journalistic works of the year and helps the young establish themselves in their vocation. It is a small thing, but it still influences women journalists' mood and sense of self.

6. I believe that those who do not want to work in the state sector should be
able to stay at home, or go into the private sector, or set up their own business. Everyone should be doing what is best suited to them. As for capable, educated women, who know their business and want to work, let them do what they love and let them work with great determination - unhindered by men and not forced to do monotonous unproductive work. Do not make us petty functionaries who just carry out your whims! If there are some real men among you, help us stand tall so that we can be useful to you and to society.

If I had had the opportunity, I would have first of all enlightened men, because the women's movement and women's organisations cannot exist without the moral support of men, at least a section of them. They must understand that women's problems are above all the problems of the whole society.

If I had money, I would have helped disabled children; I would have helped teachers open special residential schools for them which offer them a sound education and profession.

JUST as many of the respondents, the authors of this book did not belong to any party or movement; our activities were limited to the Union of Architects. But again, like many of the women we spoke to, today our position has changed. We believe that post-Soviet society has taken on some of the features of civilisation vital for the expansion of democratic institutions in society. One these is a women's movement which can attract women from different social strata, but the initiators must be the female intelligentsia.

The respondents' answers bear witness to the fact that the inertia which existed in women's social activities during the Soviet period is still very strong. The majority of respondents do not feel a part of events which are taking place in society.

The respondents include very few members of previous and present political parties and those who were former members of the CPSU spoke about their great sense of disillusionment. But while all were critical of Soviet women's policies, they are disturbed by today's outright rejection of these policies.

The majority of the respondents are clearly uneasy about the prospective Islamisation of society in their countries, yet do not see in the present political power structures anyone capable of voicing their interests.

The responses reveal an interesting point of view which had taken root among the subjects of the totalitarian empire: politics was perceived as a means used by the powers to oppress, and was thus not an area for women to get involved in. Similarly, the past saw a strengthening in the social consciousness of the stereotype of women as creatures incapable of resolving problems of great social significance, given their mental inferiority and excessive emotionalism. Fortunately, only a minority of respondents hold
such a point of view.

The majority of the respondents consider a rejection of the notion of women's equality, the sideling of women's problems, and the withdrawal of state protection for women, all to be alarming symptoms which are evidence of the backwardness of social consciousness in the Central Asian countries. The views of women from the various countries surveyed indicate that traditional perceptions regarding the position of women in society are less tenacious in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, due both to their historical development and to the current political situation in the two Republics.

A portion of the respondents, even though they point out the alienation of women from the government in the post-Soviet period, believe that women's participation in the power structures was and still is a formality. Although there are other respondents who are concerned about the reduction in the number of women in the nomenklatura, a majority express deep antipathy towards the nomenklatura dama, whom they never regarded as a genuine spokesperson for their interests. They also expressed a profound sense of mistrust of the quota system through which women found themselves in senior positions. Most women believe that a different type of woman must come into politics: a woman who combines in herself moral principles and political conviction, and who has a command over the kind of knowledge that is essential for politics. This is why, when identifying outstanding women politicians, the respondents cite those from the western political scene.

The majority of respondents take the politics of equality to be an attribute of western civilisation, and believe it will lead to a backlash in the post-Soviet societies of the Central Asian Republics where the influence of Islamic civilisation is still strong.

Only mature, educated, and highly qualified women recognise the significance of the notion of women's equality and the historical necessity of feminism. They are the supporters of and also those involved in setting up autonomous non-governmental organisations capable of promoting women's interests and formulating women's policies. The majority of them do not believe that the process of forming a women's movement will begin rapidly, nor do they consider there to be any immediate prospects that feminism will be at all influential. The respondents point out that the totalitarian system levelled out people's energies as activists, which were squeezed into a routine or diverted into careerism, making no contribution to those who were going against the flow, those for whom the greater social good and solidarity among women was the motivating force.

The respondents explain their passivity by the fact that, in the eyes of those who were and are successful in life, to take an active social stand and be a citizen with an active sense of responsibility towards her society was dismissed as the laughable whim of those who had failed in life.

The responses lead us to the conclusion that genuine improvements in the sphere of women's employment and participation in public life cannot be foreseen. The factors obstructing this are the passivity of women themselves, and their lack of experience in the field of activism. But there is hope in the fact that the majority of the respondents expressed an interest in the women's
movement abroad. They consider the most likely shape of women's unity to be women's clubs, and mention the necessity of a women's press.

In the replies one can also see the lack of, or dearth of accurate knowledge and a political culture, factors which are characteristic of the whole of post-Soviet society. The women's replies are evidence of their ignorance about the form and structure of democratic institutions. There are few who connect the emergence of a women's movement with the holding of free elections to the central and local power structures, and with the work of free trade unions and participation in international solidarity activities.

Some replies suggest a confused understanding about the women's movement. These responses reflect conservative attitudes towards the changing status of women in the present world. They repeat male stereotypes regarding women's place in politics and public life. They are mocking of women who think of more than their personal advance and they speak about the depravity of society under the totalitarian regime; they have a low opinion of all activity that is outside the framework of their pragmatic and utilitarian attitudes towards life.

Despite their great variety, these views together allow one to conclude that women's influence in contemporary political life is insignificant and the prestige of social activism remains low. And as a consequence, one can assert that a feminist movement is possible only given the general democratisation of society. If such a change does not take place, women's policies will remain dictated from above, determined by the priorities of state interest and not those of individuals and will simply lead to the creation of a new women's nomenklatura.
Chapter 8

The Choices Facing Russian Women
Modern Central Asia is multinational. Other than the Uzbek, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tadik, and Karakalpaks, there are Russians, Ukrainians, Belaruss, Tatars, Jews, Armenians and many other nationalities living in the region. Central Asia was one of regions to which a number of smaller nationalities were deported on Stalin’s orders in the 1940s: initially Koreans, and then later Germans, Crimean Tatars, Turkmen, Meshkents, Chechens and Kurds. Migration has also played a role in the evolution of the region’s demographic profile with a major wave of voluntary migration from the other republics of the USSR taking place after the 1960s.

Today, with the Central Asian republics having attained independence, one of their most acute problems is that of inter-ethnic relations. In this context, it is vitally important to have accurate information regarding the perceptions of ethnic Russians living in Central Asia. A people whom Soviet propaganda termed ‘big brother’, following the fall of the Soviet empire, found themselves in a situation that was difficult both in political and psychological terms. They were distinct from those living in their own homeland as well as from those who were exiled abroad. While until the break-up of the Soviet Union, they had perceived themselves as part of the majority (for most Russians, the Soviet Union was equated with Russia), today with the emergence of the newly independent states, they find themselves to be part of the minority. Each faces the question of where and how to live in the future. And yet, if one is to look at Central Asia as a whole, then Russians are still numerically the second largest nationality living in the region.

In order to contextualise the comments made by many of the Russian women who responded to this section of the survey, a brief history of Russian involvement in Central Asia is called for.

Russia’s trade interests strengthened in the 19th century with the emergence of Russian manufacture, which desperately needed the raw materials of Central Asia. It is this which determined Russia’s interest in Central Asia as a future colony. The second half of the 19th century was the period of ‘smash and grab’ colonisation. The world was being shared out and Russia, never having recovered from the disastrous Crimean War of 1853-55, turned its attentions away from an expansion into the European sphere and focused on a slow, but determined expansion into Central Asia: Chimkent, Aulye-Ata and Turkestan were seized in 1864; Tashkent a year later and Samarkand in 1866. In 1873, the area on the right bank of the Amu-Darya which belonged to the Khanate of Khiva was annexed. Following constant pressure from Russian troops during the period 1873-1876, the Khanates of Bukhara, Khiva and Kokand accepted humiliating treaties with Russia, recognising themselves as vassals of the Russian Tsar. In 1876, the Khanate of Kokand
was ultimately annexed and in 1886, with the capture of the fortress of Kushka, the Turkmenia campaign and thus the conquest of all of Central Asia, was concluded. Less then four years later, in 1890 the Russians reached the Pamirs to knock on the back door of the British Empire.

Russian supremacy in Central Asia was reinforced through colonisation, and the first wave of Russians to settle in the colonial Central Asian territory known as Turkestan consisted of former soldiers, colonial functionaries, traders and priests. The second wave of Russians to migrate to Central Asia consisted of peasants. "The territory of Turkestan not only can but must offer reparations replacing the losses incurred in the Turkestan campaign and subsequent reconstruction efforts", said a detailed note addressed to the Minister of War. Further on, among the foremost tasks it ordered that "assistance is to be rendered allowing the development of the territory's colonisation by Russian elements". (1)

Further migration took place during the period of the revolution and the post-revolution decade. Linked to the socialist campaign, it primarily consisted of soldiers and new functionaries, as well as a section of the Russian peasantry which had fled to Central Asia following the famine and whose migration was organised by the Soviet administration in the hard hit Volga region. This was followed by the mass re-settling of kulaks dispossessed during collectivisation. (2)

The fourth wave of Russian migration began in the years of the second world war, and was due to the evacuation of industrial units from regions under Nazi occupation. Again, the Russian migrants basically consisted of workers.

The fifth and final wave of Russian migration to Central Asia began around the end of the 1960s and the early 1970s and was stimulated by the government under the title of 'the organised recruitment of workers'. The aim was to facilitate the rapid establishment of industrial enterprises and construction ventures that were of Union-wide significance and that came under the jurisdiction of the powerful security ministries. These enterprises met orders for the military-industrial complex and obtained the raw materials it needed. Consisting of the technical intelligentsia and workers, this migration also led to a significant rise in the number of Russian functionaries in the republic's administrative and industrial structures.

As a result, the Russians and Russian-speaking populations considered themselves the most educated and active section of the population in the capitals and industrial centres of Central Asia. In Uzbekistan, they made up almost half of the urban population and worked in the fields of science, education, culture, administration and industry. Russians also made up the majority of military personnel and border guards in the region.

The break-up of the Union and the proclamation of independence by the Central Asian countries led to a profound psychological challenge for Russians living in the region even though, in contrast to the Baltic republics, practically all Russians living in Central Asia were granted the right to citizenship of the newly independent states.

But the Russians dispersed throughout Central Asia are not homogeneous, neither in terms of their mentality, education, culture nor origin. As a community, Russians were also divided along class lines, with each layer
living its own life. Contact with the indigenous population basically took place at work, although Russians in practical terms faced little competition from local specialists and workers. Inter-ethnic marriages were few and mainly restricted to the upper sections of society - the Comsomol and Party elite - and invariably faced opposition from one or other of the sides. Nevertheless, the number of mixed marriages rose after the war.

Russians born in Central Asia - especially in Uzbekistan - differ from Russians born in Russia, primarily because in Central Asia the Russian intelligentsia comprises a significant social strata. Indeed, the old pre-revolutionary intelligentsia includes the legendary names of Russian women who were renowned as doctors and as researchers into the flora and fauna, culture, and the history of the Turkestan territory. The post-revolutionary wave of migration also brought many well known women scholars. But in Central Asia, the top positions are occupied by functionaries: women's organisers, who headed the women's departments at the various levels right up to Secretary of the Turkestan Bureau of the Communist Party (Bolshevik). These women came from both the middle and working classes, and were committed communists who actively carried out Party directives. Many young women specialists came to Central Asia, posted there by central higher education colleges.

Many women were part of the evacuation wave, including workers, engineers and technicians. The majority of the evacuees stayed on in Central Asia to work in military and semi-military industrial establishments as well as in the machine-building, mining and extraction industries. This part of the Russian diaspora has retained the deepest sense of gratitude to Central Asia for providing food and warmth; many with whom I talked today see their future as lying with the region.

With the quantitative growth in the Russian migrant community, for the peasants, intelligentsia, and even the workers the preservation of their own way of life was taken for granted, and allowed the preservation of Christian norms, and cultural and domestic traditions which were, ironically, gradually being lost in Russia itself.

Russian, Ukrainian and Belaruss women - unfamiliar with Asian domestic lifestyles - came to Central Asia with soldier or officer husbands - and commonly immersed themselves in the life of the Russian diaspora. The greatest indifference and lack of receptivity towards local cultural influences was displayed by that part of the Russian population which had moved to the region during the Stalinist period sloganised as the 'formation of the new social community of Soviet people'. Those who, in the years of stagnation, came from Siberia and the depths of Central Russia, fully convinced of their preeminence as the 'big brother', today experience extreme stress and are attempting to return to their ethnic homeland - with which their links are still very strong.

Today, each and every Russian in Central Asia is living out a real life drama. Previously, the Russian population, whose standard of living was on average higher than that of locals, perceived their presence in the region as being extremely secure. In the Soviet period they could find work in Central Asia while still using their native Russian language and could receive a sound Russian-language education in any of the region's cities. Indeed, it was
precisely this pre-eminence of the Russian language that allowed them to take up senior positions in the fields of science, education, technology, industry and especially administration; to fulfill their true potential and, consequently, successfully compete with the national intelligentsia.

In the years of stagnation, part of the local Russian intelligentsia experienced a sense of insecurity because the local ruling class - the nomenklatura - succeeded in pushing them under, forcing them to become dependent just like part of the national intelligentsia.

The passage of the law introducing the local language as the state language (replacing Russian) and the proclamation of independence by the Central Asian republics raised the question of how Russians and the local Russian-speaking intelligentsia were to live in future. The crux of the matter lies in the fact that state science, planning, education and culture is now in a crisis, while the spirit of totalitarian hierarchy has been preserved at all levels of administration, and in the struggle for survival the administrative system is exploiting the nationalist idea. Directly related to this is the point that the Russian and Russian-speaking section of the population is of particular interest to the newly independent Central Asian states which seek at least to preserve their former level of scientific and technological potential. This population now faces a dilemma: whether to link their future with the countries of Central Asia or to return to Russia. The prevailing instability throughout the former Soviet Union has put off a definitive response to this question.

Russian women in Central Asia share many of the problems facing women of local nationalities. Today the crisis has affected everyone, in all classes and strata, and most face the question of how to survive. Competition has notably sharpened in the sphere of intellectual work - science, arts, education, administration and planning - areas which traditionally employed a high percentage of Russian women. In its essence, the nature of the inter-relationship between the individual and the system has yet to change. Just as before, the individual is dependent upon the government, but changes in the state's orientation have meant that those individuals who have failed to adapt, who do not meet contemporary needs (which are at times the diametrical opposite to previous needs), fall out of the system.

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Natalya Shulepina

41; journalist; editor of the industry pages in the newspaper Tashkent Pravda

1. With unsheathed saber, one of my grandfathers fought in the civil war for the Reds in the Trans-Urals. The other worked at a bank in the depths of Asia. Meanwhile his brother-in-law, who was his cousin from his grandmother's side, fought for the Whites in Central Asia.
Victory did not bring any particular benefits to my Red grandfather. He said that it was not for this kind of a revolution nor for this kind of socialism that he had fought. During the post-war famine in the 1920s, he along with his family emigrated to Tashkent and worked for the rest of his life at a factory as a lathe operator. Nor did my relatives from the White officer side of my family get any benefits. All trace of them has been destroyed - they didn't survive Stalin's camps. My Red grandfather brought up my mother, and my father grew up with his bank official and teacher parents. The extent to which the revolution levelled my parents - far from equal according to background - was that it gave both the opportunity of receiving an education.

According to stories told to me by my parents, their youth, in the 1930s, was a happy time. There were clear-cut goals. In the desert that was Tashkent, the Comsomol dug the Comsomol Lake using just spades. Then they swam in it and went sailing. In parks heavenly orchestras entertained people. From the outskirts of town girls ran to attend dances, returning home late at night without fear; Tashkent was good and peaceful. The policemen took care of the maintenance of peace and order. But more important, according to my mother's youthful impressions, was that then the towns people did not forget to water the streets. The city was single-storied, and every night each house was sprinkled with dozens of buckets of water from the irrigation ditches, bringing great coolness to the city.

The political passion that bubbled over in the 1930s touched my parents, even if only partly. Papa well remembered his grandmother's tales about the Basmach. She lived out her life in the suburbs of Ferghana at the railway station. She was the widow of a military doctor and was not well-off. Local Uzbeks called her 'madam' and went to her for treatment. She helped whoever she could, whether they were communist or Basmach. Neither touched her. But her granddaughter Lilya died at the hands of the Basmach, in the Ferghana area, while doing her student practicals (she was doing some surveying at one of the kolkhoz). She was last seen going into the fields with the president of the kolkhoz and the brigade leader. Her body was found a year later. The president and the brigade leader were sentenced. This tragedy was of course a source of pain for all our relatives. A newspaper wrote that it was the "consequences of the political struggle between the old and the new".

Mother was at college during the Second World War and went out to do her surveying, choosing a place beneath the future dam. There were no boys - they were all at the front. Girls in the various isolated villages were practically defenceless. My mother defended her thesis for a Diploma in hydrology in the spring of 1946. That summer, at the same Comsomol Lake, she met Papa. He had just returned from the front. Due to the war everything was in short supply. At the wedding the gifts included a simple enamelled wash basin. This says something about the living standards my parents began their life together with.

Here I should talk about Mother's struggle for equality. In order to support the family she would sell clothes - but it was kept secret from Papa. Things became extremely difficult after we were born. She was dismissed from work and was not reappointed. Since my mother had three small children, both our grandmothers helped out by working.

And then an article by the famous Uzbek poetess Zulfia appeared in the
Party's republic newspaper, Pravda Vostoka. She spoke out against women who only have children and do not want to work in the production sector, saying "This is particularly a matter of shame in the case of women with higher education".

Mamma plucked up courage and sent Zulfiya the following, c/o the newspaper's address: "I want to work, but they do not accept me at work as they know that I do not have anyone to leave my children with. And the kindergarten won't take my children because I do not work". Zulfiya was very surprised and started to help. She rang one number, then another, but things did not work out. She then suggested Mother place us children in a tuberculosis sanatorium for two months; Mother exploded. The poetess cooled her down, telling her that the place was actually for healthy children of the elite. It all turned out well. Mama found work and Grandmother gave the director of a neighbouring kindergarten a gift - either a goose or a turkey. We were accepted.

2. My struggle for survival started when my life changed abruptly. From teaching I came to journalism. I had liked teaching. Having graduated from University, I worked for two years in a village school, and for three more years I taught history at an urban technical-vocational school. The teaching turned out well. But what was a problem was that while I was teaching too many questions about Soviet history piled up. The course was based on the class struggle, Brezhnev's memoirs, which one had to conscientiously learn along with the students, the Five Year Plans and Party Congresses. But I did not join the Communist Party. Very likely, this would have happened had I worked for two more years as a teacher. It was a job condition - my subject was considered an ideological one.

But then the possibility of a posting in the Foreign Countries Friendship Society turned up. The post was not great: a typist in the publications department. I took up this opportunity as I had always dreamt of going into journalism.

It was not all sweetness and light in the Friendship Society which turned out to be a hotbed of swindlers. You see, it gave one the opportunity of travelling abroad at government expense. For more than half a year I tapped away a typewriter. Then I did things for the bulletin (and actually for a magazine), one story, another and another, there was a lot of material. I liked it. I became the editor of the photo-exhibitions that were to be sent abroad; they were exclusively propagandist. My task was to work out the theme of the exhibition, determine its contents, participate in the photography sessions, choose the best negatives and generally prepare the exhibition from start to finish. Later, our sub-department became independent. The problem was that this was an entirely new field of activity for me. I knew photography from my student days. I was not bad - but at an amateur level. I am not a professional but have had to become one. In general there were quite enough problems, added to which a shoe production technologist was appointed to head our sub-department.

For any problems in the work, naturally I was the one they kicked. What mistakes had I made? Political. I was really scolded for a photograph of children bathing in a fountain. The little children in the splashing water were extremely funny and brought a smile to one's face. But "What will they say in
the West - that we don't have swimming pools?". Another one of the photographs was of the boxer, Mohammed Ali and he, I was told, was an enemy as he had made some critical remark about the Soviet Union when he was here. A photograph of workers in the factory was not allowed through: the overalls were dirty. The director of the sub-department began to accompany the photographer on photo-sessions, making workers wear new overalls, choosing flattering close-ups, moving Koreans, Russians, and other non-locals into the background. The idea was to present a glossy image. But during the sessions I came to learn many interesting things. In the end, camera in hand, I started to record information, and sent my photographs to newspapers.

I was lucky that even though I didn't have any contacts, they were decent to me. My material was published and I was asked to bring in more. But it all ended with the office finding my criticism intolerable. Angrily, I handed in my resignation and found myself on the streets, without any means of survival.

I was still not married. There had been close friends, but in the past. My expectations of a husband were too high for a choice to have been easy. They said that intelligent, good, talented, organised, jolly, reliable, decisive and action-oriented men did not exist. So I shouldered my burdens alone.

I met a man - talented, reliable, good, jolly... But this was later. How I passed that six months without work that fate blessed me with... But it rewarded me with my meeting not only the most important person in my life, but also with many other wonderful people.

For half a year, I lived on my measly savings. What was terrible was that I did not go out anywhere. In the beginning I couldn't understand why I was promised work one day and the next day was refused; later it was explained.

Attempts to arrange a job in a school did not work out. As a last resort, I turned to the editorial offices of newspapers. Here I found people unexpectedly candid; they explained why I had been rejected and, forcing me to abandon my false pride, I turned to famous journalists from the Komsomolets Uzbekistana. In their view, my story was not the least something to be ashamed of, but was in fact rather typical. Later I, myself, came across similar stories and took under my wing people who go against the flow, while everyone else is grovelling on their knees.

My interaction with journalists from Molodyozh produced some results. I was licensed as a freelance correspondent, and began to actively write and photograph for their newspaper. They found one of my articles very interesting and advised me to develop this topic for the heavyweight, artistic journal Zvezda Vostoka. I thought that to get into a heavyweight journal would surely need backing. But no. I went straight from the streets to people I'd never met before. They took the material, were happy and later I saw it printed.

"Do you not want to work in the Uzbekistan Telegraphic Newsagency (UzTAG)? There are vacancies?" I had had contact with the UTA as a photograph editor. I knew that an agency journalist is a prestigious job.

"They won't take me".
"Come on, we'll call them up right now.

"This is the person you people need!"

"OK, let her come".

But no one was going to take me at work just like that.

"Do you have any understanding about the media. Do you know what a `lead' is? The information should be brought in at the very beginning of the article. We are waiting for your material".

For three months I wrote paragraphs for UzTAG and slipped further into despair: one can't survive on honorariums. My fate was not being decided - but not because my previous bosses had somehow influenced things; no one had bothered to telephone them. The problem was that the boss was not happy that I was a woman. I had to prove that in my ability to do my work and in the quality of information I produced, I did not lag behind men.

3. It is now my eighth year working as a correspondent for the agency. I have learned a lot and I have written articles which I am in fact proud of. Unfortunately, little changed in this period. Perestroika ended in ignominy. It brought glasnost, but with the break-up of the Soviet Union and the strengthening of local powers, for us writers freedom of speech also ended. There was an exodus of talented journalists from UzTAG; some left of their own will, some were made to leave by the agency's new leadership, and the person dearest to me died.

UzTAG is no more. It was renamed the UzA, the Uzbek National Agency. In the beginning we smiled when they said that things would change with the change of name. Much did change. The earlier openness was just a memory. I attempted to resist and was sacked along with the second batch of `Russian language speakers'. The first batch consisted of people who were of pensionable or near pensionable ages. Five of us were discharged because the director did not want to give us a contract. We had never had a contract system before, giving employers the right to make or break contracts without explanation. Our trade union is silent; everyone is afraid and even signed these senseless and discriminatory contracts. There is nowhere to go, unemployment is everywhere: whoever opens their mouth is fired.

But once again I had to fight. I went to court seeking reinstatement. At the hearing in court the deputy director said there was no point in reinstating us, as after the new year not one Russian would remain in on the editorial staff, "You see, you don't speak Uzbek". Previously this was not necessary. And even now I can make do without the language: in industry, which is what I write about, they all speak in Russian. After some days the court met, and the decision was in our favour.

After the trial I worked at the agency for less than a year. I was notified that my contract was annulled, even though I had not signed it after all. I do not have the strength to fight yet again, although I am fully within my rights. This is why I have joined the editorial staff a Russian-language newspaper. Here, my work is geographically limited and the pay less.

I do not know what will happen in the future. It is difficult to predict.
1. My parents were members of the Russian intelligentsia (father, an engineer, mother, a teacher; he from Siberia, she from Ukraine) who linked their lives with Central Asia. Both were from families that were not well-off and went to college in France because it was far more expensive in Russia. They worked and used the income for their studies. On returning home, Father, being a young engineer, was appointed as an area civil engineer in the Semirechenski region and the family moved to Verni (present day Almaty). I was born there in 1915. Later, Father worked - until his early death - on the construction of the irrigation system in Uzbekistan and Turkmenia. Mother was the director of a school in Almaty and in 1930 we accompanied her to Tashkent, where she headed the chair of philosophy and political economics at the Central Asian State University (now Tashkent State University).

In 1931, I enrolled in the architectural department at the Central Asian Industrial Institute and graduated in 1937. Even in my student years I was attracted by Uzbekistan's architectural heritage. On graduating, I was accepted for post-graduate studies and in 1941 defended my PhD dissertation. All of my long scholarly life has been dedicated to the study of the architectural, creative and archaeological heritage of the Republics of Central Asia, Afghanistan and eastern Iran. Even though my mother said that I chose architecture as an 'escape into the past', it was right for me. I can look back on the dozens of expeditions and nature research trips that I went on, the many discoveries I made of architectural monuments and uncovering of artistic works from the classical and medieval periods.

2. As to competition from people of other nationalities, I never hardly ever faced any although I had my detractors just as every person working in the field of art. But over the long years I have met only goodwill on the part those of Central Asian nationality, both within the intelligentsia and in the masses with whom I had broad contact during my expeditions. In the villages, people wished me and my work well and were respectful.

But unfortunately, over the last one and a half to two decades, attitudes towards the Russian-speaking population in the republics have changed for the worse. And this is alarming because such a tendency is dangerous for the young generation, for their children and grandchildren, and is leading people to emigrate from the republics.

3. I regard the break-up of the Soviet Union as an irreversible historical process. History has seen periods when gigantic powerful states rose and then fell. For example, the Roman or Kushan empires, the Baghdad Caliphate or Timur's Empire. This process continues in the new era, the most eloquent examples being that of the British empire and the Soviet Union.
4. Central Asia is my homeland because it is here that I was born, was moulded as a specialist and achieved recognition. But Russia also is my homeland because from childhood my soul has been infused with the Russian culture.

5. At the age of 73, the future means an exit into non-existence! For my children and grandchildren, there is no future here. There are now even quotas for the enrollment of Russian-speakers in the colleges, which has just been formally announced: this I do not accept and also do not forgive. This is discrimination and a violation of human rights.

These days in the states of the former Soviet Union, it is acceptable to criticise everything that took place over the past seven decades. In my opinion, even if the break-up of the Soviet Union was unavoidable, not everything about it needs to be regarded negatively.

One of the great achievements of those years was the emancipation of women from the Muslim East, because in Central Asia its more extreme forms were widely prevalent: the chachuan and parandja, the segregation of women in the ichkari, the side-lining of women from public and creative life.

In this context I cannot help recalling the words of Frederick Engels (who it is also no longer acceptable to respect as a great thinker) that the level of a society’s development is characterised by the condition of its women and the extent of their freedom or lack of it. In these times it is particularly appropriate to compare two Muslim countries: Turkey and Iran. In Turkey, where religion is separated from the state, even though Islam is dominant, there is a woman prime minister, women professors, and women theatre and stage artists. In Iran after the coup led by Khomeini, Islamic fundamentalism compelled women to wear chaddors, and to remain in the closed world of their homes, completely side-lining them from all spheres of public life.

Russian women played a quite significant role in the development of culture in Uzbekistan, and in moulding of the members of the intelligentsia. For example, Professor I.A. Raikova, who came in 1920 to teach at the first Central Asian University; she was a leading botanist who created an experimental botanical station on the Pamirs; Professor N.M. Miroshikina, who headed the department of Philosophy at the Central Asian State University. There were ethnographers A.S. Morozova, V.G. Moshkova, O.A. Sukhareva, E.M. Peshchereva - who, beginning in the late 1920s, participated in the formidable task of studying the domestic lifestyles and spiritual cultures of Central Asian peoples, passing on their knowledge and experience to student ethnographers.

The emancipation of women in the Soviet Central Asian republics produced dynamic and gifted women. I can name my PhD students the authors of many books and articles. They include: T. Kadirova, former President of the Uzbekistan Union of Architects; E. Ismailova and Z. Rahimova, scholars in the field of oriental miniatures and the illumination of manuscripts; N. Byashimova, who studied medieval Turkmenistan ceramics of. In this space it is possible to name just a few Uzbek, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tadjik and Turkmen women, working for the glory of their peoples in various fields - medicine, social sciences, drama, ballet and cinematography. It would be inhuman to restrict their lives to the narrow confines of the world of domesticity.
1. One can write a whole book on this! Four generations of our family have lived and worked in Central Asia. Let me begin from the beginning. In 1893 two girls, orphans from a petty-feudal family of Swedish origin, came to Central Asia for the first time. One of them had graduated from the Smolny Institute in St. Petersburg, the other from the Prince Oldenburg boarding school. Their guardian was Countess Mordvinova, who got the sisters married, one to a clergyman who had been appointed in Ura-Tyube and the other also to a clergyman, who left with his family for Aulie-Ata in Turkestan. One of them was my great grandmother. Her husband, Alex Semyonovich Raikov, was transferred from Ura-Tubei to Samarkand in 1899. His daughters studied in the Samarkand gymnasium, one of them, Illeria, enrolled in 1914 for Bestuzhovskii's courses in the department of natural science. The course ended with Professor Buni, famous in St. Petersburg, and by 1918 Illeria was already an assistant professor at the University. In 1920 came the notification from the Soviet National Committee setting up the Tashkent Central Asian State University and she returned to Central Asia to work there. She did not have any children, but she is nevertheless my grandmother. In 1933 after Kirov's assassination,(3) a new wave of repression began against the intelligentsia and my grandfather was arrested and shot. Grandmother was exiled to Gidjuvan, where, of course, the conditions facing the exiles can be simply described as raw. My mother, then a ten year old, was adopted by Illeria.

My mother enrolled in the Aviation institute which had been evacuated from Leningrad in 1941. Here, she came to meet her future husband. Father was also born in Central Asia. He grew up in Tashkent, in a family of highly placed Party workers. My parents got married in Tashkent and after the war left for Leningrad, where I was born in 1949. But even as a schoolgirl I came to Tashkent for the holidays. My happiest memories of my childhood are from those times: it was like a grand holiday, long and sunny. Here people were friendly and cordial, nature was magnificent; we would be exhausted from the heat and the sun, the nights were dark and star-lit. My days were full of play, visits and new people. At the age of 18 I came here and so Tashkent became my home.

2. I have always been involved in the situation of working women and if I was the Vice President of Union of Artists of Uzbekistan it was because I was chosen by the artists for this job. When I worked as a reader in the Uzbekistan Society of Friendship with Foreign Countries, I became something of an advertising agent. I tried to make sure that the works of talented people were displayed on the walls of the Society's exhibition rooms and taken abroad with exhibitions; some of the artists were even unknowns and I am not afraid to say that I was among the few who did this for them.

These days I am a head of department, but I shall not move higher than this office: there is the question of my age (I am 47) and nationality. That Uzbeks
represent the country I accept as given. I do my work well, better than anyone, which is why we shall not talk about competition.

3. The break-up of the Soviet Union is an irreversible fact which changed the life of every Russian who finds themselves outside Russia and now faces the dilemma of how and where to live in the future.

4. My entire life has been connected with Uzbekistan, but I do not feel it to be my homeland because there is another culture here, one which I love very much but which is different. And this I feel the more I study it. Uzbekistan is dear to me precisely because of that sense of another culture, which is linked with my research and life interests, the history of my family and my fondest childhood memories and ultimately, my work.

5. This is a very sensitive question. It is difficult to answer because having put this question to myself, I have yet to find an answer. The issue of language is very acute. Today, now that I am over 40, this problem seems impossible solve. I studied in Leningrad, and later at the Institute of Foreign Languages in Tashkent. Not having studied Uzbek at school, I did not have to take courses on this subject, but I took the courses anyway. Still, the teaching standard was low, the method weak (and this in a linguistics college!) and as a result I was taught only the most primitive and utilitarian phrases. Today I bitterly observe the standards of Uzbek language teaching for my children. The vocabulary of the school books is extremely poor, the texts primitive and are made up of ideological material, something just brought to light. This is why the children's education in Uzbekistan makes their future problematic. The opportunity for language studies is limited, therefore educated Uzbeks have the same problems which we Russians have as they too use Russian in their working discussions and research work. The kind of Uzbek spoken in the bazaar does not help me use Uzbek in the office or for scientific research.

In practice, today there are very few masters of the Uzbek language in trade and science, almost all of the scientific literature is in Russian. I think this is wrong but these were the government's policies and we are the ones who are paying for it - and not those who were responsible for the russification. And today, the conversion to Uzbek is taking place with the same zeal and if they, too, are guilty, then this guilt is passive. Language cannot be introduced through an order, since mechanical translations do not lead to a language which is as alive and colorful as a full-fledged language, which is backed by a national thought process and culture.

What is happening today is a catastrophe for the intelligentsia. Living in a society it is impossible to retreat into oneself, into one's family. The events taking place in society are being mirrored in every family, poverty knocks on every door. Unable to support their families, men are under considerable strain, leading to violence against women. This strengthens women's desire for independence, forcing them to give more attention to work and not to the children and family. Children are becoming alienated from their parents. Spiritual and cultural values, which are learnt within the family circle, are being displaced by the mass culture and consumerism. There are so many social problems that society has quickly and irretrievably lost what it had achieved with such difficulty over the years. In the battle between art and commerce, the desire to earn triumphs over all thought, with many artists leaving for the West to earn more.
In Uzbekistan many people talk about an alien culture and alien influences that are not needed by the people. But are not the theatre, the arts, ballet, opera and painting already an established part of life? There are painting schools and conservatories, why does one have to reject them in order to give birth to a national culture? Why destroy one thing just to create something else? This was done once before thirty years ago during the cultural revolution. The veneer of culture is so thin, so brittle and defenceless, and today's people of culture are linked with the imported alien culture. It is precisely they - and not those who are no more - who could have revived the national culture; the others who can do this are yet to be born. Today, culture needs to be defended and protected by the state. Without this, it will not survive. In the USA, the Roosevelt government had such a programme. India in the 1950s found work for its talented people and did not waste their culture in the future.

Elena Topornina
Mathematician; teacher at the Tashkent Technical University; married with two children; born and living in Tashkent

1. Our family has strong ties with Central Asia. My great grandfather, Sergei Dimitrivich Topornin, an officer in the Tsarist army, came to Turkestan as part of a company of active regular soldiers in 1868, and served in the Osh garrison. His family came with him, and six of his seven children were born here. Being in the military was a family tradition and my grandfather studied at the cadet corps in St. Petersburg. During his service, he served in Turkestan, Tashkent and then in Petrograd. He was a colonel when the revolution occurred. My grandfather Dimitri Sergeivich, contrived to get himself released from military service after the overthrow of the Tsar, and returned to Tashkent as a civilian in 1917. This land was his home and homeland. He was a wise person and believed that in difficult times one must be at home and share with one's nearest all of life's difficulties. Even though many of his fellow servicemen emigrated, he remained after the revolution as a civilian. He had an excellent education and therefore he became one of the first professors of the Central Asian University, formed in 1918 on Soviet orders. At the age of 40, he became the head of the department of higher mathematics in the University and later, of the Central Asian Industrial Institute.

My grandmother, Maria Vacilevna, too, was born in Central Asia. Her father, a simple peasant but with some means, came to Turkestan and became the owner of a cotton ginning unit. He then left his business and invested his money in the construction of profitable homes and the stock exchange. Unfortunately, many houses constructed in new Tashkent were destroyed after the earthquake of 1966. The exchange building is now used as a history museum

Even in the pre-revolution period, new Tashkent became one of the most civilised cities of the Russian Empire. Interesting and educated people worked here, who loved this corner of the empire. At that time immense
research work was conducted on the region's history, geography, ethnography, and geology. The people's general standard of education was high. Russians made their own cultural nest, drawing the local population to libraries, theatres, scientific societies and groups of Classical enthusiasts. The city was alive with culture, in which the local intelligentsia who had accepted the western culture through the Russian language also participated. In Turkestan, a purity of language, customs and traditions, has been preserved which have been even lost in Russia itself. My grandfather treated his Uzbek students with great respect and tried to give them the very best foundation. Many famous Uzbek mathematicians were his former students and, I think the respect was mutual. He was a great enlightener and wherever he went on his travels around Central Asia, people would gather around him and he would speak with them in their language, opening the doors to a mutual cultural exchange. At home, going through Grandfather's wonderful library, I am amazed how a handful of people opened up the ancient Central Asian culture for the world to see. Russians in Turkestan kept on writing about discoveries of antiques, about the dress, domestic lifestyles, customs, people, and flora and fauna of the territory: all manner of wonders were brought to life for the reader.

In Grandfather's circle of friends, there was a high sense of personal achievement and they respected this, as well as individual independence, in others. Today, I understand how difficult it was for him to survive in those times. All their lives, the old intelligentsia tried not to be dependent on the authorities, which is why many lived in their own houses, in old pre-revolution ones or in new ones they had constructed by themselves. For the Soviet way of life this was strange, the new people expected to receive free housing from the state, even if they had their own independent means. I agree with Grandfather's way of doing things: one's own house is a small way of being independent from the state, and to have one's own house should be each person's expectation and goal. The system tried to fulfill this need so as to make everyone dependent - state apartments were a means of taming those who were not submissive.

Even though my father studied in Leningrad, he returned to Tashkent.

My mother's parents' family were also Russians who had come to the region in the pre-revolution period. Mother's grandfather was a lawyer. In 1911, he came to Bern to work in the military court, and, as a result, the family came to Andijan. My mother's father was also a lawyer and worked as an advocate. My mother and her brother faced obstacles in their higher education as they were considered to be from the 'old order'. While filling in the entry forms for the university, they came up against the question of their social position; this was an attempt to uproot the old intelligentsia, to sweep them away. All their life, my parents worked as teachers at the Tashkent Polytechnical Institute.

I myself grew up in an Uzbek mohalla and the question of where to live has simply not arisen until now. The point is not the state language - to a certain extent it is possible to learn Uzbek even at my age; the point is different - a question of one's homeland. It would be strange to suddenly find oneself an emigrant, it is something entirely unexpected. Yes, this is our home, we have many people dear to us here, one has passed one's whole life here. But life is just not going to be the same here as it was before.
Our family has always been democratically inclined; we always were respected by those around us; we have many friends, people of different nationalities. And they have passed a good citizenship law. But I see my future as lying in Russia. Not because someone is making me leave, but because it is precisely the intelligentsia which determines the culture of each country and we, the Russian intelligentsia cannot be anything other than Russians! You can speak of multi-national countries like Singapore, Malaysia and Egypt, where different nationalities coexist peacefully. Perhaps Uzbekistan will also be like that. But one question worries me: would not we Russians become the object of political games. I am not certain that my opinions will count even when decisions regarding my personal fate are being made. I know that in Russia it would not be easy for me either because there, too, there are strong vestiges of the old regime. But I believe that nevertheless, I need to be in my homeland although in my heart I will always retain a great love for Uzbekistan.

I regard President Karimov as a wise politician who instills patriotism in his fellow citizens. This I do not see in the rulers of Russia and I feel pity for her. Preserving Russia's status as a great country must be done by the Russian intelligentsia, which must the notion of patriotism to oppose the plundering of the country.

All of my thoughts about moving are for now only theoretical, and are not supported by actions. Such thoughts have arisen as a result of my analysis of current circumstances, but for the time being these thoughts fill me with anguish. Central Asia is returning to the world of Islam, even as secular states; and will they be tolerant of heterodoxies? Tadzikistan has outdone even the gloomiest forecasts. Let us hope that this never happens in Uzbekistan. Will the government be able to suppress the secret extremism, born of poverty and ignorance, that is dangerous for everyone who lives on this earth?

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**Tatiana Abramova**

Russian; 38; married with one child; working at a design institute; born and living in Tashkent

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1. My paternal grandfather ended up in Tashkent during the civil war period which followed the revolution, having fled the famine in the Volga region. My mother's parents were evacuated to Tadzikistan in 1941. Then mother studied in Tashkent, got married and remained in Tashkent working as a teacher. My husband and I, second generation intelligentsia, are both architects. We have worked with people of different nationalities.

2. No one has ever insulted us and I have never felt any discrimination. Even though, given equal qualifications, the road to a career was often more open to those of local nationalities, I understood the reasons. But I am afraid that now the language situation will lead to Russians being forced out of the field of intellectual work.

3. I am bitter about the break-up of the Soviet Union. It has created problems
for everyone; that gigantic country, comparable to a continent, was accessible to all; this includes its culture, information and travel opportunities. Personally, it has raised questions which are emotionally very draining. People are leaving, my acquaintances and friends, leading specialists who in their personal and professional qualities are better than most. This is also influencing my inner feelings. Many left two years ago when the state language law was passed and independence proclaimed and it seemed that the inter-ethnic attitudes would become more tense. In Russia they are also struggling and suffering and feeling miserable. These facts themselves are giving rise to alarm, internal protest, a loss of faith and a sense of good and evil. I am not worried about myself, for me Uzbekistan is my homeland. I do not want to leave, but I am worried about my son. He has problems with the language; despite all efforts, the language change is proceeding slowly, the reason being the poor school books and teaching methods. It is difficult to learn the language well enough to be able to work professionally.

4. **Uzbekistan is my homeland. I was helped to regard it as my homeland by an ideology which today people think should be criticised. For me, the friendship of the peoples was not a slogan, but a way of life: it swept away all doubts. I will carry on treating people of other nationalities just as I did in the past. I respect other languages and peoples, their cultures and customs - things cannot be otherwise. 'All the world is my temple', is my creed.**

5. I do not know what my future holds, but sometimes it seems to me that the best times have already past. However, I believe that people are wise and that a better life can be made together and not at the cost of the other.

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**Alla Chervova**

42, teacher and philologist; married with one daughter; born in Kokand and living in Tashkent

1. I am from a worker's family which has lived in Central Asia since the beginning of the century. By origin, my father was from a Greek family settled in Kokand where I grew up.

2. I studied at Tashkent University in the evenings, and during the day I worked on a construction site. In my youth I believed that everything depended upon myself, and so I was voted into the elected bodies because I could actually defend what I said. I was also elected as Secretary of the regional committee and the Secretary of the city Comsomol committee on working youth. This work took me to schools. I worked with Uzbek schools and Uzbek children, I love them very much and their love for me is my reward. I always worked at one and a half times the regular rate - not so much for the sake of the money, but because I did not want to abandon a single class. My grown up former students remember me and try to send their children to my classes.

3. I took the break-up of the Soviet Union very badly; contacts are being lost, we are not receiving textbooks and books, we no longer meet colleagues from other republics and students' trips to other cities have been curtailed due to
rising prices. Earlier, there was a substantial exchange of information, one had friends everywhere. It is not independence which is obstructing contacts but the policies of Russia, which have led to the breaking off of relations with former republics, and which are pushing Russians to leave because of their fear of isolation from their ethnic homeland. Wonderful seeds were sown in the Soviet period so why should all of the shoots of the past be destroyed. It seems to me that Russia's policies are also responsible for the fact that people's antipathy towards them turns into antipathy towards the Russians living in the republics. What has begun in Russia is the plunder of the people. Simple people are working as hard as they have always done but are getting worse and worse off.

4. I regard Uzbekistan as my homeland; the Russians here are different from the Russians living in Russia, because their domestic lifestyles have assimilated much of what is characteristic of the Uzbek way of life. At times we feel uncomfortable, in spite of President Karimov's policies which are aimed at making sure Russians do not feel offended, because these days everyone is worse off and people are bitter. I find local nationalism common among those who are playing the stock market and living off easy earnings; in order to divert the attention of those whose lives are tough, they try to direct people's frustrations towards those who are different in appearance and who speak another language. It is precisely these people who are making life difficult and forcing us to leave.

5. I shall not go anywhere; I was born here and here I will die. But I regard my daughter's future as uncertain; she is a student at the University, her speciality being Russian language. The number of Russian schools will be reduced, Russian will no longer be used in business correspondence and so the demand for Russian language teachers will fall. Russian will gradually lose its present social status; particularly the female teachers will have to go for less meaningful jobs.

But whatever happens, I will always love Uzbekistan and its culture. I always feel insulted when someone says something bad about it. There are people for whom nothing is dear, they praise things that do not exist here, at the same time not refusing those good things which there are here. They do not have genuine goodwill for the country which they live in.

Today life is tough, only hope and faith in the good helps us to survive these difficult times. It is essential that people do not seek out enemies among those whom they live.

Olga Egunova
21; student at the Tashkent Institute of Communications; unmarried

1. My parents were born in Central Asia, Mother in Uzbekistan, Father in Kazakhstan. Their parents came here along with those uprooted in the 1930s from the Buzuluk and Stalingrad regions. My parents were born in a village, they later went to college in Tashkent, got married, bought a house and then I was born in Tashkent. Our family lives in an Uzbek mohalla. We share our
sorrows and our joys.

2. Boys and girls from all over Central Asia study at the Institute of Communications, therefore when I enrolled in the institute, the main medium of instruction was Russian; out of nine groups only two were being taught in Uzbek. At present there is a cutback in the number of groups being taught in Russian because the number of foreigners and students from other republics is falling. In recent years little has changed in the interaction between students of different nationalities, only many teachers have left for Israel and Russia and this is affecting teaching standards. Even though our teachers include Uzbeks who are very competent specialists and who teach in Russian, they too are leaving for the military faculty.

I think my problems will start after graduating because now the institute's graduates do not have a guaranteed job and this now worries me.

3. Although superficially the break-up of the Soviet Union did not influence my way of life, it has worried me inside and led to thoughts which I never had earlier. I think all Russians are suffering from psychological depression, because meeting relatives in Russia has become difficult because of travel becoming so expensive and the introduction of separate currencies in the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States). My parents and I feel uneasy that our ethnic homeland has over the past three to four years become more and more distant. The break-up of the Soviet Union means fewer books, journals and newspapers from Russia and less personal contact. It is particularly difficult when a family tragedy takes place or someone dies and Russians cannot freely come and go. This is what is pushing people to leave and not Uzbekistan's policies, as the Moscow newspapers write. On the contrary, President Karimov tries to ensure that the interests of the Russians are not infringed upon, he wants to hold on to them. But the politicians of Russia want us to return but there is no one waiting for us there.

4. Uzbekistan is my homeland, it is difficult for me to imagine that I could be able to live elsewhere. My home, friends and relatives are all here. But neither is Russia an alien country. I want Uzbekistan and Russia to have friendly relations based on true equality. Any oppression by Russia would first and foremost be felt by us Russians. I have always found that Russians in Central Asia differ from Russians in Russia itself. My elder sister and her husband left four years ago for the Orenburg region. They are very depressed, the meanness of the people and the high levels of alcoholism there make them depressed. What perhaps many do not say is that here people's inter-relationships are more open, a person does not abandon another in distress. Even though I have also come across nationalism, this is prevalent among a specific type of people, but nobody respects them including people of their own nationality.

5. I do not want to go anywhere. The main problem for me is the language, even though at the daily level I do not have any problems with it. But if it came to using Uzbek for my professional work, it would be very difficult for me. Life in Uzbekistan differs from life in Russia, and is dictated by another way of doing things, another way of thinking. Here, we have assimilated much of the Uzbek way of life, in our cooking, the patriarchal domestic lifestyle, the allocation of specific family roles for men and women; specific responsibilities in terms of socialising with the neighbourhood. Here, it is not
acceptable to dress very fashionably, an unaccompanied girl in a mini-skirt attracts unpleasant attention and she may get insulted. But we are Russians and want to remain as such. I believe that Uzbekistan will be a normal country, where citizens of different nationalities can be equal citizens.

Last year the wave of Islamisation appeared to be unstoppable, but the war in Tadzikistan sobered many of the local nationalists. It was actually at that time that many Russians decided to leave Uzbekistan. But for now it appears as if this desire has started to recede; most importantly, there wasn't such a frightening force pushing them to leave. This is why it is necessary for all of us to have reliable information about everything that is taking place and not exaggeration or silence about events.

**Tatyana Barga**

Topographical engineer; 43; one daughter

1. My grandfather, an Austrian prisoner of war, was a participant in the civil war in Russia and in the 1920s fate left him stranded in Bukhara. Here, he got married to my grandmother, whose family came to Central Asia during the period of Stalin's reforms. In 1937 Grandfather was purged. My father was a worker. I was born in Bukhara. I graduated from college in Moscow, but returned to Uzbekistan and have worked in survey expeditions all over the republic.

2. The majority of those in my profession are Russians. In the Soviet Union cartographic work was done by central Soviet organisations, using aerial and space photographs. In my department almost all of my co-workers graduated from the central colleges and were appointed in Tashkent, or posted here by the head office in Moscow; locals make up an insignificant portion of the staff and that too at the level of service duties. I find it unfortunate that very few of my colleagues love the region they live in and the people they spend their lives with. I am upset about their hostility towards the Uzbek, with whom they have to socialise on the streets and in the bazaars. I myself am a Russian, but these people are alien for me. Once I could not help myself and told them, "Why did you come here, if you constantly insult the Uzbeks?" They replied "What, and go back to Russia and stuff ourselves with rotten tinned food?" Yes, these 'valuable' specialists have come here for the good life, the apartments, the promotions and higher salaries, and the cheaper bazaars! These same Uzbeks, whom they speak so badly about, work under the hot sun to bring them cheap fruit in the bazaars. I was born and grew up in Uzbekistan but got an apartment at the age of 37, while the 'valuable' specialists, appointed from above got an apartment immediately after they arrived; it needed only one of them to come and immediately call over all his drinking companions. The value of specialists was determined by the Moscow leadership and director of the establishment. It was to their advantage to promote those who depended upon them for everything rather than those who had worked here for a long while. Staff policies were determined, above all by one's superior's interests. Such people are greedy and coarse and, whatever nationality they may be, they evoke a negative
reaction from others who then subconsciously treat everyone of that nationality the same way. These were the people I had conflicts with, they were my competitors.

3. Perhaps the break-up of the Soviet Union was due to the laws of history, but I am sorry that it broke up; that links between people who were citizens of one large country have been shattered.

4. I have always considered Uzbekistan my homeland which is why, after graduating, I returned here even though I had an offer to remain in Moscow. And now after independence, my country is especially dear to me. I am ashamed of being Russian because Russia has been deceived by people who make promises one day and then go back on them the very next day. The new dictators are just covering themselves up with words about democracy; the people are being robbed and destroyed yet again; everything which was created by the labour of generations of workers has been pocketed by the new rulers.

Just like millions of other toilers, my life has not changed with the break-up of the Soviet Union. While previously our lives were poor but just about tolerable, today things are even worse and more unbearable. And this is not because an Uzbek has become my director, but because the old system is still very strong and the entire burden lies on the shoulders of those who are not part of the power structures. I respect the policies of the Uzbek government for not turning away from providing state support for the weak, but not everything depends upon it.

5. I see my future as lying in Uzbekistan, but I am uneasy about the emergence of nationalism among life's new masters - yesterday's speculators and traders. They try to denigrate others including the people of other nationalities so as to build up their own egos. But this is also a vestige of the past, when being rude and disrespectful of people's individual identity took root. I would want independent Uzbekistan to be a country in which human rights are the basis for people's primary moral values, both in terms of laws and in real life.

Valentina Artemova
Energy engineer; 36; married with two children; living in Almalik

1. I was posted to Uzbekistan after graduating from the Omsk Polytechnic Institute, got married and remained here. My husband is from a family which has lived in Uzbekistan since the 1940s.

2. Almalik is an industrial city in which the majority are Russian speaking; I work and live among Russians who came and settled here at various stages. Before 1991 I had not noticed any ill-will among the local population. In recent years, actually in 1992, nationalistic tendencies among political activists started strengthening. They started to replace Russians in decision-making posts, in reaction to which one hundred and fifty specialists left for Russia. Many measures were adopted to stop that happening and the
situation stabilised. But I now feel alarmed.

3. I have a negative attitude towards the break-up of the Soviet Union. Why was there any need to hold a referendum in 1991? The people said "We are for the Soviet Union", but did the opposite. In 1993 again there was a referendum in Russia. The people said "Let there be a president and also a parliament" and again what happened was exactly the opposite. In October 1993, the Russian parliament was attacked by tanks on Yeltsin's orders and fresh elections were announced. Why ask the people, if everything is done the way the army and whoever has power wants it to be done. Who suffers, who loses? The people. Here, for example, I have ended up cut off from my homeland; I cannot go to visit my mother - travel has become expensive and I do not have Russian money. I hate those who brought us to this: to unexpectedly finding ourselves beyond our borders. They humiliate themselves in negotiating with the West but as for Uzbekistan, they boss it about and impose conditions of bondage. To me Uzbekistan's position is more understandable than that of Russia, and not just because I live here. How can they not understand that Russian people will also suffer!

4. My homeland is Russia and I hope to return there some day, but I would have wanted Uzbekistan and the other former republics not to turn away from Russia, to live in friendship and mutual understanding, so that it would be possible to meet one's friends and neighbours; many Russians are rooted here and have invested their labour in the region.

5. I have no specific ideas about my future. I would like to leave, but my husband and his parents do not want this. The children are growing up, one needs to think about them. But here I have an apartment and interesting work. I love the climate here and the people are also warm. Here things are peaceful. In Russia even though it is my homeland, no one will look out for us and we would have to start everything afresh. I have talked with those who have left. Most of them have gone to rural areas, many are doing jobs not in their line of work. I do not want that. No one is throwing us out, or making us refugees. Whereas earlier transferring was not so disruptive, now one would lose almost everything. This is why people try to get refugee status, so they do not go hungry. The question about the future is a difficult one; we are taking each day as it comes.

IN the responses from Russian women one senses a clear attempt to overcome the stereotypes of the past. The majority of respondents undoubtedly regard the break-up of the Soviet Union as a factor influencing their family's future, and necessitating change both in their psychological and social circumstances. A sense of insecurity permeates almost every reply and is prompted not so much by external factors, but by the necessity of an internal reconstruction of one's views about one's place in life beyond the borders of the ethnic homeland. The respondents' replies also speak of the deep psychological stress they face, caused not only by concern for their own
fate, but also by the sense of their association with the historic shock that has rocked Russia.

The respondents have a complex attitude towards the country they are living in. While the majority do call Uzbekistan their homeland, in this reply there is both an element of rationality and a certain level of disbelief, as witnessed by the responses about the uncertain fate facing the Russian population in the Central Asian countries.

As authors, we chose to take responses only from Russian women living in Uzbekistan - rather than of those living in other Central Asian Republics. This was largely because the proportion of Russian women in Uzbekistan is significantly less than in other countries of Central Asia, even though they also occupy leading positions in many sectors of the country economic and public life. Life itself pushed us to include in this book questions concerning the future of Russians in Central Asia - after all, they are the second largest ethnic group in the region. The feelings, the political rights, and the economic position of Russian women who are active, educated and qualified, will undoubtedly influence the stability and irreversibility of the various processes currently taking place in the young states of Central Asia.

The respondents understand that Russia had and still has its own interests in Central Asia and that it can implement its policies through the influential Russian diaspora. The respondents believe that Moscow has not worked out any new policy towards the formerly dependent republics, and that Russian policies still contain a strong element of past attitudes, which might lead to an extremist backlash. The average Russian woman's sense of insecurity is an echo of Moscow's past policies - and it is a heavy psychological burden for those who do not bear any responsibility for the past or for Russia's current imperial-style policies.

Despite its slogans of internationalism, the totalitarian system tried to divide people, thrusting on them the predetermined roles of elder brother and younger brother, thus suppressing their national feelings and sense of attachment to their own way of life. People remained people but politicians - in the name of global or personal goals - tried and are still trying to divide them. Communism in Russia did not establish even one of the main objectives proclaimed by Karl Marx. It was not the workers of the world which united but the Party and state functionaries who, for the sake of their own interests, exploited communist slogans. The 'friendship of the peoples' turned out to be another hollow myth. The policy of using brute force against the ordinary masses must be consigned to the history books, and only then will mutual tolerance ensure the truly peaceful and fruitful existence of people of different viewpoints, psychologies, and nationalities. And women, the bearers of cultural traditions and life itself, will find peace for themselves and their children.
Conclusion

When Will Tomorrow Come?
Conclusion

When Will Tomorrow Come?

In concluding this book, one needs to reflect on why our respondents time and again return to the events and times which surrounded their homeland's proclamation of independence. Infinite strands tie the present to the past, meaning not only that the past lives on in each of us but also that neither society, nor the individual can develop without a realistic assessment of the past. There is a strong need to look into what has passed, to extract its essence and to understand it, to learn its lessons and reject its illusions so one can enter a wiser tomorrow.

Courage, honesty and clarity of the mind are needed by all those who genuinely seek to start a new life, so that this period of social fragmentation can be traversed without casualties and without the loss of everything that previously gave one a sense of stability. What is needed is for us to be able to reject demeaning patterns of social behaviour (in which each "knows their own place"), for change to take place in society and for this change to benefit those who have always worked, who seek not only their own welfare but also the welfare of their nearest and dearest.

Coming after the leaden decades of the suppression of the individuality, the independence of each person for whom the states of Central Asia are a homeland is linked with the dream of a new and better life, and with the restoration of the dignity of the individual. The independence of the state and the growing freedom of the individual are today resuscitating our countries. But without justice, which is morality in its highest sense, there can be neither freedom nor independence.

Today the independent countries of Central Asia, even given the strong sense of commitment and personal honesty of their leaders, still cannot rid themselves of the vestiges of totalitarianism. The chasm between stated principles and reality remains as wide as ever. The inertia dictated by the past is still dominant and there is an almost unconscious desire to create a new mythical race of people who are indifferent to everything except their own profit. A lack of confidence, apathy and alienation are developing within society and it will be with great difficulty that a contemporary, civilised society of genuine citizens, confident of their rights, will be constructed in the newly independent states of Central Asia.

Moreover, there is still little knowledge and understanding of the need for women's freedom and equality. We hope that to some extent we have been able to fill in this gap.
Conclusion

THE question that now challenges us is: what to make of this new beginning, which road to take to try to reach it, and how to avoid the old ways of slavery which in the past attracted people with their inviting mirages? How can one avoid falling prey to new illusions?

The biggest threat to the future lies within us: the inertia of past patterns of dependence and powerlessness. There is the vain hope that everything will happen automatically, that some wise and intelligent being will bring to us the rosy life we have waited so long for; there is the urge to forget about unpleasant things, as if they never happened. Meanwhile, the masters of both yesterday's and today's world still want to be well-fed and wealthy - even at the cost of those who are powerless, afraid, dependent and suffering.

This is why I continuously scanned the faces of my interviewees, trying to catch the pain in their voices and trying to find the seeds of the future in their observations and their life stories. It saddens us that tomorrow will not come as quickly as we perhaps would have wanted it to: even in the best of our interviewees, we discovered a profound sense of mental paralysis caused by our growing up in a sick society, suffering from the disease of fear. This fear ate away at and ultimately destroyed a person's moral foundation, inculcating a sense of submissiveness towards a force that had little historical legitimacy.

The call to the future demands a re-assertion of the dignity of the individual - and the dignity of women. Clearly, the crisis which the respondents talk about is not only economic, but also psychological. But if the reader were to find only disillusionment, a crisis of trust, and a negative stand regarding ongoing events in the respondents' replies, this would be only half of the picture. The main sign of hope is that there are nevertheless attempts to analyse what is happening, and to bring attitudes closer in line with reality; an awakening is nevertheless taking place, as evidenced by the respondents' precise observations and constructive conclusions. Women talk about what they think and not what others want to hear from them. Perhaps this is why some of them often appear verbose, hard-hitting and in need of the interviewer's empathy.

Although the majority of respondents in one form or another mention the need for choice - i.e., the freedom of the individual - they are afraid of unprecedented change. The answers also contain a certain nostalgia for the previous lack of freedom, revealing a habit of being dependent and passive. It is these very factors which are paralysing change in women's attitudes towards life; much is said but little action is taken.

The dominant theme in the responses is the issue of the moral crisis in society and the rebirth of spiritual values. But how is this possible without an active social stance? Are women capable of overcoming their sense of powerlessness, of influencing things (even if just in their immediate environs), of believing in the possibility of changing something in their lives and of taking upon themselves responsibility for their own actions? The majority of those we spoke with, are indeed capable of all this because they recognise their individual identity, their personal and professional worth.

Unfortunately however, their sense of identification with any specific social
group is still poorly developed. It is not surprising that former Soviet women have a very poorly developed sense of belonging - even to their own sex, as if they are ashamed of being women. Women are not inclined to believe that they face any specific social problems and it is precisely this which is preventing them from uniting. The reason lies in the fact that in the previous way of life, propaganda and policies were directed at suppressing any group identity, including that of women. This prevented the emergence of another world outlook conditioned upon the essence of what it means to be a woman. And this is what, to this day, is making women passive.

Passivity is a worrying symptom, and even now it is pushing women backwards and is leading to the further lowering of their social status which, in any case, was already not very high. Soviet policies towards women, reflecting an image of women as a source of cheap labour, vulgarised the notion of equality and attempted to convert women into some neutral gender, secondary and without aspirations of self-assertion. Only though a women's movement can women declare their identity and aspire to a higher material and spiritual life. But this will require great effort.

The very form that the newly independent countries of Central Asia have taken, and their development now demand of their citizens - including both women and the government - a different attitude towards themselves and towards each other. Our governments have declared themselves sympathetic to the new political principles, but the implementation of these principles depends not only upon the leadership, but also the citizens.

Activism and tolerance of diversity - from one's way of dressing to new social institutions - can bring us closer to the tomorrow we desire. From the past we have preserved the primitive structure of our society, propaganda which called itself 'culture', and a mass consciousness which gravitates towards simpleness. From top to bottom, society is dominated by the perception that anyone who deviates from the generally accepted, conformist way of doing things, constitutes a threat - both personally and to the whole of society. Instead of dialogue there are decrees; instead of respect and understanding there is dependence and frustration; instead of cooperation there are orders; instead of analysis there are predetermined formulas, all of which make it difficult to experiment with new forms of public activity and individual initiative. An example is the replacement of the stereotyped image of women as worker with another equally single-faceted image - that of mother. There is resistance to variety, to the multicoloured picture that makes up the whole wide world. Civic consciousness is capable of overcoming these limitations but this is preconditioned on the emergence of qualitatively new forms of social institutions, abandoning the old Soviet structures. One of the new social institutions must be the women's movement in all its various forms.

As can be seen from the respondents' replies, women need extensive and adequate information about the forms that the women's movement has taken across the world; about the problems confronting women of various social strata and about how these issues have been addressed practically in other countries; about organisations which are active in these areas, doing concrete work and influencing the lives of women in various parts of the world.

Against the background of fluctuations in both the economic and political
spheres, women in the Central Asian states find themselves vacillating between varying degrees of passivity and periodic bursts of activity. There are still few autonomous non-governmental women's groups, while the governmental women's organisations are also still weak. The time factor is working against women's education, professional growth and political significance. Will the notion of women's equality survive? The answer to this question remains open; a positive response depends upon modern women's recognition of their responsibility towards the fate of their country and the fate of their daughters. Women's future and the fate of the country are interdependent and if, despite their differences, women can unite in the name of preserving their civic and individual rights, there will be a better tomorrow. For this unity to take shape, the women's intelligentsia must survive and not become a relic of the Soviet era.

Tashkent
January - December, 1993
Notes
Notes

Introduction

1. Not to be confused with the 'East-West' ideological terminology of the Cold War. In Central Asia the term 'the West' generally refers to Russia - perceived as atheist, modern, urban, non-family oriented - contrasted with the East which is perceived as spiritual, traditionalist, and family-oriented. - Ed.

Chapter 1

1. Ostroumov, N. *Ocherk istorii narodnovo obrazovania v gorodakh i ukrepleniakh punktakh byvshei Syr-Darinskoi linii i Turkestanskoi oblasti*, Turkestanskie Vedomosti, Tashkent, 1887

2. The *Khudjum* (literally 'offensive') against traditionalism was launched on March 8th, 1927, International Women's Day when mass meetings of women were organised by the Women's Councils (*zhensovety*) in all cities and major population centres in Central Asia. At these and subsequent meetings, pyres were lit on which all kinds of veils used to hide the faces and figures of Muslim women were symbolically burnt.

3. In 1929, the Arabic script which was used as the medium for written Uzbek, was replaced by the Latin (and later Cyrillic) script as part of Soviet efforts to combat the influence religion in Central Asian society.

4. The geo-political disturbances taking place in Afghanistan in the 1980s spilled over into neighbouring Tadjikistan, and laid the foundations for the civil war that broke out in the former Soviet Republic in 1993. This pitted various groups of nationalists, communists and obscurantist forces against each other, sharply dividing whole communities and families, and, according to Russian newspapers, there were tens of thousands of civilian casualties. In 1996, hundreds of thousands of Tadjikistan's multi-ethnic population continue to be refugees, and while a veneer of stability has returned, law and order remain in the hands of the militia, which represent various forces, both state and opposition. - Ed
Chapter 2

1. See Editor's Note

2. There is now a Kabardin-Balkar autonomous republic in the Russian Federation in the northern Caucasus. In 1944, Balkars, like many other Muslim nations of the Caucasus, were forcibly moved to Central Asia by Stalin. Many of them can today still be found in Central Asia, notably in Kyrgyzstan. - M.T.

3. 'podsele
en'- the authorities had the right to order someone to share an apartment with a family, no matter whether they were related or not and the family had no say in the matter. - M.T.

4. The 'Comrades Court' was a social institution with no legal status set up during the Khrushchev era as a measure to combat hooliganism and alcoholism. Organised by a community or work unit, the Comrades Court consisted of elected members, usually from the trade union, Party committees and workers who had lived or worked in the area or enterprise for a long time. The Comrades Court as a first measure in instances of domestic violence would give the husband a severe talking to. It could also order that a person's salary be cut or that they be moved from their work position, expelled from their job or apartment or the Communist Party, or interred for 15 days. It could also hand people over to the police recommending that they be punished by the courts. In many instances, the Comrades Courts were used against dissidents. - M.T.

5. Kronshtadski was a religious philosopher and an Orthodox preacher who lived at the end of the 19th century. - M.T.

6. There is an autonomous Khakass republic in Western Siberia with a population of some 560,000 most of whom are Buddhist.

Chapter 3

1. In December 1986 there were large-scale demonstrations in the Kazakhstan capital, Almaty against the appointment of Gennady Kolbin as Secretary of the Kazakhstan Central Committee. The demonstrators, which largely consisted of students and youth, demanded the appointment of a Kazakh as Secretary. The demonstrations were quelled by the Police and Army, many were killed and large numbers of participants repressed. Following Kazakhstan's independence, they were rehabilitated and are now members of various political parties, including the Alash movement which is opposed to President Nazarbaev.

2. Strabo (63 BC - AD 21) was an ancient Greek geographer and historian from the 1st century B.C. who travelled extensively in Europe, Asia Minor and Central Asia. - M.T.
3. *Saodat* is the only official women's journal in Uzbekistan and is edited by a woman. - *Ed.*

4. Bakshi's gave their own improvised interpretations of religious texts through folk music and poetry, passing down oral histories and adding their own new epics. There were annual *bakhshi* competitions in the form of dialogues or discussions which could last many days. - *M.T.*

5. A specific portion of posts throughout the Party and state hierarchies were reserved for specific categories of nominees: women, those of peasant background, those from workers' families, those belonging to a family with numerous children, etc. In her book, *Between the Slogans of Communism and the Laws of Islam: The Women of Uzbekistan*, Ms. Tokhtakhodjaeva has shown how such 'positive discrimination' served to undermine women's access to decision-making positions and to lower the contribution of women leaders in the eyes of the general public. - *Ed.*

6. *Kulaks* were wealthier small farmers who were the target of repression in the collectivisation period of 1928-38. However, along with the *kulaks*, many non-*kulaks*, including poor peasants, were also repressed. - *Ed.*

7. *Birlik* was a movement which emerged during *perestroika* in 1988-89 in Uzbekistan. *Birlik*’s programme stood against cotton production’s monopoly over the republic’s economy and supported the introduction of Uzbek as the state language. The first to raise the question of independence, *Birlik* also called for cultural autonomy. - *M.T.*

8. There is now a Kabardin-Balkar autonomous republic in the Russian Federation in the northern Caucasus. In 1944, Balkars, like many other Muslim nations of the Caucasus, were forcibly moved to Central Asia by Stalin. Many of them can today still be found in Central Asia, notably in Kyrgyzstan. - *M.T.*

9. This practice occurred irrespective of whether the uncle was married or not and was thus a common cause of polygynous marriages. - *Ed.*

10. There was sporadic but severe famine in several areas - including Central Asia - during the early years of Soviet rule, notably in the 1920s and early 1930s.

11. The respondent is paraphrasing a quotation from *The Qur’an*.

12. Karakalpakstan, is now an autonomous republic within Uzbekistan and has its own parliament. Bordering the Aral Sea, Karakalpakstan has serious ecological problems and is one of the poorest areas in Uzbekistan.

13. The *Basmach* opposition movement was led by feudals, Muslim clerics and a section of the urban intelligentsia and emerging bourgeoisie. It reached its height in the period 1918-20 in the Ferghana Valley area. - *Ed.*
Chapter 4

1. The Russian terms *kul'tura/, *kul'turnost* and *kul'turnii* have a far broader meaning than the English `culture' and `cultured', perhaps coming closer to the concept of `civilisation' and `civilised'.

2. The Bukhara Emirate was one of the three major states in the Central Asian region and lasted for some three centuries before the Russian conquest in the late 19th Century.

3. Some 10 years ago, evangelical preachers began working in the former Soviet Union, illegally and largely among ethnic Germans who had been forcibly transported to Central Asia by Stalin. In 1989 their work was legalised and the evangelical organisations are officially registered. Although there is no accurate data on the extent of the conversions, it is recognised that large numbers of the population of Kazakhstan are declaring themselves Christian. The Muslim clergy and Orthodox Church have both noted their alarm at the trend and have appealed to the Kazakhstan government to forbid missionary activity. - M.T.

Chapter 5

1. See Editor's Note

2. Throughout the former Soviet Union, the public was mobilised - often on a seasonal basis - to take part in labour-intensive, mass-scale economic ventures, such as the cotton harvest. Participants were organised into small groups - `brigades' - based on their factory unit or school/college and attendance was compulsory.

3. the All-Union Lenin Young Communist League

4. There is an autonomous Khakass republic in Western Siberia with a population of some 560,000 most of whom are Buddhist.

Chapter 6

1. According to 1987 statistics: in Uzbekistan, 49.3% of able-bodied women of working age were employed; in Kyrgyzstan 64.3%, in Tadjikistan 47.9% and in Turkmenia 47.4%.

Chapter 7

1. The term `women-mothers is common to the language of the state-organised Women's Councils and still dominates discourse on women's
rights in much of the former Soviet Union. Although ostensibly a term of respect which includes the notion that women should be provided state support because of their essential social role as the bearers of the new generation, the term is clearly restrictive as it implicitly excludes women who are not mothers from the purview of state protection. - Ed.

2. see Note No. 1, Chapter 3

3. A former Prime Minister of France

4. A Kazakh writer, philosopher and activist; one of the ideologues of independence. - M.T.

5. During the Soviet era, Women's Councils (zhensovet) which were devoted to working with women were organised at each Party level. Given that officially the 'women's question' had been resolved by Soviet rule, the zhensovet had largely decorative functions, apart from occasionally assisting individual women through personal intervention.

6. A quote from Marx, based on Hegel.

7. An official who inspects clubs, schools, libraries, etc and is responsible for equipment, staff, construction work, and organising conferences and meetings.

Chapter 8


2. see Note No. 6, Chapter 3

3. In December 1934, Kirov, a member of the central Party Secretariat and widely regarded as a possible successor to Stalin, was assassinated at Party headquarters in Leningrad. Stalin used the assassination as a pretext for strengthening police powers and harassing opponents. - Ed.

4. see Note No. 4, Chapter 1
The transition to a market economy and independent nationhood has brought sweeping change to the lives of the peoples of former Soviet Central Asia. The impact of this transition has been most keenly felt by the region's women, who have been the first in line to lose their jobs and the focus of a political challenge to democracy and secularism.

The result of an unprecedented survey among women from five diverse Central Asian Republics, *The Daughters of Amazons* offers a window onto the historical, economic, political and social contexts to the debates confronting the emerging women's movement in Central Asia, along with the growing issues of nationalism and religious obscurantism.

By touching on topics and issues which have been taboo for so long in Central Asian society, the two authors, who are themselves from the region, have provided the reader a unique opportunity to step into the lives of Central Asian women and to understand the factors moulding their choices.