



Aitmatov and Bashiri discuss the civil war in southern Tajikistan

Aitmatov's Farewell, Gyulsary!: **A Structural Analysis**

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Introduction

Farewell, Gyulsary! was originally published in 1959 in the third issue of *Novy Mir*. It depicts the hard life of the Kyrgyz peasant and herder under Soviet rule. In 1963, it was included in a collection entitled *Tales of the Mountain and the Steppes*. The collection was awarded the Lenin prize, the Soviet Union's highest award for literature. It was recognized as the best work of literature in the state in 1966, and was awarded the State Prize in 1968.

Synopsis

At the simplest level, *Farewell, Gyulsary!* is the story of an old man and his old horse. Dissatisfied with the actions and words of his daughter-in-law and annoyed at his son's lack of gumption to stand up to his wife, Tanabai Bakasov was returning from his son's house in the city to his own cottage in the steppe. On the way, after crossing a rather steep rise, his horse becomes increasingly weak until he can no longer go on. The old man tends the horse, but to no avail; the horse dies.

During that cold February night, as his horse passes through the last hours of his existence, Tanabai reviews and assesses his own life, which spans some five decades of Soviet rule, a major portion of it during the Stalin era and the Second World War. By morning, he comes to a rather stunning conclusion. His assessment, the conclusions that he draws, and the decision that he makes form the substance of this story.

There is little information on the early life of Bakasov. But we know that in the technical sense of the word he was not educated. He and his half-brother,

Kulubai, worked as itinerant workers for the rich members of their family most of the time, being cheated out of their earnings. When they came of age, Tanabai worked for a Russian farmer, learned Russian and became familiar with life in the urban centers of Kyrgyzstan. Kulubai worked for a *bai* (landlord), married a well-off widow and, eventually, became a fairly rich man.

After the shock waves of the October Revolution in Russia reached Kyrgyzstan, Tanabai returned to his village and became involved in the activities of the village soviets. At the Komsomol school, he met Choro Sayakov, an educated and eloquent young man. They worked together in the Komsomol cells and later joined the Communist Party. During this time they became good friends; Choro taught Tanabai to read and write.

One of the duties of the Komsomol cells was to draw up lists containing the names of the landowners and *mullahs* in villages and towns. The feudal lords of the past were now to be dispossessed. The list of the cell where Tanabai and Choro were members included the name of Kulubai Bakasov. Because of Kulubai's relationship with Tanabai, the committee consulted both Tanabai and Choro regarding proper action. Choro suggested that Kulubai should be left alone. Later on, he said, the Party would be in a position to draw on the resources of Kulubai. Tanabai disagreed. Unable to express himself under pressure, and to disagree with Choro, as he automatically did, he suggested that Kulubai, like any other landowner, must be dispossessed. He went even farther and suggested that Kulubai should be made a *Kulak*, i.e., a landowner who refuses to join the collective. Kulubai's beseeching for mercy did not change Tanabai's resolve. Thus identified as a *Kulak*, Kulubai was exiled to Siberia for seven years.

Tanabai's decision, although applauded by some Party members during the early days of the socialist movement, was frowned upon by many. "How could he do that to his own brother?" people said, both to his face and behind his back. Predictably, within a short time, Tanabai's popularity plunged, affecting his position in the Party. He was gradually phased out of both committees and administrative assignments.

When the Soviets began operations against Nazi Germany, Tanabai was drafted and sent to the front for the duration of the War. There he was shell shocked once and sustained a chest wound which landed him in the hospital for two months. Choro, on the other hand, because of ill health, was assigned administrative duties commensurate with his abilities. He attended to the affairs of the collective during the War and provided provisions for the soldiers

fighting the Nazis. Before the War ended, Choro became the Chairman of the White Stones Collective Farm.

At the end of the War, Tanabai returned home to his wife and seven-year-old son. To earn a living, he became an apprentice to a blacksmith. He began to reorganize his life, send his son to boarding school, and make preparations for a larger family. But the transition from military life to a civilian life after a long war was not as easy as Tanabai had imagined.

During the War, the old men of the village had undertaken the difficult task of providing for the soldiers. Now, it was the duty of the veterans to relieve the old men so that they could enjoy what remained of their lives. Since most of the returning soldiers already had jobs, the rank and file members of the Communist Party, especially those at the lower ranks, had to fill tough assignments. As a low-ranking Party member and veteran, Tanabai Bakasov was required to accept any task that the Chairman felt he should do.

The collective Chairman, Choro, forced by circumstances and capitalizing on his friendship and long association with Tanabai, asked Tanabai to become a horse herder and relieve old Torgoi. Although reluctant--he had always thought that life in the Soviet Union after the War would be comfortable--Tanabai accepted the appointment. Before he left, Torgoi brought to Tanabai's attention an eighteen-month-old golden colt, named Gyulsary (Buttercup), so named by his granddaughter. Before long, the colt became a true source of joy in an otherwise bleak existence for Tanabai high up in the mountains. Torgoi instructed Tanabai to pay special attention to Gyulsary, as the colt had the potential to become a stallion that could both be entered in the races and serve as a stud horse.

By the age of two, when Tanabai broke Gyulsary according to Torgoi's direction, the old herder's prediction for the pacer came true. Gyulsary became a strong pacer. As soon as he was old enough to run in the races, he won not only all the prizes but the love and affection of the entire village as well. Among the fans of the pacer and his rider was a war widow named Biubiujan. That summer, Tanabai rode Gyulsary in all the races and served on the auditing committee as well. That gave him some free time to spend in the village. In addition, he was assigned night-duty with the herd. The combination of these circumstances allowed Tanabai to spend some nights at Biubiujan's.

One night a fierce storm descended upon the Valley; in an attempt to keep Gyulsary from escaping and to get to the herd to protect the horses from the storm, Tanabai left Biubiujan's house in his nightshirt. On the mountain, his

wife, Jaidar, who, along with some neighbors, had come to help Tanabai with the herd, had already taken care of the horses. Tanabai's appearance in his nightshirt disclosed his relationship with Biubiujan. As a result, he went up the mountain with the herd and did not return to the village until he was no longer a herder.

Meanwhile, Choro became sick and was replaced by Aldanov. In an attempt to ingratiate himself with the new Chairman, the ambitious Ibraim recalled the pacer to the Collective's stables to be used as a riding horse by the new Chairman. Once delivered, however, the pacer kept escaping and returning to the herd to visit the mares. With Aldanov's permission, Ibraim gelded the pacer, thus putting an end to Tanabai's hopes for using Gyulsary for stud.

While Tanabai was still unhappy over the loss of Gyulsary, a similar set of circumstances that had forced Choro, now the Party Organizer, to ask Tanabai to become a herder, forced Choro to ask his friend to change jobs one more time. This time, however, the demands on Tanabai were dictated by the authorities above Choro. Tanabai was asked, actually forced, not only to become a shepherd, but announce that he would take on a flock of breeding ewes, and to pledge to the Party and the people that he would rear a lamb crop of one hundred and ten per cent and shear a fleece of three kilos each from the flock. He also had to pledge to train two younger Komsomol shepherds, even though he himself had no training as a shepherd. When Tanabai tried to refuse, he was told in no uncertain terms that he had no choice but to accept.

Tanabai's life as a shepherd began similarly to the way it had when he was a herdsman. The sheep, of course, were not as interesting as the horses and required constant shepherding. Unlike when he was a lonely herder, however, here Jaidar, too, worked with him and drew a salary. Life with the flock was difficult for the children, but they liked playing with the sheep and helped their parents whenever they could. In fact, things would have proceeded quite uneventfully, if they had not had to move to the lambing station in the foothills where the pregnant ewes were to be cared for while the lambs were being born.

Technically, the Collective was responsible for providing dry sheds and fodder for the ewes and lambs, as well as a tent and provisions for the shepherd and his family. These items would normally be in place before the flocks reached the lambing station. However, when Tanabai, supervising the driving of three flocks, arrived at the Five Trees Valley lambing station, the place was deserted and in ramshackle condition. For many years prior to this, it seemed, the station had not been taken care of properly. The roof of the shed was full of

holes, the shed itself was full of dung from previous years as well as snow and ice. In addition, there was only a small amount of rotting straw and little fodder.

Tanabai's first reaction was to ride down to the village and have it out with Ibraim, Choro, and the new Chairman, but Jaidar convinced him that they should manage in spite of the situation. She argued that the Collective is poor, and if it had had the ability, Choro and others would have seen to it that the station was well stocked. Tanabai eventually agreed with Jaidar and decided not to go. Instead, they worked very hard for three days and nights and prepared part of the shed for accepting the first lambs. Then the weather decided to be uncooperative. A quick thaw followed by torrential rain, and then more snow and cold destroyed everything that they had worked so hard for up to this point. Helpless, Tanabai and his assistants became the movers of dead ewes and lambs. Lack of food and dry places for the animals to rest led to a rapid demise of the ewes and lambs.

Interestingly enough, in the middle of the chaos, first a surveyor came and recorded the number of losses in Tanabai's flock; then an inspector arrived to investigate the situation. With no regard to the difficult situation in which the shepherds in general, and Tanabai in particular, had to operate, the inspector, Segizbayev, insulted Tanabai by calling him a saboteur, an enemy of the people and a disgrace to the Party. In turn, Tanabai insulted the inspector by calling him the "new lord in a leather coat" and by threatening him with a pitchfork.

Although, with Choro's help, the incident ended without any actual physical violence, three days later, Tanabai was summoned to the district committee to respond to several charges leveled against him by Segizbayev. Tanabai listened to the charges and accepted them as fact. He could not defend himself by outlining the problems of the collective that had been made his in the proceedings. Additionally, Choro, on whom Tanabai had counted for support, remained relatively mute. In fact, Choro himself was implicated both for trying to cover up for Tanabai and for alleged mismanagement of the affairs of the Collective. At the end of the trial, Tanabai was expelled from the Party.

After the trial, Tanabai and Choro parted acrimoniously. Choro died the next day, but Tanabai, although summoned while Choro was still alive, refused to go to his friend's deathbed until forced by Jaidar. Thus, he was not at Choro's side when he died. On his deathbed, Choro requested, through his son, Samansur, that Tanabai be the one to turn in his Party card to the District Center.

Following Choro's funeral, Tanabai took Choro's card to the District Center. On the way, he visualized a meeting with the Party Secretary along the lines of early Soviet meetings with the Secretaries. At that time, individuals had the right both as Party members and as human beings to express their opinion personally and receive a just reaction. Those meetings, of course, were now a part of the past and a new reality had dawned in Soviet lands, a reality, however, to which Tanabai Bakasov was oblivious. When he arrived at the District Center, Secretary Kashkatayev would not see him. Tanabai tried to insist on seeing him, but the Secretary, through his receptionist, made it understood that he would not be seen, and that the procedure was that Tanabai should deposit Choro's card at the Registration Office down the hall.

During the next seven years, which for all intents and purposes coincide with the post-Stalin rule of Nikita Khrushchev, life circumstances in the collective changed. A new cadre of educated youth took over from the old guard and implemented far-reaching reforms. The reforms also brought the Party back to Tanabai. Kerimbekov, a Komsomol secretary who, during Tanabai's trial so many years ago, had tried very hard to dismiss the charges against him, had become the new District Party Secretary. He personally came to Tanabai and asked him to rejoin the Party. Later, the same reforms also brought Gyulsary, now a nag and in poor health, back to Tanabai. He and Jaidar nursed the pacer back to a degree of health.

Early that day in February, Tanabai had taken some gifts to his son's family in the city following the birth of their family's second son. While there, he had a quarrel with his daughter-in-law. In the course of the quarrel, she had insulted Tanabai by reminding him that he was an old, useless fellow, one whom the Party had identified as an unfit Communist and had expelled. She further attributed her husband's inability to rise in the Party ranks to the stigma of Tanabai's expulsion from the Party.

As a result of the acrimonious atmosphere thus created, Tanabai did not wish to spend the night at his son's house. Late as it was, and not paying attention to Gyulsary's state of health, he headed for his cottage in the steppe. And that journey, of course, came to be Gyulsary's last journey on that familiar road.

That unforgettable night also saw the last of Tanabai as an outcast. In the morning, as he leaves the body of the dead horse to walk to his cottage across the fields, he decides to return to the Party and, even though in the sunset of his life, to use all the help he can muster to purge the Party of the likes of Kashkatayev, Segizbayev, and Ibraim. He somehow knew that Choro's son and

his cohorts, along with Kerimbekov and his associate *jigits* (personal attendants), would help him get the Party back on the right track.

Characters

Tanabai Bakasov

Tanabai Bakasov's life can be divided into three main phases: a) before the period when the shockwaves of the October Revolution in Russia reached Kyrgyzstan, b) as an atheist member of the Communist Party, and c) after his expulsion from the Communist Party. In what follows developments in each phase are highlighted.

There is not a great deal of information about Tanabai's life when the Russian Empire held sway over the region of present-day Republic of Kyrgyzstan. We don't know, for example, exactly when Tanabai was born, although we learn that by the time of the establishment of Soviet rule in Kyrgyzstan (late 1920s), he was in his youth. He does not seem to have received a formal education as a child. Rather, he grew up as a herdsboy alongside Kulubai, his older half-brother. As teens, the brothers hired themselves out to the richer members of the family who treated them unfairly. As a result, Tanabai became an extremely angry and ruthless young man, resolved to avenge injustice no matter where he found it. For the remainder of the years before the Revolution, he hired out as an itinerant worker to a Russian. At this juncture he learned Russian and became acquainted with urban life in Aouliye-Ata.

The Communist Party affected Tanabai Bakasov profoundly and reshaped his life to Lenin's desire. Lenin had asked for people to devote not just hours and days, but their entire lives to the cause of socialism.¹ In that sense, Tanabai was his man. Soon after the Soviets moved into Kyrgyzstan (in the late 1920s), Tanabai returned to the village of his birth and involved himself heavily in the socialist activities of the village soviets. Because of his energy and enthusiasm, but especially for his keen stance against the *bais*, he was elected to the local Committee of Poor Peasants. He also attended Komsomol school where he became acquainted with Choro Sayakov. Together, they established the first collective in the village and formed the first Komsomol cells. They also joined the Communist Party together.

¹ Cf., Shireen T, Hunter, 2002, p. 62.

Membership in the Party committees gave Tanabai a great deal of power. His lack of education, however, hampered his ability to argue and win cases and projects. To compensate for this shortcoming, he developed a system of opposition to his friend Choro's stands on issues. Thus, whenever Choro presented a solid, logical view, Tanabai took it upon himself to oppose that statement. Fortunately for Tanabai, during the early days of the revolution, there was support for his kind of argument. At the time, the Soviets were being formed and anti-traditionalist trends ran wild. Tanabai argued that Choro was weak, that he followed traditional scholarly arguments rather than applying pragmatic solutions that would get the job done. In other words, Tanabai contended that the individual must exercise judgment on the basis of the material evidence and the bare facts rather than follow logic and precedence.

As we shall see, later on, exercising his own personal judgment and his disregard for Choro's sound counsel cost Tanabai a great deal. During the formative period, however, his ruthlessness gave him a great deal of satisfaction and pleasure. For instance, he dispossessed his brother, Kulubai and, as a *kulak*, sent him to Siberia for seven years. He did that because he identified Kulubai with the *bais* of yore who had deprived him of his wages as a child, because Choro advocated that Kulubai should be left alone and, of course, Tanabai had to oppose that, and because he could. After all, was he not the first atheist and the first Communist in the village? If he were to be soft on his brother, what would people say?

During the period before World War II, due to the actions that he had taken earlier in his short career, Tanabai lost his popularity among the "voters." Kulubai's exile to Siberia was only one example of these actions, albeit the most damning for Tanabai. Deprived of committee and administrative work, he turned to domestic affairs and got married to Jaidar, a wonderful Jew's-harp player. Their son was born about the time that Tanabai was dispatched to the war front.

The War played a major role in Tanabai's life. He entered the military as a young man, but nearly six years later, he left it as what he himself termed an *aksakal* or old man. He was not old in the technical sense of the word, of course, but his attitude towards life had changed. After having been shell-shocked once and hospitalized two months for a chest wound, he was no longer as energetic as before. Neither was he as cruel as he had been before the War. He viewed the War as an inconvenience created by those who did not want the Soviets to arrive at their promised land. In fact, he used this argument throughout the War, as a coping mechanism. He convinced himself that after the War, the Soviets

would pick up things where they had left them and would usher in the good life promised by Marx and Lenin.

But life in the Soviet Union after the War proved to be more burdensome for Tanabai than it had been in the trenches. Life circumstances in his village had deteriorated. His wife and son, who were waiting for him, had received little assistance. Only as an expression of charity, every now and then, Choro had attended to their immediate needs.

To make ends meet, Tanabai found a job as an apprentice to a blacksmith. His life, however, was not totally his. Indirectly, he was at Choro's beck and call. In other words, rather than a member of an egalitarian system, Tanabai found himself living in an invisible hierarchy with values of its own. The masses were required to make sacrifices so that authorities could provide comfort for the few who served as the "brains" of Soviet operations. Put differently, Tanabai joined the other forms of life on the Collective.

Between the end of the war and the time when he was expelled from the Party, Tanabai was employed in three jobs. The last two were imposed on him by Choro and the new Chairman of the Collective, respectively. The job that Choro imposed on him was that of a herder. At the time when Tanabai was appointed to the job, he had minimal knowledge of herding, especially about the treatment of horses, provision of security, and meeting the needs of the herd. Nevertheless, he did very well, and at the end, he was recognized as the Collective's best herder.

While serving the Collective as a herder, Tanabai met Gyulsary, a beautiful golden pacer whose participation in future races and in *buzkashi* events (see further below) would bring them fame and fortune. He was also appointed to the auditing committee of the District. With some free time on his hand, he visited the village, where he became acquainted, and fell in love, with a young war widow named Biubiujan. The combined dynamics of these three events provided Tanabai with the most enjoyable summer of his life. Within a short time, however, Gyulsary was recalled to the stables to become a riding horse and Biubiujan became the subject of a scandal of which Tanabai did not want a part. Soon thereafter, Tanabai's tenure as a herder came to an end and his life returned to a more normal schedule.

The next position for which Tanabai was not trained but had to accept was that of a shepherd. In fact, he was not only forced to become a shepherd, but had to pledge to the Party and the people that he would take on a flock of breeding ewes, that he would rear a lamb crop of one hundred and ten per cent,

and that he would shear a fleece of three kilos each from the flock. He also pledged to take on the training of two Komsomol shepherds.

Distraught, Tanabai took the three flocks assigned to him to the mountains. It was a harsh winter, but with Jaidar's help, he managed to keep the ewes in good condition. In the spring, he moved the flocks to the lambing stations in the foothills. The lambing stations, which were supposed to offer shelter, provisions, and extra hands, provided none of the above. Consequently, the lambing had to proceed under severe mountain conditions. Pregnant ewes, as well as their lambs, unable to sustain themselves in the wet and cold, died in large numbers.

How could Tanabai meet his pledge? Even the most level-headed veteran shepherds had snapped under the unreasonable demands of the system. Spitting nails, he was ready to go to the village and vent his frustration on the leadership of the Collective, but Jaidar's level-headedness prevailed. Tanabai decided to stay and do his best.

Predictably, within a day or two after the ewes began to give birth, a recorder came and recorded Tanabai's heavy losses. Soon after that, an inspector arrived to evaluate the situation. Incensed at the poor conditions of the lambing stations in general, the inspector, Segizbayev, vented his anger at poor Tanabai by questioning his devotion to the Party. Tanabai was stunned. Then, Segizbayev asked Tanabai what his pledge was. Tanabai could not recall what his pledge was. This prompted Segizbayev to call Tanabai a saboteur and an enemy of the people. Tanabai responded in kind by calling Segizbayev the "new lord in a leather coat." Not only that, he also threatened to kill Segizbayev with a pitchfork.

As a result of this uncommunist behavior, shortly thereafter, Tanabai was tried at the District Committee and was expelled from the Party (see *Tanabai: A Headless Goat?* below).

Nothing in his life had affected Tanabai as did his expulsion from the Party. He had never even visualized a day when someone would question his loyalty to the Party. His record before, during, and after the War was spotless. Yet recently, on two occasions, his loyalty and his fitness for the Communist Party had come into question, first by a student shepherd, Bektai, and now by a committee. Unfortunately for Tanabai, neither the level of his education, nor his social skills were sufficiently developed to soften the impact of his opinions. Besides, being gullible, he was easily manipulated, and being stubborn, he was

likely to do exactly the thing that he should avoid. Were it not for the wisdom of his wife, Jaidar, Tanabai would have never reached where he was in life.

This is not to say that Tanabai was not a conscientious Communist. He was. And more than anyone else, Choro was aware of Tanabai's sense of devotion to the cause of socialism. In fact, he used this virtue of Tanabai to the fullest for the benefit of the Party. Only towards the end of his life did Tanabai realize how he, and Choro for that matter, had been cheated out of their youths. He also recognized who the robbers were. They were the Party officials at the District Center, including his own son. Towards the end of his life, therefore, he decided to re-enter the system in an effort to expose those who had robbed the people, and to reestablish a true Communist system at the Collective.

Tanabai's sense of collective responsibility belonged to his tribal instincts whereby he felt he was responsible not only for all his own actions but for the actions of his father, mother, friends and enemies, even the actions of his neighbor's dog. His son and daughter-in-law, for instance, being urbanized, were not burdened with this kind of tremendous responsibility. That is perhaps why Tanabai never broached the subject of his son's shortcomings in family quarrels. Rather, he allowed himself to be blamed instead. Additionally, Tanabai had great difficulty in forming appropriate sentences and delivering them on the spot. Thus, although a very kind and sensitive man, he often came across as being abrupt and uncooperative. The same feature marred his discussions with his colleagues at social and business functions. Once Tanabai added frankness to the scant vocabulary that he used to describe the shortcomings of his colleagues and the system, few chose to voluntarily communicate with him.

In spite of the tough situation that he faced, Tanabai proved to be a good and understanding father for his daughters. Their disagreements usually evaporated within a few minutes. Similarly, he was a loyal friend. He opposed Choro when he was young simply to compensate for his own shortcoming but, otherwise, he respected Choro tremendously. He considered Choro to be his mentor, the person who could tell him why things were not the way they used to be. When the Collective failed to meet his demands, he always thought of the impact of countless demands like his on Choro and felt ashamed to have even thought of making a request. He had difficulty communicating with others, even with Bektai. He wanted so much to put Bektai on the right path, but he could not find the words. All he could do was to regret that Bektai's youth was being wasted.

Similarly, Tanabai was a good husband. He married Jaidar when they were both young and together they weathered the War which, in many cases, had ended many young marriages.² That's because Tanabai and Jaidar loved each other beyond the social ties that held normal Soviet married couples together. True, Tanabai loved Biubiujan for a while. But that did not come anywhere close to the deep respect and love which he felt towards Jaidar. In difficult times, it was not Biubiujan's love that sustained Tanabai, but Jaidar's wisdom and the true love that flowed from her music and songs. In fact, as everyone in the Collective believed, Tanabai would not have reached at the age he was without Jaidar's direction. In almost all dire circumstances, it was Jaidar who was level-headed and correct. Jaidar would usually see the same thing at the beginning of an event, that Tanabai would see at the end, after disaster had already struck.

The morning after Gyulsary died was a most poignant moment in Tanabai's life. As he threw the bridle on his shoulder and began to walk home, two realities appeared to the now gray-haired master of Gyulsary: the death of his pacer and his own impending death. Spending the long night by the side of the dying horse, Tanabai felt lonelier than he had ever felt before. Even Choro, to whom he had turned during the last few years, was long gone. The question foremost on his mind was: Had the Party been unjust in his case or had he himself been stubborn and uncompromising? His review indicated grounds for a compromise. The Party had failed in retaining its original revolutionary promises; but, he too had failed at keeping up with the times. Tanabai had harbored the notion that time alone was sufficient to achieve the highest peaks. He had been unhappy because after a long passage of time, Communism had not been achieved. Now he could understand why that was the case.

Before Choro's death, he had interpreted the old man's flexibility in the face of inevitable change as "becoming soft," rather than becoming civilized and internationalized. More than that, Tanabai realized now that, even in death, Choro had been trying to make him understand that things were not what they had been at the beginning of the Revolution, and that they would never be that way again. It was true that in those days collective bosses were available for discussing affairs over a cup of tea. But today, the complexity of the bureaucracy no longer allowed that. Yet Tanabai expected that at every occasion, even in the 1950s, the Party secretary was obliged to have tea with the Party members and discuss their problems. The realization had even deeper roots. Tanabai realized that the Kyrgyz socialization that had been a tradition since the time of Manas has given way to the mechanization of the modern age.

² Cf., the case of Jamila and Sadyk in Chingiz Aitmatov's *Jamila*, on this site.

Now only names, serial numbers, and files met, and that in cold administrative offices.

Tanabai's self-discovery at the beginning of this new day was exhilarating. As he walked, tears ran down his cheeks for the death of his pacer and for the death of the system that in an earlier time had catered best to his needs. He knew that his loneliness was born of his own ignorance of the system. He also realized that his return to life the way it used to be depended on his ability to reenter the system. After all, it was the system and those who managed it that had given him a break in life. I am a lone goose, he concluded, looking at a lone goose struggling to catch up to the rest, left out of my gaggle because of my own shortcomings. I must rejoin the gaggle. Samansur, Choro's son, can help me do just that, he thought. While, in the past, he would have considered Samansur too young for an *aksakal* to approach and beg for assistance, today he had no qualms about doing that. He valued Samansur's knowledge, as did the other Communists who had appointed him to a high position of authority.

Choro Sayakov

Choro Sayakov and Tanabai Bakasov met as young men in the Komsomol school in the early 1930s. They became their village's first communists and first atheists. Together they established a collective and formed Komsomol cells. Choro was not only educated and quite eloquent, but he was also a great student of human character. As the village's unofficial teacher, he taught Tanabai how to read and write.

In the meetings of the Komsomol cell, Choro's suggestions were based on logic and a genuine concern for the well-being of the individuals under investigation. This is seen in his treatment of Kulubai, Tanabai's half-brother. Unlike Tanabai, Choro was quite lenient. He advocated that Kulubai should be left alone at the early stages and be called upon to serve the Party later, in ways that only he could.

The War separated Choro and Tanabai from each other for six years. During this time Choro saw to the well-being of Tanabai's wife and son. He also worked hard for the soldiers at the front so that they were well provided for. At times it seemed that he starved the Collective to make sure that the soldiers did not go hungry. As a result, during the years immediately following the end of the War, the Collective fell on bad days. And in subsequent years, Choro was unfairly blamed for the Collective's poverty.

After the War, even though the upper-echelon administrators were forbidden from mingling with the rank and file, Choro did not forget Tanabai; rather, whenever possible, Choro tried to help his old friend. Choro's position, however, was difficult. On the one hand, with regard to the invisible protocol for assertion of power mentioned above, he had to keep his distance from Tanabai and come to his aid only indirectly. On the other hand, the Collective required sacrifice from the rank and file. Choro quite regularly volunteered Tanabai for tasks, no matter how hard those tasks were. His treatment of Tanabai as if he were an equal angered the higher-ups because they interpreted his deference to Tanabai as covering up for a friend. Choro's following of the rules and assigning tough tasks to him angered Tanabai because he felt Choro has sold out to the new order and was no longer the person he had known. In any event, Choro allowed Tanabai to come to his office and vent his anger. Tanabai could pound Choro's desk, say what made him feel good and, more importantly, hear what he wanted to hear--that all would be fine in the end. Tanabai always left Choro's office satisfied and full of hope.

Deep in his heart, Choro knew that he was not treating Tanabai fairly, that he was not providing him with an opportunity to become educated, as every good Communist had the right to be, and that he was assigning him the most difficult of tasks. But he did not have a choice. The Collective was poor and could not afford hiring young Komsomols like Bektai, who demanded radio, newspapers, films, and other amenities. Additionally, especially after he became sick and was replaced by Aldanov as the chairman of the Collective, Choro had little contact with the Collective and had less control. He knew very little about what was happening to the Collective and its members, especially Tanabai. The fact that he could not make good on the promises that he had made throughout the years troubled him to no end. But there was not much that he could do other than feel bad.

After the trial, which indirectly served as Choro's trial as well, Choro sought Tanabai and tried to talk some sense into him. He wanted to tell his friend that Aldanov had the upper hand and that the committee was using Tanabai to take revenge on Choro. He wanted Tanabai to understand that he (Choro) had had no part in Tanabai's having been forced to make the unrealistic pledges that he had made. But Tanabai was too irate to hear him out. Choro, in the midst of heart palpitations, nonetheless takes his case to the Collective, gathering all the Communists and telling them what had been going on in the committee. Most important in Tanabai's case, he told the Party members that Tanabai was innocent and that he should not have been expelled from the Party without a real cause.

When he was on his deathbed, Choro's main concern was finding a way whereby he could show Tanabai the factors that had compelled him to take some of the steps that he had taken with respect to Tanabai and to others in the Collective with whose plight Tanabai sympathized. He then came to the conclusion that Tanabai must be forced to personally face the system in concrete terms and deal with it. He must be pulled out of his cocoon and shown that the Soviet system that operated after the revolution and before the War no longer existed. Tanabai had to realize that Kashkatayev was not the type of Secretary that you could visit, drink tea with, and discuss Collective matters with. Or that with Aldanov as Chairman, people could barge into his office and pound on his desk without paying for the consequences of their actions. Choro thus required, as a dying man's wish, that Tanabai should take his Party card to the District Center and turn it in.

Tanabai did not understand the significance of Choro's directive for many years, until the night that Gyulsary died. Having reviewed all that had happened up to that point, Tanabai realized what Choro's intentions had been all along. In fact, it was this realization that jolted him out of the world of self-pity that he had created around himself. Choro was telling his headstrong friend that the *bais* of yore had reappeared in the guise of Party authorities and that they had taken over the Party from within. They must be rooted out in the same way that the *kulaks* had been rooted out in the past. And Tanabai was the person to do it. Choro had faith in Tanabai because they worked together on the canal. He had been the first to show Tanabai his picture that had appeared in an article full of praise about his selfless activities, and because he had been the first to congratulate Tanabai on his achievements during those trying days.

Choro was respected by not only his family, especially his son, Samansur, but by the peoples of the region as a whole. The Kazakhs, for instance, attended his funeral as if he were one of their own.³

Kulubai

Kulubai was Tanabai's half-brother. He was older than Tanabai by five years. As a teenager, he guided Tanabai through life, helping him to find employment with the wealthy members of their family. Later, he married a wealthy widow, bought a house and several animals, and became a prosperous farmer.

³ Even today, this type of cross-cultural recognition is a sign of great honor in Central Asia. In the past, the death of heroes like Manas had attracted peoples of the neighboring ethnic groups to attend funerals repasts of the greats of the region.

With the advent of socialism, Kulubai was identified with the rich *bais* and was slated to be sent to Siberia. He visited his half-brother, Tanabai, to try to persuade him to stop at dispossessing him and not make him a *kulak*. Tanabai would not hear of it. Rather, he expedited Kulubai's departure for Siberia where he remained for seven years.

According to Choro, Tanabai's Komsomol comrade, Kulubai should not have been exiled to Siberia. But Tanabai saw things differently. He felt that Choro, an "intellectual," had read too many books and, therefore, was too lenient. Choro was not, he thought, aware of the needs of the new system in the way that Tanabai was. To help the system move ahead smoothly, Tanabai thought, traditional bonds among the people of Central Asian societies must be loosened. Exiling Kulubai, he thought, was a step in that direction.

Tanabai's treatment of his brother made Tanabai suffer in a number of ways. First he lost his status among the "voters;" they did not elect him to Party committees any more. Then he was sent to the war front where he spent six, rather than two, years. When he returned people continued to be hostile to him. His brother and his brother's family hated him, as did his neighbors. An outcast with only one friend, Choro, he spent most of his time up in the mountains with no one to talk to but horses and sheep. In the village, the value of his house declined as no one was willing to lend a hand in cutting the grass or watering the plants. Similarly, his own life was ruined because he could not influence those who doled out provisions. He could not acquire even a handful of wool to mend the family's old *yurt* (nomad's tent) that was falling apart.

Kulubai weighed more heavily on Tanabai's conscience as Tanabai became older. Once he could see the world more clearly, Tanabai realized that he should not have dealt with his brother as harshly as he had. Kulubai lived well, that was true, but he had worked hard for what he had. Should he have paid so dearly for enjoying what was rightfully his?

Tanabai usually overcame his frustration arising from matters he could not reconcile by attributing them to the good of the Party. His situation with respect to his treatment of Kulubai became critical, especially when he realized that the Party itself was not what he had believed it to be. Proof for the Party's fickleness was in the treatment that both he and Choro had received. Where was the Party when he needed it, when the ewes and lambs were dying? Where were the Communists when he was framed and expelled from the Party? Would Kulubai have sacrificed his wealth and prestige to save Tanabai from the clutches of an unjust court system? This remained a question about Kulubai that Tanabai could never resolve.

Biubiujan

The three-year-old Gyulsary became the talk of the town. Kids in village alleys rode sticks, pretending they were riding the pacer Gyulsary. Women stopped Tanabai on his way to the mountains to adore the pacer and to exchange pleasantries with him. Among the women interested in Gyulsary was a war widow named Biubiujan. Tender, loving, yet somewhat detached, Biubiujan stopped Tanabai often and patted Gyulsary. While doing so, she also communicated her willingness to entertain both Gyulsary and Tanabai at her house, although she never stayed long enough with them for Tanabai to know her better. After patting Gyulsary and suffusing the alley with her perfume, she usually left for home. On some days when she picked up her daughter and her dog from her mother's house, Tanabai watched her from a distance.

The night that Gyulsary and Tanabai won the *buzkashi* event, Tanabai was entertained by a friend. From there, he rode Gyulsary to Biubiujan's house. Using Gyulsary's need to rest, and the fact that the herd was miles away on the mountain, he invited himself to stay the night. Biubiujan, somewhat coy at first, gave in, and Tanabai stayed the night. Many nocturnal visits followed.

Usually, late at night, Tanabai left the herd on its own and rode down to the village. Then, early in the morning, he rode up and resumed his herding duties. One night, however, a quick storm took Tanabai by surprise. The intensity of the storm frightened Gyulsary. To prevent Gyulsary from running away from him, Tanabai left Biubiujan's house in his nightshirt. His main concern at the time was to reach the herd and keep it from running to the valley.

In the village, the storm had disconcerted Jaidar. Thinking that her husband might not be able to cope alone, she and Aldake, a helper, had come to the holding place. Not finding Tanabai, Jaidar rounded up the horses and brought them back on her own. By the time Tanabai arrived, a situation that could have spelled disaster for him had been saved. After that incident, Tanabai no longer visited Biubiujan.

The last time Tanabai saw Biubiujan was at Choro's funeral. Clad in black from head to toe, she stayed away from him. Tanabai hoped that at some point she might come close to him and talk, but she never did. Rather, she stood at a distance and wept.

Ibraim

The story focuses on Ibraim in three capacities. The first time is when he is the Head of the Horse Breeding Farm. A survivor, and a Soviet lackey, Ibraim brought provisions for Tanabai in the mountains. He also kept an eye on the developments in the lives of Tanabai and Gyulsary, waiting for an opportune moment when he could use Gyulsary as a rung on his ladder for upward mobility to the position of the Deputy Chairman in Charge of All Cattle Breeding.

When Choro became sick and a new chairman took over, Ibraim found the opportunity to make his move. He arranged the necessary document for moving Gyulsary into the stables for the use of the new Chairman. To prevent the pacer from returning to the herd in search of mares, he castrated Gyulsary, putting an end to Tanabai's plans for the future of Gyulsary as well as to the pacer's love for participating in races.

The weakness in Ibraim's character surfaces during a conversation with Tanabai, when he cannot control his emotions and confesses that his shenanigans had not done him any good; they had only tightened the noose around his neck. What he saw in his future were two things, a trial followed by a long jail sentence:

And then, to Tanabai's amazement, the wily Ibraim burst into tears, covering his face with his hands, mumbling: "They'll send me to jail, that's what they'll do. I can't get anything any place. Nobody even wants to come here as temporary help. Go on, kill me, tear me to pieces, there's nothing else I can do. And don't expect anything else. I'm sorry I ever took this job!"⁴

Next, the lackey in Ibraim's character surfaces again when he comes to the committee to testify against Tanabai. Tanabai had done nothing to him that could give Ibraim cause to be against him. Yet, Ibraim wanted to be on good terms with the Chairman.

The third time we meet Ibraim is seven years after Tanabai's expulsion from the Party. Ibraim accompanies Kerimbekov, the new District Secretary. The irony is that Kashkatayev and Aldanov, for whom Ibraim had worked, were the exact opposite of Kerimbekov in thought, approach, and Party loyalty. Yet

⁴ Aitmatov, 1973, p. 221.

Ibraim did not have any difficulty doing for Kerimbekov what he had done for the others. He did what had to be done, even if it were mowing the lawn.

To survive the Soviet system during the time of Stalin, the members of the cadres had to be flexible. They had to carry out the commands of the system, irrespective of whether those commands were for the good of the masses or were hurtful. This, of course, made of the individual a person with no conscience or personality. Fortunately for people like Ibraim, those qualities were not among their most cherished.

Torgoi

Torgoi is a scrawny old man with a hairless, wrinkled face. During the War, he had taken care of the herd. Choro sent Tanabai to relieve him. According to Tanabai, Torgoi was a true, loud-mouthed and sharp-tongued *aksakal*, but unlike the traditional *aksakals*, he was very knowledgeable about the Soviet system. He introduced Tanabai to Gyulsary and warned him about the ill intentions of the collective leaders for colts like Gyulsary. He also taught Tanabai how to break the pacer correctly the next spring and how to ride him gently until Gyulsary got used to carrying a rider.

Tanabai, as we know, ignored Torgoi's parting advice and entered Gyulsary in the races and a major *Buzkashi* event. Gyulsary's fame brought him to the attention of the leaders. He was recalled to the stables and was castrated. Before he became an old horse, Gyulsary was passed from one leader to another.

By the time Gyulsary became a nag, Torgoi had died long ago. His knowledge about the horses and about the system, however, spoke volumes about him, as well as about Kyrgyz *aksakals* like him.

Aldanov

Jorokul Aldanovich Aldanov replaced Choro, the Chairman of the Collective, when the latter became ill. Apparently hand picked by the district committee chair, First Secretary Kashkatayev, Aldanov moved quickly to attract the loyalties of the Collective leaders to himself, as well as to prevent the previous collective chairman, Choro, from making a comeback. Among those who transferred their entire loyalty to the new cadre, was the Party functionary Ibraim, Head of the Horse Breeding Farm. To pave the way for becoming the future Deputy Chair in Charge of all Cattle Breeding, Ibraim commandeered the best stallion in the herds, Gyulsary, for the new Chairman.

Not taking into account Gyulsary's needs and potential to contribute to the development of the herd, Aldanov allowed Ibraim to geld the pacer so that he would not go back to the herd.

Gyulsary disliked Aldanov instinctively. This was partly because Aldanov treated him cruelly, and partly because he and his friends always reeked of alcohol. Aldanov's main task was to strengthen Kashkatayev's position in the Collective and to buy him prestige among the members of the district committee. He carried out his mission by criticizing Choro and pointing out Choro's shortcomings in the meetings of the District Center.

Aldanov did not care that the Collective was devastated during the War and that without Choro's contributions it would not have survived. Neither did he consider the fact that the energy of the Collective under Choro had been spent in providing for the soldiers at the front and needed to be refurbished gradually in the post-War years. In other words, he did not allow Choro to make good on the promises that Choro had made to the members.

One weak spot in Choro's management of the Collective was in the way that he had handled the lambing stations. Aldanov, therefore, arranged matters--he forced Tanabai and others, perhaps, to make pledges they could not meet--in a way that the district center inspector would not miss the heavy losses to the Collective that resulted from the improper handling of ewes and lambs. In Tanabai's trial, Aldanov then testified against Tanabai, but in reality, he outlined the shortcomings of which he himself was the sole author, yet making them reflect poorly on Choro.

In fact, Aldanov himself testified against Tanabai and Choro by pointing out Choro's incompetence and attempt at bribery and cover up, and also by outlining Tanabai's threats, including Tanabai's angry remark about "cracking" his skull. To support his contention that Tanabai was a criminal who should be in jail, Aldanov introduced his lackeys, prominent among them Ibraim, as witnesses.

Jaidar

Wise, forceful, and forgiving, Jaidar was also a wonderful jew's-harp player. Young Jaidar and Tanabai became acquainted sometime before the War and got married. Their son was born about the time that Tanabai was getting ready to go to the front.

During the War, Jaidar took good care of both their son and their house. Among praises that Choro continuously lavished on Jaidar was how well she took care of the house, especially when Tanabai was away. He also praised Jaidar for being level-headed and wise.

After the war, when Tanabai was working as an apprentice at the smithy, Jaidar gave him a daughter, and the next year, when he became a herder, she brought him another daughter. Additionally, she lived on her own throughout the time that Tanabai was herding up in the mountains. In other words, she brought up their son and two daughters single-handedly. Their son was ready to go to boarding school by the time Tanabai became a herder.

When Tanabai became a herder and his horse Gyulsary became famous, Tanabai became involved with the widow Biubiujan. When their affair was discovered, Jaidar approached the situation with dignity. However, Tanabai often felt that Jaidar took her revenge incrementally, but there is little direct evidence of that.

Conversely, a thoughtful, knowledgeable, and firm woman, Jaidar guided Tanabai through life, filling the areas where he lacked initiative and decorum and reminding him of his own beliefs in the larger mission of the Party. For instance, when the Collective ordered Gyulsary to be moved back to the stables, Tanabai wanted to disobey the order. Jaidar made it clear to him that he had no choice but to send the horse to the stables for the use of the new Chairman:

"Don't shout. And put your hands down," she said, as always calm and collected. "Listen to me. Do you own Gyulsary? Is he your private property? What do you own? Everything we have we own in common with the farm. That's our way of life. And Gyulsary belongs to the collective farm, too. The Chairman's in charge of the farm. Whatever he says, goes."⁵

Similarly, years later, after the episode at the lambing station, Tanabai wanted to chase and kill both Segizbayev and Choro. But Jaidar held the reins of Tanabai's horse firmly, prevented him from making matters worse than they were. Most importantly, when Choro was on his deathbed and Tanabai was feeling sorry for himself, it was Jaidar who literally forced Tanabai to participate in the funeral. She knew that the funeral was a one-time event in which Tanabai had a major role to play:

⁵ Ibid, 1973, p. 180.

"Haven't you dressed yet?" Jaidar said, returning.

"Stop nagging. I said I'm not going."

"Get up!" she shouted angrily. To his utter surprise he rose at her command like a soldier. She took a step towards him, and in the dim light of the lantern her eyes were full of torment and indignation. "If you're not a man, if you're not a human being, if you're nothing but a snivelling old woman, I'll go instead of you, and you stay home and feel sorry for yourself! I'm leaving this minute. Go saddle the horse for me!"⁶

Minutes later, when the horse was ready for her to leave, she returned and said:

"Then get ready to go." Jaidar handed him his cape.

Tanabai began dressing in silence, pleased that his wife had taken the first step. Still, his pride made him say:

"Maybe I'd better start out tomorrow morning?"

"No, go now. You'll be too late tomorrow."⁷

In all similar instances, Jaidar made the right decisions for her husband. Additionally, nothing, including sickness, even being crushed under the weight of a falling column, deterred Jaidar from helping her husband meet his pledge. Not only Tanabai, but the entire Collective respected her for that and asked her opinion, especially when Tanabai was stubborn and hard to approach.

Jaidar was a traditional woman. She complained about the condition of their *yurt*, but, at the same time, she refused to move into a new tent. The makers of the modern tents, she felt, had failed to provide the facilities that the ancient Kyrgyz had incorporated in the construction of the *yurt*.

Jaidar's opinion about tents and *yurts* was analogous to her opinion about the new breed of Kyrgyz people as well. When their son was still a child, Jaidar loved him. During the period when he attended boarding school she visited him. Even after he got married, she prepared baskets that Tanabai took to the city for him and his family. But Jaidar did not accompany Tanabai to town because she did not approve of her daughter-in-law. She felt that her daughter-in-law had influenced her son adversely and had moved him away from the true path of Communism. Tanabai echoed this same sentiment, albeit with much more passion.

⁶ Ibid, 1973, p. 259.

⁷ Ibid, 1973, p. 260.

After their daughters got married and left the house, only Gyulsary remained. He was the sole survivor of the many turbulent years in the lives of the old couple. Besides Gyulsary, Jaidar's music gave Tanabai a new outlook on life. It pointed out the nature of Communism and showed how unbridled Communism would not spare even the last man on earth.

Bektai Zarylkov

Bektai Zarylkov was one of the two young trainees who were assigned to Tanabai when the latter was appointed as a shepherd at the White Stones Collective Farm. Tanabai was supposed to teach Bektai the ins and outs of shepherding even though he himself knew very little about the job.

Bektai was at once irresponsible and aggressive. He gave Tanabai a lot of grief exactly at a time when Tanabai needed his support and assistance. For instance, he abandoned his flock in the middle of the lambing period. Komsomol shepherds in the past would not dare do such a thing under any circumstances. When Tanabai protested, Bektai punched him on the nose and left him unconscious in the snow.

Bektai and Tanabai, when the latter was a young man, had a lot in common. They were relatively uneducated, individualistic, hot-tempered, and frank. But the milieu in which they were operating were different. Tanabai was a youth in the forefront of a revolution. He served as an instrument for installing a new way of life in Kyrgyzstan. He served on committees without having to produce appropriate credentials. He formed Komsomol cells that taught the principles of socialism about which he knew nothing, and he made decisions that he came to regret throughout the rest of his life.

Bektai, on the other hand, dealt with a system that consisted of a top and a bottom. Those at the top had set the Party's priorities. Those at the bottom had to carry them out without question. There was no room for the likes of Bektai to flex their muscle. He was assigned as Tanabai's helper without his prior knowledge or consent:

"Oh yes, and say that you'll undertake to help two young shepherds, both Komsomol members."

"Which two?"

People were shoving and pushing. Choro looked through his list.

"Eshim Bolotbekov and Bektai Zarlykov."

"But I haven't spoken to them. What'll they say?"

"There you go again!" the chairman said with annoyance. "You're a

strange man. Do you have to talk to them? What's the difference? It's not up to them anyway. We've appointed you as their sponsor, it's all been decided."

"Then what's the use talking to me if it's all been decided?" Tanabai turned to go.⁸

Additionally, while Tanabai had Choro and other young progressive Communists as models to emulate and shape his future, Bektai had the old and spent Tanabai, a man who could not form a proper sentence, let alone give him advice or inspire him with the type of vision that Bektai felt he needed. In fact, Bektai was the first person to tell Tanabai what was wrong with him as a person, something that Choro and Jaidar had been aware of for a long time but who had been withholding it from Tanabai, sparing the old man's feelings:

"Wait, Bektai!" He ran after him. "You can't walk out. Think of what you're doing! Do you hear me?"

"Leave me alone!" Bektai spun around. "You do the thinking. I want to live like other people. I'm no worse than they are. I can work in the city, too, and get wages. Why do I have to waste my life here with these sheep? No grain, no shed, no felt tent. Leave me alone! Go on, kill yourself, go drown in dung. Have a look at yourself, see what you look like. You'll drop dead here soon, but even that's not enough. You'll still be shouting slogans. You want others to follow your example. Well, not this boy! I've had enough!" And he stalked off, stamping through the white, virgin snow so fiercely that his footprints filled with water and turned instantly black.

"Bektai! Listen to me!"

Tanabai caught up with him. "I can explain everything."

"Do your explaining someplace else. Maybe some fools will listen to you."⁹

Disappointed in the manner the Collective was operating and fearing that soon the arduous work for the Collective would make an old man like Tanabai out of him as well, with no true contribution to point to, Bektai left the Collective to work for a restaurant in town. The last time Tanabai saw Bektai, it was at Bektai's trial. Tanabai was there to testify to Bektai's irresponsible act. Tanabai did not point out his own personal betrayal - that Bektai had hit him - but condemned Bektai only for renegeing on his responsibilities to the community - for abandoning his flock at a crucial time.

⁸ Ibid, 1973, p. 205.

⁹ Ibid, 1973, p. 235.

After the trial, Tanabai invited Bektai to visit him and Jaidar after he was released, but he could not go further and educate the erring shepherd, as it were. Tanabai wished he could tell Bektai to finish his sentence with dignity, come home and join him so that together they could build a better world, but unfortunately, he could not form the appropriate sentences that would convey all that.

Eshim Bolotbekov

Eshim Bolotbekov was one of the two young trainees who were assigned to Tanabai when the latter was appointed as a shepherd at the White Stones Collective Farm. Tanabai was supposed to teach Eshim the ins and outs of shepherding even though he himself knew very little about the job.

In general, Eshim was a helpful young man, easy to work with but somewhat inefficient in his handling of tasks.

Kashkatayev

Kashkatayev, the First Secretary of the District Committee and the Head of the Bureau of the District Party Committee, was a polite and overtly Party-oriented individual; he was also cunning, ruthless, abrasive, and manipulative. As a newcomer to the job and an outsider in the district, he had to prove himself. He had to show that he was better qualified than Segizbayev for carrying out the affairs of the district. If ruthlessness was called for, he was ready to show that he was sufficiently ruthless as well.

As we shall see, as the chair of the committee, on two occasions during the trial, he had the chance and, indeed, the last word, to determine Tanabai Bakasov's fate. In both those cases, he chose to close his eyes to the facts outlined by Kerimbekov regarding the state of the lambing stations and voted politically, in favor of Segizbayev. This is not to mention his dismissal of the logical and prudent procedure suggested by Choro, i.e., to refer Bakasov's case to the Collective Party committee where Tanabai's peers, people knowledgeable about the plight of the shepherds, could pass judgment on him.

Aitmatov uses Kashkatayev as the symbol of the arrogance that permeated the Soviet system in the 1950s. As Secretary, Kashkatayev is unsympathetic, unapproachable, and unconcerned about the well-being of his fellow Communists, especially the rank and file. He is the exact opposite of what the early Party leaders had hoped to achieve: dignity and self-reliance for the masses.

When Tanabai visited Kashkatayev, he was under the impression that the Secretary would invite him in, listen to his side of the story, and apologize for the injustice that had been levied against him. But at Kashkatayev's office, he faced not only an unsympathetic ear, but a bureaucratic run-around. Was Kashkatayev in any way different from the Qushbegi who had managed the affairs of Bukhara in pre-Soviet times?¹⁰ Hardly.

Kerimbekov

Kerimbekov appears twice in the story, first as a young Komsomol secretary and a member of the District Party Committee who tries to defend Tanabai during his trial. Later, as the District Party Secretary, he approaches Tanabai and persuades him to consider returning to the Party.

As a Komsomol secretary at the trial, Kerimbekov was the only committee member who was intimately familiar with the trials and tribulations of the shepherds and herders. More importantly, he was the only one who was ready to criticize the system and admit that the shepherds and the herders received little, if any, assistance from the Collective. Given the assistance they have received, he argued, how could they meet the high quotas that the people and the Party expected them to fulfill? He placed the blame for mismanagement of the Collective squarely on the shoulders of the committee and those higher-ups who had been controlling the affairs of the Collective. His arguments during the trial make it clear that he believes that those who forced the rank and file to make pledges that were destined to fail were the true culprits who should be tried in the committee.

Knowledgeable about the situation and impartial in the political game that was being played, Kerimbekov sided with Tanabai and chastised Segizbayev for insulting a collective farm worker, a shepherd, and a veteran Party member. He questioned the approach and the tone of Segizbayev's encounter with Bakasov and emphasized Segizbayev's lack of decorum and concern regarding the harsh circumstances in which the shepherd had been placed. At the end, he asked that Segizbayev, too, be officially reprimanded for insulting Bakasov's dignity as a Party member and a human being, as well as for his intolerable work ethics as the representative of the Bureau. It should be added that Kerimbekov failed to convict Segizbayev not because of his lack of conviction but because of Segizbayev's influence among the committee members, especially Kashkatayev.

¹⁰ See, Bashiri, "The Bukhara of Sadriddin Aini," on this site.

Kerimbekov was the only one, before the verdict was pronounced, to ask that Tanabai should defend himself. He literally put the words for a good defense in Tanabai's mouth. Old Tanabai, however, was too confused to follow his lead. Again, when Tanabai was stripped of his Party membership, Kerimbekov was the only one who tried to soften the blow by reminding him that there was always a chance for him to return to the Party and contribute.

There was a seven-year gap between this encounter and when Kerimbekov approached Tanabai to return to the Party. As District Secretary, Kerimbekov behaved in exactly the same way that he had behaved as a Komsomol secretary. He spoke about the changes that had been implemented during the last few years with great enthusiasm and implied that Tanabai's return to the Party was virtually agreed upon. How else could the Party be purged from the likes of Ibraim? In large part, it is his urging that enables Tanabai to return to the Party with hopes of change.

Segizbayev

Segizbayev was one of the seven members of the Bureau of the District Party Committee that supervised the affairs of the White Stones Collective Farm. He was also a respected district procurator, a job that he had held for many years. We met Segizbayev twice, first as the procurator investigating the execution of the Party plan at the collective level, and later as a committee member and a plaintiff against Tanabai Bakasov.

As a procurator, Segizbayev was arrogant, insulting, and unsympathetic. Without taking into account the circumstances under which Choro and Tanabai worked, he berated both and, at different times and in different places, accused them of sabotaging the Party plan. He deliberately riled Tanabai, a fellow who was universally known as being prone to anger, and elicited acts that he could later prosecute. Similarly, he accused Choro, whom he believed to be lacking decorum, of deceit and of covering up for his friend, Tanabai.

At the trial, Segizbayev carried the case against Tanabai almost single-handedly. He accused Tanabai of both verbally and physically attacking a governmental officer who was on official duty. At the end, acting as judge, jury, and executioner, and using words that according to Tanabai "were pretty on the outside, but false and empty on the inside," he stripped Tanabai of his Party affiliation. The fact that all along he knew that Party affiliation was the only thing that had any meaning for Tanabai, a veteran Communist, points to the degree of Segizbayev's callousness.

Finally, in Segizbayev we see a frustrated official who maltreats Choro and Tanabai not for what they had done but simply to make a point. While appointing a new First Secretary recently, the District had ignored Segizbayev's long tenure in service and had by-passed him. Segizbayev, therefore, set himself the task of proving the District committee wrong in bringing an outsider, Kashkatayev, to run its affairs. In short, he used the socially- and economically-inflicted vows of Choro and Tanabai as evidence of bad management, the type of management that would not have happened if he were the District First Secretary.

The Inevitability of Change

Change and its inevitability are dominant themes in Aitmatov's development of *Farewell, Gyulsary!*. In fact, Aitmatov's mastery in writing this story is in his ability to provide, in detail, the gradual changes that had taken place in the lives of the peoples of the Soviet Union, the Kyrgyz in particular, over some forty years of Soviet rule. More importantly, he emphasizes that changes introduced into Central Asia between the 1920s and the 1960s were at once profound and diverse. Some changes were visible to the eye. These included shiny, fast cars, combines, space exploration vehicles, and new government and civic centers on the one hand, and the disappearance of the cherished craft of the people, on the other. This latter is evident from Tanabai's examination of an old chain hobble used to prevent Gyulsary from returning to the mares:

He examined the rusty chain, admiring the smith's work. It was finely worked with great imagination, the work of the old Kirghiz smiths. The trade had been forgotten now, lost for ever. There was no need for chain hobbles any more. But it was a shame that other things had also disappeared. What beautiful ornaments, what utensils of silver, copper, wood and leather they used to make! They had not been expensive, yet they had been beautiful. Each was unique. They didn't make things like that any more. Nowadays everything was being churned out of aluminum: cups and bowls, spoons, earrings and basins, no matter where you went everyone had the same things. How dull. And the last great saddle-makers were living out their lives. What saddles they used to make! Each saddle had a history to it: who had made it, when it had been made, whom it had been made for and what reward the craftsman had received for his labours. Soon everyone would be riding in cars like they did in Europe. All the cars would be the same, you'd only be able to tell them apart by the numbers on the licence plates. Meanwhile, the people were forgetting the skills of their forefathers. They had

buried the old handicrafts for good, yet a man's soul and eyes were in his hands.¹¹

The other aspects of change concerned the attitude of the people, especially the youth, towards the socialist system and its future. In the 1950s, the youth in the republics of Central Asia had their own particular views regarding those who had supported and those who continued to support socialism. Their ideas about authority and its future place in society were mediated by their experiences of living within the confines of a non-ideal application of socialism.

The life of Tanabai Bakasov highlights the predicament of the masses, which can be seen as a contrast - those who were not receiving preferential treatment versus those who bilked the system. Here is Tanabai's lament over his bygone days:

"What was the use of me joining the Party if I never became more than a shepherd or a herdsman and got kicked out anyway in my old age!"¹²

His assessment of the new breed, the breed that strives to reach high positions by lavishing flattery on those who exploit the proletariat speaks for itself:

"They are a sorry breed of men nowadays, that's for sure."¹³

There is an unforgettable scene in the story when the old man Tanabai and his nag Gyulsary come in contact with a truck driver:

"What's the matter, old fellow?" he shouted, sticking his head out of the window. "Was that your wagon on the road back away?"

"Yes," Tanabai replied.

"I thought so. We saw the old wreck. And not a soul in sight. We thought we might pick up a harness, but it wasn't worth a damn."

Tanabai said nothing.

The driver climbed down, walked over and began urinating on the road. The old man caught the foul smell of vodka on his breath.

"What's the matter?" the man asked.

"It was too much for the horse. He's sick and he's old."

"Hm. Where are you going?"

"Home. To the Sarygousy Gorge."

¹¹ Aitmatov, 1973, p. 196.

¹² Aitmatov, 1972, p. 124.

¹³ Ibid.

"Whew!" the driver whistled. "That high up? Too bad you're not going my way. If you want to you can get in the back and I'll drop you off at the state farm. You can start back home from there tomorrow."

"No thanks. I can't leave my horse."

"This bag of bones? To hell with it. Dump him in a ravine and you'll have him off your neck. Want a hand?"

"Get going," Tanabai muttered angrily.

"Don't say I didn't offer..."¹⁴

The meeting of an old man driving an old horse-drawn wagon and a driver in a truck was, in a way, the meeting of the old with the new. The irony of it was that road had not changed, only the travellers and the means of transportation. Years ago, Tanabai and Gyulsary had traversed the same road in full speed, filling the farmers along the way with amazement. What annoyed Tanabai most, however, was not so much the change but the attitude of the driver towards the past.

When Tanabai was young, people's attitude towards the world was different. Children grew into manhood in the company of animals; they respected the animal kingdom. They also respected older people. They referred to them as *aksakal*, a term of endearment in those days indicating respect for the wisdom that they associated with experience and age. Helping the aged, curing their ills, and providing a comfortable life for them were among the unwritten cardinal rules of the time. Obviously, an age comes when an individual is no longer able to contribute. Tanabai's generation realized that and accommodated old men and old horses by opening their homes and pastures to them.

The new generation, the rural as well as the urban, knew little about compassion. At least that is what Tanabai thought. They grew up on modern farms using technology to get what old farmers used their hands and feet to get. They hardly had to touch the animals. They drove around in cars and trucks, with little care about expenses. Whenever necessary, they eeked out a few roubles here and a few roubles there by manipulating others, mostly the older generation. Tanabai's own son was a good example. His son grew up a flatterer. At the district center, he tried to promote himself not by dint of hard work, as Tanabai had done, but by using the political pull of his in-laws. Tanabai felt the new generation, like his son, lacked fortitude.

¹⁴ Aitmatov, 1973, p. 145.

Similarly, the trucks driver was referring to Gyulsary as a useless nag that should be pushed off a cliff. But if we were to carry his premise to its conclusion, he was giving perspective to Tanabai and his generation as well. In the same way that nags like Gyulsary were standing in the way of the rapid movement of his trucks, old men like Tanabai, too, were hampering Soviet progress. They, too, should be pushed off a cliff to lighten the burden of the Soviet working man.

Because socialism was conceived in terms of an evolutionary step, a necessary next phase in humans' political development. Thus, those who continued to believe in the basic tenets of socialism even after many years of living in its severely flawed application were doubly disappointed in the technological evolution but moral devolution they saw. Furthermore, those who grew up within the corrupt political systems of socialism in the region experienced first hand the disconnect between political and moral change. Therefore, they saw technology as the *only* avenue for immediate, tangible progress.

The inevitability of change is nowhere better apparent than in the values embodied in the characters of Tanabai and Choro, especially their understanding of the dynamics of socialism. From the beginning of the story, the reader realizes that Tanabai and Choro have two distinct views about the Communist Party and how it operates. This difference in perception plays a vial role in the later developments in their lives. In fact, it shapes their future perceptions of reality.

Young Tanabai viewed the Communist Party as an authority drawing strength from a series of rules set down by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the articles of the *Communist Manifesto*.¹⁵ Everyone had to obey those rules to the dot and all vestiges of the past had to be eliminated. "Down with the tents! We don't want to live in the past,"¹⁶ Tanabai would say. Once all the rules were applied, he felt, society would automatically change and difficulties would evaporate. To him the intervening World War II was a mere set back. Once it was won, he argued, the course of developments into the ideal socialist state would be picked up. Before long, he thought, Communism would emerge. At that time, he believed, the rulership of the world would automatically be handed over to the proletariat.

¹⁵ Karl Marx, et. al., 1985, pp. 104-105.

¹⁶ Aitmatov, 1973, p. 187.

What frustrated Tanabai in his later years was that after all that had happened, he could not see even an indication of a light at the end of the tunnel. In fact, in the post-war period, things were worse than they had been during the war. This made Tanabai genuinely concerned about the validity of all Soviet claims. He worried: how are the Communists going to control the world, if they have difficulty in controlling the affairs of the small Five Stones Farm Collective? What confused Tanabai most, of course, was the Soviet double talk:

Maybe I am wrong in judging a man for that? It's stupid, of course. That's what comes from getting old, from spending all my time out here with the herd. I never see anyone and I don't know what's going on. But how much longer we have to struggle so? If you listen to the speeches, everything's fine. All right, say I am wrong. I hope to God I am. But I am sure the others think the same way I do.¹⁷

Additionally, the more he compared the post-war situation with what he had accepted as a good and reasonable approach to government, the more he was confused and upset:

Before, whatever the meeting decided was law. They knew they themselves had adopted the law and it was up to them to enforce it. But now a meeting meant a lot of useless talk. No one cared about what you had to say any more. It was as if the collective farm was no longer governed by the collective farmers, but by others from elsewhere. As if others from elsewhere had a better idea of what should be done, of how they were to work better and how they were to run the farm.¹⁸

Choro, on the other hand, saw the Communist movement for what it was, a living entity, the rules of which were subject to change according to the demands of the time, the wishes of the Party leaders, and the international demands on the Party. He also realized that the dicta of Marx and Engels, although workable for Europe at the turn of the twentieth century, did not fit the Central Asian realities of the time. A blend of socialism and traditional Islam, Choro realized, controlled the collectives. More importantly, to survive, Choro knew, the individual must align himself or herself with that reality. Consequently, we see Choro bend like a willow when the harsh winds blow

¹⁷ Aitmatov, 1973, pp. 196-197.

¹⁸ Aitmatov, 1973, p. 197.

while Tanabai stands like a weak dried up tree, with firewood written all over him.

Throughout his life, Choro intended to talk to Tanabai about the changes that had taken place since their Komsomol days, but he never got the chance. On his deathbed, however, he communicated his concern and freed himself of the responsibility of having kept his friend in the dark. Now Tanabai could influence the direction that the Collective, and eventually Soviet life, should take in the future.

The History of the Collective

In the early 1930s, Tanabai Bakasov and Choro Sayakov established the Five Stones Collective Farm in one of the villages near the town of Aouliye-Ata, in the region that came to be known as Kirghizia (present-day Kyrgyzstan). They also joined the Communist Party and formed Komsomol schools and Komsomol cells in order to implement the Communist Manifesto and proceed with the establishment of Soviet rule in the region.

During the early stages, both Bakasov and Sayakov did quite well. They were elected to Committees and were instrumental in deciding the future life of their village and its inhabitants, some of whom were not as cooperative as others and were identified as *kulaks* and sent to Siberia.

Purged by the most zealous of the committee members, by 1936-37, the affairs of the collective were in good order. It could afford now, gradually, to discontinue the contributions of the overtly zealous members, like Tanabai, even though they had paved the way for a new order. As a result, Sayakov, the more level-headed of the founders of the Collective, was positioned to eventually assume the chairmanship of the Collective. Bakasov's role, on the other hand, was incrementally diminished until, by the beginning of the War, he was literally out of the loop. He was then sent to the war front, where he served for the next six years.

During the War, the organization of the Collective became complex compared to its humble beginnings, but still it was a poor collective. Choro Sayakov, most of the time in poor health, continued to be its chairman. The longer the War went on, the harder it was for the Collective to feed its own people as well as fill the quotas that were assigned to it by the Center. Choro had to scrounge, as it were, both supplies and manpower to make ends meet. Bakasov (at the front) was totally oblivious to what was happening to the

collective that he had established. One notion kept him going on: when the War ends, all will be well and the Soviets will reach their promised land.

By the end of the War, the district had become interested in the affairs of the Collective and had begun to seriously interfere with its operation. In order for the district to bring the collective within its full control, Choro Sayakov and Tanabai Bakasov were slated for dismissal. Additionally, the District First Secretary was to be given to a new person to the region, an outsider, rather than to Segizbayev, the deserving member. The District Committee, therefore, was organized as follows:

District Center

First Secretary of the district, possibly in Auoliye-Ata: Kashkatayev

District procurator: Segizbayev

Bureau of the District Party Committee

Chair: Kashkatayev (new, from the outside)

Members

Segizbayev (bypassed)

Kerimbekov, Komsomol Secretary

Director of the machine-and-tractor station

Editor of the district newspaper

Other 1

Other 2

When Choro became ill, the Chairmanship of the Collective was taken away from him and given to Aldanov, who was a new official from outside of the Collective. Aldanov was to visit the Center regularly and reorganize the Collective according to the new thinking. The children of the ex-founders, for instance, were not to be allowed to gain prominence. Hence, Bakasov's son had great difficulty making progress in the ranks at the Center.

Major decisions regarding the affairs of the Collective were no longer made at the Collective level. Instead, they were discussed at the District Committee level. This change was made in order to prevent the mingling of ranks in the way that had become prevalent among the inhabitants of the Collective. The friendship of Tanabai and Choro, for instance, was given as an example of wrong behavior at Tanabai's trial.

When the time for the showdown between the Collective and the Center approached, the new chairman prepared the way for the dismissal of the Collective founders. He forced Sayakov to ask Bakasov to make pledges that

he could not possibly meet. The Committee then sent its most eloquent member as an inspector to investigate not only the reasons for Bakasov's "sabotage" but also to gather evidence regarding the mismanagement of the Collective during the chairmanship of Sayakov. And as we know, Bakasov unknowingly played into the district's hand and landed both himself and Sayakov in court. As a result of the trial, Bakasov was expelled from the Party and Sayakov died the day after the trial. As for the Collective, it lost its original founders and its affairs fell into the hands of the District Center and higher authorities.

Tanabai Bakasov: A Headless Goat?

The use of animals in fiction for the expression of the shortcomings of the Soviet system is not new. As early as 1945, George Orwell used this device successfully in *Animal Farm* to show the gradual changes that the Manor Farm underwent after the animals ousted Mr. Jones, the farm's original owner.¹⁹ Old Major (Marx), Napoleon (Stalin), and Snowball (Trotsky) are glaring examples. More subtle statements are made through the words and deeds of Mollie, Boxer, and others.

In *Farewell, Gyulsary!*, Aitmatov uses a similar technique to show how Gyulsary's short life exemplifies the tragic existence that man and beast underwent under the Soviet system. The lives of the masses were shaped and reshaped, like clay in the hands of a potter, in order to fit the requirements that provided creature comfort for a few at the top. In that sense, the treatment that Gyulsary received was in no way different from the treatment that those devoted to the true socialist cause received: they were exploited to the last dregs of their energy before they were discarded. The less fortunate, tried on trumped up charges, were executed.

In *Farewell, Gyulsary!*, Aitmatov uses two other Kyrgyz traditions, the game of *Buzkashi* and the tradition of the hunt, to criticize Soviet law on the one hand, and to illustrate Soviet intentions for the future of Central Asian Muslims and their culture, on the other. In both cases the goat, a symbol of Kyrgyz culture, plays a prominent role. Aitmatov's question is this: What happens if, in a court of law, assertion of might becomes an objective unto itself? Similarly, power can become an instrument of destruction. His question in this regard: What if the hunter decides to continue the hunt until the last game is taken off the face of the earth? In what follows, we shall concentrate on *Buzkashi* first and discuss Aitmatov's use of this game, especially the goat, as a vehicle for illustrating the use of law to squelch an individual's right. We shall

¹⁹ Cf., George Orwell, 1946, pp. 28-29.

then turn to the tradition of the hunter and outline the consequences of choosing expedience over sound judgment.

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The Game of Buzkashi (also referred to as *Kup Kari*, *Ulak Tyrtys*, and *Kok Beru*) is played by two teams of ten to twelve players each. Wearing heavy clothes and helmet-like hats, the *chapandaz* (player) compete on a large dusty field for a set prize, or for the national championship of the region. Their only equipment is a short rawhide whip, which they use as a vicious weapon for inflicting pain and wounds on their opponents. Otherwise, they hold it between their teeth. The riders mount specially-trained horses with enormous bodies. Like their riders, the horses are taught to attack, kick and bite their rivals. Both riders and horses are extraordinarily skillful, with amazing maneuvers and armaments to aid their attacks.

The buzkashi field is a vast area that covers large distances. Although the players are allowed to use as much of the field as they need and for as long as it takes to complete the game, there are two major signposts. The field is marked near where the dignitaries are located with three circles each about 6 feet in diameter. The middle circle is where the object of the game, a headless, slimy goat or calf, is dropped to be picked up by the players. The other two circles are marked clearly for each competing team. The object of the game is, for the victorious team's champion, to throw what remains of the carcass into that circle. At the far end of the field, a flag or a simple pole is placed, about a quarter of a mile from the three circles. Both teams, while competing for the possession of the headless goat, must go around the pole before they head for home. It should be emphasized that the players are not confined to any certain route or distance as long as it is farther than the quarter mile distance between the circles and the pole. Sometimes the audience may lose sight of the players altogether. Only stabbing or shooting one's opponent are forbidden. The reward for the struggle is a prize put up by the organizers of the game, and also the respect of the people, as well as the fame that accompanies elevation to the championship of the region.

Like every game, *Buzkashi* has its own internal rules and strategy. For instance, each team has its champion on whose strength the team capitalizes to snatch the carcass and carry over long distances. The champion, on each flank, has defenders who ward off the opposing champion and his aides from snatching the carcass from them. At the beginning of the game, when the object is thrown into the middle circle, one of the riders takes hold of it and heads for the pole. Left on his own, he might not be able to ride very far; rather, the

strongman of the opposing team would overtake him. He might lose the goat altogether. In order to prevent this eventuality, his teammates surround him and ward off attacks mounted by the rival team. The rider with the goats tries to extend the initiative and create momentum for his teammates who might need to carry the goat farther.

Similarly, the members of the rival team try to push through the protective defense of their opponent and open the way for their champion so that he can place himself next to the rider carrying the carcass and snatch it away from him. If they are successful, the rider carrying the goat may shift the carcass away from his opponent to his other side. This move, however, may not be sufficient to keep the opponent away. The would-be carrier might, against all odds, reach across the neck of his rival's horse, to snatch and retrieve the carcass. Gradually movement becomes slow as the teammates of the one carrying the goat neutralize the gauntlet through which their teammate must move towards the goal. Before the game ends and a winner is declared, the goat changes hands a number of times. And each time a new strategy is used to gain possession. Experience shows that the team that takes the initiative and keeps the momentum throughout the game wins the prize.

It is not our intention here to describe the game if *Buzkashi*, the details of its rules, the various ways it is played throughout Central Asia, or where the game originated. Rather, we would like to emphasize the principle underlying the game: power. In other words, *Buzkashi* is not a game based on fairness to either the goat, the horse, or the rider. It is a game in which the most powerful man, the strongest and fastest horse, and a reasonably cooperative team combine their efforts to win the prize. It is noteworthy that the power in the game is lodged in several orders, depending on the individual's perspective on the game. At the lowest level, the power is centered on the teams. Slightly higher, it is lodged in those who organize the team. Even higher, it is in the domain of those who issue the permit to play the game.²⁰ In this essay, however, *Buzkashi* itself is used as the basis of an analogy that Aitmatov creates in a Soviet court to illustrate the dynamics of Soviet justice. It is on this aspect of the game that we now concentrate.

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Although Tanabai's fate was sealed the moment he pushed a pitchfork into Segizbayev's face and threatened to kill that "lord in leather," the expulsion did not take place until three days later when Tanabai was summoned to the Bureau

²⁰ See Azoy, 1982, p.19.

of the District Party Committee meeting. There he faced his accuser, Segizbayev, sitting on the right hand side of Kashkatayev, the First Secretary of the District Committee. Choro, Tanabai's long-time friend, and Aldanov, Tanabai's most recent enemy, were also present. A Komsomol secretary named Kerimbekov provided the voice of reason and justice, in which the rules are correctly applied.

Recall that Tanabai felt that the incident under discussion was the result of his reaction to a set of unbearable circumstances imposed upon him by the Bureau. In other words, he reacted to the failure of the system. Tanabai believed that any of his colleagues, faced with the same set of circumstances, would have handled things pretty much in the same vein, if not with the application of more force and violence. Tanabai felt, as he had felt since his return from the war front, that something was wrong with the system. It had lost its sense of justice. The case that is presented, however, is one of a lack of education, especially with regard to the Soviet system, and of insubordination within the Party ranks. Furthermore, both Choro and Tanabai are accused of perpetuation of a lack of accountability for their actions.

Recall that in the game of *Buzkashi*, the rider who snatches the goat must carry it as far afield as he possibly can. Others are responsible to defend him and facilitate his gradual advance towards the goal. Their combined efforts would result in a total defeat for the opposing team. With that analogy in mind, the court is divided as follows: Segizbayev and two unnamed members, form one team, Kerimbekov, the Director of Machine and Tractor and the Editor of the District newspaper, form the other team. Choro and Aldanov are witnesses--Aldanov more so than Choro. With his opening remarks, Segizbayev picks up the object:

"If the comrades will permit me to, I'd like to say a few words to clarify the situation," Segizbayev said resolutely. "I'd like to warn the comrades from the start not to try to explain away the actions of Comrade Bakasov as a simple act of hooliganism. Believe me, if this were so, I would never have brought the case to your attention. We have other means of dealing with hooliganism. And, naturally, my own feelings have nothing to do with it. I represent the Bureau of the District Party Committee, and, if I may say so, I represent the Party as a whole in this case. I cannot permit its authority to be trampled upon. However, the main point is that what has happened is further indication of the sorry state of the political and educational work being carried out among the Communists and non-Communists, of the shortcomings in the ideological work of the District Committee.

We are all to be held responsible for the political outlook of such rank-and-file members as Bakasov. We must determine whether he is alone in his way of thinking or whether there are others who share his views. Think of the significance of his words: 'A new lord in a leather coat!' Let us dismiss the coat. Now, according to Bakasov, it would seem that I, a Soviet citizen, a representative of the Party, am a new lord, an exploiter, an oppressor of the people! Indeed! Do you realise what this means, do you realise the significance of his words? I think there is no need for further comment. Now let us have a look at the other side of the case. I was very upset by the state of affairs at the White Stones Farm. When Bakasov declared he had forgotten his pledge, I called him a saboteur, an enemy of the people, and said he should be in jail, not in the Party. I admit that I insulted him and I was ready to apologise. But I am convinced now that I was right. I do not take my words back but insist that Bakasov is a dangerous and hostile person."²¹

His eloquent speech renders Tanabai utterly distraught. The poor shepherd loses his total confidence in the merit of the defense that he had prepared. However, as is evident, Segizbayev's attack was directed at more than Tanabai and his actions up in the mountains. He attacked Choro, the ex-Chairman of the Collective and the current Party Organizer, and Aldanov, the current Collective Chairman, as well. The former, in order to neutralize the power of his counter attack, the latter to recruit a new aide on his side. In short, he forced the two relatively powerful men in the Collective to take sides and speak before the First Secretary in support or against his allegations.

If Tanabai was to receive any help at all, it would have been from Choro, Ibraim, Aldanov, and the others who had worked with him. But, unfortunately for him, the jobs and Party affiliations of all his potential rescuers were on the line. None would dare contradict Segizbayev.

As for Tanabai himself, he no longer had a defense. Actually, he was totally lost. Furthermore, as the case proceeded and unfamiliar words and concepts were used, the arguments that he had prepared in support of his case crumbled. How could the management of sheds and taking care of ewes, his job, be a defense against the "pretty words" that Segizbayev had used? Tanabai was no match for Segizbayev. He had to defer his defense to others. A poor showing for one of the major players.

²¹ Aitmatov, 1973, p. 245.

What Tanabai wanted to say, but could not find the words to express, was set forth with a great deal of enthusiasm by Kerimbekov, a young Komsomol secretary on the committee. As a counteract to Sagizbayev, who had said that Bakasov hated socialist competition and should be expelled from the Party, Kerimbekov answered:

"I don't approve of Comrade Bakasov's action. I think he should be punished accordingly by the Party Bureau. But I don't agree with Comrade Segizbayev, either... In fact, I think we should discuss the case of Comrade Segizbayev as well."²²

It should be emphasized that Kerimbekov, Kashkatayev, and Segizbayev symbolize the dying breed of the Soviet society and Soviet justice of their time. While, at the moment, they monopolized the game by holding sway over people like Tanabai, their power base was being eroded by the likes of Kerimbekov whose strategies for the end game were at great odds with the old players. It was with the power of the up-and-coming generation, therefore, that Kerimbekov dared mount his counterattack against Segizbayev and question his motives. The unfortunate thing for Tanabai was that this struggle for power should mar the judgment that defined the rest of his life. Kerimbekov's counterattack was forceful and disarming:

"What right did you have to insult a collective farm worker, a shepherd, a veteran Party member? I'd like to see you call me an enemy of the people! You said you did it because you were very upset by the state of affairs at the farm, but don't you think the shepherd was upset, too? When you got there did you ask him what his living conditions were like and how things were? Or why the lambs were dying? No. Judging from your own report, the minute you got there you began shouting at him. Everyone knows what a hard time the collective farms are having now during the lambing period. I have to be in the mountains quite often and I am ashamed. I'm terribly ashamed when I talk to the young Komsomol shepherds, because we place big demands on them but don't offer any real help. Did you see the type of sheds they have? And what about the fodder? I'm a shepherd's son myself..."²³

As mentioned, what we see here is a clash of the old and the new. Kerimbekov raises concern regarding the traditional operation of the system--

²² Aitmatov, 1973, p. 247.

²³ Aitmatov, 1973, p. 247.

the system introduced by Stalin and his cronies--that has resulted in the unfair treatment of Tanabai. He questions whether indeed the rank and file should blindly obey the dictates of those above. Of course, this is the very thing for which both Tanabai and Choro are being chastised here. The current system states that whether work conditions were poor or not was not an issue. What was at issue was Tanabai's insubordination and lack of education no matter what the circumstances were that led to that state of affairs.

At this juncture, however, Kerimbekov's voice is as muffled, as are Tanabai's thoughts. Segizbayev, as we shall see, will keep the momentum going; Kashkatayev, as a team player, will help him.

Soviet internal politics was a game with which Tanabai was not at all familiar. Yet, strangely enough, as was mentioned earlier, the "me" that Kashkatayev, Segizbayev, and Kerimbekov were playing was very similar, both in principle and in strategy, to the game of *Buzkashi*, a game in which Tanabai was a champion. Familiarity with the physical aspect of this game, however, could not lead Tanabai to an understanding of its more abstract principles. In fact, the interplay of the principles baffled him.

Over the years, being away from people and ideas, Tanabai had not had a chance to develop his knowledge of the system beyond what Plato calls "imaging." In other words, he had very little understanding of the network of beliefs, thoughts, and knowledge that the others in the room were employing to resolve problems. Tanabai could have followed the procedures if he knew that the Bureau members were divided into two teams: those who supported Kashkatayev, Segizbayev, and Aldanov versus those who supported him. Players included Kerimbekov, the Director of Machine and Tractor Operation and the Editor of the District newspaper. More importantly, Tanabai could have better understood his own position if he knew that he himself was the headless goat of the game, and that his status in the Communist Party was the prize.

We have already seen how, after the charges were lodged against Tanabai, Segizbayev took the initiative and denounced him as a saboteur and an enemy of the people. We saw how Segizbayev strengthened his position by extending the blame to reach the upper echelon of the Party, i.e., its Organizer and the Chairman of the Collective. Additionally, it should be mentioned that Segizbayev tailored his remarks to affect Choro as the ex-chairman of the Collective, but not Aldanov who, as the new chairman, had little to do with the current poor state of the White Stones Collective Farm.

Logically, Tanabai should have defended himself by detailing the lack of means, shortage of fodder, and absence of manpower at a crucial time when a large number of ewes were lambing. After all, this was the promise that the Party and the people had made to him before he had accepted the pledge, but he could not—a poor showing indeed for his team. The initiative thus stayed with Segizbayev and his team. In fact, the field was so wide open that Segizbayev could have moved on and asked for Tanabai's expulsion then and there and secured approval. However, he did not. He wanted to make Tanabai a criminal and send him to prison.

But, as it usually happens in the game of *Buzkashi*, when all seems lost, someone from the middle moves in with full force—a last ditch stand. Kerimbekov not only defended Tanabai, using the most appropriate protocol, but accused Segizbayev of insulting a member of the Party and a human being. He outlined the miserable situation of the flocks and placed the blame squarely at the thresholds of the Bureau and the Collective. Tanabai, he said, was being used as a scapegoat:

A Communist's fate is being decided. That's why we should stop to think why Comrade Bakasov acted the way he did. His actions should certainly be censured, but what made one of the farm's best cattlemen, as Bakasov certainly was, come to this?"²⁴

Seeing Segizbayev's grip loosening, in spite of the hatred that he harbored for the man, Kashkatayev came to Segizbayev's rescue. He attacked Kerimbekov, using the full force of his office:

"Sit down," Kashkatayev said with displeasure. "You're leading us away from the main problem, Comrade Kerimbekov. I think it's evident to all of us that Comrade Bakasov has committed a very grave offence. Think of what he did. Who ever heard of such a thing. We will not permit anyone to attack our representatives with a pitchfork, we will not permit anyone to undermine the authority of our Party officials.... Emotions are one thing, actions are another. Bakasov's wilful action should alert us. Needless to say, there is no place for him in the Party."²⁵

²⁴ Aitmatov, 1973, p. 247-48.

²⁵ Aitmatov, 1973, p. 248.

Furthermore, Kashkatayev knew that sooner or later Choro would come to the aid of his friend. Thus, in order to discourage Choro and, at the same time, take Choro by surprise, he asked the Party organizer:

"Comrade Sayakov, as the party organizer of the collective farm, do you corroborate the report?"²⁶

Choro was a seasoned and astute politician. He knew from the start where these proceedings were heading. He also knew that his team was weak and could not withstand the steady assaults of his higher ups for a long time. Neither could he sit there and allow his side to lose without a fight. He, therefore, thought of a compromise. He requested that the proceedings for the investigation into Bakasov's actions be forwarded to the Collective Party organization. There, he thought, as chair, he could save Tanabai not only from criminal charges but also from expulsion from the Party. His committee, having a better understanding of the circumstances prevailing at the lambing stations, could censure Tanabai as it had censured many others and end the case. Kashkatayev, however, interpreted this as a weak spot in the rival team--he was still new at his post and was fathoming the depths at each point. He would not hear of it:

"You, too, are responsible for what happened. And we will hold you to blame for disrupting the educational work among the rank-and-file. Why did you try to dissuade Comrade Segizbayev from bringing the case to our attention? Did you want to cover it up? It's disgraceful. Be seated."²⁷

In spite of this major setback, Tanabai still had a chance to ride out the storm. The Director of Machine and Tractor Station and the Editor of the District Newspaper rushed to Kerimbekov's help, but this support was neutralized by Aldanov, who brought up the issue of hobbling Gyulsary. He spoke of how Tanabai had threatened to "crack *his* skull" [emphasis added] as well. He further indicated that others, including Ibraim who waited in the lobby, were ready to testify that Tanabai was belligerent and violent.

By now a safe distance had been put between Tanabai's culpability and the issue of blame regarding the poor maintenance of the Collective by the Bureau. Kashkatayev, therefore, moved that Comrade Tanabai Bakasov of White

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

Stones Farm be removed from the Party. Kerimbekov, having failed to turn the tide, became conciliatory:

"Members of the Bureau, aren't we making a terrible mistake? I have another proposal: that we limit ourselves to a severe reprimand and warning. At the same time, I propose that we reprimand Segizbayev, a member of the Bureau, for insulting Comrade Bakasov's dignity as a Party member and a human being, and for Segizbayev's intolerable method of work as a District Committee representative."²⁸

Obviously, as a second last ditch effort, Kerimbekov was trying to refocus the discussion so that farm management and the Bureau's poor administration would become the main subject of the discussion. This would have strengthened Choro's hand and made the higher ups relent and allow the case to be handled at the Party organization. But Kashkatayev, apparently coming from a region where *aksakals* won their points through tribal squabbles, stopped Kerimbekov cold. Rather than following Party protocol, which required all points to be discussed before a vote was taken, he dismissed Kerimbekov's point as a family matter to be settled outside the Bureau. Without a moment's notice then, he put the matter of the expulsion of Bakasov to vote. The seven-member Committee voted as follows:

Segizbayev	expel
Unnamed member	expel
Unnamed member	expel
Kerimbekov	not expel
Director of machine and tractor	not expel
Editor of District newspaper	not expel

It was now up to Kashkatayev to finalize the decision. He voted in support of Segizbayev "to expel." The expulsion of Tanabai Bakasov was thus entered into the minutes of the meeting. Upon Kerimbekov's insistence, a second vote was taken with regard to a reprimand for Segizbayev. That vote, too, was three to three. Kashkatayev again saved Segizbayev, thinking to himself, "I wonder whether he'll understand and appreciate the favor?...he [Kashkatayev] thought, "Who knows? He's cunning and treacherous."²⁹

Kashkatayev, it should be mentioned, worked within the Soviet system in which, for the individual to feel secure, it was necessary to develop a support

²⁸ Aitmatov, 1973, p. 249.

²⁹ Aitmatov, 1973, P. 250.

group covering relations with both the upper and the lower echelons of the job. He or she also needed a scapegoat close to his ranks who could be blamed when things went wrong. In the case of Segizbayev, it was Choro, the Party organizer, and Aldanov, the collective chairman. As long as they were responsible for giving an account of the disaster that had befallen the district animal breeding project, he felt, he was in the clear. In the case of Kashkatayev, it was everyone. Tanabai and Choro were truly pawns in the larger blame game that was being played out.

Buzkashi, hunt, animal tales, generational conflict: we have seen many ways to read and think about Tanabai's trial, that pivotal moment in Aitmatov's novel.

* * *

Soviets and the Myth of the Goat

One of the sad periods of Soviet life during the Stalin era was the period of the purges (1935-1937). During this period, many prominent Central Asian figures were eliminated. The charges were diverse: sabotage of the Party plan, enmity against the people, bourgeois-nationalism, and insubordination. In reality, however, these individuals were guilty of dedication to the cause of the preservation of Central Asian and Islamic identity of their people, seeking ways to improve the quality of life in the republics, and endeavoring to place the Party on the right track.

This period affected Chingiz Aitmatov in particular. His father, Torekul Aitmatov, was liquidated on charges of "bourgeois nationalism" in 1937. This event interrupted the life of the nine-year-old Chingiz Aitmatov, who then had to shoulder the responsibilities of his father, one of Kyrgyzstan's influential figures. It also launched Aitmatov on the path of finding a solution for the ills that had befallen his people. Rather than writing about the atrocities of Stalin era in essay format--impossible under the circumstances prevailing in the 1960s in the Soviet Union--he wrote fictional sketches. The world, he thought, must know about the dangers of unbridled authoritarian rulership.

The character of Choro in *Farewell, Gyulsary!* has a great deal in common with the personality of Torekul Aitmatov. Both were educated. The degree of Choro's education is not known, but Torekul was a party secretary for the region and a student at the Institute of Red Professorship in Moscow. Both were the first communists in their region, and both were well-versed in politics. Additionally, what Choro lacks in depicting the complete character of Torekul

is provided in the personality of Tanabai. No wonder that both characters meet their ends (symbolic and literal) within three days of each other.

Towards the end of *Farewell, Gyulsary!*, Aitmatov uses the goat, the symbol of Kyrgyz cultural continuity, once more. This time, the goat is not a symbol of life just in Kyrgyzstan or just of the Kyrgyz people, but a symbol of life on the planet. Using the Billy goat myth, outlined below, a myth well-known among the Kyrgyz, Aitmatov shows not only the consequences of the Soviets' relentless persecution of common people like Choro and Tanabai, but also the fate that awaits the system itself. Here is the myth of the Billy Goat:

...In times long past an old man had a son, a brave young hunter. The father had taught his son the difficult skills of hunting. And the son had surpassed him.

He never missed. No living creature could escape his sure and lethal shot. He killed off all the game in the nearby mountains. He had no mercy for pregnant dams, he had no mercy for the newborn. He killed off the herd of Grey Goat, mother of all goats. None remained save old Grey Goat and old Grey Billy Goat. She begged the young hunter to spare old Billy Goat so that they might multiply. But he did not heed her words, he felled the great Billy Goat with a single shot. Billy Goat tumbled over the edge of the cliff. Then Grey Goat began to moan, she turned sideways to the hunter and said: "Shoot at my heart, I will not move. But you will miss and it will be your last shot!" The young hunter laughed at the words of the mad old Grey Goat. He took aim. He fired. But Grey Goat did not fall. The bullet had only grazed her foreleg. The hunter was startled, nothing of the kind had ever happened before. "See?" Grey Goat said to him. "Now try to catch me, lame as I am!" The young hunter laughed. "Fine! Try to run away from me. But if I catch you, don't expect any mercy. I'll slit your old throat for bragging!"

And so lame old Grey Goat ran off, with the hunter close behind. The chase continued for many a day and many a night, over cliffs and across gorges, through the snow and over the rocks. But he could not catch Grey Goat. The hunter had cast away his rifle, his clothing hung in tatters. He did not realise that Grey Goat had led him to the sheer cliffs from which there was no escape, up or down. This was where Grey Goat left him. And this is the curse she put on him before she left: "You shall never leave here, and no one can rescue you. May your father weep for you as I weep for my murdered children, for my vanished herd, may your father howl here,

alone among the cliffs, alone among the cold mountains as I, old Grey Goat, mother of all goats, howl. I curse you, Karagul, I curse you. And Grey Goat ran away weeping, jumping from rock to rock, from mountain to mountain.

The young hunter remained there on a narrow ledge at a dizzying height, his face pressed against the cliff, afraid to look around, unable to step up or down, left or right. He could see neither the sky nor the earth.

Meanwhile, his father searched everywhere for him, he climbed every mountain. When he found his son's rifle on a path he knew that an accident had befallen his son. He ran along the deep gorges, through the dark crevices. "Where are you, Karagul? Karagul, answer me!" In reply the stony mountains rumbled in stony laughter, flinging his own words back at him: "Where are you, Karagul? Answer me!"

"Here I am, Father!" he suddenly heard a voice calling to him from above.

The old man looked up and saw his son on a high, sheer cliff standing like a baby crow at the edge of the precipice. He stood there, his back to the world, unable to turn round.

"How did you get there, my unhappy son?" his father asked anxiously.

"Don't ask, Father. I am here as a punishment for my sins. Old Grey Goat led me here and put a terrible curse on me. I've been standing here for many a day and cannot see the sun, or the sky, or the earth. And I will never see your face, Father. Have pity on me, Father. Kill me. Relieve me of my suffering, I beg of you. Kill me and bury me."

What could the father do? He wept, he rushed about, and all the while his son kept pleading. "Hurry, kill me.

"Shoot, father! Have pity on me. Shoot!" The father had not the heart to do it. Finally, just before the sun went down, he took aim and fired. Then he broke his rifle on the rocks and sang a song of mourning over his son's dead body.

*I have killed you, my son Karagul.
I am all alone in the world now, my son Karagul.
Fate has punished me, my son Karagul.*

*Fate has smitten me, my son Karagul.
Why did I teach you, my son Karagul,
The hunters' trade, my son Karagul.
Why did you kill, my son Karagul,
All the game, every living thing, my son Karagul.
Why have you destroyed, my son Karagul,
All that was to live and multiply, my son Karagul.
I am all alone in the world now, my son Karagul.
No one weeps with me, my son Karagul,
In my sorrow, my son Karagul.
I have killed you, my son Karagul,
I have killed you with my own hands, my son Karagul...*³⁰

The struggle for power illustrated in the *Buzkashi* analogy and the hunt for the goat in this analogy bring us to the same conclusion. It is a simple conclusion that states: if the Soviet Union continues its mistreatment of the workers, it too will end up on a precipice and will be killed by the very people who initially gave it life.

Timeline of *Farewell, Gyulsary!*

The difference between writing historical novels and realist fiction is in that historical novels, as is apparent from their name, usually contain a timeline, a chronological account of events. Whether that history is documented fact or itself is a figment of someone's imagination does not matter. The novel's perspective remains the same. In realist fiction, there might exist a semblance of chronology; the author, however, is not bound to adhere to any specific dates or any specific sequence of events. Only the events must appear true to life.

In *Farewell Gyulsary!* Aitmatov uses the latter device. March 5, 1950, for instance, is the only date named in the entire novel. That is a date on a letter ordering Tanabai Bakasov to release Gyulsary to be moved to the Collective stables. Everything else is referenced to general events, such as the October Revolution, the outbreak of the Second World War, after the War, and so on.

In tribal societies, the passage of time is measured not so much by specific dates as by the change of seasons. As fall turns into winter, and winter into spring, events in the life of the tribe move approximately one year ahead. The only difficulty here is that one has to figure out a base for the calculation. Besides, how would one know that a year or a sequence of years is not

³⁰ Aitmatov, 1973, p. 271.

missing? Nevertheless, this is the system that Aitmatov uses to account for the sequence of events in *Farewell, Gyulsary!*. Surprisingly enough, his story gives readers a pretty good idea of the historical context framing events in the novel, although not with the accuracy of the timeline presented in a historical novel.

In what follows, an attempt will be made to reconstruct a timeline for the story. It is necessary to reiterate that statements made by the characters do not necessarily reflect hard facts. For example, talking to Gyulsary, Tanabai states that the pacer is twenty years old, or even more. This can be true only if we assume that we know nothing significant about the last years of Tanabai's life and that he appears on the steppe after a long time to say farewell to his favorite steed. Conversely, Gyulsary can be only 12 or 13 when he dies. In the latter case, every move of the pacer can be accounted for. However, then his death at an old age will be somewhat questionable; pacers are known to live into their twenties.

The background of the story reflects events in Tanabai's life that had happened in the 1920s and before. A logical conclusion for Tanabai's date of birth would be around 1910. The shock waves of socialist change in Central Asia reach Kyrgyzstan in the mid-1920s and sweep Tanabai into committees and Komsomol cells in the early 1930s. This is generally the time that *Khujum* (onslaught on the traditional ways) took place and paved the way for collectivization that led to rapid industrialization.

In the wake of the revolution, young Central Asians, especially the poor, were elected to committees and promoted quickly into authoritative positions in order to use them in the difficult processes of dispossessing the traditional feudal aristocracy (mostly *bais* and *mullahs*) without inciting a revolt. Some of these young revolutionaries, especially between 1932 and 1934, became ruthless instruments of socialist might. Around 1934, it seems, Tanabai identified his own brother, Kulubai, as a *Kulak* and exiled him to Siberia for seven years. Kulubai returned from exile some time around the time of the Soviet Union's entrance into the War.

Before the War, possibly in 1939-40, Tanabai and Jaidar got married and before Tanabai left for the front, they had a son. At the same time, it seems, their Collective received its first truck. But as soon as Hitler expanded his war into the Soviet Union and the Soviets in all republics were mobilized, the truck was taken away from the Collective. Thus, Tanabai entered the military some time in 1940-1941. He served in the military for the better part of six years, i.e., until about 1946.

There is very little information about Tanabai's activities between 1941 and 1945 other than he was shell-shocked once and hospitalized with a chest wound for two months, and that he traveled extensively in Slovakia and Austria.

After 1945, when Japan capitulated, Tanabai returned home. Within a year, it seems, he reorganized his life and found a job as a striker with the village blacksmith. Their seven-year-old son began his education at the boarding school. In February or March of 1947, a golden colt was born. During that same summer, Torgoi's granddaughter named the colt Gyulsary (Buttercup). Tanabai's first daughter, too, was born at about the same time.

In mid-1948, Tanabai became a herder and met the now eighteen-month old Gyulsary for the first time. His second daughter was born when he was herding horses. When Gyulsary turned two, in the spring of 1949, following Torgoi's instructions, Tanabai and the herders from neighboring valleys broke Gyulsary for riding. The pacer could now enter races and participate in the annual *buzkashi* event.

1949 and 1950 seem to have been the most eventful years in the lives of both Tanabai and Gyulsary. In 1949, Tanabai was elected to the auditing committee and Gyulsary was entered into a number of races including a *buzkashi*. *Buzkashi*, an "international" event in which ethnic groups other than the Kyrgyz participate, happened on May 1st and 2nd. Winning the prize in the event made Gyulsary famous throughout the region; it also brought him to the attention of the Collective authorities. This was the time when Tanabai met Biubiujan; he spent the summer of 1949 seeing her.

Late in 1949, Choro became sick and was hospitalized in town. Aldanov replaced Choro and Ibraim changed his loyalty from Choro to Aldanov. Furthermore, in order to ingratiate himself with Aldanov, Ibraim paved the way for dispossessing Tanabai of the pacer Gyulsary. On March 5, 1950, the three-year-old Gyulsary was returned to the Collective's stables. In order to prevent him from repeatedly returning to the herd in search of mares, in the spring of that year, he was castrated.

During the autumn of 1950, Tanabai was summoned to come to the District Center. There he was asked to become a shepherd. Per Aldanov's orders, he made a number of unrealistic pledges and, at the end, drove three flocks of sheep up the mountain for winter.

In early spring of 1951, he drove the flocks back down to the foothills to the Five Trees Valley lambing station. Unfavorable circumstances at the station

prevented Tanabai from meeting the pledges he had made. In fact, he lost more ewes and lambs than he could keep track of. But meeting his pledge was not the driving force in his life. Surviving as a card carrying member of the Party was.

As if the events in his life were not frustrating enough, an inspector from the District Center visited him and made some incendiary remarks. With no concern for the tough situation in which Tanabai found himself, the inspector called Tanabai an enemy of the people, a saboteur, and an individual unfit to be in the party. Tanabai's reaction verbally as well as physically frightened the inspector. Within three days of the altercation, Tanabai was expelled from the Party. The following day Choro passed away. Thus, late in spring of 1951, Tanabai lost both his membership in the Party and his friend Choro.

The beginning of this major event in Tanabai's life coincides with the last years of Stalin's rule. In fact, 1953, the year that Stalin died, a brief window of opportunity and freedom opened in the lives of the people of the Soviet Union. Nikita Khrushchev (1953-1964) tried very hard to not only denounce Stalin but return the Soviet Union onto its pre-Stalin days. As a result, Stalin's actions were reviewed and the individuals who had contributed to the atmosphere of fear during his final years were dismissed. An era of prosperity entered the picture. This is evident from the discussions around 1958 between Kerimbekov and Tanabai Bakasov regarding the latter's present place of work, the repair and upgrading of the Five Trees Valley lambing station and many other changes introduced by the post-Stalin authorities.

Finally, it seems that Kerimbekov asked Tanabai to return to the Party some time in 1958-1959. Tanabai did not answer right away. He said that he would think about it. Then there is a lull in Tanabai's activities. We learn, however, that during this lull, the pacer Gyulsary lost his strength quite rapidly. Released from being a riding horse for the chairman, he pulled a wagon for a while then became a nag and gave rides to children. Around 1962, it seems, an ailing Gyulsary was returned to Tanabai. Jaidar and Tanabai nursed him back to health. In February of that year he died. He could not have been more than fifteen years of age.

Conclusions

The ancients, and to a large degree, those who lived during the Middle Ages, believed that man's destiny was in God's hands; if not in God's hands, then in the hands of some deity or supernatural being or starts that wielded extraordinary powers. Social forces, as we know them today, were not strong

enough or sufficiently tangible to be identified as viable determinants of man's destiny.

In *Farewell, Gyulsary!*, Aitmatov shows that social forces can decide the fate of both man and beast. The Soviet system, for instance, reshaped the lives of Tanabai Bakasov, Choro Sayakov, and Gyulsary in such a way that they could be useful only to a few individuals at the top of the hierarchy at the district soviet. Once they could no longer contribute as expected, they were discarded. Interestingly enough, at the trial, the only question was how, rather than whether, they should be discarded.

To bring this point home to the reader, Aitmatov uses two major Kyrgyz traditions: the game of *Buzkashi* and the tradition of the hunter. In the course of the story, he illustrates how the two systems work in tandem. *Buzkashi* justice divests the individual of all dignity and humanity and hands him over to the hunter. The hunter then pursues the unfortunate individual relentlessly until death.

Finally, *Goodbye, Gyulsary!* highlights many of the realities and shortcomings of the Soviet system in Central Asia. Aitmatov's sensitive analysis and engaging depictions of this system bring recognition not only of his own talents, but of the larger body of regional writing.

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