

Title: “На оседлости коммунизм никак не состоится”: Movement as a Way to Build an Ideal Society in Andrei Platonov’s *Chevengur*

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This paper addresses the theme of movement in Andrei Platonov’s *Chevengur* (1926-1928) and “Dzhan” (1934-1935) and the relationship of this theme to the ideology of state-induced mass migrations of the 1930’s. The so-called “population redistribution” politics of the 1930’s set in motion enormous masses of people, moving them from their villages and towns to Soviet construction sites, the country’s underdeveloped regions, or labor camps. Both *Chevengur* and “Dzhan” offer significant insights into the contemporary assumptions underlying these politics, particularly into the idea that ceaseless movement is the one true means to build and maintain an ideal society.

While the early Platonov hailed perpetual movement forward as the ultimate expression of progress, in *Chevengur* he comes to question its value for a community’s well-being. The novel suggests that movement could orphan people by severing their ties with others, thus making a viable community impossible; it could disconnect them from genuine involvement in their own lives and in the life of their larger community. In addition, *Chevengur* intimates that the idea of movement could serve as a powerful means of mass manipulation when presented as an instrument to achieve an ideal state of society.

Chevengur does not offer alternatives to a life on the move. Such an alternative can be found in the later novella “Dzhan,” which develops many of *Chevengur*’s central themes, particularly that of movement. During the years of large-scale population movements that created “communities adrift on a current leading nowhere” (Brown 150), “Dzhan” suggests that true progress can be realized in a settled life: “в четырех избушках” (Платонов 88) of one’s home village.

Bibliography:

Brown, Kate. *A Biography Of No Place: From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004.

Платонов, Андрей. *На заре туманной юности. Повести и рассказы*. Москва: Советская Россия, 1999.