

Title: Reading against the Grain: History and Its Suppression in Andrei Volos's  
*Hurramabad*

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*Hurramabad* (1999) was acclaimed both as a refreshing return to realist writing after a decade of postmodern experimentation and the only literary work portraying the Soviet collapse and civil war in Central Asia (1991-93) through the experiences of ethnic Russians who were forced to leave their birthplace to begin a new life in Russia. The proposed paper challenges this thematization as reductive and argues that Volos uses the relatively marginal episode of the Russian exodus from Tajikistan to articulate perhaps the most comprehensive philosophy of history in post-Soviet Russian literature.

The first part of the paper attempts a hermeneutic reconstruction of this philosophy--as expressed in poetic metaphors, lyrical evocations, moral collisions, and literary references--and situates it in the context of post-Soviet ideologies of "the end of history." This reading reveals a philosophical layer that combines historical resignation and a sense of the futility of all endeavors to build a better society with the appreciation of human striving for the ideal and the hope that some degree of law and order will return once a new class of private property owners is formed.

The second part challenges this reading by observing that the novel's internally cohesive and seemingly sincere reflection on the human condition and its prospects is based on the suppression and misappropriation of recent political history and the biographies of some leading figures of the civil war in Tajikistan. This argument is developed by comparing the story of the mafia "godfather," the key ideological character of the novel, with his real life prototype--the popular leader of the National Front, nicknamed "The Little Lenin of the Vaksh Valley," who led the only successful defense of socialism in the FSU. The paper concludes by questioning the ethics and politics of the novel's relation to history.