

Uzbek Minister on Restoring Order in Tashkent

It has been more than a year now that disruptions bringing disquiet to the life and mood of the inhabitants began to burst into the customary work rhythm of the Uzbek capital. The point is that every Saturday and Sunday, as a rule, groups of young people congregating toward the city center, V. I. Lenin Square, would from the early morning begin to "throw their weight around" on the streets of Tashkent. I repeatedly observed their literally unbridled behavior at, for example, unsanctioned meetings which were held by an association, not officially registered, named "Birlik," which, translated from the Uzbek, means "Unity." Here is not the place and now is not the time to analyze the "Birlik" program—this is the subject of a separate, thorough discussion. We would not merely that there is much therein which is causing the inhabitants of the Uzbek capital and other cities of our country profound concern. People are rightly insisting that the negative phenomena connected with the actions of the informal associations cannot be glossed over in the press. They have, after all, at times assumed an openly hooligan, antisocial nature, of which, incidentally, both all kinds of extremists and manifestly criminal elements are skillfully availing themselves. It is sufficient to recall, for example, the savage stunt which occurred little more than a month ago. In a Tashkent Metro car a group of unbridled thugs literally perpetrated outrages upon a defenseless young girl of Russian nationality. There is no need to describe, I believe, the Tashkent people's unbridled anger. To the credit of Uzbek police officers, those guilty of the abuse were quickly found and a criminal investigation is now underway in respect of them.

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