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Uzbek

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Hello everyone. My name is Talgat Batalov, and today I'm going to tell you why I am not Uzbek. Actually, it's a very strange story about my nationality. When I lived in Uzbekistan, I was considered Russian because everyone there is considered Russian: Jews, Georgians, Armenians, Tatars, Meskhetian Turks, and even Koreans are considered Russian. Everyone who speaks Russian is considered Russian and everyone is called Russian. When I arrived in Moscow, I began to be considered an Uzbek. That is, you say, "You know, I am from Uzbekistan," they say, "So, you're Uzbek." You say, "No, I'm not Uzbek." - "But how? It's Uzbekistan, everyone there is Uzbek." You think, "OK, now I'm going to explain to you what a multicultural city with 160 nationalities is, and I'm going to list all those nationalities." Then you think, "It takes a fucking long time to do all that and you say: 'Okay, guys, I'm Uzbek.'" In fact, I am the most ordinary banal Tatar. That's exactly what it says on my green passport. See, it's green, but it always makes it obvious. Any self-respecting citizen of Uzbekistan always says, "My green passport," and when he gets Russian citizenship, he always says, "I got a red passport." And in this passport my nationality "Tatar" is written. You can pass it through the rows and look.

Generally, most Uzbek documents are green. Apparently, this is some kind of national tradition, no one knows why. When I grew up a little bit, and I became older, I went to the military enlistment office and got a military ID card. But how did I get a military ID? In general, we have relatives everywhere in Uzbekistan, there are a lot of them. We just call some uncle, the uncle calls some aunt, the aunt calls some nephew, and the vicious circle closes, and in the end you get any kind of document: an institute diploma, a military ID, and so on, and so on, and so on. And so there was a point when I got older, my mother called some relatives, they called somebody else, and somebody else, and somebody else, and I went to the military recruitment office, and I say, "You know, I'm here for this and that." They say, "Great," and immediately gave me a dark green military ID. It contains all sorts of interesting information about me: did not serve, of course, height 184 cm, gas mask size 2, shoe size 44, clothing size 48.5. And here is my favorite point: when I get a call from a center somewhere, and they say, for example, someone is sewing me a hat, and they say: "Talgat, what is the circumference of your head?" I pull out the Uzbek ID, look, and it says "56."

And here is such an important phrase that you need to remember. Now, I can't remember it myself but you will remember: "No military training, fit for non-combat service." You can pass it around and look at it.

As soon as I arrived in Russia, I received a Russian passport – I'll tell you about it later, it's a long story – I was immediately called to the military enlistment office. I packed up, took my Uzbek military ID, arrived in the Tver region, not so far from Moscow, came to the military enlistment office, went in. There are like eight women sitting around, and I say, "Hello, I need you to rewrite everything on this military card on the Russian one, please. I have very little time, I'll wait an hour for you to give me the Russian one, and I'll go back to Moscow." One woman even stood up to look. She says, "What do you mean rewrite it?" I say, "This 'not having this kind of training' just in the Russian military ID, and I'll go, I've got a lot to do." She says, "How?" I say, "Well, I've already served in the military, I just need to get a piece of paper." She says, "No. What you served in is not an army. How come you have an army in Uzbekistan? You did two laps on a donkey and they gave you a military ID." Basically, she was wrong, I didn't even make two laps on the donkey. And I say, "Are you insane? A man doesn't serve in the army twice. The debt is paid to the motherland once." She says, "So now Russia is your homeland, you have to pay your debt to her." And, to be honest, I felt, as it were, not very well. I say, "Woman, just a minute." I realized that I could get drafted, and somehow right now, and I went out. And I had never paid bribes, I'm telling you, there were always relatives everywhere, everybody just called somebody, and I got any kind of documents. And I had never paid a bribe in my life, to anybody, anywhere, and I didn't know how to do it. But I had a friend and bribing was his hobby. He paid bribes everywhere, in general, everywhere, even where it wasn't necessary. And I called this friend, saying in a trembling voice, "Hey, I've got a big problem." He says, "What kind?" I say, "I'm about to get drafted into the army." He says, "What do you mean?" I say, "Well, they're going to draft me right now." He says, "Where are you?" I say, "In the Tver region." He says, "Good news. Who's gonna draft you?" I say, "Women." He says, "Also good news." I say, "Dammit, why? Explain." – "Because the Tver region, women. Women from the Tver region drink, so don't worry. Now, do this: go to any nearby supermarket and buy a food kit like this. Listen carefully," – he tells me – "A bottle of cognac, a bottle of vodka, a box of Perfection chocolates, only Perfection, none of the fucking Inspiration chocolates, they don't like those." I say, "OK," – "And any fruit in season." I say, "Okay" – "Go and give everything to these women, and everything will be fine. Go now, pick the most representative one, and make a deal with her. The main and key words here are 'thank you.'" I went.

How do you choose the most representative women if you've never paid a bribe? By weight. You pick the biggest woman out of them. I looked, I picked the biggest one, and I say, "Excuse me, what's your name?" She says, let's say, "Angela Vladislavovna." I say, "Angela Vladislavovna, may I have a word with you?" Angela Vladislavovna got up, left this office, took me by the arm, took me out into the hallway and led me somewhere. I got scared for the second time, but she led me into the office, locked the door with the key, ate the key, sat me across from her and says, "Well?" I say, "I want to thank you." She says, "Well, finally. There is a military commission at six o'clock today. You pass the commission, we give you all the papers." I say, "Great, that's it." I'm making a deal, I have until six o'clock, I go to the supermarket, pick up this food kit. I counted all the women so that even if there were any extra women there, they could be left out, but I put these kits together for everybody: a bottle of cognac, a bottle of vodka, Perfection chocolates, tangerines, of course. I packed it all up and dragged it to the military commission. The representative woman was already dressed in white, that is, medical, and she sees me with

these packages, and says: "Tell me, are you a moron?" I say, "Uh, no. What is it?" - "What the fuck did you bring this here for?" I say, "It's a thank you" – "Get under the stairs quickly, get undressed and get in line." I went, took it all under the stairs, put it down, stripped down to my underwear and joined the line of 16 and 18 year olds. But apparently, the effective presentation worked, because from doctor to doctor I became a less and less healthy person. When I made it to the eye doctor, we'd both be convinced that I couldn't even see him at all, and he wouldn't see me. Generally, interesting doctors work in the military recruitment office. They can't work anywhere else like they do in the military recruitment office. And they wrote to me: "Not fit, not healthy, not fit, not healthy, not healthy, not healthy." I don't understand how I made it to the finals at all, really. And in the finals, men know, there is even a chair where the military commander should sit, and he should ask, "Well, soldier, where are you going, to the Airborne Forces?" Well, naturally I would join the Airborner Forces, 64 kilograms. But there was no military commander, I reached the final in my underwear, there was a chair, a leather chair, and on it was my bag with cognac, vodka, and Perfection chocolates. So the Tver military commander loves Perfection chocolates, maybe it will be useful to someone. By the way, it makes no difference at all where you solve these cases, these people are the same everywhere.

And just like that, in the end I came back to the representative woman, and she says to me, "Well, here you go," and gave me the blue enlistment certificate. It's all good. I opened it, everything was normal, but the wording had changed compared to the Uzbek one, that's what happens when you get out of the army with cognac instead of your relatives: "Recognized as temporarily unfit." Do you understand what that means? Every year and a half I have to go to the Tver region, get those packets, bring them to the women and get weighed. If my weight does not change, then I won't be enlisted into the Russian army. I'm still good for two years. We can let you in to watch it, too. I think: I wonder, when I go there to be weighed, will I be weighed with or without bags?

And I got that piece of paper, everything was good, all my military records were available. I'll tell you one thing: in winter you feel equally shitty in a crowd of men in your underwear whether you're in Russia or Uzbekistan. It doesn't matter at all.

I'll tell you how everything will be arranged today. First of all, there will be no theater today, that's one. I mean, I'm not gonna have people in costumes coming out to help me. Secondly, you see these cardboard boxes, and there are documents that I have used in my life, some of which you have already seen. And there are also conversations with people I talked to when I was making this performance. The first person I met was Hamid, who sells shawarma. Like any newcomer, I have to take your place.

I went to see Hamid at the Kursk station. Those who have been there know, it's one of the nicest places in Moscow. The Kursk station is very nice, I want to be there as much as possible always. And I knew this Hamid. Why? Because Uzbeks – they, in principle, are not talkative, and Hamid, well I knew another relative of his who also sold shawarma, and then went up and opened his own stall. And he said to me, "I have a little brother there, come and talk to him," and I went.

He has such an interesting accent. It sounds a little bit Uzbek actually, “Bro, my shift has just started and it runs until five in the morning, then I'm gonna go to bed. There's two of us working here: me and the owner's son. He's an idiot, for real. The owner is a friend of my mob boss. I, ya know, I actually came as... what's that fucking word in Russian – oh, an experiment. Half a year ago I was studying at the economic institute, and then my dad called, saying: 'Come quickly, there's room.' I say, 'Okay, yeah, yeah, no problem.' I take a leave of absence, my father sends me money for a plane, I buy a ticket and go to Moscow. My girlfriend was like, come on, sobbing, crying, she says 'Here or there, you'll be just like your father,' flat broke. Well, that's what I told her, that's the story. In short, my dad found a girl in Moscow and began to live with her. Well, she was so young, but she lived in the house where he worked. Mom, of course, didn't know, but Natasha called her, says, 'Do you know that Nasrullo is now my husband?' Well, the girl is normal, pretty. By the way. My dad sent me an SMS. My mom was worried, she became so thin, my father calls every day, she does not pick up the phone. I say, 'Mom, it's your own fault. He's alone there, you should go to Moscow, too.' Mom consulted with her friends, and also flew to Moscow. Dad left the girl immediately, of course, but Mom became, like, a little bit crazy. They even had a fight, and they lived – how do you say, in the house, how do you say it in Russian – they lived, yes, they lived. They lived, and the neighbors complained, and my father was turned away from there. Moscow? Yes, I like Moscow. I want to learn to write in Russian, and then go to college. No, I can write, I studied in a Russian group, but I didn't study well, in short, in the hallway. And we have such an attitude here, you know, some guys come to me all the time and say: "Churka, give me your poison." I say to them, "Since it's poison, you don't have to eat it, okay?" They tell me, "We're gonna put your tent on your head now, churka." And they come every day, they probably live here somewhere. And I'm not a churka – yes, I understand their language. Shawarma is normal and fresh, chicken is normal, cucumbers are normal, and I'm wearing gloves. How can they do that? If you don't want shawarma, go to McDonald's, okay? But no, every day they come in and say, "Churka, give me your poison," and then somehow leave like it's normal. I told Dad, he says, "Don't answer, or they'll kill you, it's the Russians." I don't understand. Do you know what the most important question is? I don't want to live here forever. I want to live at home. But how? My dad got citizenship, I'll get it too, I'm not sending my money home, I'm collecting for citizenship. My father has some acquaintances in Rostov, it can be done there. In a few more years my parents will be old, and they'll live here because they have citizenship. And where will they live, in the Housing and Maintenance office? I don't know, bro, I don't think much about it yet, I want to learn how to write in Russian. Talgat, can you teach me? About shawarma? Well, you can't say anything interesting about shawarma, it's chicken in pita bread. Caucasians sell shawarma, or Tajiks, or Armenians. Women never know why. Probably because the men in the east are better cooks. Although what is there to cooking it? You'll do it 20 times, and then you'll be able to do it with your eyes closed. Oh, by the way, some Russians don't like cabbage. I don't know why there's cabbage in there myself. Well, it's probably in there because it's cheap – cheaper than onions. Power? No, bro, I don't know anything about power at all. "Power" you say. What is power? Ah, well, I know, Putin, a normal president. Well, I saw him singing on TV. He sang well. He didn't study, right, he's not a singer? Our president, by the way, does not sing, he is rarely shown even on TV.”

My next two documents, which indicate I can no longer legally live at home in Tashkent, where I was born, have lived almost all my life. This is a record from my Tashkent apartment, and this is her little sister. All such documents have relatives. That is, this is a record, and this is what is called, a confirmation, or something, that I am already here. You can look at them.

What interesting thing can I tell you about the discharge and registration in Uzbekistan? Discharge is very easy. I came, I say, "Hello, can I be discharged from my apartment in Uzbekistan in Tashkent?" – "Yes, of course it is easy." I was discharged in half an hour. But it is impossible to register at all, and no one knows why. That is, people live in Uzbekistan, in Tashkent, they already have an apartment, a car, a house, but they cannot register in any way, because they came from the region. And sometimes, on some great holidays, the president suddenly opens a residence permit, and with a broad gesture, some Mustakillik (*Independence Day - approx.E.B.*), or on the birthday of one of his relatives, a residence permit suddenly opens, and everyone starts saying: "I heard they opened a residence permit there", and everyone starts to quickly make a residence permit for themselves. And so people who live in remote Uzbek regions, it is very inconvenient for them to go to Tashkent, they have a lot of problems with registration, with registration for residency, it is much easier for them to go to Moscow and, in general, to Russia directly. Approximately the path is as follows: they descend from the mountains, go around Tashkent, and go straight to Moscow. It's actually our tradition: when we get a little older, we go to Moscow. That is, if your parents see that you can fly by yourself, they give you a ticket to Moscow and you fly there.

There's very few people anymore that live in Tashkent and haven't been to Moscow. I recently arrived there, got into a taxi, and the taxi driver and I couldn't find an address. And he says, "Listen, brother, if only you were talking about the Kazan or Belorussian train station, but you're talking about Tashkent. It's hard to figure out what's there." And we couldn't find the address, we couldn't get to this place, we asked everyone. That is, everyone was in Moscow, everyone was in Russia, and those who were not, imagine Moscow as a terribly criminal city, where, for example, you have to go to work very well armed, to the teeth. That is, you must definitely carry some kind of stun gun, you must have something else with you, some kind of crowbar. And you walk to the subway under bullets, in the subway you could get a knife to the gut. This is the opinion of people in Uzbekistan who have never been to Moscow, and they worry a lot about those who are in Moscow. And everybody in Uzbekistan has someone in Moscow, this is normal. And why do they think that? For a very simple reason: they don't watch Uzbek television, because Uzbek television has three channels. On one channel, venerable elders in skullcaps with national instruments sing all the time. They usually sit under a weeping willow and sing mournful songs: "Tadam, tadam, tadam, tadam." Very, very long songs, each track is 18 minutes long. And how can you tell if the ensemble has changed? If the weeping willow is on the right, it means that it is already a different group, if on the left, it means that it is already a different one, or if the person who played that kind of instrument is already her, then this is a different ensemble.

The second channel is where Islam Karimov, the president, is always handing something to someone like handing diplomas, cups, or something else to cotton growers, cotton farmers and

all sorts of people. And, in my opinion, they show the same recording all the time. He's always handing the same woman a cup.

And on the third channel, there are Uzbek sports achievements. This one's a little better, by the way. Ruslan Chagaev lives in Germany, but continues to fight for Uzbekistan, which is why he recently became a world champion. And they also show all the time how our athletes received something, and the president also handed them something. This is the third channel. Therefore, people do not watch Uzbek television, they connect cable and watch Russian TV, which isn't really that different with the first, second, and third button. But they're just watching another person handing something to someone, someone's singing somewhere, but they see there is crime all the time, someone is being killed, a woman threw her children out the window, someone ate a dog in the subway. And they hear all that, and they're terribly worried and constantly call, like, "How are you doing there? Is everything okay?" Around 10 am, you're sleeping, everyone starts calling, basically everyone is at home. You pick up the phone, and there's Mom, "Son, are you alive?" – "Mom, yes, I'm alive, I'm sleeping actually" – "And were you blown up there" – "Mom, where was the explosion?" – "Well, where is it?" – and she tells me the metro station. I say, "Mom, that's 50 kilometers away from me" – "Ah, on the metro map it's so close." And therefore, they're worried, they call, it's hard for them. And one of those people that is really worried about me is my dad. But my dad does not recognize the means of communication, he does not make phone calls, does not send SMS, he writes letters. And one of his letters that he wrote to me when I first arrived in Moscow, I would like to read to you today. My dad writes letters like this, using the old method. He doesn't send SMS, like I said, he doesn't know how. If you received 48 empty SMS messages, it means that Dad just sat down 48 times that day. He had his phone there in his pocket, he was texting. Or a text that says "hiri-hiri, piri-piri," may come. Well, it's clear, he's working on his phone and accidentally sends it. That's why he writes such letters, in general, he supports the tradition of the epistolary genre. And he also does not trust the Russian Post, and, by the way, he's doing the right thing. And he takes these letters to the train station and gives them to just regular people. He comes to the train station and says, "Excuse me, are you flying to Moscow?" – "Well, yes" – "Could you pass this letter?" I've already got a text message from my mom: "Eight in the morning, Kazan railway station, Tashkent train, get your Dad's letter." Or sometimes, if there isn't a train for a long time, Dad is like, "Well, I'll go to the airport. What to do?" He arrives at the airport: "Hello, are you flying to Moscow?" – "Yes" – "Here's a letter to pass on." It comes to me: "6:30 in Sheremetyevo." You pack, you go, you have to get Dad's letter somehow. And this is the first letter he wrote me when I had just arrived in Moscow in 2006.

"Sonny, hello. Although you object to the letters, I decided to write you a couple of lines anyway. First of all, I want to praise you for your efficiency and dedication, but I also want to caution you against getting too euphoric. No matter how you adapt in Moscow, still, always be careful in your deeds, actions and behavior. Don't say such platitudes about it being a foreign city and the like, but there's just such a detail as internal adaptation, which plays, of course, a more important role in mental balance than external adaptation. Moreover, my son, the fact that you have not traveled further than the mountains until you were 20 years old, you understand yourself. Hence, there can be misdirections in evaluating people. Listen, I'm glad you're not so

cynical about soccer. Maybe it's your boss's fault or the Russians' good game, but I'm sure you've noticed that there are a lot of everyday laws in the laws of this game. Were you at the opening of the Moscow Film Festival? Takeshi Kitano, Kusturica, Will Smith and others were there. Kitano stunned me. I think he is profoundly handicapped physically, but a great artist. All the buttons in the elevator were stolen again. Mom, of course, arranged for them to 'put out the light, throw a grenade,' but for now they have to climb to the eighth floor on foot. The facade of our house now stands out with a black outline of the eighth, seventh, and sixth floors, the climbers did some work yesterday. That's all for now, a lot of news. I could write to you more often if there is a specific mailbox, but I am increasingly tuning in to 'go to Moscow.' It takes time, it's not today, not tomorrow, but after your exams, otherwise I'm powerless with longing and moping, and I fall into a strange depression, which I myself understand as missing you, and I notice it in your mother too. Are you going to come home? Your dad."

To travel home an Uzbek citizen needs another document – this is a renunciation of citizenship. My renunciation of citizenship is fake, not real, I'll explain why now. In general, how is citizenship denied to an Uzbek citizen and in general in Uzbekistan? Only the president himself can help you renounce citizenship. You go to the Uzbek embassy, take a huge questionnaire where you need to fill out everything, list all the relatives who stayed in Uzbekistan, write their addresses and phone numbers, apparently, they will come to visit, or something like that. And most importantly, you need to write a letter of motivation there, about why you decided to renounce Uzbek citizenship.

So, how do I envision it? You come home in the evening, take out writing materials, set up a table, turn on a lamp and sit down to write a letter of motivation to the president: "Dear Islam Abduganievich, your loyal subject Talgat Damirovich Batalov is writing to you. I would like to bother you with the fact that I want to renounce my Uzbek citizenship, and not because I do not love my homeland, but because (for example) I don't like the sun and fruits," and you sign it all, send it by the Uzbek mail, and this is not the "Russian Post." On the same day, Islam Abduganievich receives a letter, some people carry it on a golden tray, the delegation comes in: "You have a letter from Talgat." He says, "Oh, great, I remember him." He takes it, opens it: "Talgat, yes, this is the same Batalov, yes. 'Renounce citizenship', 'fruit', 'Sun.' No, let him live for now." And, as it were, the president hasn't processed anyone's renunciation of citizenship, in principle. He loves us, doesn't want to let us go, like a good father. And do you even want to write a letter to such a person? Somehow communicate with him, or see him, go for a ride. If you're not afraid, you can pass it through the rows. It's paper, it's not so scary.

And therefore, since dual citizenship is also not allowed in Russia, and people need to renounce citizenship somehow, they came up with another form of refusal, and a brilliant one. Any notary, and in general, anyone in Russia can help you renounce Uzbek citizenship. You go to any notary office. For example, Olga Vladimirovna Budanova, a notary in the city of Tver, helped me to renounce my citizenship. You make a piece of paper that says something like this: "I notify all authorities that I have decided to renounce Uzbek citizenship," and you send this piece of paper everywhere. And you keep a copy, and you can go home. That is, you put it in your pocket, it's always with you, you already have a Russian passport, and you walk around, and if a policeman

stops you... But to get stopped by a policeman in Uzbekistan, you have to try hard, because they don't speak Russian at all. Because there are two chances, in principle, to get a residence permit in Tashkent: to become a policeman or to have very good relatives. And the only chance not to go to Russia is also to become a policeman. That's why there are a lot of police there, but they don't speak Russian, and they're unlikely to stop you. But if you're suddenly stopped, you have this kind of document of renunciation, and, naturally, any Uzbek policeman understands that Olga Vladimirovna Budanova is a serious person, so there can hardly be any problems. You can travel around Tashkent perfectly with it, with this piece of paper.

And I was like, "Damn, why such an incomprehensible story?" Here I am, a living, free person, I'm tired of some country, I want to renounce my citizenship, and there are so many problems. I started to find out somehow, to ask people from Central Asia who found it most difficult to renounce their citizenship. I was told that it was very easy for Kyrgyz people to renounce their citizenship and get Russian citizenship. Nobody knows why. It's just that once Askar Akayev agreed with Yeltsin in the sauna, in the bathhouse: "And let's let yours get a Russian passport, as they come in?" and the latter says, "Yes, let's do it." And that's it, they agreed, and the Kyrgyz come to Russia, and immediately this law: "Yes, let's do it," works for them, and they are given a Russian passport. That's why, if you pay attention to fast food in Moscow, Kyrgyz people always work there because they aren't allowed to eat Russian food without a passport. And then Ukrainians and Uzbeks follow. The scientific basis is very long, everything is complicated. And the Tajiks have the most terrible situation. Why's that? Because Russian pilots were arrested there, and here they started deporting all Tajiks, one after the other, back to Tajikistan. Moreover, when they were deported, 40 Uzbeks were deported to Tajikistan: "What's the matter, blacks all look the same. Come on, come on, come on" – "I'm Uzbek, guys, don't deport me to Tajikistan" – "Come on, come on." They put everyone in jail and send them away. How many Turkmens were sent to Uzbekistan instead of Tajikistan. And I think, "How come, damn, why is this a story? Some pilots were caught there, people are being deported here. Catch the Tajik pilots, right? Why mess with each other's heads? What do people have to do with it?" But I couldn't figure it out myself. I needed an expert on Tajiks. I started calling journalists I knew, searching, and eventually I was told, "Yes, there is such a person. He knows about Tajiks, let's just say he knows everything and more about Tajiks." I went to him to talk to him about the Tajik issue.

I came to the center of Moscow, to such a good office to talk with Karomat Bakojevich, a Tajik human rights activist. Everything was so dignified and noble, the secretary brought me tea and coffee and said, "Karomat Bakojevich is a little busy right now, wait." I started waiting, waiting a looking at Karomat Bakojevich's office. Such a nice leather chair is expensive, like everything. And behind this chair there is an interesting still life, I noticed. There's an aluminum bust of Lenin, and next to it is a portrait of Putin. But Karomat Bakoevich was not satisfied with this. He printed out a piece of paper on his printer, which reads: "Vladimir Putin is a man of words and deeds," and stuck it on Putin's forehead. And there's a still life like this. Karomat Bakojevich came out in a suit and tie, and we started talking about Tajiks.

"You know, Tajikistan has never known anything in its life. The feudal system. We haven't even gotten past the feudal system. I mean, really, look, life wasn't that bad in Libya. Yes, they were illiterate, but thanks to Gaddafi, knowledge appeared, big money appeared. But the overthrow of Gaddafi was carried out by these fools, and we are talking about completely different things. We were approached by migrant workers. Many of them are beaten up, disappeared, died, and two thousand vanished without a trace in a year. You see, a migrant worker gains experience, acts according to the law, and then he is deported. And ya know, all Tajiks are obedient, they're much different than those from the Caucasus. That's what distinguishes a Russian person from a Central Asian one. I'll tell you, it's insolence. A Russian person is an insolent person. Look at the way they shout at these rallies. Here the man from the Caucasus also behaves insolently. You see, here's the performance that you want to stage, here's something interesting to create. Here you can create an effigy of Hitler, do whatever you want, I'll help you. Let the doubles of Rakhmonov, Putin, and Karimov take part in your cultural theater. I don't know how you're going to do the performance. Is that how you're going to show it? For example, people came to watch your performance, but you show how poor Tajiks go to the store, buy 'Doshirak' or bread, poor things, and then you show an effigy of Rakhmonov or a stuffed Medvedev. That's your performance. Show how they are being cheated out of their jobs by employers. More than a million Tajiks have already received Russian citizenship. In 1995, there were 135 thousand of us. Do you realize that you will soon see Russia disunited like you saw the Soviet Union in pieces? If it doesn't change, then everything is already at the internal revolutionary stage, when Nemtsov, Vladimir Tor, the so-called Navalny, a bunch of people like them, they will be ready thanks to our Jewish brothers in Tel Aviv, they will be engaged in the race to unite Russia, 100%. They've already reached it now. I looked at Bolotnaya Square. I watched the 'Russian March,' and there were only four Russian people there, the rest were all from Israel. And they are Jews, they have arrived, they are ours, they are bloodthirsty. But why are they interfering in Russia's affairs? They're Jews. In Soviet times, they were expelled thanks to Hitler, and these are their children, there are their names and surnames. Vladimir is Volodya, he knows, it's a pseudonym. Now, you see, it is not the Caucasus that is dangerous for Russia, but now the Jewish nation is dangerous. Synagogues are dangerous, by the way. I think Putin is well aware of this, and we've had it up to here. There was no bad attitude when we were under the tsar. It will definitely be in Putin's program, he will slowly get rid of the Jews, yes, and no one will say that Russia has committed genocide against Jews, but he will, we will see, because every third person who goes out on the street, I see, is a Jew, every second person in the bank is a Jew, every owner who is doing business here in Russia, is not Russian but a Jew, and this is good, no one has anything against it. But on the other hand, if we find 40 million Russians in Russia, that's also good. So, you see, the trouble of our migrant brothers is thanks to the Jewish brothers. Pay attention to those basements, cellars where Tajiks live. Where do you think the owners are from? Bukhara Jews - that's one, mountain Azeri Jews - that's two, and the most important Jew is Romodanovsky, the chairman of the Russian Migration Service. What does he say? 'We teach everyone the Russian language, and if anyone behaves illegally, we will deport everyone.' Let him try it. There used to be 'Cherkizon,' the Cherkizovsky Market, but now there's the Moscow shopping center. Let him stick his head in there, they'll break his head, this Romodanovsky.

Two Tajik actors will work with you in your performance. They were already working when we wanted to do a story on Armenians, the same as the show 'Hama Russia' (Nasha Rasha). But then we were told, 'It's not worth it,' because as it turned out these two fools, Ravshan and Jamshut, aren't Armenians. When we met with the Armenian representatives, they said, 'No, they are not Armenians. They just call themselves Armenians, they are from Tel Aviv.' Yes, we had discussions and a TV show. And what about this Galustyan, is it a pity to kill him? You have to kill for such things. Or are there not enough jokes about Moldovans? Another problem: Moldovans consider themselves Romanians today, and Bulgarians tomorrow, so don't worry.

Lenin behind my back is a tribute, and Putin... Putin. I have always believed that military people are much better educated than all the other priests and engineers. Military people, they are determined. So I think: why is Putin here, why not Medvedev, why not Rakhmonov, why not them? It's just lucky for the Russian nation, the Russian people, that the country is not yet divided into parts. Putin is the only authority for today. Here he meets people in the Caucasus, he speaks the Caucasian language, he meets with people in Siberia, he speaks the Siberian language. He is the only one who preserves Russia today. Lucky you, take care of him, I'm taking care of him myself. And what kind of rallies? It seems like 30 people came out, but with three zeros that's 30 thousand. Is this a rally? And who was there at the rally? They all got tickets this morning, they had planes from Tel Aviv in the evening, and then again. Nemtsov won't be here now, he and his entire group already have tickets, they're all going to live in the Canaries, because the Americans are fulfilling their mission. They don't want Russia to be a power, but Russia is a power in the world. And you don't have to go to Bolotnaya Square. Go to Luzhniki on the 25th, national diasporas will be there, among others, to support Putin, he is a worthy man. Don't you love him, you don't say anything? I understand. But he is good."

Karamat Sharipov did not go to the performance. But I read some review in which he was called an idiot, and a denial of it on the human rights website. It was written there that "If Karomat Sharipov is an idiot, then Talgat is a vile hypocrite." And then a very long explanation about the U.S. State Department to make me finally understand the Jewish threat.

I thought, "How cool. Everything is clear, Tajiks, Uzbeks, everything is coming together." And Karomat Bakojevich gave me an idea. Putin is a man of words and deeds. What does Putin think about migrants, about Uzbeks, about everyone who comes here? And I began to look for something, the thoughts of our then prime Minister still, what does he think about it. And I found his election article "Russia: The National Question", which I will read to you today in its entirety. Don't worry, it's only 60 pages. Putin has short articles, but this is our president, we chose him, so we are listening. I'm kidding, I'm only reading points, the most interesting. It is called "Russia: The National Question," it was published in an independent newspaper.

"The 'melting pot' of assimilation is floundering and smoking – and is not able to 'digest' the ever-increasing large-scale migration flow. The reflection of this in politics was 'multiculturalism,' which denies integration through assimilation.

In many countries, closed national-religious communities are forming, which not only refuse to assimilate, but even refuse to adapt. There are neighborhoods and entire cities where generations

of visitors have been living on social benefits and do not speak the language of the host country. The response to this pattern of behavior is an increase in xenophobia among the local indigenous population.

Quite respectable European politicians are beginning to talk about the failure of the 'multicultural project.'

Despite all the external similarities, our situation is fundamentally different. Our national and migration problems are directly related to the destruction of the Soviet Union, and in fact, historically, of the great Russia, which was formed at its core back in the XVIII century. (Uninteresting details)

And, by the way, our holiday on November 4 - the Day of National Unity, which some superficially call 'the day of victory over the Poles,' is in fact 'the day of victory over ourselves,' over internal feuds and strife, when estates, nationalities realized themselves as one community - one people. We can rightfully consider this holiday the birthday of our civil nation.

Historical Russia is not an ethnic state and not an American 'melting pot,' where, in general, everyone is a migrant in one way or another. Russia has emerged and developed for centuries as a multinational state.

However, if a multinational society is struck by the bacilli of nationalism, it loses its strength and durability.

It is also interesting to note that ethnic Russians have never formed stable national diasporas anywhere and never in any emigration, although they were represented both numerically and qualitatively quite significantly. Because there is a different cultural code in our identity.

In our country, where the civil war has not yet ended in the minds of many, where the past is highly politicized and 'torn apart' into ideological quotations, a subtle cultural therapy is needed.

Today, citizens are seriously concerned about, and frankly, irritated by, many of the costs associated with mass migration – both external and internal. I believe we need to make our position clear.

Firstly, it is obvious that we need to improve the quality of the state's migration policy by an order of magnitude. And we will solve this problem. And in this respect, the clear policing functions and powers of migration services need to be strengthened.

I think that it is necessary to tighten the registration rules and sanctions for their violation.

It is important for us that migrants can adapt normally in society. In fact, an elementary requirement for people wishing to live and work in Russia is their willingness to master our culture and language. Starting next year, exams in Russian language, Russian history, and Russian literature should be made mandatory for the acquisition or extension of migration status.

Our state, like other civilized countries, is ready to form and provide migrants with appropriate educational programs. We understand that it is not from a good life that people leave for faraway lands and often far from civilized conditions to earn for themselves and their families the possibility of human existence.

From this point of view, the tasks that we set both within the country and the tasks of Eurasian integration are the key instrument through which it is possible to bring migration flows into a normal course. In fact, on the one hand, direct migrants to where they will cause the least social tension. But on the other hand, the most ambitious project is this: that people in their native places, in their small homeland, can feel normal and comfortable. We just need to give people the opportunity to work and live normally at home, in their native land, an opportunity that they are now largely deprived of.

We've lived together for centuries. Together we won the most terrible war. And we will continue to live together. And to those who want or are trying to divide us, I can say one thing – you'll be waiting forever..."

As always, it ended with an external threat. Someone is trying to divide us.

My next document is registration in the village of Savvatievo. That is, a request to register. Great village. 16 houses, there's light, no gas, everything's fine, even some people live there. And I've never seen a village ever, I must say, I've never seen a hut, only in Russian literature textbooks, and that one had chicken legs. And then I went to an actual, real village, I went to a hut, to a log cabin, and they put me to sleep on a stove, that is on a real stove. I was sleeping, and at night I was covered with all the cats, all the cats of the village just all slept on me. I wake up in the morning, the people I was staying with, the dude there says, "Well, how did you sleep?" I say, "Great, good" – "Were there cats?" I say, "Yes, there were." He says, "Well, how about a little bit?" I say, "I can have a little, I have to go to the passport office today, though." Him: "It's nothing," and takes out a bottle of moonshine of this size and says, "and then we'll smoke hookah," and takes out a hookah. Such is the friendship of cultures in the Russian countryside. Naturally, I did not go to any passport office that day, and I didn't go the next day either, or the next day. Then at some point I had to stop him, and just get up before him and leave. So I went to the passport office to do all my civilian stuff. The passport office is... I'm trying to find decent words. It's just a shit hole made of cinder blocks, on the whole a marvel of architecture, such a long piece of shit, everything, they just put on the roof, and there's these offices across from one another. And women work in this shit hole. And I imagine – here are these women who work in the passport office – I always imagine their job application form. It would roughly say something like this: "A very pedantic attitude toward everything concerning the end of the working day and lunch break." She says, "Oh, great, I can do that." "Boundless self-love" -"Mmm, I can do that too." "Hatred of all people, regardless of their race, nationality, and so on" – "Mmm, that's great." And the last point is "You must have a nest on your head." If that last point matches and you've got this shit on your head, this chemical cloud on your head, then you get a job at the passport office for life, you sit there, and that's it, you're a woman who works at the passport office. And these women who are sitting there perfectly opposite each other, they have made it so that their breaks never coincide. That is, you signed something here, you will never go here,

then you will not go to this office, and it's never going to match up. That's why you'll drive, sleep on the stove, cats will sleep on you, you'll get off the stove, drink moonshine at eight in the morning, go back to the passport office, because the hours of operation for the offices never match. But if suddenly, by some miracle, you managed to sign at one cloud and ran to another, and you, like, even had one foot still in that office, and the other in this one, and so... And she says on the phone, on the "iPhone" fucking bought with my money: "Yes, Galya, yes, okay. No, there's not a lot of people. Galechka, yes, well, how's Igor? Did you buy him shoes? Like I told you, it's a good market, it's not crappy. Yes, yes Galechka, yes, yes. No, there's not a lot of people. Well, there were a couple of people, and there are 700 people standing there. - Yes, okay, everyone, of course, warm up, I will, bye. What did you want?" And I also have a woman who helped me do citizenship, she says, "Just don't pick a fight with anyone, you'll just have to look for a new area." And you stand there, so as not to argue, you say, "I wanted to sign something here." Maybe she signs, maybe she doesn't, whatever she wants, basically.

Then I generally tell the device of this organism, which is called the "passport office." There is a civilized queue of people who get citizenship. What is a civilized queue? It is Tajiks, Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, Moldovans, Georgians, and many, many different people who came from the construction site, tired, there are 480 of them, and they are forming a crazy queue. You, of course, understand that they do it very easily. So, they make this huge four-kilometer-long list, where they are written down one after another. They find one delegate who knows how to write, and he writes down everybody's name. Half of the people have the same name, I don't even know how they got there. But it doesn't matter, they make a list, and according to that list, really to avoid fighting with each other, they somehow go to the passport office. Some have been living in the ward there for probably a month or so now. And suddenly there's a guy with packages who says, "Excuse me, I just want to ask. I'll be quick," goes in there, and like, a lot of times that person was me, "just to ask." This aunt Nadia was with me, and she could just push through any queue, and I ran after her with packages of Perfection chocolates, cognac, everything as usual. We just stopped in to ask. Naturally, we ran to do everything we needed to do. But, OK, we've done everything, we've signed everything, everything is fine, the cloud has received its packages, but we have to go back through a civilized queue. All 480 men understand that you didn't just fucking ask, you did your business and he's living there in a tent for a month. And for this the cloud woman has a secret door in her office, people made a small door behind her, in which, when you brought her a bribe, you can climb into it and out of the back of the passport office. You climb out that door, no, Aunt Nadia first, naturally. First Aunt Nadia, then you, and while on the other side of the passport office, you need to run quickly to the parking lot, get in the car and drive away. And people throw galoshes at you, something else flies after you, pieces of asphalt.

Here you have done everything, everything is fine, the civilized queue has been passed. Next, what other good things have been done there? The cloud has its own company. What do you think the company does? I'll tell you now. The firm has very interesting services, the firm prints on the computer, because you can't print, you're a moron, you don't have a computer, you don't have a printer, and she bought a printer, bought a computer, opened a sole proprietorship, put her friend there, and she sits there just printing any of your applications, any of your papers, and you

have to bring her everything that is printed on the computer, with a check from her firm, otherwise she will say that it doesn't fit, because you brought it, you have everything wrong, the right computer is only there, in front of the passport office. And you have to print everything from this girl, bring checks, hand them over, and then they accept it from you. Everything is well thought out.

Then one day, I remember, there was some kind of solemn day. I ran in to her, she was sitting in epaulettes - she also happens to be a militiaman - and she was sitting in uniform, and her daughter Galechka was sitting next to her. I recognized Galechka because she also has this on her head. And soon, when mom gets tired of working at the passport office or leaves our world, Galechka will sit in her place for life, and she is already preparing. And so they were sitting there together. And it was a solemn day. She got up, took my arm, and led me somewhere. The second time I already remember that at the military recruitment office some woman led me somewhere, and this one led me. She took me into some room, opened the door and began to take my fingerprints, began to roll some kind of roller on my hand and says to me, "Why are your hands so sweaty?", and I decided to make a joke, I say, "You know, I don't take fingerprints every day" – "Joke with your churkas." And that was the limit. I thought, "I don't need any Russian passport, no citizenship, I'll go back." I came out, I was standing on the porch, very angry, I was smoking, and I saw an Uzbek not far from me. Unlike many people, I know how to distinguish an Uzbek from a Kyrgyz, a Kyrgyz from a Kazakh, a Kazakh from a Tajik. I see the Uzbek, I see that he is from Samarkand, I see his family, I see how many children he has, I begin to see his illnesses, then I stop him and ask, "Hello, are you from Uzbekistan?", he says, "Yes, yes," you say that you are a countryman, "Hello, countryman," back and forth. He says, "Why are you so angry?" I say, "Well, here," I told him the whole story about the prints, about all the rudeness, that I was tired of it all, and he said, "Listen, brother, did you sign all the papers, did you pass everything for a passport?" I say, "Yes, I passed" – "Well, that's good. The other day my nephew came to get his fingerprints taken, and he's missing some of his fingers because he's a carpenter, he's missing two there, one there. And they come in – he tells me – she takes out her roller, he takes out his hands, she says, 'So, where are the fingers?' He says, 'Woman, what do you mean where? Look, there. Hold on, I lost my fingers there' – 'Well, you lost them, fine. I need a certificate.' He says, 'What kind of certificate? I don't have any fingers.' She says, 'Well, like, I see that there are no fingers, but the state should see it. You have to bring a certificate of which fingers and where they are missing,' and that was it, sent him off, and he went to find a certificate to have it written out that he was missing such-and-such a finger, otherwise his prints were invalid." And I think, "Damn, why is it always the Uzbeks? Of all the Central Asians, Uzbeks are the easiest to humiliate, and it is unclear why." Since I am an ordinary Tatar myself, I could not understand this, and I needed an Uzbek, a real Uzbek, who would explain it all to me. And by some complicated ways I found an Uzbek who told me everything about the Uzbeks.

I came to talk to Bakhrom, an Uzbek human rights activist, at the market. In general, all the authentic Uzbek cafes are at the markets, where normally for 200 rubles you can eat samsa, pilaf, chorba, and all that. And we met at some market, and I began to ask him about Uzbeks and what he thinks, in general.

"You know, when they come without knowing the Russian language, without knowing the reality, without knowing the character of this nation, because there are enough interested power structures in Russia that there is a permanent mess in this matter, and this is a benefit for corrupt circles. Uzbeks have been working here for twenty years, but the Russian side has not raised the issue yet, and Russia should have raised this issue from day one. Recently, before the elections, the slogan was proclaimed that every visitor should know Russian. But these are just election stories, there is no mechanism. That is, on the one hand, for Russia, migrant workers who are powerless, who do not require working conditions - it is profitable. They can be used in heavy work without pay, and this suits everyone, including the Russian business community. In general, you know, Uzbeks today are a dangerous society, and this danger will spread. They are so depressed today that if something negative happens, the Uzbek will remain silent. Uzbeks today are not ready for civil society, because everything is destroyed there. There may also be people in America who are unhappy economically or financially, but that's not the main point. Uzbeks have no civic consciousness, and Karimov, claiming to the West that he is fighting mythological terrorism, is on the contrary 'training terrorists' – that's in quotes. I mean, how can I explain it to you, it turns out that even recently I have been communicating a lot with Uzbeks, it is necessary to account for the crimes committed. For this, the most profitable option is Uzbek. They take him, put him in jail, and these are the most powerless people who can be kept in the basement for three to five months, then put out on the street, and this is slave labor, because Uzbeks do not demand their rights, and this is the danger of Uzbek citizens, and corrupt forces get used to this. I know a police captain, and you know what he says: 'How many people do I stop, Bakhrom, why is it that the most cowardly are the Uzbeks?' And this is all because they have been living there in fear for 20 years already." That is, the Uzbeks, it turns out, are involved in the development of corruption. That is, even if an Uzbek has come legally, has registration and a work permit, he is still ready to give money to any policeman; this is how the Uzbek regime has brought them up, and here too, they are turning this into a tradition. And then, we must not forget that there are a lot of Russians living in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, and Russia, on the contrary, should not work with the Uzbek government, which awaits the fate of Saddam Hussein and other such dictators, but work should be done with the Uzbek people themselves. It would be less expensive, and that's a lot of people, and from that comes the relationship with Russian society. That is, people could then be told when we had a bad time, when we had a dictatorship, when we were humiliated by the Uzbek regime, Russia opened their doors to us, we lived there, we worked there, so to speak, we were people. But this, unfortunately, will not happen. There are now more than 350 thousand Uzbeks studying in various educational institutions in America, and they are coming, and they will be purely American people, the intellectual elite. And what will Russia say? "We provided you migrant workers with slave labor, gave you basements to live in?" I can't get an Uzbek to go to school here, and officials are involved in everything. There are more than 4.5 million Uzbeks in Russia alone, and if we take Central Asia, that's 10 million. There are even Uzbeks in Yakutia, in the permafrost. I myself have been banned from Central Asia for 20 years, my mother died, I couldn't go, and here they don't give political asylum to opponents of the Uzbek regime. On the contrary, they are imprisoned and extradited here, that is, they commit a crime against a person. Russia is loyal to the dictatorship, and in general this applies to all Central Asian countries, they all live in dictatorial regimes. I had an artist with me who isn't into the subject at all, and she

asks: "And how many years has Karimov been in power?" - "More than 20 years" - "Don't you have elections?" - "Do you have any elections?" When this is over, we will dig up Karimov, even if he dies, and show everyone that he is a dictator, that even the Uzbek land does not accept him, and we will find all his aides and judge them."

Somehow the story was already forming in my head, I began to understand everything about it even more, and when, in general, we were doing this whole performance, I was calling home a lot on Skype, talking to my parents, asking them how we got to Uzbekistan and our whole story. And I have recorded one of these conversations and would like to play it for you today.

"- Mom, hi

- Hi.

- Listen Mom, here's what I'm calling you about. Will you tell me how my grandfather and my great-grandmother got to Uzbekistan?

- During the war they were evacuated from the occupied territories to Tashkent.

When they got to Tashkent, Dad was four years old. Naturally, he was sick there, starving, because it was such a hard journey after all. That's how he got here. And the fact that they reached Uzbekistan saved his life. And Grandma, too.

- Did Grandma want to come back later, my great-grandmother, your grandmother, did she ever want to come back?

- No, no, even in the nineties, when the mood was like that here, she said, 'I'm not going anywhere away from here at all. I've never lived anywhere better than here, and I'm not going to leave here, and I'm going to die here. I was categorically against it.'

- They buried her there in Uzbekistan, right?

- Of course

- Mom, do you regret that you've lived in Uzbekistan your whole life?

- Well, first of all, no. I was born here. My mother was already born here, and I was already born in the second generation in Uzbekistan, I've lived here all my life, and, frankly, I don't want to leave, and I like it here

- You were born in an Uzbek neighborhood, weren't you?

- In the old city, where my dad was the only Russian, and was treated very well and respected. I even remember grannies in burqas, and there was no nationalistic sentiment.

- Oh, really?

– Really, even before the 90s... When I was still at school, the class would not have been even 20% Russian, and we never even had such a national question. We didn't notice who we were studying with by nationality, who our parents were. They moved quietly around the country. I traveled all over the Soviet Union throughout my youth, but such a question did not arise at all. Of course, in the 90s it was very insulting, but now, frankly, it's even incomprehensible."

And, in the end, I got a Russian passport, that's it. And in general, I left Uzbekistan because I was annoyed by the terrible number of prohibitions, for example, of all kinds. For example, when you came in you heard Uzbek rap – it's banned. Rap is banned in Uzbekistan because it's the music of some poor black neighborhoods, and a young, modern Uzbek doesn't need to listen to rap. Rock is forbidden, for example, with the wording that everyone who listens to rock serves Satan. I have some friends, they have a deathmetal band in Tashkent, and they would never have ended up on the Uzbek channel if they hadn't banned rock and made a propaganda movie, and they're being filmed there, and really death-metalists all serve Satan – it's a known fact – and eat people. Then, movies are banned. The Uzbekkino website has a list of banned films, and they are completely different, in no way related to each other. For example, the movie "Antichrist" is banned, or the movie "Police Academy" is banned, the movie "Shrek" in Goblin translation is banned, it is unclear why. Here's the only movies which I understand by the name why it was banned – Germanica's "Everyone will die, but I will stay." I see, that's a specific hint. Imagine, people came to the movie theater, sat down, and the title is a message from the president: "Everyone will die, but I will stay." It was 76 years ago, they showed Mustakillik, such a huge square, Independence Day, everyone is dancing, everything is going on, and he dances like that. They take a big picture of him, he just says, "Guys, my health is great, I recently had everything transplanted in Switzerland, everything is brand new, everything, everything, everything." Because for three years he disappeared somewhere, and returned like this as a dancer. And they ban movies. And, apparently, when they banned them, they simply googled all the movies where there is sex, satan, and all that, because, for example, Tarkovsky's film "The Sacrifice" was banned, and the film "Sex, lies and videos" was banned. That is, a young Uzbek cannot watch a movie that is immediately about three bad things – sex, lies, and videos. And so they banned a bunch of movies, and they themselves filmed a bunch of stuff that sucked. They gather Uzbek singers, and for five thousand dollars they shoot some shitty movie where everyone runs along the shore somewhere, and someone loves someone, and at the end some person rides in a wheelchair, and everyone cries. There are about 60 thousand such films. And once upon a time, "Uzbekfilm" was one of the strongest national film studios, and shot very good movies, and a lot, in fact. And Dad would show me these movies, I would watch these movies. And there were a lot of movies at home, and my childhood is directly connected to good Uzbek films. And one movies I somehow remember very well. When I was making this performance, I remembered it and realized that it was needed, and that I needed to cut out a fragment and show it to you. So, pay attention to the screen.

" - They drive and drive. You'd think the damn war had killed all the fathers and mothers. When is the end?"

- Fourth echelon today.

- Can I see you? I heard you take children, is that right?
- Yes, they did?
- Will you take me?
- Father, don't take him, we've already taken all the stuff from the house to the bazaar.
- Wait, where you going. What's your name?
- Kolya.
- Come here, Kolya. Sit down, Kolya.
- I'm so dirty.
- It's nothing, sit down, sit down.
- Thanks.
- Where did you come from?
- From Smolensk.
- Do you have parents?
- The Germans shot my parents.
- Well, why are you sitting there? Is that any way to greet a guest?
- Girls, bring a tablecloth.
- Vanya, put the samovar on.
- I'll go put it on myself.
- Sit mother, sit, he'll be stubborn without you. Who did I tell?
- And bring a table."

This is an Uzbek blacksmith who adopted 16 Russian children, and it turns out that my family once fell into about the same family. I mean, my great-grandmother and my grandfather. And it turns out, thanks to the Uzbeks, I am now standing here, and I am telling you this story. And that's why I want to say thank you to the Uzbeks, and thank you for coming. Thank you."