

CENSORSHIP

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attacked again by unidentified men with iron rods, who proceeded to beat him severely. This attack placed Berdiyev in hospital for 43 days.

This repressive environment has become largely impenetrable by outside influences. According to Greg Myre of the Associated Press, one of the few western journalists able to enter Turkmenistan, state-run national libraries have purchased no new books since independence, and the only periodicals from the outside world are dated magazines and newspapers donated by western embassies. Foreign aid groups and embassies have offered to connect the libraries to the Internet, and to help in establishing a computerized catalogue system free of charge, but, citing Turkmenistan's need for self-sufficiency, the government has declined every offer. Librarians note that instead of purchasing new books and equipment, the government thought it especially important to build a multi-million dollar presidential palace. Today in Turkmenistan, foreign newspapers are collected before passengers leave their aircraft, secret police follow reporters if they diverge from their officially prescribed itineraries, telephone calls made by foreign reporters and opposition figures are tapped, and the country's border guards have become notorious for their thorough searches.

Censorship and political repression are unlikely to be relaxed in Turkmenistan in the foreseeable future. The governing elite is too insecure to allow basic human rights and liberties, while the population at large are unwilling to risk outright social

upheaval to challenge the government. Turkmen social structures continue to be based on patriarchal patterns of leadership: not for nothing did Niyazov revive the traditional council of tribal elders. Nurberdi Nurmannedov, a Turkmen dissident, has stated that: "People are fully aware of what is being done to them. But they have been repressed for 70 years . . . Today censorship is worse than it was in the 1970s. Our people . . . can't see any light at the end of the tunnel."

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TUSKEGEE EXPERIMENT

US medical research censorship, 1932-72

For 40 years the US government, through its Public Health Service (PHS), conducted an experiment at Tuskegee Institute in Macon County, Alabama. The experiment was designed to study the natural course of untreated syphilis in African-American males. Six hundred men, between the ages of 25 and 60, were involved in the experiment: 399 men with tertiary syphilis and a control group of 201 disease-free men.

The experimental subjects were drawn from a population of poor and largely illiterate sharecroppers and tenant farmers. To locate subjects, the PHS offered free health screenings that included a variety of medical procedures. When infected men were located, they were told they had "bad blood", not syphilis. They were offered free medical treatment if they allowed the government to monitor their disease. They were not told they were participating in an experiment; rather, they were lead to believe that they were being treated in a public health demonstration similar to one that had been conducted in the county several years earlier. The PHS had no intention of treating members of the experimental sample. The men were given placebos to preserve their illusions of treatment and to keep them participating in the project. Even after penicillin became widely available in the 1950s and proved effective in treating syphilis, the test subjects were not treated. The PHS actively intervened to prevent treatment of the men so that the experiment could continue.

Deception was a constituent of the study from the beginning. Dr Raymond Vonderlehr, the PHS physician assigned to oversee the Tuskegee study, wrote to Dr Taliaferro Clark, chief of the

PHS Venereal Disease Division, in January 1933 requesting placebo drugs, saying "It is my desire to keep the main purpose of the work from the negroes in the county and continue their interest in treatment." After initial diagnostic tests and observations of the men were completed, the PHS had no further interest in the subjects until they died. Then, it sought autopsies to assess the effects of the disease on the various vital organs of the body. Beginning in 1935, the subjects were offered approximately \$50 each towards funeral expenses as an incentive to come to the hospital so that autopsies could be performed when they died. The Milbank Memorial Fund provided the burial money.

Inspired by a study of untreated syphilis conducted by professor C. Boeck in Oslo between 1890 and 1910, the Tuskegee experiment had no formal research protocol. It has been compared to experiments conducted by Nazi doctors on Jewish concentration camp inmates during World War II. When Associated Press reporter Jean Heller broke the story in the *Washington Star* on 25 July 1972, an official for the Venereal Disease Branch of the Center for Disease Control, Dr Donald Printz, described the Tuskegee experiment as "almost like genocide".

To resolve a class action suit brought on behalf of the participants, the US government agreed in 1974 to pay a \$10 million settlement to compensate victims and their heirs for the harm done by the experiment. The government also agreed to provide free medical care to participants and infected members of their families. Congressional hearings, triggered by exposure

of the Tuskegee experiment, precipitated a nationwide review and reform of guidelines for research involving human subjects. In response to a request from the National Medical Association, an organization made up of approximately 20,000 black physicians, president Bill Clinton formally apologized to the eight remaining survivors of the experiment and their families for the federal government's actions.

The government censorship involved in the Tuskegee case was selective. It functioned in ways that parallel the treatment of "classified" information in government bureaucracies except that the privileged information was available to a select category of people outside the government: readers of medical journals, primarily physicians and medical students. While the study was in progress, 36 articles, reporting the results of the experiment, appeared in national medical journals. A 1955 article, for example, reported that more than 30 per cent of the infected men in the study died directly from the effects of syphilitic lesions on the cardiovascular or central nervous systems. Conversely, the PHS went to great lengths to conceal the experiment from the subjects and to deny them access to vital information about their own health. The PHS also worked actively to conceal the existence of the experiment from the public.

When the experiment was exposed by the press, federal and local health agencies and the Tuskegee Institute assumed an official posture of shock and outrage; however, they selectively released information about the study to create the impression that modern medical authorities bore little responsibility for the experiment. Later investigations revealed that modern authorities were very much involved both in decisions to continue the experiment and in efforts to prevent public disclosure.

In 1965, a Detroit physician, Dr Irwin J. Schatz, had complained to the Center for Disease Control when he read about the experiment in a medical journal. His complaint was ignored. In 1966, Peter Buxton, a venereal disease interviewer employed by the Public Health Service who had heard about the study from co-workers, registered a formal complaint with

the director of the Division of Venereal Diseases. The experiment continued, but a second written complaint from Buxton resulted in a review of the experiment by a blue-ribbon panel at the Center for Disease Control in 1969. Although one member of the panel strongly objected, the panel approved continuation of the experiment. It was Buxton who finally stopped the experiment. Frustrated by the inaction of government and medical authorities, he told the story to the press in 1972. The story had circulated earlier in the radical black press, such as *The Drum*, but it was not taken seriously by the mainstream press until Buxton's action.

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ALEKSANDR TVARDOVSKII

Russian poet and editor, 1910-1971

Tvardovskii grew up as one of seven children on a small farm, but left home at 18 to devote himself to literature in nearby Smolensk, where he eked out a scant living as a journalist while continuing his education. Meanwhile, his relatives were dispossessed and exiled as prosperous peasants (*kulaks*). Tvardovskii's classification as the son of a *kulak* caused him difficulties throughout his life, as did his feelings of guilt over not sharing his family's exile.

Tvardovskii's early verse is notable for its objectivity, even when he tries to glorify collectivized agriculture. The verse narrative "The Hunchbacked Peasant" was printed in 1934, but after much debate it was excised at the last moment from the journal in which it would have appeared, and burned. The critics were incensed that the main protagonist, a poor peasant, was depicted as lazy and shiftless, instead of being shown as a

true "socialist hero", hardworking and politically conscious. This was Tvardovskii's first spectacular encounter with censorship, which at the time was exercised primarily by the writers' organizations and, when it was deemed necessary, local party authorities. Tvardovskii incorporated material from the banned narrative into his next major work, *Strana Muravii* (1935, *The Land of Muravia*), which he decided to publish not in Smolensk but in Moscow. There he found prominent supporters, including Boris Pasternak and Prince Mirskii. After its publication, Tvardovskii was able to move to Moscow and finish his education there, thus escaping the wave of arrests in Smolensk in 1937. Stalin himself liked the poem and included Tvardovskii among the recipients of the first Orders of Lenin in 1939; two years later Tvardovskii also received the first of his many Stalin Prizes.