11 The "planet of one hundred languages"

Ethnic relations and Soviet identity in the Virgin Lands

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The Virgin Lands opening (its "mass phase" took place 1954–6) was the last large-scale Soviet-era migration project that contributed to the centrifugal movement of people from the centers to the borderlands of the Soviet empire. Nikita Khrushchev's project was initiated and implemented with the needs of Moscow and the Soviet nation in mind, rather than those of people in Central Asia, but despite that, it brought a lasting transformation of society and nature to Kazakhstan. The Virgin Lands were not "abandoned," and the project was not merely a chapter in the history of Soviet power struggles or an episode of voluntaristic agricultural policy, as some Western textbooks and the works of Sovietologists suggest.[1] Kazakh demographers have estimated that between one and two million Slavic settlers came to Kazakhstan as a result of the Virgin Lands opening, and throughout the 1990s, Kazakh and Western scholars and observers agreed that this was a "heavy price" to pay for the "mixed successes" of the Virgin Lands episode.[2] More positive assessments are rare nowadays. The former celebrations of internationalism, of the "great friendship of peoples," and of the Virgin Lands as a special "planet of 100 languages" have gone out of fashion. A new Kazakh history textbook for university students states more prosaically that one of the main results of the Virgin Lands was the "formation of a broad zone of socio-cultural and ethnic contacts, which invigorated the internationalization of public life," but the text provides little substantiation and no examples of culture in this Virgin Lands zone, pointing only to negative long-term effects on Kazakh culture as a whole.[3]

This chapter seeks to reappraise the notion of the *tselina* (Virgin Lands) as a multiethnic "planet," examining evidence from documents and personal narratives on three broad topics: inter-ethnic contact, religious and cultural life, and notions of Virgin Lands identity. The history of the Virgin Lands project has been written from Moscow's point of view, from that of Kazakh national history, and in the spirit of the Cold War. Only Russians and Kazakhs have appeared in the Virgin Lands discourse, while many other local people (Germans, Chechens, Ingush, and other Slavs, to name but a few) whose lives were changed have remained invisible.[4] As my discussion shows, it is not particularly revealing to reduce the Virgin Lands to an episode of demographic aggression, seeing the project's significance primarily in wreaking the "crushing final disintegration of traditional Kazakh culture."[5] Viewed from the Virgin Lands – at the peripheries of *both* Russia and

Kazakhstan – and despite economic and ecological setbacks, the Virgin Lands project, or rather what it was transformed into, turned out to be one of Khrushchev's most successful and lasting *social* reforms. It was a process that initiated the destalinization and rehabilitation of a region that had served as a dumping ground for punished nations and for labor camps. It took place rather differently from how we – or Khrushchev – had imagined. It was far more turbulent and even violent, and it involved many different groups of people besides Russians and Kazakhs. The processes of migration and construction evoked contradictory responses ranging from fervent support to bitter resistance. Ultimately, however, the Virgin Lands opening gave hundreds of thousands of the most varied people opportunities to build new lives and to reinvent themselves. Notions of moving to an "empty" space led to conflicts, but they also served to rehabilitate the region and to make way for a new identity for both settlers *and* local people.

This essay is based on archival and oral history research in what is now the Astana region of Kazakhstan, which served as the administrative and cultural center of the Virgin Lands. (To confuse matters, the region's principal town was called Akmolinsk from 1832–1960, then Tselinograd 1960–92, Akmola 1992–8, and Astana since 1998, and the name of the region has generally followed suit. Throughout, I use the historically correct designation.) When the campaign started, in 1954, its hinterland was a sparsely settled steppe territory of slightly more than 150,000 km^2 (about the size of South Korea). Akmolinsk was founded as a fort in 1832, in the course of extending Russian administration to the Kazakh Middle Horde. The Akmolinsk region was one of the main destinations of Slavic peasant settlement after emancipation, and a center of reformist efforts to transform agriculture in the 1890s. Most Russian and Ukrainian peasant settlements were clustered along the rivers, separately from Kazakh auls, but already by 1920, the Kazakh population of this region was reduced to 37 percent of the total.[6] In the Stalin era, the Akmolinsk region became a site for agricultural labor camps and a place of exile for the nations deported by Stalin. The two largest groups of exiles in Akmolinsk were Germans and Caucasians, primarily Chechens and Ingush. By 1946, 136,625 "special settlers" (*spetsposelentsy*) lived in the Akmolinsk region, the total population of the region being about 508,000.[7] Counting "kulaks" and prisoners, "special" populations in Akmolinsk made up about one-third of the total population. It is important to know for what follows, that after the initial shock wore off, the "special settlers" adapted to the local conditions very differently, depending on the national group and on their place of origin. A great variety of sources show that Chechen and Ingush resisted accommodation, while the Germans were obedient and worked as hard as they could to survive. Akmolinsk party bosses perceived Chechens and Ingush as working "significantly worse than the Germans," and they arrested far more Caucasians than Germans for crimes and misdemeanors.[8]

The political atmosphere in Akmolinsk was intensely oppressive from the beginning of collectivization until well into the 1950s. Kazakh communists about to be promoted were investigated to make sure their father or uncle had not been a *bai* or a member of the Kazakh intelligentsia purged in 1937, and they were closely

Map 5 The USSR, c 1950

observed for signs of "nationalist" sentiments and corruption.[9] If some of the local Stolypin peasants, resettled "kulaks," and even the German "special settlers" had built up relatively prosperous villages, the economic situation of the region as a whole was bleak and most work was done by hand and with draft animals. Many Kazakh villages had little contact with the outside world, and in the poorest districts, like Kurgaldzhino, children suffered from preventable diseases and few were sent to school. The Akmolinsk party chief, Nikolai Zhurin, along with the other party bosses from northern Kazakhstan, was one of the most enthusiastic supporters of the Virgin Lands project from its inception, hoping to seize a major opportunity for investment. Upon Khrushchev's request, he submitted a proposal for an increase in cultivated lands for the Akmolinsk region alone that was in excess of what the republican leaders considered possible for the entire republic.[10]

In opening the new lands, Khrushchev had the intention of reducing the burden on the Soviet Union's collective farmers. Most of his Virgin Lands memorandum to the Presidium of the Central Committee on 22 January 1954 (later published under the title "Means of Resolving the Grain Problem") is devoted to demonstrating how little grain the state had been able to procure in the years since 1950 and what a dismal effect the ever greater pressure had upon the collective farms and upon the morale of the *kolkhozniki* (collective farm workers). Opening so-called virgin and fallow lands in Siberia and Kazakhstan (the initial proposal called for 13–15 million hectares) would allow the state to reduce its demands on the central regions and would make it possible to buy more grain instead of extracting it.[11] Khrushchev was less alert to the needs of Kazakhstan and of the people who would work in the new lands.

His formula for opening the new lands can be summed up as "technology plus people." It was to be accomplished by pouring *all* new tractors and agricultural machines produced in 1954 into the new regions and by recruiting a permanent workforce (100,000 volunteers) by means of a large-scale publicity campaign. The settlers were recruited and sent at emergency speed by the Komsomol, the Party's youth organization. From the end of February 1954 to 20 April 1954, the total was reported as 146,710.[12] The recruiting commissions tried to fill the total required of them, and sent anybody who would sign up, including many 15–16-year-old teenagers (youth of draft age), who would have to leave again the next year. Over 20,000 volunteers arrived in Kazakhstan before any farm directors had been appointed. A significant number of people released under the amnesties of 1953–4 were sent to the Virgin Lands with Komsomol *putevki* (vouchers) during the first year, but it is difficult to say how many exactly. People from all over Kazakhstan complained about amnestied criminals who committed thefts and engaged in rude confrontations with locals. At a Party plenum in Akmolinsk in 1954, Party bosses said that one-third of the "volunteers" had a "dark past."[13] The Komsomol leaders attempted to avoid this in later years. It appears that the mass recruitment of formerly amnestied prisoners was not repeated, but the speed of recruitment in the second year was even greater than in 1954: 111,914 by 15 April; 162,099 by 1 June 1955.[14] In 1954 and 1955, the communist youth organization mobilized a total workforce of 330,375 people.[15] This was far more than initially projected. The

oversupply of workers was supposed to combat the effects of out-migration, which ensued as soon as Virgin Lands workers arrived in their regions, but it also helped intensify the outflow when overcrowding and competition for jobs increased too much.

Suspicious of the mobilization results, some Western writers have placed the word "volunteers" in quotation marks when speaking of the Virgin Lands, or they have argued that "semi-compulsory methods" were used,[16] but the truth is that the project received a tremendously positive public response in 1954 and 1955. The verifiable (through unpublished documents and interviews) manifestations of this outpouring of enthusiasm and patriotism make clear that the project had a tremendous appeal for tens of thousands of young *kolkhozniki* stuck in bleak post-war villages. The work-days (*trudodni*) accumulated in *kolkhozy* amounted to nothing more than "little sticks" (*palochki*), while in the state farms of Kazakhstan one could earn money wages, and in addition receive an internal passport. In my interviews in the Akmolinsk region in 1994 and 1996,[17] almost all former Virgin Lands settlers sought to impress on me how desperate they were to leave behind the bitter poverty of the post-war years. One of the most vivid expressions of this came from Industrian Semenov, a Virgin Lands veteran who later became a local writer:

> We were a generation of fatherless children. The main thing that moved us, you see, is that we were people who experienced the most violent war, the terrible, destructive war … and so from this destroyed country, we were the first who tried to escape the nightmare.[18]

The Virgin Lands held out prospects to nearly everyone. Students and some of the urban youth hoped they would "travel" and "live under the open sky,"[19] while demobilizing soldiers were more realistic in their expectations: "We are not afraid of difficulties. We are prepared to meet them. We have seen many hardships."[20] Many girls and young women wanted to get married in Kazakhstan,[21] while others had heard that Kazakhstan was a "rich country," that it was "great" there, that the wages were good.[22]

The Virgin Lands settlers inundated the region. The population of the Akmolinsk region grew by 133,761 during the first three years of the campaign, but this does not reflect the fluidity of people, as altogether at least 300,000 people came to the region, most to leave again after a few months or years.[23] Of the first waves of settlers in 1954–6, only a few hundred people stayed in the region. The bulk of settlers who remained came some years later, especially during the years 1960–5 (when Tselinograd was booming) and after (when an infrastructure and services had been built up).

The main reason for out-migration was that the years of the "mass opening" (1954–6) were terribly difficult and many of the volunteers suffered severe deprivations upon arrival. Local authorities were completely unprepared for the influx of people and materiel. Vast trainloads of tractors, tents, and supplies were sent, but remained piled up at train stations for months and even years because it was

Figure 11.1 "Come with us to the Virgin Lands!" (poster, V. Seleznev, Moscow, 1954). From *Rossiia: Istoriia strany v plakatakh* (Moscow, 1993), no page number indicated.

extremely difficult to transport the supplies to the sites of the new state farms. For the first two years, the food situation in the Akmolinsk region was frequently described as "extremely abnormal" and as "alarming," including cases in which tractor brigades starved for several days, and workers collapsed from hunger while they were working. Almost all the farms went through a succession of bosses. Common complaints were that the directors were constantly drinking, that they were rude towards the settlers, and that they committed many acts of random and bureaucratic abuse. The bosses had a heavy hand. Quite a few of them got into drunken episodes that were more "colorful" than those of the youth.[24]

Despite these rough beginnings the project transformed the region and the north of Kazakhstan. Between 1954 and 1956, Akmolinskaia oblast' received 3.29 billion rubles in investments, the settlers built about 10,000 of their own houses, and they built 77 brand-new state farms and settlements.[25] These Virgin Lands settlements represented the state of the art in rural construction, completely different from the older European villages and the Kazakh *auly* that existed in the region. The area of the state farms was large. The streets were wide, designed with space for trees and benches. One unique feature of the Virgin Lands farms was that work and public areas were designed to be separate. Garages, electric stations, storage facilities, grain silos, and cattle sheds were clustered at one end of the settlement, separate from living areas. Storage sheds, stables, and gardens attached to individual houses were accessible through back alleys, to preserve the neat appearance of the main streets. The centers of the settlements featured spaces for parks and squares. All of the settlements received electricity and telephone services by the mid-1950s. Living in such a settlement and becoming a paid worker was very attractive to *kolkhozniki* from the depressed villages of the western regions of the Soviet Union, and many of them stuck it out from the first, turbulent years – returning to Belarus and Ukraine only in the mid-1970s, when they were pensioned. A disproportionate number of my most enthusiastic Virgin Lands informants of all nationalities grew up in orphanages, and in the years after 1956 large cohorts of released prisoners from the camps quietly made the *tselina* their home. Workers and youth from the large cities, however, found little at first to make up for deprivations, and they came and left in droves. State and Party essentially viewed and treated these settlers as an endlessly renewable source. What started as a plan to permanently resettle 100,000 people turned into a *yearly* mobilization of that many workers.

When the Virgin Lands settlers started pouring into Akmolinsk, local people received few or no explanations of what was happening, and the settlers came expecting "empty" steppe lands. The entire presentation of the Virgin Lands in propaganda and in media prepared them to expect a Kazakhstan that was empty of culture or people, except for a few "native herders." They were astonished and dismayed to find thousands of people whom they had been taught to think of as "traitors" already living there, scattered in all the villages and small district towns. Antonina Azeeva, a construction worker in a state farm founded in 1955, had a very vivid recollection when I asked her why she came and what her expectations were.

> Do you think I had any idea what Kazakhstan was like back then? [Laughs.] I thought it was this rich country, just as everyone else thought! We thought we knew, but we didn't know anything! And then, when we got here – [Louder.] Oh!! Oh!! If you could have seen what it was like! We went out of our minds!! Out of our minds! … The train station was terrifying! [Loudly.] And the people there, all black! Chechens, and Ingush! And what kind of people they were, they all went with some kind of knife under their belt. … Oh, how we cried! Oh! Where did we end up? Why did they tell us it was so great here (*sil'no khorosho*)? On the radio it said how in Kazakhstan, how it couldn't be better than that! Well, afterwards, after we opened the new lands, we really did have a great life. Only nature here remained strange, but we had all the goods we needed.[26]

It was easy to blame the deported people for problems, or to see them as "enemies" and "parasites." As soon as the new settlers began to arrive in Kazakhstan, dozens of incidents of unrest, violent confrontations, beatings, mass fights, and riots were reported by the militia and the special settler police force in each of the Virgin Lands regions.[27] To give some examples, one series of attacks and fights, which were typical for these first Virgin Lands months, happened at KazTsIK *sovkhoz*, a place where many of the new workers were amnestied prisoners and where the local population consisted of resettled Ingush and Poles. The Virgin Lands workers were left without direct supervision and without work for several months. Many confrontations took place during extended drinking bouts. A mass fight in March 1954 caused one death from knife wounds, that of a settler. The larger cases in this farm were reported to the Party only months after they occurred, and they were not fully investigated until almost one year after the events, in 1955. The report drawn up at that time showed that during 1954 smaller incidents (brawls, knife fights, rapes) involving between two and five people had been nearly daily occurrences at KazTsIK and that they had not been recorded by anyone.[28]

Several mass riots between Virgin Landers and resettled Chechens and Ingush took place in mechanization schools (which provided courses for tractor drivers) at the end of 1954, after the harvest, each involving hundreds of participants. These large confrontations were also preceded by a whole series of smaller violent incidents, including brawls at movie showings and other attacks and beatings. In the village of Elizavetinka, for example, the hostile atmosphere exploded on Soviet election day in December 1954, as the voting and holiday festivities brought crowds of all national groups out into the streets. The immediate cause of the fighting appears to have been an attempt by Virgin Landers to drive the Caucasian special settlers from the local club, which on that day served simultaneously as a polling station and dance hall. A scuffle at the club erupted into general fighting that spread all over the village, involving at least 120 persons directly, as active participants in the fighting. The Ingush fled to their houses, pursued by mechanization students, who armed themselves with sticks and rocks, and began to invade Ingush homes, dragging out inhabitants and beating them. The fighting went on

from noon until evening. Virgin Landers chased away and intimidated local officials, until they were driven back to their school by Ingush men armed with rocks and axes, and finally dispersed into smaller groups by the school director and teachers.[29]

Police and party records show that at least 135 separate violent crowd incidents took place in the Akmolinsk region between 1954 and 1957.[30] In police reports and write-ups made soon after such incidents occurred, several patterns emerge very clearly. The police placed the blame for instigating the majority of the occurrences squarely on the Virgin Landers. In almost all district towns and villages the arriving Virgin Lands settlers created a hostile atmosphere and many of the "special settlers" were soon afraid to go to rural stores and lunchrooms and to public events like dances and movie showings. In addition, I found that while deprivations and poor conditions clearly increased the level of stress and competition for resources, the number and the intensity of confrontations increased when people *had* money, especially to buy vodka; that is, when the settlers first arrived, after the harvest, and during major holidays. The great majority of direct participants in the fights were young single men, and small-scale confrontations turned into riots or larger fights only where workers were concentrated in larger numbers. Such incidents tended to occur in district towns, or in Akmolinsk, where workers attended tractor courses, were crowded into construction trust dormitories, or congregated at dances, in parks or clubs.[31]

The deported people not only adapted to their exile differently, they also reacted differently to the violence. While Germans and Kazakhs generally tried to avoid confrontations, many of the Caucasian men fought back, and this caused even greater violence. A newspaper editor from Alma-Ata, sent to carry out "political-explanatory" work among the Chechen and Ingush in the Akmolinsk region in late 1956, wrote that despite the efforts of the Akmolinsk Party organization to fight "unhealthy phenomena,"

> [I]n Akmolinsk and in the districts of the *oblast'* murders of Chechen and Ingush frequently take place, committed by bandits and hooligan elements. This has created somewhat strained relations between the Chechen and a certain part of the rest of the population of Akmolinsk and rural districts. Just before we arrived several Ingush were killed, others beaten half to death, and wounded. In the evening, the latter are afraid to go out on the streets of Akmolinsk and of the Virgin Lands settlements alone.[32]

Local police officers were very concerned about these incidents at first. But after about a year they stopped recording smaller incidents and concentrated on breaking up large groups of "hooligans." The regional party organizations passed a few resolutions "On Group Fights," which exhorted local officials to "carry out explanatory work" among the affected populations, but except for firing farm directors and Party secretaries *after* major fights had occurred, they took no systematic action.[33] Judging by the declassified records of the special settler police, which are available up to 1959, the fights decreased sharply in number after

1957, when the Chechens and some of the Ingush were allowed to return home to the Caucasus (more on this follows below).

Many of the oral testimonies that I collected in Akmola contradicted the documentary evidence, primarily because it was difficult to get people to talk openly about these disturbances. The most common responses to direct questions about ethnic relations and fights were to deny that fights had ever taken place, or to minimize their extent by blaming the violence on the amnestied criminals of the first years, on "youth excesses," or on so-called "outsiders" (*sluchainye liudi*). On the other hand, some interviewees brought up the violence spontaneously, as in this example from a conversation with a 60-year-old Kazakh woman, a dairy worker in a Virgin Lands farm for over 30 years.

M.P.: Tell me about how your life changed here, when they opened the Virgin Lands.

N.N.: Oh!! When the *tselina* opened, it was hard! People from Moscow came here. Muscovites came and put a trailer there. There was no house; there was a Kazakh *aul*, and a barracks, nothing else. The Kazakhs were all afraid. "Oh! People from Moscow came, they are killing people!" They all hid in their houses! When the Muscovites came with their trailer, everyone hid. They were afraid, Russians [as well], Kazakhs, very much. And then we got used to each other and people became like family. They started to work together, we [indicates herself and a German woman] were like real sisters. Right. Then they started to build housing. The first house they built was ours, where I live now; I've lived in that house for 30, for 40 years now.[34]

None of the interviewees who did consent to talk and reflect upon these matters brought up "ethnic hatred" to explain the violence. Instead they brought up the Soviet "collective." In a group discussion with Ingush and Chechen men, participants argued that the new arrivals "did not recognize" or "acknowledge" Kazakhs or Ingush as part of this collective.[35] Leonid Kartauzov, a much-decorated Virgin Lands veteran and former Supreme Soviet deputy, described some of the violent fights, and argued that they took place because the Caucasians were "fiery" and "considered themselves the bosses" in the Virgin Lands towns. The violence lasted, he said, until people "found a common language." He went on to explain:

L.M.: The thing is, you know, taken by itself; the *tselina* was one of the best measures to improve our internationalist education. Because they came here from all republics. People came here of all nationalities and faiths, so that's why they called Kazakhstan the "republic of 100 languages." In our state farm alone, somehow they counted it, were 125 nationalities.

M.P.: Just in that one place [unconvinced].

L.M.: Just there. … And you know, the common goal, the knowledge that our work was absolutely necessary, that's what brought us closer. Nobody could survive on their own in those conditions. Only the collective.

M.P.: It seems to me, well, I read these protocols of the MVD about the fights, and I want to ask you this. The police said the fights started because those people [the Caucasians] were accused of being traitors to the motherland. Why were things so hard with *them*, and with others they were –

L.M.: That's right, right – no, here's what I want to tell you, I'm not talking about the nationalities who lived here before we came.

M.P.: But only the people arriving?

L.M.: Right, you see what I mean? Only those who came. Slowly, bit by bit, those others who lived here started to come into our collective. But those who came, they represented some kind of general collective. You understand? And only thanks to that, we could really make an effort with this *tselina*, in a short time, and pretty successfully.[36]

The first part of Kartauzov's testimony could have been taken straight from the Soviet Virgin Lands literature, with its accolades to internationalism, and its emphasis on the creation of a "multinational family of Virgin Landers." It was a typical convention to point out a specific brigade or state farm, and to show how many nationalities were peacefully working side by side in it. The level of friendship was "measured" by the successes of such multinational work collectives in ploughing up the land, bringing in the harvest, or winning competitions.[37] What Kartauzov said about the local people slowly becoming part of the "general" Soviet collective, however, was unique, and reflects his personal and specific experience of local culture as initially separate and different.

The most important impulse for bringing the "special settlers" back into the orbit of the Soviet collective was provided by a series of reforms of the exile system, which began two years before Khrushchev's "Secret Speech" and coincided with the influx of Virgin Landers.[38] In the summer of 1954, the government passed a decree which reduced the number of exiles by one-third all at once. All children under age 16 were released from their "special" status. Along with these measures to reduce their numbers came new regulations that eased the restrictions that the deportees lived under. It was made easier to travel and to change one's residence within the republic of exile. The most immediate result of these new provisions was that Ingush and Chechens began to leave the Virgin Lands areas and to move to the south of Kazakhstan. By February 1955 about 19,000 persons had left the northern regions. The most important motivation was the harsh climate and unfamiliar nature of northern Kazakhstan, but a brigade from Moscow, sent to study the dislocation of special settlers and the violent clashes, found that the violence also played a role.[39]

A decree in December 1955 lifted the "special regulations" from the Germans. This reform was linked to the visit of German Chancellor Adenauer in Moscow in September 1955. The Germans received no compensation for their confiscated properties and did not receive the right to return to their former republics. Their removal from the special regime caused great unrest and resentment among the remaining special settlers, who could not understand how they were "any worse" than the Germans.[40] In the summer of 1956, all remaining exiles, including

Chechens and Ingush, were taken off the special settler rolls, but, like the Germans, they were still not allowed to go home. They were released without apology or rehabilitation, and they were forced to sign a document saying that they waived all rights to their former property, and that they were aware that returning to their former home was forbidden. Five thousand persons in the Akmolinsk region refused to sign this waiver.[41] Finally, in December 1956, apparently responding to spontaneous out-migration and growing unrest in the exile regions, the Central Committee passed a resolution that prepared for the repatriation of the Caucasians. The return migration was poorly organized and dragged on for months, as train stations and railroad towns were swamped with streams of people, and local authorities attempted to ease the pressure by announcing temporary stops on out-migration. The bulk of Chechen families left by 1958, but many Ingush ended up staying in the north of Kazakhstan, because their home region was split between the Chechen-Ingush ASSR and North Ossetia.

As these piecemeal and hesitant attempts at reform were carried out, and in the midst of the Virgin Lands influx, the special settlers revived their cultures and found a new confidence. One of the sources of this new confidence was grassroots political activity. Between 1955 and 1957, Germans and Caucasians who wanted to return home engaged in letter writing campaigns, trips to district and regional party offices, and even public demonstrations to achieve their goal.[42] A second source for restoring some measure of cultural autonomy was religious belief. Secret reports show that the religious culture of the exile population grew very strongly in those years. By 1959, the Akmolinsk region was home to more than 40 different religious groups (represented in most of the villages of the region), including Muslims (including Sufis), Orthodox Christians, Baptists, Mennonites, Polish and German Catholics, and many smaller sects.[43] While most of the religious groups acted in secrecy, others, according to a 1955 regional KGB report, openly proselytized, sought to draw village youth into prayer groups and choirs, distributed icons and candles, and carried out baptisms and weddings. For example, one of the most visible Sufi brotherhoods was based in Atbasar, a railroad town in the north of the region, led by Sheikh Bagautdin Deni Arsanov. In the mid-1950s the Sheikh moved to Alma-Ata, but the movement continued to flourish and the "*Arsanovtsy*" maintained connections in dozens of villages in the Akmolinsk region, and traveled throughout Kazakhstan.

Most remarkably, as I discuss elsewhere in greater detail, the Chechen Sufis founded an entirely new movement in Akmolinsk, the Vis Hadj *tarikat*, or sect of "White Hats" (*beloshaposhniki*). The "White Hats," named after the caps followers wear, are widely credited with inspiring the largest expansion of Sufism in exile, and after the 1950s the sect spread from Kazakhstan to Chechnya.[44] Throughout the late 1950s, Muslim and Christian preachers traveled around the villages of the region, organized Bible and Koran studies, advised believers in spiritual and practical questions, and collected money to support themselves and to build prayer houses. The major groups and those not suspected of carrying out "anti-soviet activities" were allowed to register, and German Lutherans were allowed to open a church in Akmolinsk in 1956.[45]

Clearly, the Virgin Lands were a very different place than many imagined (and imagine to this day). The most recent arrivals brought to this mixture their own vibrant and rough frontier culture, in which vodka and simple entertainments like dances, singing, and going to film showings featured most prominently. It was hardly "monolithic" (as Kazakhs now allege) and in the first few years it did not make a great impact, nor did it hinder the growth of all these different expressions of culture and identity.

"Special" and Virgin Lands settlers remember the 1950s quite differently. When I asked about entertainments or festivities, many former special settlers waved the question off, exclaiming there had never been any "good times," while Virgin Landers lit up with enthusiasm, remembered songs and *chastushki* (folk verses) from their home regions, and nostalgically described dances and holidays. The most important and satisfying holidays were the days immediately after the harvest (which in the 1960s turned into a "Day of the Agriculture Worker," a holiday that people said was specific to the Virgin Lands), the October Revolution Day (7 November), and New Year's Eve. A marked separateness also emerged when I asked people about specific practices. For instance, I asked couples who had married in the 1950s about their weddings. Several German women exclaimed bitterly that they "had no wedding," while others remembered primarily their poverty and absence of a dowry, and a very modest, quiet celebration: "My mother came, and her father, and we had a bottle of vodka, too. And that was it, we were married!"[46] Virgin Landers who married other Virgin Landers also spoke of their poverty at the time, but fondly recalled "brigade weddings" and the sense of community they engendered:

> The whole brigade had a party! How many people in the brigade, let's see, 20, or 30, and our neighbors. We were in this little tiny room, sat down, people everywhere! We never used to look who's friends with whom! We didn't make any distinctions, like, you're up there, you're a boss, you know, we were all the same. … It was great, we celebrated for three days. No one paid attention, you know, director, worker, tractor driver, or whatever, we were all together.[47]

Virgin Landers who courted and married local women – whether Kazakhs, deportees, or from other groups living in the region – initially encountered resistance from the local special-settler police,[48] and frequently on the part of relatives on both sides of the future family. In one dramatic case recorded by the local police, the male relatives of an Ingush woman chased and threatened a young couple until the police interfered and helped them leave the republic.[49]

Officials measured the "friendship of peoples" by showing that the number of "mixed" marriages, or vows across national and ethnic lines, increased. The number of such weddings increased by about one-third in the Akmolinsk region (from 20.5 percent of all weddings in 1950 to 38.8 percent in 1960). [50] While this number shows little in itself, because it includes marriages of Slavs to each other, the narrative testimonies that I collected show that Virgin Landers who married locals indeed tended to have a better understanding of their neighbors' difficult

lives, being able to recall more than the simple fact that they were present. Industrian Semenov, cited above, who married one of the Polish exile women, was deeply affected by the sharp contrasts between the newest settlers and the special settlers. The Virgin Landers, as patriots and Soviet citizens, felt the whole country to be theirs, and they felt free to go anywhere. At the same time in Akmolinsk existed "second-class" people who were not even allowed to go to the next village without permission.[51] Semenov wrote about an incident in which one of the special settlers was beaten and no one dared to defend him, because of his special status.

> That was my first collision with one of the innermost secrets of the Stalinist regime. I was amazed, just like the other *tselinniki* … who worked in the MTS Virgin Lands brigades, made up of local people. To tell the truth, we knew about the repressed, the special settlers, we had heard about them, but we thought nothing of it. Used to working in multinational collectives everywhere, we saw nothing special in the fact that local brigades and villages, besides Kazakhs and Russians, contained Poles, Germans, Chechens, Ingush, Kabardians, Balkardians, Koreans, and other people. But coming into contact with their "status," in practice, gave us this stunning piece of information: these were unfree people, almost prisoners. After that morning my comrades in the brigade warmed up to me and told me much about their lives. It's true; however, they did so gently, almost as if speaking to a sick person, and only partially … [knowing that] otherwise I would experience difficulties.[52]

Others worked side by side, in the celebrated multinational work collectives, knowing very little about each other. Galina Tarasiuk, a land surveyor who came to Akmolinsk in 1954, admired the German farms of the region as "strong and well managed." She worked with German agronomists and collective farm chairmen for years, respected them as excellent workers and competent bosses, and learned much from them, but as she explained:

> We did not notice that they were under a special regime. I didn't even know that there was a *spetskomendatura*, that is something that they told us later. In general they behaved as if they were free, and I wouldn't say that there was any oppression.[53]

Hard work and the sharing of dangers, disappointments, and successes gradually engendered mutual respect. In interviews, people of all nationalities insisted that they did learn to respect each other, even if their relationship had a stormy beginning. That respect was somewhat different from the official "friendship of nations." For instance, it was a commonplace of the Virgin Lands propaganda that local "herders" came to the aid of frozen or lost *tselinniki*, and that they met the settlers "gladly" or "warmly, like brothers." As discredited as that language may seem after 1991, *locally* the notion that the *tselina* was a place that fostered a special kind of mutual aid, and friendship remains a key component of Virgin Lands lore and of regional self-identification to this day. While most aspects of

Kazakh culture clearly remained invisible to my Russian informants, there was one important exception – the concept of hospitality. My interviewees frequently and spontaneously expressed their appreciation of the Kazakh traits of kindness and compassion for people, and they recounted instances in which Kazakhs helped newly arrived people when nobody else would. By a widely shared consensus, high Kazakh standards of hospitality were an important value and something to aspire to regardless of nationality. For instance, many of my non-Kazakh informants told stories of entertaining and receiving guests that are (at least on the surface) surprisingly similar to testimonies collected in Kazakh families about the prestige and satisfaction derived from successful feasts and celebrations.[54]

Many people of the older generation in Kazakhstan, as in the testimony by Kartauzov, cited above, see no contradiction between the tradition of remembering the Virgin Lands as an example of ethnic harmony and the evidence of the violence that took place. The "others," those who left, especially Chechens and Ingush, never became part of the Virgin Lands collective, and thus simply were not part of the story. Another interesting illustration of how this local consensus grew is provided by the way in which Virgin Landers *who stayed* (most of them former *kolkhozniki*), local Kazakhs, special settlers, and local officials alike came to view new waves of urban youth, especially Muscovites, who rotated in and out each year, as "outsiders." The students from the capital were supposed to set an example, but workers in Kazakhstan, regardless of their status, could hardly believe the strange "tastes" and "styles" that existed in Moscow, and they indiscriminately lumped together "*stiliagi*" ("mods" or stylish youth) with "hooligans" and "criminals."[55] "They think nothing of wearing trousers wide to the knees and sweaters that are just as long. They dance 'in style' (*tantsuiut stilem*). They sing songs that don't exist in the repertoire of Russian songs, nor as popular Soviet songs."[56] Local officials and workers alike perceived the youth from Moscow as troublemakers and slackers, who would flock to the district committees begging to be released from work for "medical" and "family" reasons just when the harvest began.[57]

Most importantly, high wages and the growth of prosperity engendered a local sense of community. In Akmolinsk, 1956 was the first year during which conditions for Virgin Lands workers became better than catastrophic. It was the first harvest season in which their efforts led to a great success.[58] The state procured over 180 million *poods* of grain from Akmolinsk,[59] and the workers were able to earn high wages and many of them were decorated and received gifts and bonuses. The best workers had the chance to win prizes, for instance motorcycles. These rewards and satisfactions were shared by many in the region, regardless of what "category" of people they belonged to. The records of the regional soviet show this very clearly. In 1954 a few dozen people were distinguished by becoming participants in the agriculture pavilion at VDNKh in Moscow. In 1955 the *oblispolkom* issued several pages-worth of lists of outstanding workers (*spiski peredovnikov*). In 1956 the lists of people decorated for Virgin Lands work suddenly grew to more than 1000 pages. Each year these lists included substantial numbers of people of all nationalities, and many local collective farmers (not just state farm workers).[60]

The food shortages of the first years disappeared conclusively from the picture by 1956. One major problem that was not solved even by the end of the 1950s was housing construction. New cohorts of settlers responded to the catastrophically slow pace of housing construction by leaving. By January 1958 out-migration of "cadres" had reached nearly 100 percent in both farms and construction units, that is the entire professional workforce (mechanizers, drivers, supervisors, and so on) brought in from other republics now turned over once each year – even as countless collective farmers, former prisoners, and others in need of a fresh start continued to stream to Kazakhstan on their own.[61] In 1960 Khrushchev decided to carry out an administrative reorganization to get this problem under control, based on the same thinking that led him to institute *sovnarkhozy* in 1957. The new unit was the so-called Virgin Lands Region or *Tselinnyi krai*, consisting of the five northern Virgin Lands regions of Kazakhstan.[62] The most important functional result of the *krai* was the creation of a new *krai* party organization (*Kraikom KPSS*) directly subordinate to Moscow rather than Alma-Ata. Akmolinsk oblast' was dissolved as a separate administrative entity. Although Akmolinsk became the capital of the new Virgin Lands region (and was renamed Tselinograd in 1960, at the suggestion of Khrushchev), the entire regional leadership was replaced in December 1959. The local Party bosses were criticized for neglecting the needs of the settlers, for their inability to lead rural cadres, and, in an unusual admission, for neglecting the former special settlers in the Party's political work. They, especially the Germans, were better at farming the Virgin Lands than the workers brought in from other regions.[63]

Although the *krai* would be dissolved again after Khrushchev's ouster from power, the Akmolinsk region and especially Tselinograd were decisively transformed during the *krai* years. It was a period of renewed investment, and of the streaming in of new volunteers from Russia, this time many students and members of the intelligentsia. The opening of television and radio stations and of new *krai* newspapers attracted a fresh generation, many of them enthusiastic young representatives of the national "thaw culture," who changed the cultural atmosphere of the Virgin Lands profoundly. Along with the name change came a popular awareness that the identity of the region had been transformed. For instance, it is during the *krai* years that monuments to the Virgin Landers of 1954–6 first appeared locally.[64]

Tselinograd "became cultured" and grew into the largest center of higher education in the north of Kazakhstan, as several major educational institutes were founded in the city. These institutes and the new *krai* administrations provided work for many people released from the labor camps and for the special settler intelligentsia. While the majority of Chechens and Ingush went home, the German special settlers had no autonomous region or republic to return to. As the Medvedev brothers have argued, they had to stay because they were needed as the basic permanent workforce in the *tselina*, while the Caucasians ended up being "more trouble than they were worth" and thus were allowed to go home.[65] The Germans found their niche in the Virgin Lands. Staying in Kazakhstan was not to their disadvantage, at least economically. After their political rehabilitation in

1964,[66] they ended up being granted a small degree of linguistic and cultural autonomy. Tselinograd Germans built up prosperous communities during the 1960s and 1970s and they were highly valued and respected as organizers and administrators. By the 1980s they even had considerable influence in local party organizations, and the first post-independence chief of the Akmola region was of German descent, Andrei Braun. Tselinograd became a German cultural center with a lively religious life, several official churches, and a German newspaper.[67] Many of my German interview partners remembered the Virgin Lands as the time "when things got better," when they got "easier," and they mentioned that many Germans were decorated for their participation in agricultural work. This is also reflected in published memoirs, in fieldwork and archival research conducted by local researchers.[68]

Most importantly, the *krai* years were a period of growing prosperity and of unceasing construction for the entire region. New housing appeared in the villages, and in Tselinograd new housing districts (*mikroraiony*) were built, as well as bridges and roads, a direct high-voltage energy supply from Karaganda, a new airport, a number of recreation complexes (Virgin Lands Palace, Pioneers' Palace), and other monumental public buildings, such as the House of Soviets. Conditions for Virgin Lands workers did not change immediately, but people who saw Akmolinsk grow into Tselinograd and who spent their whole lives in the region unanimously placed great emphasis on the economic transformation of the region and the city. A common thing for people to say (whether asked about it or not) was "there was nothing here before" and that the settlers built "everything" or that "everything was built during the *tselina*." Similar phrases were used by villagers, townspeople, workers, and members of the intelligentsia, both in formal interviews and in casual conversations. What "nothing" meant, as I came to understand, was not literal emptiness or the absence of people, but rather "there was nothing here for people to live on." It referred to the poverty that existed before the Virgin Lands opening, and also was a way of drawing attention to the great amount of work that people accomplished during the Virgin Lands years. Everyone who lived in Akmolinsk before 1954 agreed that life became more prosperous for all national groups. The daughter of a Stolypin settler from Ukraine, married to a Moldovan special settler, told me that a "second life" began with the Virgin Lands. Her reference to "the bridge" points to the *krai* years as the decisive ones.

> The youth were followed by special trains with products, with things, with beds. And together with them, our life began to turn around, it became different. After the *tselina*, they began to ship materials. Especially when the bridge was built, a second life began. … After the *tselina* they began to supply us with goods, food products, completely different than before.[69]

Settlers who came in the 1960s were thrilled to find stores full of "deficit" goods:

> Life was much easier here [in Tselinograd]. It was easier to get an apartment and to get consumer goods than in Ukraine. In the stores here they had goods from East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, they had shoes.[70]
>
> Here they had shops, full of everything. They had good streets. Where we came from everything had been destroyed by war.[71]

In rural regions, the economic situation changed for everyone, not only workers on the Virgin Lands state farms. Kan De Khan, a Korean collective farm chairman who had an extraordinary career and who contributed much to the regional economy during the 1950s ands 1960s, expressed what many other people in Kazakhstan told me as well, in an article published during the fortieth Virgin Lands anniversary.[72]

> Our collective farm could hardly be called a Virgin Lands enterprise. It was organized in 1933, but before the opening of the Virgin Lands it was weak and it produced little for the state. The Virgin Lands opening not only improved the economy, but it significantly raised the standard of living and the culture of the village … Before this, the youth tried to leave the village by any means, legally or illegally. With a seven-year education, back then considered very solid, working in a collective farm was considered a disgrace … And of course, how could you keep people in the village, if the school, the hospital, the majority of houses were in a catastrophic state! After all, they were built from mud. So the Virgin Lands did not only consist of plowing the land. It was necessary to rebuild everything from scratch – the school, hospital, kindergarten, club, the sports complex, stores, houses … and economic buildings. With great difficulties, pushing us to the limit of our strength and possibilities, all these basic objects were built. They serve the economy to this day, and *zemlianki* (mud huts) have disappeared from the village altogether.[73]

People grew animated when talking about the 1960s in Akmolinsk. They clearly preferred this part of the story to talking about the initial, turbulent years. I collected numerous oral testimonies that showed how strongly people of all nationalities identified with these changes, but one of the most interesting testimonies was published in an article entitled "Virgin Lands Nostalgia," in 1994:

> It seemed to us that we are living a new life, that the *tselina* represented a new planet, where people were nicer, better. According to Khrushchev's promise we had 20 years to go before communism – but here, in Tselinograd, it had already started.[74]

This was the local perspective, but was the Virgin Lands opening a success from Moscow's point of view, as well? The question of the profitability of the entire venture was one of Khrushchev's main preoccupations. At the December Plenum of the Central Committee in 1958 he reported that the Virgin Lands had paid for itself after four years, despite the predictions of its opponents that it would not be

worth the investments. Between 1954 and 1958, 30.7 billion rubles had been invested in the Virgin Lands, according to the Central Statistics Office and the Ministry of Finances. During the same time period, the state had procured 48.8 billion rubles' worth of grain, thus receiving a "net income" (*chistyi dokhod*) of 18.2 billion rubles, 9.3 billion from the Russian Virgin Lands regions, and 8.9 billion from Kazakhstan.[75] Khrushchev singled out Dnepropetrovskii state farm in the Akmolinsk region as a particularly good example of the investments that had been made at the level of the state farms. The organization of the farm had cost the state 28.4 million rubles, in return it received 86.4 million rubles' worth of grain in procurements and purchases.[76] Martin McCauley, the author of the first monograph on the Virgin Lands, tracked these official calculations of net income in the Virgin Lands and concluded that the Virgin Lands indeed performed "creditably" until 1960, as net income kept "roughly in step" with investment. According to McCauley, the additional investments undertaken during the krai years "adversely affected the overall performance" of the project, and they had the effect of lowering the overall profit achieved after a peak in 1960.[77] This is an important conclusion. The Virgin Lands opening did not solve all of the problems of Soviet agriculture, and it was never designed to do so. Instead, precisely those investments that Sovietologists chalked up as a waste transformed the lives of millions of people *in the Virgin Lands regions*, far from Moscow, from Alma-Ata, and from debates in scientific journals. Khrushchev's successors abolished the *krai*, but continued to invest in the Virgin Lands, and they continued to receive grain from the region.

During Kazakhstan's belated "glasnost" years in the 1990s, public debates of the *tselina* focused exclusively on Kazakhs and Russians. For the first time, Kazakh scholars showed that the percentage of Kazakhs in the republic was greatly reduced as a result of the Virgin Lands, and that Kazakh culture suffered: altogether over 700 Kazakh elementary schools were closed, and Russian ones were opened instead. Kazakh villages were neglected in favor of the Virgin Lands settlements, and by the 1980s, many stood empty because families moved in search of opportunities for work and education. [78] However, it is not entirely clear which of these processes were directly caused by the Virgin Lands opening, and which were the result of large-scale processes occurring in the entire Soviet Union. The more immediate impact on the deported populations of those regions has remained completely invisible. Why did the culture of the special settlers experience a modest revival in the Virgin Lands regions, even though they were on the receiving end of most of the violence of the first years, while that of the Kazakhs was supposedly "crushed"? Even among the special settlers there are unexplained differences: why did Chechens and Ingush preserve their languages, while subsequent German generations grew up believing it was "illegal" to speak German – even as they received preferential treatment in the job market, such as it was in the *tselina*? The culture that existed before the Virgin Lands started did not change very quickly. It became less visible, compared to the constant reiteration of the new Virgin Lands identity. In later years Akmolinsk was constantly presented as "primitive" before the Virgin Lands and as empty of culture, except for "backward" religious

practices. In the Party, Muslim religious beliefs and customs like bride price were dismissed as "feudal remnants," perhaps more vigorously because of the influx of outsiders. However, Kazakh entertainment activities continued, including large public events like horse races and horse games, sponsored by the local soviet (the *ispolkom*). Many people observed religious holidays, holding feasts and slaughtering animals, and major Islamic holidays drew up to 3,000 believers to the central mosque in Akmolinsk. [79] Many, if not most, older Kazakhs *in the Virgin Lands* emphatically reject the notion that the Virgin Lands brought them harm. While members of recent generations might accuse them of being misinformed or even brainwashed, they insist on simple insights, such as: "We are all sleeping on beds now, whereas before, we slept on the floor."[80]

Public narratives of the Soviet past in Kazakhstan, or rather of the many different pasts that were characteristic of the multiethnic borderlands, contain many unresolved contradictions. The Virgin Lands past has remained the story contrived during the Soviet era, interpreted either positively or negatively, and tied to simple notions of either progress or loss. The *contradictory* (not just negative) effects on Kazakh culture and the dramatic and previously unknown evidence of clashes with others should not obstruct our view of the more durable processes through which ethnic relations improved, primarily the growth of prosperity. Soviet culture in the Virgin Lands was not unsuccessful, because it left spaces (perhaps unique to Kazakhstan or to the periphery of the Soviet Union) in which distinct cultures and groups and individuals could quietly create their own version of the Virgin Lands or of Kazakhstan. The Virgin Lands, as a newly created borderland, a new *pays* within the Soviet *patrie*, made a unique, regional contribution to Soviet identity. Tselinograd is now Astana, Kazakhstan's booming capital city. Even as the region has seen a great influx of Kazakhs from the south, the Virgin Lands work ethic, high educational level, and multiethnic social potential are at the very center of Kazakh identity in the twenty-first century. The regional ethnic harmony, while weakened, did not evaporate and serves as one of the foundations of the new Kazakhstan.

Notes

1 See, for instance, Martin Gilbert, *Atlas of Russian History* (New York, 1985), 136; Sidney Ploss, *Conflict and Decision-Making in Soviet Russia: A Case Study of Agricultural Policy, 1953–63* (Princeton, 1965); Richard M. Mills, "The formation of the Virgin Lands policy," *Slavic Review* 29, no. 1 (1970): 58–69; and Martin McCauley, *Khrushchev and the Development of Soviet Agriculture: The Virgin Land Programme 1953–64* (New York, 1976).

2 See, for instance, David M. Crowe, Zhanylzhan Dzhunusova, and Stephen O. Sabol, guest eds, *Focus on Kazakstan: History, Ethnicity, and Society*, Special Topic Issue, *Nationalities Papers* 26, no. 3 (September 1998): 405–6, 428.

3 N.E. Masanov et. al., eds, *Istoriia Kazakstana: Narody i kul'tury* (Almaty, 2001), 341.

4 Throughout this essay, when I refer to "locals" as a group, I am referring to Kazakhs, deportees, earlier settlers, and the many others who had lived for a while in the region before the arrival of the Virgin Lands settlers.

5 Ingvar Svanberg, "The Kazak nation," in *Contemporary Kazaks: Cultural and Social Perspectives*, ed. idem (New York, 1999), 3.

6 Zhanusak Kasymbaev, *Istoriia goroda Akmoly* (Almaty, 1995), 9–10; A.F. Dubitskii, *Proidemsia po ulitsam Tselinograda* (Tselinograd, 1990), 6–12; Nadezhda Strel'tsova, "S chego Akmola nachalas'," *Info-Tses* (Akmola), 12 April 1996, 6; R.N. Nurgaliev, ed. *Akmola entsiklopediia* (Almaty, 1995), 38.
7 Nurtai Agubaev, "'Zdes' nashi korni, ili o tom, kak Akmolinskaia oblast' stala mnogonatsional'noi," *Info-Tses*, 11 February 1994, 7.
8 See Michaela Pohl, "'It cannot be that our graves will be here': the survival of Chechen and Ingush deportees in Kazakhstan, 1944–57," *Journal of Genocide Research* 4, no. 3 (September 2002): 401–30.
9 OPDAO, f. 1, op. 1, d. 1915, l. 43, Zhurin to Ponomarenko, 13 April 1954, no. 435/s; also see ibid., d. 1857, l. 30.
10 RGANI, f. 5, op. 24, d. 519, ll. 3–31 and ll. 161–225, esp. l. 176, 16 November 1953, "O merakh dal'neishego razvitiia sel'skogo khoziaistva Akmolinskoi oblasti," from Tasbaev, Zhurin to Mikoian, Khrushchev; Nikita S. Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers: The Last Testament*, trans. and ed. Strobe Talbott (Boston, 1974), 120–2; and Nikolai Zhurin, *Trudnye i schastlivye gody: Zapiski partiinogo rabotnika* (Moscow, 1982), 172.
11 RGANI, f. 5, op. 45, d. 1, ll. 1–14, 22 January 1954, Khrushchev to TsK KPSS, "V presidium TsK KPSS"; and see "Puti resheniia zernovoi problemy: Zapiska v Presidium TsK KPSS," in N.S. Khrushchev, *Stroitel'stvo kommunizma v SSSR i razvitie sel'skogo khoziaistva* (Moscow, 1962), v. 1, 85–100.
12 TsKhDMO, f. 1, op. 9, d. 296, ll. 135–6, 126–7, 166, 207, 210.
13 OPDAO, f. 1, op. 1, d. 1852, l. 202, 17–19 November 1954, "Protokol zasedaniia 4-ogo Plenuma Akmolinskogo Obkoma KPK."
14 TsKhDMO, f. 1, op. 9, d. 323, ll. 152, 185, 237, Saprykin to TsK VLKSM, TsK KPSS.
15 TsKhDMO, "Spravochnye materialy," d. 232, "Statisticheskaia spravka," l. 217; and see RGANI, f. 2, op. 1, d. 360, l. 5, "Stenograficheskii otchet Plenuma TsK KPSS" (where this figure was rounded up to "350,000").
16 See for instance Gilbert, *Atlas*, 136; Edward Crankshaw, *Khrushchev: A Career* (New York, 1966), 201.
17 I conducted about 50 full-length interviews (life histories) with former settlers and local people in the Akmola region in Kazakhstan between 1994 and 1996, during dissertation fieldwork. About a dozen of the interviews used for this article were with Russian informants; the rest include interviews with Kazakh, Ukrainian, Moldovan, Belorussian, German, Polish, Ingush, and Chechen respondents. My questions varied depending on nationality and background, but I followed a similar set of questions for both men and women. The interviews in 1996 were carried out with a Human Subjects Clearance for my project from Indiana University, and the interviewees cited by name signed a Human Subjects Clearance, agreeing to an "authorial" [*avtorskii*] interview, while all others cited agreed in writing or verbally (on tape) to be cited anonymously in my publications.
18 Interview with I.N. Semenov, Akmola, Kazakhstan, July 1994, Tape No. 94-01.
19 Fieldnotes Summer 1996, Tape No. 96-09.
20 OPDAO, f. 1, op. 1, d. 1983, ll. 19–21, and see ll. 28, 47, 58, 71–4, 81, 86.
21 See also my chapter "Women and girls in the Virgin Lands," in *Women in the Khrushchev Era*, eds Melanie Ilic, Susan E. Reid and Lynne Atwood (Basingstoke, Hampshire, 2004).
22 Fieldnotes July 1994, August 1996, Tapes 94–01, 96–41, 96–51, and others.
23 OPDAO, f. 1, op. 1, d. 1941, "Administrativno-khoziaistvennye kharakteristiki Akmolinskoi oblasti," (1954); d. 2169 (1955); d. 2554 (1957); d. 2714 (1958); d. 2856 (1959).
24 Michaela Pohl, "The Virgin Lands between memory and forgetting: people and transformation in the Soviet Union, 1954–1960" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1999), 278–304.

25 OPDAO, f. 1, op. 1, d. 2297, ll. 22–6, 11 April 1956, "O khode stroitel'stva sovkhozov i MTS v oblasti"; and ibid., dd. 1941, 2554.
26 Interview with Antonina Nikolaevna Azeeva, 19 August 1996, Manshuk, Tape No. 96–45.
27 OPDAO, f. 1, op. 1, d. 2049, ll. 74–5, Nikitchenko to Zhurin; ibid., d. 2049, ll. 83–106, 25 July 1954, Serikpaev to Zhurin, "O prestupnosti sredi komsomol'tsev i molodezhi pribyvshikh na osvoenie tselinnykh i zalezhnykh zemel', po sostoianiiu na 1.7. 1954 g."
28 GARF, f. 9479, op. 1, d. 903, ll. 50–1, 20 January 1955, Seitmukhambetov, "O faktakh ugolovnykh proiavlenii mezhdu pribyvshimi kontingentami na osvoenie tselinnykh zemel' i spetsposelentsami."
29 GARF, f. 9479, op. 1, d. 903, ll. 45–8, "O gruppovoi drake v g. Atbasare, Akmolinskoi oblasti."; OPDAO, f. 1, op. 1, d. 2077, l. 23, 19 January 1955, "O faktakh gruppovykh drak v s. Elizavetinka, Akmolinskogo raiona i gorode Atbasare"; and ibid., d. 2079, ll. 4–9, "O faktakh gruppovykh drak v Akmolinskom i Atbasarskom uchilishchakh mekhanizatsii sel'skogo khoziaistva."
30 GARF, f. 9479, dd. 903 and 847; and OPDAO, f. 1, op. 1, dd. 1929–31, 2049–50, 2137–9, 2336, 2348, 2470–1, 2542, 2652, 2655, 2630, 2779, and 2852. For a more detailed discussion, see Pohl, "Virgin Lands," 345–52.
31 Ibid., 321–68.
32 APRK, f. 708, op. 30, d. 625, ll. 3–4, January 1957, Abazatov, "Dokladnaia v TsK KPK."
33 See, for instance, GARF, f. 9479, op. 1, d. 903, ll. 45–8, "O gruppovoi drake;" OPDAO, f. 1, op. 1, d. 2077, l. 23, 19 January 1955, "O faktakh gruppovykh drak;" ibid., d. 2079, ll. 4–9, "O faktakh gruppovykh drak;" and ibid., d. 2138, ll. 122–8, 1 July 1955, Serikpaev to Zhurin, Butin, "O bol'shom roste narusheniia obshchestvennogo poriadka v gorode Akmolinsk."
34 Anonymous interview, Manshuk, Akmola region, July 1996, Tape No. 96–52.
35 Anonymous group interview, Akmola region, 12 September 1996, Tape No. 96–39.
36 Interview with Leonid Mikhailovich Kartauzov, 14 June 1996, Akmola, Tapes No. 96–07 and 96–08.
37 See, for instance, the chapters "Planeta sta iazykov," and "V sovmestnom trude krepnet mnogonatsional'naia sem'ia tselinnikov," in S. Shvachko, *Tselina preobrazhennaia, tselina preobrazhaiushchaia* (Tselinograd, 1968), 40–76; and Ie.N. Auelbekov, "Internatsional'naia druzhba – zalog uspekha," in Kh.S. Abdrashitov and Vladislav Vladimirov, *Shchedrost' tseliny* (Alma-Ata, 1974), 135–47; V. Kasatkin, *Osvoenie tseliny – zrimoe voploshchenie Leninskoi druzhby i vzaimopomoshchi narodov SSSR* (Alma-Ata, 1974).
38 For a detailed discussion of the special settler reforms, see Viktor Zemskov, "Massovoe osvobozhdenie spetsposelentsev i ssyl'nykh (1954–60 gg.)," *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia*, no. 1 (1991): 5–26. For the impact of the reforms on the Caucasians in Akmola, see Pohl, "It cannot be."
39 GARF, f. 9479, op. 1, d. 903, ll. 11–15, 16 February1955, Karamyshev to Kruglov.
40 OPDAO, f. 1, op. 1, d. 2336, ll. 1–4, 2 February 1956, Akhmetov to Zhurin, "Spetszapiska ob osvobozhdenii iz pod administrativnogo nadzora organov MVD nekotoroi kategorii spetsposelentsev i nastroeniiakh spetskontingentov po oblasti."
41 Ibid., ll. 128–31, 25 June 1956, "Dokladnaia zapiska o nastroeniiakh i povedenii spetsposelentsev."
42 Pohl, "It cannot be," 423–4.
43 OPDAO, f. 1, op. 1, d. 2852, ll. 50–64, 22 April 1959, "Spravka o nalichii i deiatel'nosti razlichnykh religioznykh grupp na territori Akmolinskoi oblasti"; ibid., d. 2790, ll. 8–16, 2 June 1959, "Protokol 7-ogo Plenuma Akmolinskogo OK KPK" (speech by A. Andreeva about religion); B. Bobrovskii, "Sovremennyi baptism i ego moral," *Akmolinskaia pravda*, 8 December 1954.
44 See Pohl, "It cannot be."

45 OPDAO, f. 1, op. 1, d. 2139, ll. 46–59, 19 September 1955, "Spetssoobshchenie."
46 Anonymous interview, July 1996, Tape No. 96–51.
47 Anonymous interview, July 1996, Tape No. 96–41.
48 Interview with Industrian Semenov, July 1994, Tape No. 94–01.
49 GARF, f. 9479, op. 1, d. 903, ll. 43–4, 1 January 1955, Seitmukhambetov, "Spravka."
50 Shvachko, *Tselina*, 116.
51 Industrian Semenov, "Tainstvennyi znakomets: GULAG" (Typescript, 1995), 10.
52 Industrian Semenov, "Spetsposelentsy: kto oni?," *Gorodskie novosti* (Akmola), 13 May 1994, 3; and "Tainstvennyi znakomets," 9.
53 Interview with Galina Dmitrievna Tarasiuk, 1996, Akmola, Tapes No. 96-11 and 96-12.
54 See Cynthia Ann Werner, "The dynamics of feasting and gift exchange in rural Kazakhstan," in *Contemporary Kazaks: Cultural and Social Perspectives*, ed. Ingvar Svanberg (New York, 1999), 47–72.
55 Fieldnotes Summer 1996.
56 TsKhDMO, f. 1, op. 9, d. 566, l. 67, 17 August 1960, letter from brigade No. 3, Priishimskii state farm.
57 TsKhDMO, f. 1, op. 9, d. 566, ll. 65–6, October 1960, Selivant'ev/*Komsomol'skaia pravda*, TsK VLKSM.
58 See the published documents on grain procurement from the Akmola region, "Telegramma Esil'skogo RK KPK … po sdache khleba gosudarstvu," 21 September 1956, and "Iz pravitel'stvennoi telegrammy Akmolinskogo OK KPK … po sdache khleba gosudarstvu," 24 September 1956, in V.K. Savosko, ed., *Narodnoe dvizhenie za osvoenie tselinnykh zemel' v Kazakhstane* (Moscow, 1959), 510–14.
59 Ibid., 552–3; and I.M. Volkov, ed., *Velikii podvig partii i naroda. Massovoe osvoenie tselinnykh i zalezhnykh zemel': Sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Moscow, 1979), 274–5.
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64 "Iz soobshcheniia gazety *Sel'skaia zhizn'* ob ustanovlenii v sovkhoze 'Dvurechnyi' Akmolinskoi oblasti pamiatnika trudovoi slavy tselinnikam," 8 December 1960, in Volkov, *Velikii podvig*, 410–11.
65 Roy A. Medvedev and Zhores A. Medvedev, *Khrushchev: The Years in Power*, trans. Andrew R. Durkin (New York, 1978), 122.
66 On 29 August 1964 the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet issued an announcement that accusations of active collaboration with the Nazis had been unfounded. Gerhard Simon, *Nationalism and Policy Toward the Nationalities in the Soviet Union. From Totalitarian Dictatorship to Post-Stalinist Society*, trans. Karen Forster and Oswald Forster (Boulder, 1991), 245.
67 Berta Bachmann, *Memories of Kazakhstan: A Report on the Life Experiences of a German Woman in Russia* (Lincoln, 1983); Joseph Schnurr, ed., *Die Kirchen und das religiöse Leben der Russlanddeutschen* (Stuttgart, 1972), 265–8.
68 AOM, Razdel: Deportatsiia, NVF No. KP 14127–9, "Istoria sel. Kamenka i Kamyshenka Astrakhanskogo raiona," and NVF No. KP 14347, "Vospominaniia: Bich,

A.A." See also Maria Terenik, "Einer aus dem Karlag: Im Neuland," in *Die bitteren Äpfel von 1941*, ed. Wandelin Mangold (Alma-Ata, 1991), 122–4; Aleksandr Frizen, "Uchastie sovetskikh nemtsev v razvitii sel'skogo khoziastva Kazakhstana" (Candidate Dissertation, Alma-Ata, 1991).

69 Anonymous interview, 1996, Tape No. 96–53.

70 Anonymous interview, Fieldnotes 4 July 1996.

71 Anonymous interview, Fieldnotes 22 June 1996.

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73 Kan De Khan, "Moe otnoshenie k proshlomu," *Vesti*, 18 February 1994.

74 Efim Chirkov, "Tselinnaia nostal'giia," *Info-Tses*, 25 February 1994, 2.

75 RGANI, f. 2, op. 1, d. 360, l. 5, 15 December 1958, "Stenograficheskii otchet Plenuma TsK KPSS."

76 Ibid. See also speeches of T.I. Sokolov, the secretary of the "Bureau on northern oblasts" that was founded in 1960: for instance, "Iz doklada sekretaria Tsk KPK predsedatelia Biuro Tsk KPK po Severnym oblastiam T.I. Sokolova na pervom respublikanskom slete molodykh tselinnikov v Kazakhstane," OPDAO, f. 3227, op. 1, d. 1, l. 13.

77 McCauley, *The Virgin Land Programme*, 147.

78 Zh. Kuanyshev, "Tenevye storony geroicheskoi epopei," *Zaria* (Alma-Ata), no. 5 (1991), and no. 7 (1991); A. Kopishev,"Zabytye auly," *Zaria*, no. 7 (1991); "O sud'be iazyka zemli kazakhskoi," *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, 29 November 1990.

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