

# Olympic Culture in Soviet Uzbekistan 1951-1991: International Prestige and Local Heroes

Sevket Akyildiz

## Introduction

Uzbekistan was officially established in 1924 by the victorious Bolsheviks as part of a larger union-wide 'Soviet people' building project. To legitimate and consolidate Moscow's rule the southern, largely Muslim, Asian territories (including Uzbekistan) were reorganized under the national delimitation processes of the 1920s and 1930s. Establishing the Soviet republics from the territory formerly known as Turkestan was based upon language, economics, history, culture and ethnicity. Soviet identity building was a dual process fostering state-civic institutions and identity and local national (ethnic) republic identity and interests. The creation of the national republics was part of the Soviet policy of multiculturalism best described a mixed-salad model (and is similar to the British multicultural society model). (Soviet ethnographers termed ethnicity as nationality.) Uzbekistan is situated within Central Asia, a region that the Russians term "Middle Asia and Kazakhstan" – some Western authors also term it "Inner Asia". Uzbekistan stretches south-east from the Aral Sea towards the Pamir Mountains, and shares borders with Afghanistan (137km), Kazakhstan (2,203km), Kyrgyzstan (1,099km), Tajikistan (1,161km), and Turkmenistan (1,161km). The climate is continental, with hot summers and cold winters.

The Uzbeks are a Turkic-speaking people largely Turkic (and Mongol) by descent - and predominately Sunni (Hanafi) Muslim by religious practice. Between 1917 and 1985 the population of Uzbekistan rose from approximately 5 million to 18 million people. However, Uzbekistan was a Soviet multicultural society, and during the Soviet period it contained more than 1.5 million Russian settlers and also included Karakalpaks, Kazakhs, Tajik, Tatars, and several of Stalin's deported peoples. In 1991, 85 per cent of Uzbeks lived in Uzbekistan; during Soviet rule the percentage of Uzbeks resident in Uzbekistan was approximately 69 per cent.



The boycott of the Moscow 1980 Summer Olympic Games by Western countries was a protest against USSR military intervention in Afghanistan (1979-1988). In the ideological war between the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and the Western liberal democracies sport was used as a non-violent alternative to a face-to-face shooting war and proxy-wars. The fusion of politics with sport in Western society most likely commenced with the Olympic athletic competitions between ancient Greek city-states. Likewise, sports culture was important in Soviet socialization of its citizens, and in constructing national prestige and building the ‘Soviet people’. However, some Western academic observers were moaning in the 1980s that Soviet socialization processes and practices were facing problems and challenges; some area specialists argued that the ‘Muslim’ peoples of Uzbekistan actively and passively resisted integration into Soviet society. Furthermore, they argued that the five Central Asian republics were under ‘colonial rule’ and that state-civic identification had failed to materialize amongst the locals. Below I refute this last claim by analyzing one facet of a core socialization channel (physical culture or *fizkultura*) that had some success. I will highlight Olympic culture (as part of physical culture) in Soviet Uzbekistan between 1951 and 1991. This is one legacy of the CPSU that has continued to function with notable alterations in post 1991 Uzbekistan. In justifying my thesis I will outline the nature of Soviet physical culture in fostering healthy young citizens in mind and body.. I briefly comment upon domestic criticism of the Soviet model of sports culture during *perestroika* and lastly, I summarize Olympic culture in the Uzbekistan of today; and list the Soviet Uzbek Olympic sports heroes.

## **Soviet physical culture**

### ***Cultural Revolution: New Opportunities***

CPSU control of socio-cultural transformation within Uzbekistan during the 1920s and 1930s involved the subordination of indigenous sports, dance, music, architecture, and costume to Europeanized Soviet culture (*Russification*). Moscow imprinted its culture and leisure pursuits across the physical landscape of the USSR and in the psychology of the many Soviet nations. At the same time, ‘Soviet nationalities policies’ were created to balance state-civic and nation (ethnic) building; state and sub-state identification was managed by Soviet nationalities policies and fostered by the education system. The aim was to ‘bring together’ (*sblizhenie*) and ideally ‘merge’ (*sliyanie*) the Soviet nations under a universal central state-civic paradigm (with the population sharing a socialist consciousness). Lenin had acknowledged and Stalin had legalized native cultures as an expression of national (ethnic)

identity building. Indeed, local cultures and national languages were said to continue long after the ‘merger’ of the Soviet nations. Within Uzbekistan, European-Russian socialist culture coexisted alongside Uzbek-Tajik-Zoroastrian-Islamic customs, practices, and arts and crafts (Hann 1991: 218-35). Soviet physical culture was part of a comprehensive youth upbringing programme (*vospitaniye*) and was embedded within Soviet culture. Sport was as important as the arts and sciences, particularly in integrating the multicultural union; a legislation entitled *On the Tasks of the Party in Physical Culture* (1925) kick-started sports policies. Western physical pedagogy does not offer such an intensive and universal model of national sports and hygiene, perhaps ‘physical education and science’ is as close as we can imagine. Soviet physical exercise was promoted to foster a sense of well-being, strengthen human physiology, improve dietary awareness and assist community relations. In building the communist utopia, an educated and physically-fit workforce was required to staff the new industries being established in Uzbekistan (Northrop 2004: 60-65). Moreover, in Soviet citizenship it was a civic duty to labour productively and defend the Motherland, thus physical strength and stamina was encouraged for all through sports.

The USSR Committee on Physical Culture and Sport (CPCS) developed and popularized sports, sporting facilities and trained staff within Uzbekistan, which was an ongoing project. Due to limited space I will not go into detail about the physical education in schools and colleges, but sport was written into the union-wide all-Union curriculum (Riordan 1978b: 38-51). Physical culture was structured and organized by an all-Union fitness programme and a ranking system. This programme was partnered by schools and colleges so that talented young sportspeople were monitored and provided with specialist training. Sports schools, summer camps, boarding schools and ‘professional’ coaches were provided for aspiring and capable young sportspeople.

### ***All-Union Civilian Fitness Programme***

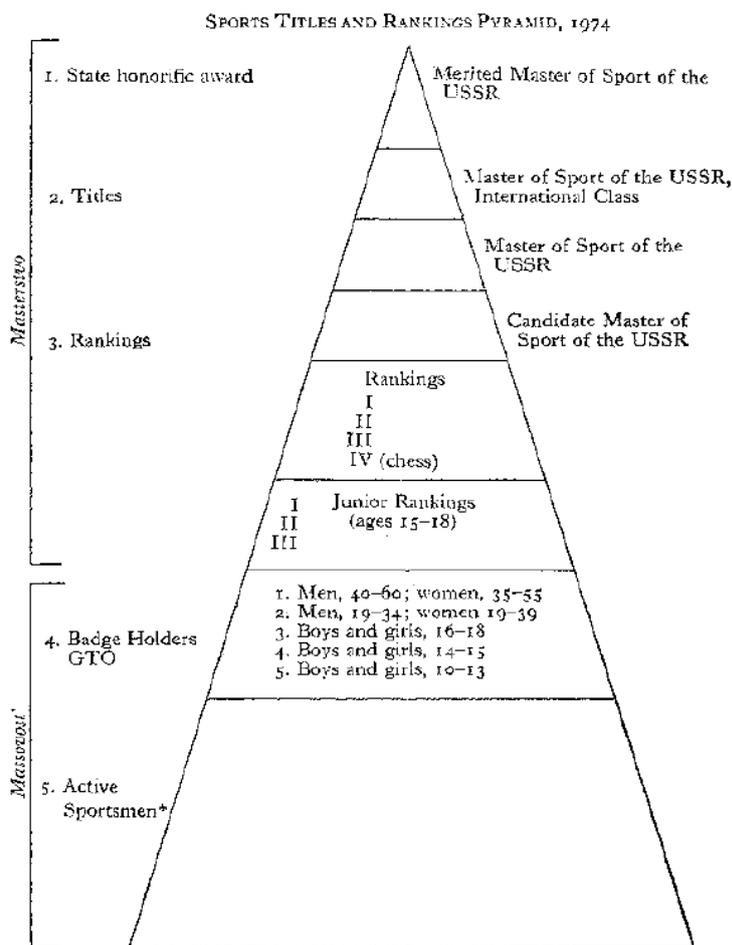
As noted above Soviet physical education had two strands: (i) Uniform Sports Ranking System; (ii) GTO Fitness - *Ready for Labour and Defence Programme*. These were connected and targeted able-bodied citizens aged 10 to 60; both elements were devised in the 1930s to establish mass participation (*massovost*) and proficiency (*masterstvo*).

The ranking system (revised in 1939; 1941; 1955; 1959; 1966 and 1972) awarded grades for individual sports. To attain second and third class grading it was necessary to have

previously achieved a required standard in the GTO programme.<sup>1</sup> An outline of the Soviet sports titles and rankings is given in Table A below.

The ranking system set performance standards and targets by which to grade all participants and to select Olympians. Both civilian and military fitness programmes were interlinked within this system. Almost 7 million achieved the lowest rankings in 1976 (Louis 1980: 16). Republic athletes and coaches could achieve the title of “Honoured Worker in Sports”, and “Honoured Worker in Physical Culture and Sports.”

Table A: Sports Titles and Rankings Pyramid 1974



\* Active sportsmen are officially defined as members of sports groups who engage in physical exercise or sport under the supervision of an instructor not less than twice a week over a minimum period of six months. In 1973, the number was put by Sergei Pavlov, Chairman of the Sports Committee, at 50 million people—i.e. one-fifth of the population (see *Soviet Weekly*, 24 November 1973, p. 16). By contrast to this 'global' figure, several micro-sociological surveys have indicated one-tenth of the population as a more realistic estimate. See L. A. Gordon, N. M. Rimashevskaya, *Pyatidnevnyaya rabochaya nedelya i svobodnoe vremya trudyashchikhsya* (M., 1972); I. M. Slepnev, B. V. Knyazev, *Molodezh' seta segodnya* (M., 1972); V. I. Azar, *Otdykh trudyashchikhsya SSSR* (M., 1972).

(Source: Riordan, J., 'Soviet Sport and Soviet Foreign Policy.' *Soviet Studies*. Vol. 26, No. 3. (Jul., 1974), p. 325.)

<sup>1</sup> See Edinaya vsesoyuznaya sportivnaya klassifikatsiya 1973-1976, Moscow, 1973, pp. 212-16, in N. N. Shneidman, *The Soviet Road to Olympus: Theory and Practice of Soviet Physical Culture and Sport* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979) at 143-48.

The GTO was core to mass physical education in terms of standards and content. Established in 1931 (and updated in 1972 and 1985), it was constructed by the USSR CPCS, trade unions, the military and the *Komsomol* (union-wide youth movement for young men and women aged 14/15 to 28). (Military personnel had their own military sports programme, introduced in 1966, that offered the “Soldier-Sportsman” badge). Managed by the GTO All-Union Council, the aims were, firstly, to foster mass participation in multiple sports (and introduce basic military training and civil defence, improve public hygiene, and create healthy worker-soldier-citizens). Secondly it was to spot, institutionalize and train young talented athletes. In order to gain a GTO medal it was necessary to pass a theoretical examination, as well as attain and display a measurable level of physical fitness (Riordan 1991: 72).<sup>2</sup>

### ***Building a Westernized Sports Culture in Uzbekistan***

Sport was made a ‘right’ by the CPSU for all citizens, men and women, and enshrined in the constitution (Article 41: 1977). During the 70 years of Party rule thousands of sports clubs and societies, associated with trade unions, the military and the *Komsomol* youth movement were established across the USSR in urban sectors and some rural sectors. Urban society contained all the socialization channels necessary for Soviet upbringing. Internalization of state-civic values was part of this socialization project. Leisure provision, even if preferred by the young for its ‘fun’ element rather than for its more serious purposes, helped to create worth and legitimacy for the CPSU. A bulk of funding came from Soviet sport institutions, trade unions and the security services. Accessing the minds and bodies of the Uzbek population was problematic, as throughout CPSU rule the majority of Uzbeks resided in the countryside – thus hindering effective socialization. This chosen lifestyle continues somewhat today. In seeking to indoctrinate the young with revolutionary zeal and harness their energies and enthusiasm, the CPSU attempted to stimulate enthusiasm and create opportunities. Social planning was centralized and the aim was to establish active local support amongst the citizenry for local development projects.

The first All-Central Asian Olympics were held at Tashkent in 1920 (with simultaneous events held in Omsk and Yekaterinburg – thus, linking Central Asia with all-Union sports competitions). Lasting for 10 days they were ethnically inclusive with almost 3,000 athletes from Turkestan, including Russians. Both folk and national games were offered. Folk games

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<sup>2</sup> See also Soviet émigré Shneidman, (1979) pp. 133-142, he cites Kuno Kulturos ir Sporto Komitetas prie Lietuvos TSR Ministru, Tarybus. Sajunginio Kuno Kulturos ‘Pasirenges Darbui ir TSRS Gynbai’ Komplekso Nuostatai. (Vilnius, 1972), pp. 21-33.

included local forms of standing upright wrestling, acrobatics, horseracing, archery and swordsmanship. Notably some folk games are not competitive but ‘entertainment’ and include humour for both participants and spectators (such as the Tajik horse race ‘chase the girl’) (Lukashin 1980). At the final ceremony, 1,500 athletes displayed gymnastics and folk games. A second Turkestan Olympics occurred in 1921. In subsequent decades modern Western-style sports would come to monopolize Soviet Uzbek leisure. An All-Turkestan Olympics was held in 1924; the first All-Uzbekistan *Spartakiad* (socialist sports event) took place in 1927. Further, local sports competitions and leagues were organized, allowing for mass entertainment, propaganda, ideological ritual, and the selection of elite athletes for further training. (Often sports events coincided with major political rallies, for instance, Constitution Day.)

Approximately 26,000 citizens in Uzbekistan were reported to have joined sports clubs by the end of 1926 (Riordan 1977: 80; 113) (Riordan 1978b: 19). The CPSU of the late 1920s and 1930s attacked the privileges of the *kulaks* (‘wealthy’ farmers) and Islamic charitable properties (*waqfs*). Resistance was suppressed or co-opted across the countryside. Accordingly, the regime was forging ahead in educating the young with new attitudes, values and beliefs. Sports facilities, though not perfect, were free, gender inclusive, and multiethnic with trained staff present to instruct. Such a mass approach successfully generated popular demand, fostering participation in sports and leisure that helped to integrate the first generations of Soviet Uzbek youth into the broader socialist society.

During the early decades those with access to sports facilities began to emerge as Uzbek sports amateurs from clubs situated in schools, colleges, and universities. Due to the egalitarian ethos of Marxism-Leninism and for pragmatic reasons to win hearts and minds, local Uzbek youths, regardless of family, tribe, religion, gender, and ethnicity were able, if they had the skill, ability and mental strength, to train for international competitions and even become citizen heroes/heroines. Heroes achieved cult-like status across the USSR; this was a policy promoted by Moscow designed to create role-models for the young and give all of the nationalities a sense of collective achievement. Such heroes would travel extensively across the USSR and perhaps meet top politicians, celebrities and journalists: “...semi-professional sport was a ticket from dusty village streets to national and international glory and fame” (Abazov 2007: 249).

Physical culture imprinted upon Uzbek society modern mass sports and helped achieve a ‘coming together’ of citizens in the Soviet National Leagues and in the USSR Olympic Team. This supported the socialist values of internationalism and patriotism. The goal was to get

Central Asian Uzbeks to cooperate, communicate and befriend their European Slavic colleagues within a Soviet national team.

Women's sport had visual impact on Uzbek society and challenged traditional norms and everyday costume. As claimed by Riordan, "[it] is a sobering thought that had the grandmothers of such Soviet Uzbek gymnasts as Nelli Kim and Elvira Saadi appeared in public clad only in a leotard, they would almost certainly have been stoned to death" (Riordan 1991: 61). Riordan compares Uzbek women active in daily sport in 1959 with those in 1969, finding that the figure rose from nearly 3.6 per cent to 10.8 per cent – in 1968, the percentage increase for women in Ukraine was 34.2 per cent (Riordan 1977: 318). In 1952 an Uzbek woman, Galina Shamray, won their first Olympic Gold for Uzbekistan.

### ***The USSR Joins the International Olympic Committee (IOC)***

Before world war two the CPSU refused to participate in 'bourgeois' international sporting organizations, preferring instead to join the Red Sport International, whereby workers sports teams from Europe, the USSR and the USA competed against each other. After 1945 policy aims changed and the USSR joined many international 'bourgeois' sports federations, including the IOC in 1951. The concepts of Soviet sports culture and chess were portrayed in propaganda during the Cold War as core elements of the cultural superiority of the Soviet regime and society over the West (J Riordan in Brown et al. 1994: 501). This made the Olympic Games a testing ground for the communist East and capitalist West (Riordan 1974: 321).

In the first appearance of the multicultural Soviet Olympic Team in the Summer Olympics of May 1952 they achieved joint first with the USA in the final medals table. Similarly, at their first Winter Olympics of 1956 in Italy the Soviets came first in the medals table. Soviet investment, purpose and organization set a pattern of domination in the Olympic Games' mid-twentieth century history. Generally, the USSR headed the medals tables between 1952 and 1992 in both the Summer Games and Winter Games. At the 1988 Seoul Summer Olympics the 464 Soviet athletes that competed won 288 medals in total – 130 of them were gold. The only Summer Olympics staged in a communist republic, before Beijing 2008, were held in Moscow from the 19<sup>th</sup> July to 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1980. As noted above, the event was boycotted by the USA and many Western countries. A negative aspect of Moscow's monomania with Olympic medals was the reduction in investment in mass participation ("sport for all").

## Some Issues

Corruption within domestic sport formed part of public debate in the late 1950s. Those who sponsored sports clubs – for instance, local party bosses, factory managers, trade union officials, KGB and army generals – were criticized by the Soviet newspapers such as *Izvestia* and sports fans alike for functioning in some cases as patrons for elite sportspeople (the clients). The fixing of games and matches was condemned, as was cheating by contestants. This was an all-Union problem and not confined to Uzbekistan and was not new in sports history. Illegal gambling groups and black market entrepreneurs were active in Soviet society and preceded the ‘puritanical’ Bolsheviks. Further, Soviet sources comment upon a disconnection between the lives and opportunities and values of elite athletes and the socialist, everyday values of the masses, especially mutual class struggle, empathy for the less fortunate and self-centredness.

As early as 1975, some ten years before *glasnost*, the official organ of Soviet sport *Sovetskii Sport* reported on a discussion between the Uzbekistan Sport Committee and footballers of the Tashkent based Pakhtator football team:

“At one meeting the lads were asked what they needed to give a good performance. In reply, it turned out that one needed a better apartment, another needed a telephone installed, and still others wanted hard-to-get (*defitsitnyi*) goods. No one remembered to say anything either about football or about training process” (Edelman 1993: 178).

Furthermore, athletes did not always play to the spirit of the game. At the fifteenth all-Uzbekistan *Spartakiad* in May 1971, two Uzbek boxers failed to appear for a match, whilst another boxer, a ‘Master of Sport’, refused to box difficult opponents; the judges stripped him of his title and banned him for two years. Criticism of falsified figures concerning participation in sport was reported in *Sovetskii Sport* (“Paper Muscles and Inflated Figures”, 29 May 1971: 2) revealed that the Bukhara *oblast* (region) reported having 904 registered weight-lifters in 79 clubs, when in fact the figure was closer to 100 weight-lifters in 4 clubs. Likewise in the Samarkand *oblast*, investigation discovered that membership figures and the quantity of clubs was four times less than reported. Also, this state of affairs was said to have happened in four other Uzbek *oblasts* (Riordan 1977: 307).

Gorbachev emphasized the principle of mass participation in sports policymaking. It was proposed to open more sport and health facilities, cater less for the elite athletes, and to make the sports experience enjoyable and accessible for all citizens, thereby, de-

emphasizing the functional use of sport to transform society. Such ideas were not new, as back in 1981 CPSU had criticized sports clubs that closed their door to all but the most talent youth (Riordan 1988b: 32).

### ***Soviet legacy: Olympics culture in Uzbekistan today***

Nation and state building policies implemented immediately after 1991 by the Uzbek government promoted the interests of the Uzbek political leaders and masses over and above those of the local Russians, Tajiks, Kyrgyz and others; with some pragmatic reflection, and in light of the emigration of hundreds of thousands of skilled Russians, citizenship policies were reappraised. The rights of minority groups were given consideration and legal status. (After all, today many Uzbeks work and reside in Russia. Thus some reciprocal agreement only seems ethical). The present Uzbek government, like their Soviet predecessors, seeks to harness the talents and abilities of a multicultural society. In the sporting sphere Uzbekistan is represented regionally and internationally by Uzbek national teams displaying a new national anthem, flag and emblem. (In fact, young men from all ethnic groups and classes partake in some form of military service in the Uzbek military, as they did when part of the USSR.) Physical culture has the potential to assist the government integrate a multicultural society, create a sense of national 'pride', provide the youth with a space to 'let off steam', and function as a partner in national health programmes. Consequently, Uzbek cultural identity formation is enhanced by uniting the population around sporting events. Indeed, shared cultural experiences help reinforce common values across an otherwise pluralist society, for example, in the preliminary stages of the Football World Cup. Building on the legacy of Soviet coaching and sports science, the present day Uzbekistan Ministry of Cultural and Sports Affairs is attempting to create a national sporting and leisure culture for domestic consumption and international prestige. For political and popular reasons, Uzbek folk games have experienced a revival of interest post-1991.

Participation in the Olympic Games continues for Uzbekistan. Uzbek government funding of facilities and services for local olympians in training has to compete with other forms of socio-cultural investment. Indeed, some provision must be made to ensure that young up-and-coming athletes are sponsored and encouraged to represent their town, region and nation. With the changing of official attitudes towards mass participation it is no longer compulsory for government officials and commissars to mobilize the masses around sporting festivals and pageants. Such events have been de-centralized. Individual and small group leisure pursuits, already evident in 1980s Soviet society, are the norm. Such a dynamic has consequences for state-civic socialisation. For example, different sports separate people by

class and prevent a shared cultural experience. (National holidays such as Independence Day are, however, occasions of mass participation in semi-organized events.) Ironically, the Olympic Games are the model that most closely resembles the Soviet organized sports events; the CPSU copied and enhanced the pre-existing, highly structured and regimented Olympic paradigm. (Actually, the 1936 Olympics in Germany developed sports ceremonial ritual to suit Nazi totalitarian culture.)

The legacy of the CPSU era is still apparent in Soviet architecture in the form of sports stadiums and clubs (and in the perceived need to compete on the international sporting arena and be seen to do so). Uzbek sportspeople compete in the Commonwealth of Independent States Tournaments, and won 51 medals (including 15 gold) at the fourteenth Asian Games in Pusan, South Korea in 2002. It is estimated that 2 billion people worldwide watch the Olympic Games on television. Uzbek participation in international sporting events offers international recognition for the efforts and organizational abilities of the government, and showcases the spirit of the nation. Prior to the Beijing Olympics both the Uzbek government and private sponsors increased their funding to the national Olympic Team. The legacy of socialist gender equality policy is evident by the representation of women athletes in the national team. Similarly, Uzbek citizens from the ethnic Russian and other minority communities have won medals for Uzbekistan. Data available reveals that on average the Uzbek Olympic Team have won as many medals as an independent republic as they did when Moscow controlled Uzbek policy on physical culture.

The days when Moscow provided funding and grants for athletes and trainers are long over. Consequently, sport in independent Uzbekistan is dependent on restricted government budgets, charities and benefactors. Commercialization of sport is a global phenomenon and since independence, many former state-owned clubs have closed especially in rural locations. Some rural villages have few leisure amenities. Private sport, health and recreation clubs have opened in urban centres. Globalization and mass consumerism have reached Uzbekistan; both Western sports and folk sports (such as archery, wrestling and fencing) remain popular in Uzbekistan. Televised transmissions of the Summer and Winter Olympics, the Football World Cup, ice hockey, gymnastics and figure skating competitions attract large numbers of Uzbek viewers (often as family oriented passive leisure experiences). Football, martial arts and boxing are popular male spectator sports, whilst basketball, volleyball and baseball are the sports played at school. Uzbek youths are being raised in a globalised technological world of the web and mobile phone, some youths enjoy rollerblading, skateboarding, and Western influenced youth popular culture. Clearly the fusion of Western and Eastern cultures continues regardless of hegemonic ideology. At least

in this instance, Marxism-Leninism was partly correct as a coming together of different peoples and nations is underway in the guise of globalization and physical culture, however implemented, has a significant role in this project (Abazov 2007: 45-55; 59-73).<sup>3</sup>

### **Collating Soviet Uzbek Olympic heroes 1952-1991**

Rywkin (1990) argued that “[u]nlike American blacks or former French and British colonial subjects, Central Asian Muslims have never aspired to social integration with those who held power over them” (Rywkin 1990: 113). Evidence below disputes this claim and I use it as an anti-thesis to some Western area specialists who claimed that Uzbeks resisted attempts by Moscow to incorporate them into socialist people-building – at least in the context of physical culture. The story behind each Uzbek athlete is a team of coaches, teachers, *Komsomol* members, family and friends, all of whom supported the physiological and emotional health of the olympian. Participation and success of Uzbek athletes alongside non-Uzbek citizens of Uzbekistan and other Soviet citizens would have required a degree of empathy with the goals and values of the CPSU. Notably patriotic upbringing emphasized values of duty and collective struggle; in addition, the lifestyle offered by sports culture was ‘fun’ and provided participants with social recognition, and for the high achievers social status, foreign travel and material goods, thus providing personal worth for the efforts made. Below I outline Uzbek Olympic athletes from the 1952 to the 1992 games (they also participated in European, Asian, and World Championships). The sportspeople have been classified as ‘Uzbek’ by the National Olympic Committee of (Independent) Uzbekistan, but some of them, judging by their names, were ethnic Russians or Tartars living and training within Uzbekistan. The Soviet Olympic Team was multiethnic, as was the ethnic make-up of Uzbekistan (although a majority of the population of Uzbekistan, approximately 70 per cent, were ethnic Uzbeks).

Helsinki 1952: Two Uzbeks participated: Galina Shamray in women’s rhythmic gymnastics and Sergey Popov in athletics. This was the first exposure of Uzbekistan to the Olympics; Shamray was the first Uzbek to win an Olympic gold medal.

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<sup>3</sup> See also International Olympic Committee, 'The Olympic Movement', <<http://www.olympic.org/>>, accessed 19 June 2009.; B.B.C. Sport, 'Olympics', <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport/>>, accessed 25 May 2010 2010.

Melbourne 1956 and Rome 1960: Uzbekistan was represented by one athlete, Valentina Ballod in the high jump. Her Soviet ranking was Honour Master of Sport. She subsequently worked as an athletics coach in the USSR.

Tokyo 1964: Svetlana Babanina participated in two Olympics, twice winning Olympic medals. At Tokyo, she was the third in 200m breaststroke and in the 4x100m swimming medley relay (and she too went on to work as a sports coach.) Alongside her in third place was Natalya Ustinova in the of 4x100m medley swimming relay final. Sergey Diamidov contributed in gymnastics, winning the silver medal. Alexey Koklushev, though a participant, was unable to compete in the cycling event due to illness.

Mexico 1968: Five Uzbek athletes participated in the USSR team: Svetlana Babanina, Natalya Ustinova, Vera Duyunova, Michail Koklyushev, Sergey Konov. The most successful was Vera Duyunova, who won an Olympic gold medal in volleyball. She went on to chair a volleyball organization in Tashkent. Sergey Konov did not win a medal – after retiring from professional sport in 1975, he became a lecturer in science and pedagogy, and became Chair of the Uzbekistan State Physical Culture Institute. Michail Koklyushev represented Uzbekistan in the Soviet cycling team (and was six times Soviet Union champion and World records-holder at 1000m). On retiring from sport he joined the police in Uzbekistan.

Munich 1972: This was the second Olympics and the second gold for Vera Duyunova in volleyball. Gold medals were won by Elvira Saadi in gymnastics and Rustem Kazakov in wrestling. The fourth gold won in Munich was by Alzhan Zharmuhamedov, a member of the Soviet Union's basketball team (that defeated the USA). Nikolay Anfimov, a boxer, and Alexander Yudin, a cyclist, reached the quarterfinals.

Montreal 1976: A gold medal was won by Elvira Saadi in gymnastics. Rufat Riskiev won silver in boxing at Montreal. He was an idol for Soviet youth, and assisted in the development of boxing in Uzbekistan. Sabirjan Ruziev was part of a fencing team that took fourth place. Valeriy Dvoryaninov was a member of an equestrian team achieving fifth place. Vladimir Fedorov played football in Uzbekistan, and was part of the USSR football team that won the bronze medal.

Moscow 1980: Was boycotted by the USA, Germany, Japan and other countries protesting against Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Yuriy Kovshov won two medals, a gold and a silver one, in equestrian events. Larisa Pavlova was awarded a gold medal as part of the Soviet volleyball team. Two gold medals were won by Olga Zubareva in the handball team,

and Erkin Shagaev, for the victory in the water polo team. Sabirjan Ruziev won silver in fencing. (He won medals at the European championships, World championships, and USSR Fencing championships. Between 1993 and 2003 he headed the National Olympic Committee of Uzbekistan. The IOC awarded him the Silver Olympic Order.) Silver medals were won by Natalya Butuzova in archery, Rustam Yambulov in shooting, and Alexander Panfilov in the 1000m cycling race. (Further, the Uzbekistan Sports Committee played a leading role in the USSR in the development of women's hockey. In 1977 the Uzbek girls' team, with many team members from the Andijan region, competed in the all-Union competitions, and in 1979 the Andijan women's hockey team *Andijanochka* became USSR champion.) Four Andijan players, Leyla Ahmedova, Nellya Gorbatkova, Alina Kham and Valentina Zazdravnyh were included in the Olympic team that won bronze at Moscow (1980). Other non-medal winning Uzbek Olympians in Moscow (1980) from track and field sports included: Tatyana Byryulina, Anatoliy Dimov and Alexander Kharlov.

Los Angeles 1984: In response to the USA boycott of the Moscow Games (1980) the USSR, GDR and other socialist republics boycotted these games.

Seoul 1988: Boycotted by Cuba, PDR of Korea, Nicaragua and other countries. Gold winners were Muharbek Khadartsev and Arsen Fadzaev in wrestling. Both had graduated from the Uzbekistan State Institute for Physical Culture. Rodion Gataulin won silver in pole-vaulting. Nail Muhamadiarov won silver in wrestling. Sergey Zabolotnov competed in the medley relay 4x100m swimming, winning bronze.

The 1992 Summer Games in Barcelona were unique for Uzbek athletes as the USSR no longer existed. A united team represented several former Soviet republics, including Uzbekistan and Russia. Indeed, the ex-Soviet republics had prepared years ahead for the 1992 Olympic Games and their success was evidence that Soviet sport continued to deliver quality athletes regardless of national economic decline and structural change evident during *perestroika*. The CIS team topped the finals medals table. Athletes from the new sovereign republic of Uzbekistan won 3 gold, 2 silver medals and 1 bronze medal. Oksana Chusovitina and Rosalia Galieva won gold in gymnastics. A gold medal was won by Marina Shmonina in the 4x100m relay track race. This was the first gold medal in track and field won by an Uzbek. Sergey Syrtsov in weightlifting won a silver medal. Anatoliy Asrabaev won a silver medal in shooting, and Valeriy Zacharevich achieved bronze in fencing.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The National Olympic Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, <<http://www.olympic.uz/>>, accessed 8 June 2009.

## Conclusions on the use of sport to build the ‘Soviet people’

Mass physical culture in the modern world has multiple social and political functions. Crafted in nineteenth and twentieth century Europe, it was a programme of physical activities designed to unite and integrate peoples, improve personal health and work productivity (within industrializing economies). Sport provision is shaped by culture, economics, politics, nationalism and identity and vice versa. Indeed, as the agenda of these spheres develops, so does the implementation of sport in society. Thus sport in the twentieth century in both the East and West became a metaphor of nationhood (and the health of the state). The functional-utilitarian use of sport by the CPSU resulted in the development between the 1930s and 1960s of a centralised, free, inclusive and comprehensive all-Union system of physical culture. This was implemented extensively, and infused with propaganda and state-civic values such as loyalty, team-spirit, co-operation and self-discipline. Leisure was conflated with civic-duty, notably in labour and defence of the Motherland.

This template of Soviet physical culture was imposed upon the Uzbek society and became the standard. However, the difference between theory, policy and practice was more problematic. The provision of physical culture and the building of sports facilities were never perfected by the Soviet planners, and different cities and regions across the USSR experienced different levels of investment. The urban centres within Uzbekistan had the sports clubs and Pioneer facilities available to supply the quota of GTO badge holders that Moscow expected. Sports provision in the remote villages is ambiguous, as many were inadequately serviced by the utilities nor had health and fitness centres. The post-1952 emphasis on elite sportspeople channelled money away from mass sports provision. Such policies were openly criticized by Gorbachev and the domestic population during *perestroika*. In everyday life, Uzbek citizens participated in the national health regime designed to make manual workers (through production gymnastics) and clerical staff physically fit for employment. Both the health benefits of sports and the overall participation in everyday sports by the masses are unclear. Still, it created opportunities for young Central Asian youths regardless of gender, and exposed them to communist ideology and values, thereby reinforcing ideological messages acquired in the educational system. Young citizens of Uzbekistan with the necessary talents required for elite athletics could progress through sports institutions up to Olympic level. These citizen-heroes were of significant use in the ideological struggle with the USA (who likewise promoted their own ethnic minority athletes). Furthermore, famous Uzbek sportspeople were used for public relations at international meetings with Muslim countries of Asia and Africa.

The transposition of Western sports culture onto Uzbek society was extensive and a core process in creating a shared state-civic experience and consciousness. The Soviet experiment in the field of European-style physical culture and its use in enculturation recast traditional leisure pastimes amongst the Uzbeks – and situated the Uzbeks very much within the international arena of sports competition and communication. In doing so, the Soviets renegotiated relations between children and their parents, and mobilized all socialization channels in the process. Folk sports remained popular amongst the predominately rural Uzbeks. However, these local events were managed by the authorities and saturated with state-civic ceremonies and symbolism. Lastly, the CPSU's 'modernization' of Uzbek society between 1924 and 1991 was achieved in the sphere of sports culture through Moscow's imposition of a sports culture designed enhance the USSR's profile in the international Olympic Games. Like so much of Soviet culture, the sphere of Soviet sports culture had its origins in European thought and practices. It is problematic to suggest or argue that specific Soviet policies from the period 1917 to 1991 are still of worth for contemporary Uzbeks, but the legacy of Olympic culture, first implemented by the CPSU in 1952, is still active and popular for many reasons in the Uzbekistan of today.

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