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Introduction by Alessandro Landolo, University of Oxford

The study of development is one of the most thriving fields in contemporary global and international history. Artemy Kalinovsky was among the very first historians to explore the Soviet Union's understandings of and attempts at development in the second half of the twentieth century. His first book, a history of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in the late 1980s, went beyond the strictly military dimension to discuss Soviet involvement in modernization campaigns during the conflict.¹ The book highlighted the tight relationship between how the Soviet government viewed modernity in the Central Asian republics of the USSR and what it had initially hoped to achieve in Afghanistan. Later, Kalinovsky continued to investigate the theory and practice of development in Soviet Central Asia in a number of influential articles, which opened the way for this monograph: a full-length study of 'socialist development' in Soviet Tajikistan from the mid-1950s to the early 1990s.²

"Laboratory of Socialist Development" is a towering achievement. It is by far the best existing study of the Soviet approach to development at home. The book is constructed around the dialogue between the 'local' and the global/international. It explores three relationships: that between elites in Moscow and in Tajikistan, between the Tajikistanis and the development projects pursued in their homeland, and between the Soviet vision of development in Tajikistan and in the Third World.

The book's most remarkable achievement is the balance that Kalinovsky manages to strike between these different dimensions. *Laboratory of Socialist Development* provides a very detailed and complete analysis of Tajikistan's contribution to the theory and practice of Soviet development. It is based on a vast array of Soviet sources, both from the central Moscow archives and from a number of repositories in Tajikistan, as well as on many interviews with former party officials, economists, and 'simple' workers who took part in development projects. Yet the big picture is never out of focus. The richness of the sources and the myriad stories of participants in the search for development in Tajikistan allow the reader to grasp the topic's complexity while at the same time remaining functional to the general narrative Kalinovsky constructs. In a nutshell, the book rejects simplistic paradigms of 'resistance' or 'collaboration,' and of 'success' or 'failure.' Soviet development in postwar Tajikistan was more complicated, neither imposed from above nor entirely accepted from below, and neither an unmitigated disaster nor uncontroversial in its effects and legacy.

All the reviewers are impressed with the book and praise Kalinovsky for the thoroughness of his research and for the contribution of the book to the field of development history. Nils Gilman commends Kalinovsky for his "total" approach to the study of development. *Laboratory of Socialist Development* is unusual, perhaps unique, in engaging with all phases of the search for development, from planning stage to lived experience. Similarly, both Jeremy Friedman and Kristy Ironside laud the book for focusing on a key regional dimension

¹ Artemy M. Kalinovsky, *A Long Goodbye: The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011).

² Kalinovsky, "Not Some British Colony in Africa: The Politics of Decolonization and Modernization in Soviet Central Asia, 1955-1964," *Ab Imperio* 2 (2013): 191-222; Artemy M. Kalinovsky, "Central Planning, Local Knowledge? Labor, Population, and the 'Tajik School of Economics,'" *Kritika* 17:3 (2016): 585-620; Artemy M. Kalinovsky, "A Most Beautiful City for the World's Tallest Dam: Internationalism, Social Welfare and Urban Utopia in Nurek," *Cahiers du Monde Russe* 54:4: 819-846.

of the USSR's economic trajectory in the postwar era, and particularly on Soviet ideas about industrialization in the 'periphery.' Moritz Florin is especially intrigued by the chronology in Kalinovsky's book, for most studies of modernization in Central Asia have tended to privilege the pre-World War Two period. The decades between Iosif Stalin's death in 1953 and the collapse of the USSR in 1991 were just as formative for the region.

Kalinovsky's 'total' approach to development allows him to challenge the idea that the local population necessarily found Soviet projects oppressive and resisted them. In fact, most of his interviewees tend to present a relatively positive and benign view of Soviet development, as both Friedman and Ironside note in their reviews. While not unaware of the political, human, and environmental costs of development, many Tajikistanis appreciated the potential improvement in living standards that Soviet development promised. At the same time, some also seized job and career opportunities that would otherwise have been inaccessible to them. Florin welcomes the discussion of Tajikistan's peoples as active participants in the search for development. When they criticized, opposed, or resisted development projects, this tended to be because they disagreed with the principles behind them and demanded 'better' development. Far from passive bystanders, Tajikistanis from all levels of society engaged with the 'hows' and 'whys' of the Soviet development project.

This is not to say that there was not a coercive element in the search for development in Tajikistan. Ironside points out that those Tajikistanis who explicitly rejected Communism certainly could not benefit from career opportunities and risked harsh repression. Gilman is generally less convinced by the idea of relative local acceptance of Soviet development. He compares the forms of resistance that Kalinovsky discusses in the book to those explored by James Scott in his *Weapons of the Weak*.³ In both cases, unsystematic but widespread resistance to specific development projects can be interpreted as a general rejection by the population of the whole idea of "modernization".

Regardless of its relative popularity, Soviet development in Tajikistan certainly did not live up to the initial promises of abundance. Gilman comments that *Laboratory of Socialist Development* is primarily a political, social, and cultural history of development, with the strictly economic and technical dimensions more in the background. Assessing results is therefore not easy, even with hindsight knowledge of the end of Soviet-style development projects in Tajikistan. Friedman reminds readers that some of Kalinovsky's interviewees were very aware of the difference in living standards between Tajikistan and those of Western societies, which achieved more by applying a very different model of development.

This last point, the degree to which Soviet development can be compared or even equated to Western development, is a matter of debate. In her review, Ironside notices how Kalinovsky's investigation of a group of Tajikistani economists suggests that they may have been less receptive to ideas that came from the West compared to their colleagues in Moscow. She stresses that the Soviet search for development remained ideological in nature, and possibly for longer than scholars who focus on the Moscow elites may be tempted to conclude. Likewise, ideology is at the center of Friedman's discussion of the same issue. He notes that while Kalinovsky seems to gesture toward a potential convergence of socialist and capitalist development, the differences between the two approaches may require further attention. Gilman is the least ambiguous in this respect. He highlights the "isomorphism" of Soviet and Western development; they may have originated from

³ James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985).

separate intellectual traditions but shared the same goals and similar methods. According to Gilman, one crucial difference is that Soviet development always aimed to ‘remake’ men and women, whereas Western development arguably acquired this (biopolitical?) dimension later. Gilman argues that Soviet development had little if any impact on the Western tradition. On the contrary, he wonders what influence Western ideas and theories had within the Soviet Union, including in Tajikistan. Florin, on the other hand, asks to what extent Tajikistan in particular and Soviet Central Asia in general could be models of development for Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In particular, was Central Asia an actual ‘laboratory’ in which new policies were tested, or did it serve primarily as an example to present Soviet development to foreign audiences?

This, along with other questions that Kalinovsky addresses in the book (Soviet development at home and its discontents, and the continuities and discontinuities between Soviet and Western development), will no doubt continue to keep historians of Cold War development busy for a long time. As all of the reviewers agree, *Laboratory of Socialist Development* will be a key text in this discussion.

Participants:

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Moritz Florin is Lecturer (Akademischer Rat) of East European History at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg. He teaches BA and MA level courses on Russian, Central Asian, and Global History. He obtained his Ph.D. from the University of Hamburg for a dissertation on the history of post-war Central Asia. He is the author of a book entitled *Kyrgyzstan and Soviet modernity, 1941-1991 (Kirgistan und die sowjetische Moderne, 1941-1991)* (Göttingen: V&R, 2015). Moritz’s academic work has appeared or will appear in journals such as *Jahrbuch für historische Kommunismusforschung* (2011) *Neprikosnovennyi zapas* (2011), *Cahiers du Monde Russe* (2013), *Ab Imperio* (2016), *Kritika* (2016) and *Jahrbücher für Geschichte*.

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Nils Gilman is Vice President at the Berggruen Institute. He is the author of *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (2004) and *Deviant Globalization: Black Market Economy in the 21st Century* (2011). A founding member of the *Humanity* journal editorial collective, he holds a B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. in History from the University of California, Berkeley.

Kristy Ironside is Assistant Professor of Russian History at McGill University. She is currently completing a monograph on the Soviet government's attempts to strengthen the ruble and use money toward the intertwined projects of postwar reconstruction and communist advance.

Review by Moritz Florin, University of Erlangen-Nuremberg

Soviet Central Asia does not fit easily into established narratives of twentieth century history. Throughout their existence, the republics of Central Asia were neither colonies nor independent. Even if some Cold War scholars identified population growth among Soviet Muslims as a potential Achilles' heel of the Soviet state,¹ Central Asia never became a battle ground of the Cold War. Even independence was not the result of a heroic anti-Soviet or anti-colonial struggle, but rather the result of the implosion of Soviet power. The position of Central Asia on the fringes of more straightforwardly frameable developments may also help to explain why the region has thus far received little attention in most histories of the (global) Cold War or decolonization.

The peripheral position of Central Asia—and by extension Central Asian studies—can also be an asset, however: Arguably, it is precisely because Soviet rule cannot easily be labeled 'colonialist' that the Central Asian case lends itself to discussions of what colonialism was, and how it can blur with other types of rule.² Central Asia was a Muslim region in an atheist state, and thus lends itself to debates about Islamic reform, and about the role of Islam in Soviet foreign policy.³ Some historians have also highlighted parallels and entanglements between Soviet Central Asia and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's authoritarian project of modernization in Turkey.⁴ Such debates on the place of Central Asia within twentieth-century history have, however, mostly focused on the pre-World-War-II-period.⁵ Artemy Kalinovsky's new book is among the first attempts to extend such debates into the Cold War period, and to connect Soviet Central Asian history to larger trends and developments not only within, but also beyond, the socialist bloc.

Based on archival sources, memoirs, interviews, and personal observations, *Laboratory of Socialist Development* presents a cogent narrative of what Kalinovsky calls the second postcolonial moment of Central Asian history:

¹ See, for example, Alexandre Bennigsen, *Muslims in the Soviet Empire: A Guide* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986). For an analysis also see Will Myer, *Islam and Colonialism: Western Perspectives on Soviet Asia* (London: Routledge, 2002).

² For a good recent overview of the Russian, Central Asian, and Western debates on tradition, modernity, "Sovietness," coloniality, and locality, see Sergei Abashin, *Sovetskii kishlak: Mezhdú kolonializmom i modernizatsiei* (Moscow, 2015), 5–55. Also see: Moritz Florin, "Beyond Colonialism? Agency, Power, and the Making of Soviet Central Asia," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 18:4 (Fall 2017): 827-838.

³ See, for example, Adeeb Khalid, *Islam after Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Eren Tasar, *Soviet and Muslim: The Institutionalization of Islam in Central Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Masha Kirasirova, "Sons of Muslims in Moscow: Soviet Central Asian Mediators to the Foreign East, 1955-62," *Ab Imperio* 4 (2011): 106-32.

⁴ Kamp, Marianne, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling Under Communism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006); Adeeb Khalid, "Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization: Early Soviet Central Asia in Comparative Perspective," *Slavic Review* 65:2 (2006): 231-251.

⁵ Recent exceptions include: Sergej Abashin, *Sovetskij kishlak*; Moritz Florin, *Kirgistan und die sowjetische Moderne, 1941-1991* (Göttingen: V&R, 2015); Julia Obertreis, *Imperial Desert Dreams: Cotton Growing and Irrigation in Central Asia, 1860-1991* (Göttingen: V&R, 2017).

The period from Stalin's death until *perestroika*. The book starts out with a discussion of the relationships between decolonization, de-Stalinization, and development. It seems a bit exaggerated to call Central Asia a "frontline region" in the "ideological battle" for the Third World (19). Nevertheless, it is certainly true that the region did play an underestimated role in the strategic debates of the Khrushchev era, and that the idea of presenting Central Asia as a 'model' for the Third World was renewed during the late 1950s. Kalinovsky shows that the region could only fulfil this function if the Soviet state at least partially lived up to its promise of development. The Soviet Union invested large sums into the expansion of the educational system, and into large scale projects such as hydroelectrical dams. The welfare of the population played an increasingly important role within the political and scholarly debates of the time. In fact, the Soviet commitment to development on its "semi-colonial periphery" was more than lip-service. As a result of the investments into housing, dams, factories, or the electricity grid, individual and collective lives within the Tajik republic were thoroughly transformed (145ff).

Soviet development initiatives never lived up to their main promises, however. It proved to be more difficult than expected to mobilize the local population for industrial jobs. In the larger cities, the European (respectively Russian-speaking) population remained dominant. The approximation of standards of living in the European and Asian parts of the Soviet Union remained a distant dream. Large scale projects of development caused dire ecological damage in the cotton-growing regions. Such contradictions helped to accentuate the feeling that, within the Soviet framework, development primarily served the interests of the Soviet center and not of the local population. During the 1970s, local scholars started to question the wisdom of projects of development that hardly helped to mobilize the growing rural population, asking how local preferences could be taken into account. Some Tajik intellectuals also began to frame existing social and cultural discrepancies between the cities and the countryside in ethnic terms, and to openly challenge the dominance of 'Russians' within the political, economic, and cultural life of the republic.

At first glance, Kalinovsky's book thus seems to follow an established narrative: As with elsewhere in the USSR, the 1950s and 1960s were characterized by the conflicts, but also the optimism of de-Stalinization. Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev renewed the universalist impetus of the Soviet project, with decolonization and the global Cold War further stimulating developmental optimism. This spirit started to abate during the 1970s. Throughout the USSR, authors of so-called village prose, engineers and scholars started to question the wisdom of large scale-projects, pointing their fingers at the ecological and cultural consequences. During the 1980s, such disappointment turned into open protest and interethnic conflict. Kalinovsky's book is most interesting when he points his finger at the contradictions of this narrative. Projects such as the Nurek dam were more than just foreign impositions onto a helpless population, they also helped to open up "radically new possibilities" for a predominantly rural population and gave Soviet individuals "a sense of ownership over the result." (173) Soviet development cannot be easily framed as 'foreign' or colonial, and it was neither universally rejected nor universally supported. In fact, the late Soviet anti-colonial critique was also voiced by 'Soviet subjects,' who usually did not aim to dismantle, but instead to reform the system.

"Laboratory of Socialist Development" is not only a book about Soviet history, however, but also more generally about development during the twentieth century. Instead of seeing the Soviet Union in isolation, Kalinovsky argues that ideas circulated globally and then found their local adaptations. The book's title even suggests that during the late Soviet era, Tajikistan became a 'laboratory' of development. This is a very helpful metaphor, and it is somewhat unfortunate that the author fails to elaborate on it in his text. In fact, the term seems to imply that the Tajik republic became a testing ground for new policies or strategies. A Soviet republic arguably provided a space that the Soviet state could more easily influence and control than newly

independent colonies in Asia or Africa. Abroad, the Soviet state had less leverage to influence local decisions and debates, and to impose its own vision of development. In fact, the author points out that Tajikistan, and especially the project of building a dam on the Vakhsh river, were presented as templates for others to follow. A laboratory, however, also implies that new insights would be consciously evaluated and applied elsewhere. But can we really refer to Tajikistan as a laboratory in the sense of a testing ground for decidedly new approaches of development? Was Tajikistan a laboratory beyond its image in propaganda?

The main achievement of Kalinovsky's book lies in his ability to connect the history of Soviet Central Asia to debates about development, decolonization and the global Cold War. In fact, throughout the world, projects of development created similar types of contradictions between universalist notions of progress and the aspirations of the local population. Instead of joining in the morally charged criticism of developmental initiatives, Kalinovsky highlights the contradictions: The local population was never passive, but instead became involved in economic management. Much of the knowledge required to make plans was produced locally, thereby forcing re-evaluations of initiatives formulated in Moscow, Tashkent, or Dushanbe. Even if Soviet initiatives were hardly based on any kind of "democratic" decision-making process, the Soviet state still aspired to serve the interests of the local population. And even if Soviet projects of development caused environmental damage and social ruptures, they were also guided by ideals of solidarity and universality. Instead of condemning developmental initiatives, Kalinovsky's book helps us to learn from successes and failures that were hardly unique to the Soviet Union.

Review by Jeremy Friedman, Harvard University

Artemy Kalinovsky's well-researched and cleverly framed new book uses the story of the development of Soviet Tajikistan as a tool for re-shaping our understanding of post-Soviet Tajikistan, the Soviet Union as a whole, and the broader project of mid-century modernist post-colonial development. Kalinovsky argues that Tajikistan in fact had three different post-colonial moments: the first with the collapse of the Tsarist Empire in 1917, the second under Nikita Khrushchev as the Soviet government re-evaluated and re-negotiated the center-periphery relationship as part of de-Stalinization, and the final one with the collapse of the USSR, though it really began earlier under perestroika as the system began to come apart. Each of these post-colonial moments was accompanied by a development strategy that contained within it a conception of Tajik society and Tajik identity, though the book concentrates primarily on the second post-colonial moment and the development strategy of large-scale industrialization. Kalinovsky traces the impacts of this development strategy in a balanced manner that highlights successes as well as failures, but ultimately leads to a social and intellectual backlash similar in some, though not all, respects to the critiques of the development strategies promoted and pursued elsewhere in the developing world in the 1950s and 1960s. In doing so, Kalinovsky asks us to re-evaluate the strategy of industrial-led development, to contrast the Soviet version with its Western counterparts, and perhaps to reconsider some of the critiques of it in light of subsequent economic and political strategies.

The structure of the book is largely chronological, although it uses that chronology to tell the story of Tajikistan's development through the experiences of different social groups, in the process illuminating certain causal connections. The book begins with a focus on the Tajik elite, both the elite that pre-dated the Bolshevik seizure of power and that which was formed through the explicit efforts of the Soviet state to create its own Tajik intelligentsia. Kalinovsky then shows how this newly formed elite helped to catalyze the process of Tajikistan's industrial development as it came to play a more prominent institutional role both at the republic and union levels, advocating for industrialization as a way of developing their homeland and increasing their influence.

The centerpiece of this industrialization was the Nurek dam, a signature objective that Kalinovsky directly situates within the international obsession with dam-based development that grew from the heroic achievements of New Deal America into a paradigm for bringing prosperity to benighted regions across the world. Kalinovsky examines the social, political, and economic consequences of the dam project, including the construction of urban environments and their attendant effects on the population. Crucially for his argument in the conclusion, Kalinovsky highlights that while he had expected his interviews to produce negative recollections of the dam project given its impact on the environment, drowning of villages, and use of outside labor, it turned out that most of his interviewees had more positive things to say (93). This makes the third part of the book even more intriguing. Kalinovsky details how the backlash against the project of industrialized development split the Tajik elite in the latter years of the Soviet Union between those who continued to equate an industrialized Tajikistan with a modern Tajikistan and those who put forth a recognizable post-colonial critique of the deleterious effects of industrialization on Tajik culture and society. These divisions set the stage for the civil war that roiled post-Soviet Tajikistan, a war which contributed to precisely the result that Soviet planners had always desired but never achieved: the mass migration of Tajik laborers to the Slavic heartland of the former USSR.

Given this dénouement, it is tempting therefore to see the entire experiment in developing the Soviet periphery as essentially similar to both the failure of analogous Western projects in the developing world and

even aspects of post-industrialism in the West itself. Kalinovsky gestures towards this in his introduction, when he invokes the work of Johanna Bockman and Gil Eyal in pointing to a convergence of Western and socialist economists towards “neoliberalism,” defined here as “new modes of economic governance privileging individual initiative, entrepreneurship, and financialization.”¹ (13) By itself, arguing that the socialist planned economy and western capitalist economies ended up producing similar phenomena would offer an intriguing thesis, albeit one with echoes of the “convergence” literature of the 1960s exemplified by Herbert Marcuse.² But Kalinovsky resists this, invoking the relevance of Soviet ideology to the way projects such as the Nurek Dam were conceived and implemented. In particular, he emphasizes the role of the Soviet ideal of ‘internationalism’ which was both supposed to motivate much of Soviet foreign policy as well as govern relations between national and ethnic groups within the USSR. At the end of the book, he includes ‘solidarity’ and ‘universalism’ as Soviet ideals, though the relationship between ‘ideals’ and ‘ideology’ is not made sufficiently clear. Though these ideals were not applied consistently, Kalinovsky argues that they contained enough power to make the experience of Soviet development materially different from that of its Western counterparts. In particular, at its best, Soviet development offered opportunities that allowed individuals to escape traditional hierarchies, especially for women, and a focus on work and performance that resulted in a sort of ethnic egalitarianism, at least as remembered by certain of Kalinovsky’s interview subjects. Additionally, improvement in the living standards and the cultural level of the population was part and parcel of the industrialization project, and while not all Soviet efforts in that vein were either beneficial or successful, this seems to be yet another area in which Kalinovsky sees some unique benefit in the Soviet model.

This evaluation is thrown into interesting relief by a revealing anecdote that Kalinovsky places at the very beginning of his story. Talking to a recently joined Party activist in Dushanbe while conducting his research, Kalinovsky asked why he signed up, and was told that “Our people go to America, and they say ‘look, they have real communism there.’ And I say yes, but at what cost?” (3) Kalinovsky takes this curious pronouncement as indicative of the commonality of Western and Soviet development and modernization projects, with a twist that the Soviets sought to get there without inequality and dislocation. But what about this man’s interlocutors, who apparently thought that the Soviet project had been less successful in achieving ‘communism’ than that of its Western capitalist competitors? Kalinovsky cites Frederick Cooper, the historian of African decolonization, on several occasions to counteract critiques of development projects. In his conclusion, he quotes Cooper remonstrating “However much validity there is in critiques of self-serving development institutions and ideologies, critiques do not bring piped water to people who lack it; they do not ease the burden of women caught between rural patriarchies and urban exploitation; they do not distribute readily available antidotes to childhood diarrhea and malaria in areas of high infant mortality.”³ (250) By Cooper’s metrics, it might be those Tajiks lauding American ‘communism,’ rather than the newly christened Tajik Party activist, who have the most clear-eyed view of the correlation between ideals and results.

¹ Johanna Brockman, *Markets in the Name of Socialism: The Left-Wing Origins of Neoliberalism*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013); Johanna Brockman and Gil Eyal, “Eastern Europe as a Laboratory for Economic Knowledge: The Transnational Roots of Neoliberalism,” *American Journal of Sociology* 108:2 (2002): 310-352.

² See, for example, Herbert Marcus, *One Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991).

³ See Frederick Cooper, “Writing the History of Development,” *Journal of Modern European History* 8:1 (April 2010): 5-23.

Kalinovsky's work is not a brief for the Soviet development model, however. It is, rather, a welcome effort to examine the impact of that development model at a granular level in order to encourage scholars to reconsider it. His book consistently highlights the ways in which Soviet actors themselves reconsidered their own model on a nearly constant basis. Particularly revealing is his analysis of why the Soviets abandoned the attempt to turn the 'Central Asian model' into a model for the developing world more broadly as early as the late 1960s, a time when the Nurek Dam project was just beginning to take shape. This analysis shows that the Soviets were already sensitive to the unique political, social, and historical conditions that should shape development strategies, rather than being tied to a particular orthodoxy. His question in the conclusion is therefore all the more pertinent: speaking of emergent strategies in the field of development, he asks "Would the USSR have gotten there as well?" (251) His answer lists factors on both sides of the question, but the very act of asking such a question presupposes another one: To what degree was the fate of the Soviet development model the product of internal factors within Soviet leaders' control? Though this is a question for historians, Kalinovsky ties it to broader one for economists, politicians, and anyone else interested in issues of development and inequality: "How, ultimately, can one design a development program that actually helps the people it claims to serve?" (250) While it would be far too much to ask Kalinovsky to answer such a question in this book, his illuminating perspective on the Soviet experience of development may bolster the case for that Tajik Party activist in a certain way: perhaps the question must be answered dialectically.

Review by Nils Gilman, Berggruen Institute

The book takes as its focus the construction of the giant Nurek dam in Soviet Tajikistan during the 1960s: the political and economic context that led to its implementation, and the social and environmental consequences that followed. Although at a surface level this appears to be a rather conventional topic – namely dam-building, a classic symbol of mid-century monumental development ambitions¹—Artemy Kalinovsky makes a number of methodological innovations, integrating multiple archival records with ethnographic research. The result is one of the few books in the rapidly growing subfield of the history of development that covers the ‘full spectrum’ of a developmental episode from doctrine, to planning, to implementation, to lived experience.² Kalinovsky in the end offers a microhistory of developmentalism as it played out in one remote corner of Central Asia, but discusses it in ways that fruitfully illuminate the global project of “the development century.”³

¹ Dams were a central focus, both practically and symbolically, of mid-century developmentalism, as David Ekbladh laid out compellingly in “‘Mr. TVA’: Grass-Roots Development, David Lilienthal, and the Rise and Fall of the Tennessee Valley Authority as a Symbol for US Overseas Development, 1933–1973,” *Diplomatic History* 26:3 (2002): 335-374; see also Nick Cullather, “Damming Afghanistan: Modernization in a Buffer State,” *The Journal of American History* 89:2 (2002): 512-537 and Maria Kaika, “Dams as Symbols of Modernization: The Urbanization of Nature between Geographical Imagination and Materiality,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 96:2 (2006): 276-301. For precisely this reason, dams have also been the target of particularly polemical treatment in the critical historiography of development, as well as in anti-development activism. A few recent examples: Allen F. Isaacman and Barbara S. Isaacman, *Dams, Displacement, and the Delusion of Development: Cahora Bassa and its Legacies in Mozambique, 1965-2007* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2013); Stephan F. Miescher, “‘Nkrumah’s Baby’: the Akosombo Dam and the Dream of Development in Ghana, 1952-1966,” *Water History* 6:4 (2014): 341-366. On anti-dam activism, see Sanjeev Khagram, *Dams and Development: Transnational Struggles for Water and Power* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); Paul Routledge, “Voices of the Dammed: Discursive Resistance amidst Erasure in the Narmada Valley, India,” *Political Geography* 22:3 (2003): 243-270; Setsuko Matsuzawa, “Horizontal Dynamics in Transnational Activism: The Case of Nu River Anti-dam Activism in China,” *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 16:3 (2011): 369-387.

² For a recent survey of this growing literature, see Joseph Morgan Hodge, “Writing the History of Development (Part 1: The First Wave),” *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 6:3 (2015): 429-463 and Joseph Morgan Hodge, “Writing the History of Development (Part 2: Longer, Deeper, Wider),” *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 7:1 (2016): 125-174.

³ In his introduction and conclusion, Kalinovsky lays out a six-part periodization of Tajikistan’s path through the development century: Phase I, in the 1920s in the immediate wake of the Soviet takeover: Incumbent Tajik elites attempted to work with Moscow to bring material improvements while retaining the social structure; Phase II, 1930s-1953: the Stalinist phase, in which the old political class was liquidated and efforts were made to settle nomads and collectivize farming; Phase III, the 1950s-70s (the main focus of the book): focused on development through infrastructure investment in order to create a new inclusive and meritocratic social order of cosmopolitan socialist citizens; Phase IV, 1980s-90s: public expression of disillusionment with the failure to achieve the social ambitions of Soviet socialism is enabled by glasnost perestroika, privatization, and civil war; Phase V, 1990s to the early twenty-first century: the entry of western developmental institutions and INGOs, focused on particular issues such as education, legal reform, or women’s rights; and Phase VI, since the start of the twenty-first century: the massive entry of Chinese

In his field-defining book *The Global Cold War* (2005), Odd Arne Westad argued that at the ideological heart of the Cold War struggle between the West and the Communist bloc was a debate over which side could provide the more compelling “development” blueprint for countries in the Global South.⁴ But if the two sides were ideologically at odds, the developmental enterprises of the two sides mirrored each other in a variety of ways. A central thrust of Kalinovsky’s book is to demonstrate the many isomorphic elements between Soviet and American models of development.

As Kalinovsky notes, mid-century American liberals famously considered the South of the United States an internal ‘underdeveloped’ or ‘backwards’ region, and made the South the site for America’s first experiments in integrated, government-led development, which would then be exported to other parts of the world.⁵ Likewise, for mid-century Soviet technocrats, Central Asia (the Soviet ‘South’) was seen as USSR’s internal backward region, and its development would be represented by Moscow as a model that other poor countries could follow. As the Soviet Union emerged from Stalinism, Kalinovsky explains, “The revival and acceleration of development projects within Central Asia could solve two dilemmas for Moscow”:

Rather than be perceived as a cotton colony and backwater, Central Asia would serve as a demonstration to the USSR’s own citizens that they were the beneficiaries of and participants in the Soviet drive for material achievement and modernization. Moscow could show the world that whereas ‘imperialist powers’ offered only exploitation, the Soviet model offered development without domination and inequality. The benefits would be material as well as political: successful modernization projects would also demonstrate the superiority of the Soviet economic system and technological power over its American alternative (30).

As in the West, the Soviet definition of development became continuously more complex and nuanced over the course of the twentieth century—moving from a focus on increasing agricultural productivity, to industrialization and gross output growth, to improved consumption, to eventually ‘social development,’ that is, improvement to health and educational attainment. The Nurek project thus became more than just a model for how to industrialize a backward agricultural region. It was also meant to instantiate and demonstrate a new cosmopolitan model of Communist sociability. Building the dam not only empowered locals, but also entailed bringing in workers in from across the Soviet Union, thus demonstrating a kind of ‘internal’ Communist internationalism. By the late 1960s the Soviet national tourism agency was encouraging visitors from abroad to come to Nurek to “observe and experience the reality of Soviet domestic internationalism” which, it was believed, would “demonstrate the Soviet commitment to anti-colonialism and its suitability as a model for Third World Nations” (133).

investment, as part of China’s regional Belt and Road strategy, which entails as in Phase III heavy investment in infrastructure projects, albeit unburdened of the visions of inclusion and social transformation.

⁴ Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁵ Kalinovsky here follows David Ekbladh, *Great American Mission: Modernization and the Construction of an American World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

Although the Soviets did not use the word ‘modernity’—the goal of development was ‘Communism’ not ‘modernity’—Kalinovsky shows that they nonetheless shared a very similar *image* of modernity with the West, rooted in big infrastructure and rapid industrialization, on the one hand, and a scientific, cosmopolitan, secular mindset in individuals, on the other. “Like leaders of postcolonial and developing countries, [Soviet leaders] hoped dam construction and irrigation schemes, industrialization, and education would radically transform their republics and make modern subjects out of their citizens” (2). Indeed, the Soviets prefigured western developmentalists in their emphasis on remaking the sociological and psychological aspects of the human population within developing regions. For the Soviet and Tajik developmentalists, creating the new ‘Communist man’ was a feature of the developmental enterprise from the beginning, whereas Westerners only got around to arguing that the aim of development was ‘Making Men Modern’ with Harvard sociologist Alex Inkeles in the late 1960s.⁶ Indeed, the fact that Inkeles started out as a student of the Soviet Union may have been what inspired him to think about Western development projects in these terms.⁷

Though Kalinovsky brilliantly elucidates the many resemblances between Western and Soviet developmental discourses and practices, he is somewhat ambiguous about the extent of actual *influence*. Were the Soviet and Tajik economists simply uncovering universal tensions and contradictions inherent in all developmental projects, or were they reading the western economists in order to formulate their arguments? Consider the debates over whether population growth represented an opportunity or a threat to development, or the role of women in development, which have been extensively covered in the literature on western theories and practices of economic development. Kalinovsky demonstrates that these Western debates were largely paralleled in the Soviet case. While it seems clear that few if any Western economists were studying Soviet developmental practices for lessons to apply in the West, it is unclear whether there may have been influence in the other direction.

The Cold War competition also generated opportunities for regional actors to engage in claim-making against central authorities.⁸ One of Kalinovsky’s most compelling findings is the relative autonomy of regional developmental ambitions within the Soviet Union. For Tajikistani economists, the proper object of development and industrialization was not the Soviet sphere as a whole, but the Tajik economy specifically. Whereas central planners in Moscow thought in terms of the development of the whole Soviet economy (or even the integrated development of what might be called the whole Soviet world system), and therefore encouraged regional specialization, Tajikistani economists of the 1950s-60s argued that such a view was tantamount to treating them as an internal colony, a mere supplier of raw materials to the already-industrialized regions of the Soviet Union: “In the 1950s, Tajikistani politicians would use anti-colonial arguments, with some success, in support of the industrialization of their republic. The necessity of

⁶ Alex Inkeles, “Making Men Modern: On the Causes and Consequences of Individual Change in Six Developing Countries,” *American Journal of Sociology* 75:2 (1969): 208-225.

⁷ See Alex Inkeles and Raymond A. Bauer, *The Soviet Citizen: Daily Life in a Totalitarian Society* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961).

⁸ As Kalinovsky points out, in this sense his book replicates for the Soviet Union the insights of Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009) and Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011) with respect to the United States: for both superpowers, the ideological pressures of Cold War competition globally put pressure on the central authorities to address significant internal reforms of political, economic, and social injustices at home.

demonstrating development at home, dictated by the spread of the Cold War to the newly decolonizing world, gave them an opportunity to push projects that planners in Moscow had previously rejected” (33). The debate over the Soviet Union’s internal development thus echoed debates outside the Communist sphere between economists (mostly in the Global North) who argued for development on the basis of regional comparative advantage, and those (more typically from the Global South) who argued for the modes of development that would enable the industrialization of their countries—e.g. Import Substitution Industrialization.

The role of personal experience

Another strength of this book is Kalinovsky’s account of the role of personal experiences in the history of the Nurek project. On one level, Kalinovsky emphasizes the importance of personal experience of the peculiarities of living in a backward region in driving the critique of the ‘metropolitan’ development theories. The experience of growing up in Tajikistan not only gave Tajikistani economists a rooting interest in development programs that would benefit their home province, but also special insights into the challenges and opportunities that were specific and particular to that part of the Soviet Union. As in much of the developing world, the greatest enthusiasts for planned development schemes were not so much the metropolitan intellectuals and political leaders, as local elites seeking to elevate their status within the macrosystem. Kalinovsky focuses not just on the top intellectuals and political leaders, but also on the experiences of lower level bureaucrats and the people in villages actually affected by the developmental schemes in Tajikistan—this is a cultural and social history of development, as well as an intellectual one. (However, it is not an economic history: we get very little specific quantitative information about the scale of the economic or social transformations effectuated by Tajikistan’s development, and no detail at all about the technical models that were used to justify and implement development schemes.)

On another level, Kalinovsky also emphasizes what it was like to live through the experience of the Nurek project. Here he emphasizes the genuinely liberating effect of developmental projects, something that often gets lost in many ‘critical’ discussions of the negative or limited effects of developmentalism: “Marginalized individuals, including peasant women and young men from remote areas of the republic, often found the experience of joining large Soviet development projects, such as the construction of the Nurek dam, genuinely liberating and fulfilling.” It allowed them to escape the narrow confines and social structures of their native societies. The Nurek dam was not just an infrastructure project, in other words, but rather entailed a “remaking of Tajikistani subjectivities” (146). The development of educational institutions, in particular new universities, helped create a new elite, and a new identity for the elite, in Tajikistan—new forms of dress (European), language (Russian), and cognition (scientific) all signified the coming of a new elite. While some members of families of the older, pre-Soviet elite made the transition into the new elite, unquestionably there were many from relatively modest backgrounds for whom the development of a new infrastructure of meritocratic achievement provided a pathway to power and status that would otherwise never have been available to them. The ultimate sign of having ‘made it’ was a sojourn to graduate education in Moscow or Leningrad. In other words, Tajikistani developmentalism really did enable social mobility.

In this emphasis on personal experiences, Kalinovsky also obliquely nuances ‘totalitarian’ views of the Soviet state. On the one hand, he emphasizes the sincerity of the Soviet state’s commitment to improving the livelihoods of people in the provinces and countryside—providing educational, health care, and cultural services and improving access to electricity, consumer goods, and potable water—even as it undoubtedly used coercive and traumatizing methods to deliver those results, such as forced relocations. On the other hand,

those coercive methods could be resisted in various passive ways of the sort that James Scott cataloged in *Weapons of the Weak* (1985).⁹ For example, Kalinovsky recounts “incidents of families convincing drivers who had been paid to take them to their new *kolkhoz* to take them elsewhere—presumably because they had heard bad things about the place where they were expected and preferred to try their luck on other farms. The fact that farm managers apparently accepted such families rather than reporting them and forcing them to move to farms where they were expected again points to the way labor needs increased hoarding among managers and provide peasants with the means to escape state coercion” (188).

Let me conclude by calling out in particular Chapter 6, which takes the form of an ethnography based on a clever conceit: Kalinovsky sought out local Tajikistanis who had been the showcased subjects of propaganda campaigns in the 1960s during the heyday of the Nurek project—the liberated muslim woman, the engineer come up from the farm, etc.—and inquired what they make of their experiences now, half a century later. It serves as a kind of ‘where are they now’ column, performed with anthropological and historical sensitivity. For almost all of them, being selected to be a literal poster child for Soviet developmentalism was one of the highlights of their lives. While most recognized that the project had not achieved all the hopes that had been invested in it, they almost all appreciated having been part of it. Any effective global history of development needs to acknowledge this sort of complexity.

⁹ James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008 [1985]).

Review by Kristy Ironside, McGill University

Long the poorest and most ‘backward’ Soviet republic (to use the Bolsheviks’ terminology), Tajikistan was the recipient of a great amount of aid and resources as the Soviet government attempted to refashion the former Tsarist colony as a modern, industrial, socialist state and model for the decolonizing world. In charting these efforts in the late Soviet period in this fascinating book, Artemy Kalinovsky makes two important interventions in the fields of international and economic history. First, he writes the experiences of Soviet/Tajik leaders, intelligentsia, and ordinary citizens into the story of the rise and fall of interest in and commitment to development economics across the globe in the second half of the twentieth century. Despite using ideologically idiosyncratic language, Soviet approaches to, and experiences of, development resembled the aspirations, pitfalls, and failures of development seen elsewhere; the Soviet Union even turned against it by the 1980s for many of the same reasons Western states came to conclude that aid was creating dependency, not self-sufficiency, in the ‘Third World.’ Second, although Kalinovsky acknowledges that the project of transforming Tajikistan into a model postcolonial state was a failure, he emphasizes that this project held great appeal for many Tajiks, who threw themselves headlong into grandiose construction projects like the Nurek Dam and sensed ways to benefit themselves, their families, and their communities in development efforts that were nominally initiated by outsiders. In large part, this was because construction sites and industrial combines came hand-in-hand with hospitals, schools, theatres, and clubs—in other words, with the benefits of the welfare state. By highlighting the ways people actively participated in the improvement of themselves and of their republic, Kalinovsky provides a useful counterweight to histories of the Soviet welfare state that have emphasized its state-led dimensions and thus its more coercive and instrumental characteristics.¹

As Kalinovsky shows, the drive to modernize Tajikistan began in the wake of the revolution and proceeded under Joseph Stalin in the form of industrialization and collectivization, but it was not until the Khrushchev years and the intensification of the ideological battle between the Soviet Union and the West for the ‘Third World’ that this project picked up speed. Soviet leaders, eager to not be seen as imperialists and to secure the loyalties of the governments of newly decolonized countries, grasped that overcoming colonial legacies in Central Asia and the Caucasus would help Moscow reach out to postcolonial states (19). This prompted them to pour resources into completing the decolonization of Central Asia within the Soviet Union’s borders. Central Asian Party leaders, in turn, became lobbyists and advocates on behalf of their republics, competing against one another for investments from the central government (42). Interest in the republic’s development was not the province of Party leaders and technocrats alone; a new Tajik intelligentsia began to emerge after being decimated during the Great Terror and in the wake of the Second World War, one that was devoted to its republic’s cultural development. Stalinabad (now Dushanbe) became a more cosmopolitan city during these years (47-50). The opening of Tajikistan’s first university and increased access to higher education opened up a world of opportunities, not only for the children of local elites but also for those of poorer and rural families. As a result of the formative experience of university life, students became self-consciously modern and ‘cultured’ (*kul’turnyi*) Soviet citizens (54-58).

¹ See, in particular, the literature on the Soviet welfare state under Stalin in the 1930s: Stephen Kotkin, “Modern Times: The Soviet Union and the Interwar Conjecture,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 2:1 (2001): 111-164; David L. Hoffman, *Cultivating the Masses: Modern State Practices and Soviet Socialism, 1914-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

In figuring out how to best develop Tajikistan, the Soviet government increasingly turned to the expertise of economists. As Kalinovsky rightly points out, Soviet scholars should pay more attention to lower-level economists, rather than big-name (usually mathematical) theorists, for a host of researchers and bureaucrats “working in relative obscurity” produced “assessments and studies [that] gradually dismantle[d] one set of assumptions and [laid] the foundations for another” (68). In particular, Tajik economists sought to show that the republic’s rapid population growth made it an ideal locale for large-scale industrial projects, despite its remote location and other unfavorable factors. Ibadullo Kasimovich Narzikulov, for example, forcefully argued that Tajikistan’s large population was a valuable untapped resource. Once industrial projects began, economists were also deployed to help understand why this massive labor reserve was not joining the industrial workforce in anticipated numbers. Their work introduced new questions and new vocabulary into the Soviet approach to labor problems, including the roles of values and the family in determining life choices (79). This was especially the case when it came to explaining why women were not joining the industrial workforce. The economist Rano Ubaidullaeva argued, for example, that encouraging women’s participation in cottage labor might be a temporary step on the path to them becoming modern industrial workers.

The construction of the Nurek dam—in many ways, the showpiece of these development efforts and the subject of more than one chapter in this book—brought many of these questions about labor and the use of resources into sharp relief. While doing oral interviews for this book, Kalinovsky expected to find evidence of opposition to the dam but was surprised to find none (93). Kalinovsky explains this by looking at how locals seized the various opportunities the dam’s construction presented. Nurek, in Kalinovsky’s portrayal, served the Soviet goals of modernization, ‘culturedness,’ and internationalism. Hiring practices and the culture of work on the dam revolved around internationalist values: workers were recruited from across the Soviet Union and, once there, were encouraged to identify with workers of different nationalities on the basis of membership in the Soviet family (108-109). Nurek was going to be not just the tallest dam in the world, but also a “beautiful” Soviet city replete with modern amenities, for which local officials and activists aggressively lobbied (117). The dam’s construction, however, resulted in many problems: aside from its environmental impact, it caused a massive shortage of housing and consumer goods and heightened tensions between Russians and Tajiks, as well as between locals and newcomers. As a result, it was easy to recruit workers but difficult to retain them. At the same time, it presented opportunities to realize Soviet aspirations of a modern, supra-national, prosperous society. “Local residents, managers, and party activists tried to find a way to make reality approximate stated ideals of Soviet equality and welfare,” Kalinovsky argues (141).

In doing the research for this project, Kalinovsky interviewed several Party leaders, workers, activists, and ordinary Tajiks, who worked on the Nurek dam or in Party and government capacities in Tajikistan. Many remain proud of their achievements to the present day. Their biographies share much with the ‘hero narratives’ of model Soviet workers like Stakhanovites, as Kalinovsky notes, but also of Soviet people who broke out of poverty and ignorance to become modern citizens (145-150). The construction of the dam and the Soviet state’s increased investment in Tajikistan presented opportunities for women, in particular, to break free from the confines of the household and become modern Soviet women—women like Jumagul Nazakova, who refused her arranged marriage and became Nurek’s first female crane operator. While the republic’s incomplete industrialization and, in particular, its cotton industry (which failed to become fully mechanized and still relied heavily upon child labor) in many ways doomed the republic to economic backwardness, the expansion of education, health care, and an avowed commitment to gender equality that came with these economic efforts “clearly provided opportunities which were appreciated and cherished” (176).

Amid these domestic development efforts, Tajikistan was expected to serve as a model for the outside world. “Central Asians were expected to step in to the role of ‘elder brother’ for the developing world previously played for them by the Russians,” Kalinovsky writes, emphasizing that Tajik leaders were well aware this was expected of them (204). This mission came under increasing strain after the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan, with which Tajikistan shared some cultural and linguistic similarities and which was supposed to be one of the primary audiences for its guidance. Moreover, by the late 1970s and definitely in the 1980s, the Soviet government’s commitment to Tajikistan’s development crumbled under the pressures of a worsening economic crisis and an increasing sense in Moscow that the associated projects had become wasteful boondoggles. Corruption scandals and an increasingly prevalent sense that some nations of the Soviet Union were simply ‘not ready’ for development undermined the universalist, supra-national thrust of earlier development efforts (222-223). Tajikistan was now seen not as a model to be emulated, but as a cautionary tale. Increased freedom of the press under Mikhail Gorbachev moved these discussions from specialist journals and Party headquarters into newspapers and the public sphere, helping to ratchet up popular discontent. As the Soviet Union collapsed, Tajikistan mobilized along national, regional, and ideological lines and descended into a brutal civil war in 1992-1997 that would undo earlier efforts to lift the country up out of poverty.

Throughout the book, Kalinovsky points to the theories and concepts of Western development economists, such as Albert Hirschman’s idea of the “hiding hand” or Ester Boserup’s ideas about women’s labor, and draws parallels with Soviet economists’ observations and the Soviet experience. Although this helps to de-alienate the Soviet story, the parallels only go so far, and this approach has, in my opinion, the effect of sapping some of the ideological content of Soviet initiatives. As Kalinovsky acknowledges at the beginning of the book, the Soviet Union did not think of its project as ‘development’—it was building Communism, understood as an industrialized economy and welfare state (6-7). Communism presented valuable opportunities to those who embraced it and Kalinovsky presents the reader with a panoply of characters who did so, some of whom, as new Soviet men and women, were even able to reconcile incompatible practices, such as Party activism and religious conviction, or enthusiastic labor and prayer breaks at work. But it also needs to be explicitly acknowledged that Communism denied opportunities to develop the country to Tajiks who did not embrace it, or who had different ideas about what ‘improvement’ entailed and were not only not asked for their opinions but were actively silenced. That said, I find Kalinovsky’s imperative at the very end of the book that “we should not be so quick to assume, as some critics of development do, that what is local is necessarily liberating” very intriguing (255). Far from a model of economic development to be unreservedly praised and emulated, the Soviet approach nevertheless was able to “accommodate quite a bit of diversity, both formally and informally, as it sought a path to material prosperity and equality,” and it rallied people around the lofty “ideals of solidarity and universality” (255). So long as there was a sense of momentum and optimism that these goals could be realized, a great deal was able to be accomplished.

Author's Response by Artemy M. Kalinovsky, University of Amsterdam

When I wrote *Laboratory of Socialist Development*, I hoped that it would reach four academic audiences: specialists working on Central Asia, historians of the USSR, those interested in the Cold War and decolonization, and scholars of development. I am grateful to H-Diplo for organizing a roundtable with scholars who represent each of those fields, and to the reviewers for their generous, careful, and insightful reading of *Laboratory of Socialist Development*. As is to be expected, each individual reader responded to different aspects of the book. Each also raises some questions and some critical points, which I will address below. Before I do that, however, I wanted to take the opportunity to talk about how I went about researching this book.

I had originally envisioned a history of local political elites, and I started out by collecting material on party members from the microfilmed files held at the Hoover Institution. Once I realized that this would be a development story, I shifted my focus to economic organs—especially the USSR Council of Ministers. It was there that I discovered that republic-level state and party officials were referring to local scholars when they put together requests to authorities in Moscow. I began to dig deeper into knowledge production in the republics, especially Tajikistan, and the relationship between researchers in Moscow and those in Central Asia. Piecing together biographies of these individuals through oral history and memoirs, I began to appreciate how well-traveled some of them were, how much their position enabled them to see the world outside the USSR. But it also led me to wonder about the relationship between what these social scientists, planners, and party officials proposed, and the daily, lived experience, of development. That, in turn, led me to look for information about the kind of people who did not, generally, leave behind memoirs—peasants and workers on industrial projects like the Nurek Dam. Not surprisingly, the archival record, even at the district level, makes it difficult to understand these people as individuals. Unless they achieved enough success in the system to earn some position of authority in the Communist party or as professionals, we learn little about their lives. The archive silences certain voices, and so do memoirs. Oral history can fill gaps and provide new perspectives, but it comes with its own biases. Who is ready to tell their story? How do I, as a historian, know to seek out people who have left no traces in the archives?

I therefore completely agree with Kristy Ironside that it “needs to be explicitly acknowledged that Communism denied opportunities to develop the country to Tajiks who did not embrace it, or who had different ideas about what ‘improvement’ entailed and were not only not asked for their opinions but were actively silenced.” I would make the point even more forcefully: for many people, Soviet modernization was experienced only as assault: on livelihoods, on traditions, on familiar ways of life. I try to show this particularly in chapters 4 and 7, when I describe the strategies of flight employed by peasants, but also in chapters 8 and 9, where I try to show the limits that even those who in principle supported Soviet development faced in challenging certain paradigms. The archives obscure the individual lives of these people, but they do give us a sense of the choices they faced. It was through the archival record that I learnt of the strategies used by those who did not want to take part in resettlement campaigns, even if I learned little about those people as individuals.

Silences can be suggestive. A bureaucratic form, not yet filled in, speaks volumes: it was meant for inspectors keeping track of the resettlement campaign, to note down instances when individuals or families returned to home villages. Clearly the problem was widespread. On several occasions, I walked away from a group interview thinking more about the people who did not speak than those who did. And I tried to think about what was left unsaid in interviews and memoirs. But I could not plug the gaps—at best, I could try to make

the reader aware of what they (might) mean. I tried, particularly in chapters 1, 2, and 4, to consider how the shadow cast in the Stalin era continued to shape the more hopeful decades that followed. Although I cannot prove it, I think it is fair to assume that the legacy of the terror partially explains the relatively muted nature of resistance even after 1953.

As I struggled to understand the relationship between ideas, politics, and the lived reality of socialist development, I came to appreciate ways in which the story was uniquely Soviet, but also how much my questions echoed the work of other development scholars. Ironside finds that the comparisons with non-Soviet development practices and paradigms have the effect of “sapping some of the ideological content of Soviet initiatives.” If so, this was certainly not intended. On the contrary, what I hoped to bring into focus was precisely that similar paradigms or technologies could play out very differently precisely because of the role played by Soviet ideology. Jeremy Friedman points out correctly that the relationship between ‘ideals’ and ‘ideology’ could be clearer. As I understand it, ‘internationalism’ and ‘solidarity’ are both part of socialist ideology as adopted in the Soviet Union. The power of ideology, or rather its significance for the cases I studied, comes not from any individual’s conscious belief in the ideology or reflection on those ideals, but rather the way that these were inscribed into the workings of party and state organizations. It forced production managers to pay attention to the training and promotion of locals, and it served as a claim-making device for those affected by Soviet initiatives.

The reviewers also raise some questions to which I (still) do not have good answers. Moritz Florin finds it “unfortunate” that I did not elaborate on the “laboratory” metaphor. Almost a year out from the book’s publication, I wholeheartedly agree. I originally thought of the title when I came across documents suggesting that the Central Asian experience should be studied so as to provide guidance from developing countries (discussed in chapter 8). As I also point out, that idea was quickly abandoned, presumably because Soviet officials did not want to make open-ended commitments, especially where their control over outcomes would be (even) more limited than it was within the USSR. But I would not go so far as to say that the role of Tajikistan or other Central Asian republics as laboratories was limited to ‘propaganda.’ Central Asian experts were sent abroad not just because they were Central Asians (important as that was) but precisely because they were experts, and their experience was considered particularly useful to developing countries. Furthermore, it is clear that reflections on the Central Asian experience with industrial development, and the studies produced by social scientists, ultimately helped undermine the broader consensus on the applicability of universal models, the viability of transfers, and on the Soviet economy itself.

Nils Gilman writes that “while it is clear that few if any Western economists were studying Soviet developmental practices for lessons to apply in the West, it is unclear whether there may have been influence in the other direction.” Indeed, one of my greatest frustrations while conducting the research for this book was my inability to trace the sources of ideas pursued by my subjects. Drawing on knowledge from outside the socialist world was always politically risky—officially, at least, the USSR was supposed to be offering models to the world, not learning from capitalist countries. I learned from one economist that his support for family planning in the late socialist era had been inspired by conversations with Indian colleagues, but I found no references to the Indian experience in any of his writings, even in the relatively liberal perestroika years. The question of mutual influence is one I am still researching through other venues, and I hope to publish on this in the coming years.