



# Interspecies Affection and Military Aims

## Was There a Totalitarian Dog?

**XENIA CHERKAEV**

*Academy for International and Area Studies, Harvard University, USA*

**ELENA TIPIKINA**

*Borey Art Center, St. Petersburg, Russia*

**Abstract** The image of totalitarianism is central to liberal ideology as the nefarious antithesis of free market exchange: the inevitable outcome of planned economies, which control their subjects' lives down to the most intimate detail. Against this image of complete state control, the multispecies ethnography of early Soviet institutions gives us a fortuitous edge to ask how centrally planned economies structure the lives of those actors whose biosocial demands can be neither stamped out nor befuddled by propaganda. In this article we examine the institutions of the Stalinist state that could have created the totalitarian service dog: institutions that planned the distribution, raising, and breeding of family dogs for military service. Our narrative begins with a recently discovered genealogical document, issued to a German Shepherd bred by plan and born during the World War II Leningrad Blockade. Reading this document together with service-dog manuals, Soviet physiological studies, archival military documents, and autobiographical narratives, we unravel the history of Leningrad's early Soviet military-service dog husbandry program. This program, we argue, relied on a particular distinction of public and private: at once stimulating affectionate interspecies bonds between dogs and their handlers and sequestering those relationships from the image of rational, scientifically objective interspecies communication. This reduction of human-dog relations to those criteria that could be scientifically studied and centrally planned yielded tangible results: it allowed the State's dog husbandry program to create apparently unified groups of dogs and dog handlers and to successfully mobilize these groups for new military tasks, like mine detection, during World War II.

**Keywords** interspecies communication, centrally planned economies, socialist pets, mine detection, military history, totalitarianism, Soviet science

### Totalitarian Dogs

In 2016, an unnamed German group, posing under a pseudonym, presented a conference paper about German Democratic Republic (GDR) military dogs' experiences of totalitarianism. They published the paper in the journal *Totalitarianism and Democracy*,

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and then they went public with the fact that it was all bogus. Their prank, they explained, intended to expose the tendency of trendy academic fads to override both bad facts and bad logic: not only was their paper entirely made up, it also pushed the conflation of humans and animals to seemingly absurd ends, proposing that animals are also the subjects of human history. GDR German Shepherds, they wrote, suffered totalitarianism even longer than us: for the poor animals, the division of Germany spanned 280 dog-years.<sup>1</sup>

Central to liberal ideology as the nefarious antithesis of free-market exchange, totalitarianism is traditionally said to crush such values as privacy, freedom, and truth. As animal rights increasingly enter the liberal agenda, why should the oppression of animals not also be included among totalitarian evils? But the extension of totalitarianism to animals seems absurd; perhaps because it pushes the connection between economic institutions and mental freedom past the typically accepted limits of common sense. Said to be the inevitable outcome of centrally planned economies, totalitarianism allows the state planner's control to seep into all aspects of life: from leisure to family relations to truth itself. "Since under modern conditions we are for almost everything dependent on means which our fellow men provide," writes Frederick Hayek in his massively influential 1944 book *The Road to Serfdom*, "economic planning would involve direction of almost the whole of our life. There is hardly an aspect of it, from our primary needs to our relations with our family and friends, from the nature of our work to the use of our leisure, over which the planner would not exercise his 'conscious control.'"<sup>2</sup> But Hayek's point is not that, as Susan Gal argues, the language ideologies of planned and market societies tend to draw the distinction of public and private in different terms.<sup>3</sup> His point, rather, is that by trampling the liberal distinction between public and private, planned economies eradicate mental freedom, intimacy, and truth as such. And this is why the notion of dogs suffering totalitarianism seems so funny: not even the most adamant cold warriors would seriously say of dogs, as Hayek says of people, that their "feeling of oppression in totalitarian countries is in general less acute than most people in the liberal countries imagine, . . . because the totalitarian governments succeed to a high degree in making [them] think as they want them to."<sup>4</sup> If we say that dogs in centrally planned societies are duped into thinking themselves less oppressed than they are, will we also insist that they properly enjoy privacy and freedom of conscience in liberal market societies?

Making other species think as one wants them to is fundamental to domestication. But domestication is also a dialogue with these other species who act within

1. For the hoaxers' statement, see Schulte, "Kommissar Rex an der Mauer erschossen?"; for the conference organizers' reply, see Laue, "Christiane S." For an English-language magazine article about the affair, see Oltermann, "Human-Animal Studies."

2. Hayek, *Road to Serfdom*, 127.

3. Gal, "Language Ideologies Compared."

4. Hayek, *Road to Serfdom*, 171.

human history without caring about humans' explicitly posed ideological aims. Examining such dialogues forces us to step aside from the totalitarian fantasy that certain societies function because their citizens are duped into acquiescence and to ask what society looks like from the position of social actors whose minds are unsusceptible to patriotic demands. Focusing on the "companion species" that co-constitute our lives, bodies, diets, histories, and kin relations, studies in "multispecies ethnography" have thus worked to disrupt the presumed centrality of human ideology and will to history.<sup>5</sup> "Human nature," as Anna Tsing writes, "is an interspecies relationship." And it is therefore a perpetually shifting one: we are a species contingent on history, which is itself contingent on other species, on "the various webs of domestication in which we humans have entangled ourselves."<sup>6</sup> These webs of domestication structure not only consumption and labor practices but also intimacy and affect. Tsing, writing about the historical entanglement of cereals, fungi, and humans, traces the slow development of a rhizomatic "empire" of domestication and property regimes that thrive by sequestering intimate affection from economic rationality: an empire centered around the family home, where "humans have curled up in their armchairs with their pets and their species-simulated snacks to watch the destruction of the rest of the world on TV."<sup>7</sup> This, of course, is the intimate private sphere, whose fragile borders centrally planned economies are said to crush as they bring life under the totalitarian planner's conscious control. And if totalitarian states' citizen-subjects can be said to be hoodwinked and forced into accepting such control over their relationships to family and friends, to leisure and to truth itself, what can be said of these states' nonhuman actors?

Mesmerized by Tsing's flickering image, we offer, in this article, a short history of the interspecies affection fostered in another modern empire: an empire whose governance and economic institutions relied on differently drawn distinctions of public and private. This empire is the Stalinist state, whose centrally planned institutions of control and distribution bound humans and animals together in structures of authority and obligation directed toward the state's militaristic goals. How did this empire regulate the nebulous boundary between intimate affection and objective planning? Historians have noted that Soviet urban dogs embodied a tension between "useful" animals and emotionally pleasurable but largely useless "pets" and that this tension was mediated by the image of animals as patriotic beings toiling alongside their human masters.<sup>8</sup> But we pose a slightly different question: concerned not with how the social role of animals was imagined by humans but with how specific interspecies relationships were afforded by centrally planned institutions mediating the state's militaristic aims and the actors' biosocial demands. Extending Tsing's analysis to the liberal order's totalitarian antithesis, we ask about the place of interspecies affection in those institutions of the

5. Haraway, *When Species Meet*; Kirksey and Helmreich, "Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography."

6. Tsing, "Unruly Edges," 144.

7. *Ibid.*, 152.

8. Nelson, "Hearth for a Dog."

*Над в г. Ленинграде 1948 года*

Форма А

**ЩЕНЯЧЬЯ  
КАРТОЧКА № 1/4.**

Сведения о щенке

1. Порода *Немецкая овчарка*

2. Кличка *"Мур" (Мурку)*

3. Пол *кобель*

4. Время рождения *28 ноября 1943*  
*сорок третьим*  
(год прописью)

5. Заводчик *Успенский НД*  
(отчетливо)

6. Его адрес *Театральная 16к18*

7. Подпись заводчика *[Signature]*

действительна до достижения собакой 12 мес. возраста.

Указанный в настоящей карточке щенок зарегистрирован в школе Служебного Собаководства

Ленинградская Осоавиахимия (обл., краев., республ.)

Осоавиахимия

Владелец щенка *Кожкина Ольга Дмитриевна*

Его адрес *Ленинград ул. Красной Кошечки 3кб44*

м.п. Секретарь Секции: *О. Кожкина*

*25 августа 1948 г.* Адрес Школы:

СМЕНА ВЛАДЕЛЬЦЕВ	ОДНОПОМЕТНИКИ (братья и сестры)		Ветосмотр	Вязка зарегистрирована по книге вязок школы за № _____ 19 ____ г.
	П О Л	№ щенячьей кар.		
1. _____	<i>сука</i>	1 <i>Медик</i>		<b>ОТМЕТКА О РЕГИСТРАЦИОННОМ СБОРЕ</b> Сбор внесен в размере _____ Руб. _____ коп. по квитанции № _____ Секретарь _____ Сбор внесен в размере _____ Руб. _____ коп. по квитанции № _____ Секретарь _____
	<i>- " -</i>	2 <i>Марга</i>		
	<i>кобель</i>	3 <i>Макс</i>		
	<i>- " -</i>	4 <i>Мурку</i>		
	<i>- " -</i>	5 <i>Меру</i>		
	<i>- " -</i>	6 <i>Мурас</i>		
	<i>- " -</i>	7 <i>Машар</i>		
2. _____		8		

Подпись \_\_\_\_\_

Figure 1. Mur's puppy card, front side. Courtesy of the authors

Stalinist state that could have created a totalitarian dog: institutions that planned the distribution, raising, and breeding of family dogs for military service.

**Remaining Evidence**

The story we want to tell is a historical one, and it is therefore primarily a story of documents: evidential scraps that this amorphous historical formation left behind as it dissipated, like debris left by a receding swamp. Our hope is that, by lighting up these shreds of old paper and memories with the proper dim light, we might trace the contours of the historical formation that once was: of these particular people, animals, aims, desires, and intentions and of the institutions they constituted and by which they were co-constituted.

We begin with the surprising historical document depicted in figure 1. The document is a genealogical certificate, a puppy card, typically issued to a pedigreed dog upon reaching thirty days of age. It was issued to a German Shepherd named Mur, whose owner is registered as Olga Koshkina. The document is also authenticated by Koshkina's signature, in her role as the secretary of the German Shepherd section of the service dog school of the Leningrad Осоавиахим. The document is astounding for its date—for the fact that the birth of Mur and his seven littermates is registered as November 28, 1943: when the city of Leningrad was still besieged by the fascist blockade.

From this puppy card, we know that Mur's mother was a family dog owned by Nikolai D. Uspensky of Teatralnaya street in downtown Leningrad; that she was healthy

enough to breed in 1943; and that, consequently, she must have survived the first two blockade winters. The first blockade winter, the winter of 1941, was one of the coldest on record and has since become known as the time of dying: in a city left with drastically little fuel and food, rationing entitled workers to 250 grams of bread daily—and nonworkers to 125. From the police files, we know that thousands of people resorted to stealing ration cards, murder, and cannibalism.<sup>9</sup> In 2005, Elena Tipikina interviewed Elizaveta Eranina about the service dog husbandry program, the blockade, and the war. Eranina recalled:

When '41 hit I was 17. The blockade ring was closing, household pets disappeared. They were eaten by people who had lost their minds from hunger. People followed my mother and me, begging: 'Give us, sell us your dog. Our children are starving.' They offered us gold, porcelain, fur! And anyway, we no longer had a way to feed Mig. We took Mig to the military kennel in Sosnovka, it was headed by Olga Dmitrievna Koshkina—she had been my teacher at the Service Dog Club and was a great authority in dog-training. That was in the Fall of '41. And after that we dug trenches and anti-tank ditches, kept roof duty, put out fire bombs and were desperately, terribly, hungry.<sup>10</sup>

Sosnovka is presently a city park, and during the war it was a forested area on Leningrad's outskirts, home to the NKVD (secret police) Service Dog Kennel-School, where the 34th Independent Battalion of Mine-Searching and Tank-Destroying Dogs was stationed and where more than two hundred dogs—among them family dogs like Mur's mother and Mig—survived the winter of 1941. In the autumn of 1943, when the blockade ring was partially broken but the city was still under siege, several of these dogs were intentionally bred. In November of that year Mur was born.

Eranina wound up in Sosnovka as well: she survived the winter of 1941 and signed up for the front in the spring of 1942, as soon as she turned eighteen. Assigned to the 34th Battalion, she was reunited with Mig, with whom she took part in the January 1943 operation that broke the blockade, allowing the Red Army to open a five-mile-wide corridor to the besieged city. For this operation, Eranina was awarded the "For Courage" medal; accompanying documentation recognizes her for having delivered, by dogsled and under fire, a total of 2,650 kilograms of munitions and cargo to the front lines and for having transported fifty-four wounded persons back to the Soviet side. It notes also that she joined the Red Army voluntarily and that she had begun handling service dogs as a Young Pioneer.<sup>11</sup>

9. Lomagin, *Unknown Blockade*, 266–323.

10. Quoted in Tipikina, "Few of Us Are Left," 6 (hereafter cited in the text).

11. TsAMO RF, f. 33, op. 682526, ed. 1395, Central Archive of the Russian Ministry of Defense, [podvignaroda.mil.ru](http://podvignaroda.mil.ru) (hereafter TsAMO RF). Eranina served under her maiden name, Samojlovich. All decorating documents cited in this article can be found in this searchable digital document bank.





Figure 2. Last pages of the 1932 picture book *Should There Be War*. Scan courtesy of the Russian Digital Children's Library, arch.rgdb.ru

“What does a real Young Pioneer dream about, if she loves dogs?” Eranina asks rhetorically in the 2005 interview. “About a German Shepherd, of course. A German Shepherd—that was the ultimate dream for a young dog trainer” (quoted in Tipikina, 5). Such dreaming was institutionally structured by the service dog husbandry program’s robust social propaganda campaign, which at once developed children’s interest in the high-bred animals and directed that interest toward the state’s militarized aims. Children’s literature presented service dogs both as personal friends and as reliable protectors of the nation and family: 1930s picture books reassured preschool-aged children that, “should your father be wounded / should he, bleeding, fall down the slope / remember: he will be returned to the Red Army / and to you he will be returned—by a dog”<sup>12</sup> (fig. 2). And after-school clubs allowed older children to themselves raise and train such heroic animals for military service. “There were a lot of us young dog trainers in Leningrad at the time,” Eranina recalled, “and we were taken very seriously. Shows, parades, All-Union Conferences: we trained the dogs like adults, and our teachers were strict. We raised the dogs for service, not just for fun: messenger service and tracking, arresting and guarding” (quoted in Tipikina, 5).

12. Ivensen, *Should There Be War*, 15.



*Figure 3.* Young Leningrad dog trainers at a pre-World War II All-Union Competition. Photograph courtesy of Natalia Eranina, St. Petersburg

Eranina recalled that in 1936 her elder brother got her a German Shepard puppy from the Service Dog Club, a dog whom she named Jules-Barnes. In 1939, Jules-Barnes was mobilized for the Winter War against Finland, and Eranina was tasked with retraining him to work in silence. Initially, the soldier who got Jules-Barnes sent letters to Eranina thanking her for the miracle dog, but then they lost contact, “and I never heard anything more about either Jules-Barnes or the soldier. For a long time I couldn’t believe in the worst. And now still I don’t want to” (*ibid.*, 6). In recognition of her training Jules-Barnes, Eranina says, the club gave her a puppy of especially valuable genetic stock: the one who grew up to be Mig, whom Eranina and her mother gave to the Sosnovka kennel in the Fall of 1941 and who was there reunited with Eranina a half-year later when she enlisted. “It was such happiness,” she says, “I cried, hugging the dog, and he whimpered licking my cheeks.” Reunited with Mig, Eranina served with him: moving wounded and cargo, laying telephone cable, carrying messages. And “the scariest thing,” she says, “was demining. Land-mines, roadmines, booby-traps. The dog makes a mistake, you make a mistake—and you’re lost.” (*ibid.*, 6, 7).

Eranina served in the 34th Battalion’s “Girls’ Team” platoon of military dog trainers, which was led by Margarita Menshyagina, captain of the Leningrad young dog-trainers team, and composed primarily of young women who had trained military-service dogs

as children. Reproduced as figure 3 is a photograph taken at a pre-World War II All-Union Competition, which Menshyagina's team had won. She stands at the front of the line on the rightmost side of the image. Eranina stands next to her. Drawing on the skills they learned as children, the platoon members not only worked with dogs under fire but also trained them to find mines and trained other munitions experts to handle the dogs. Indeed, mine detection quickly made dogs into a miracle weapon (or unweapon, as the case may be), and the decorating documents speak of incredible numbers and incredible speed. In February 1944, Menshyagina was recognized for personally locating and deactivating 744 hidden mines—249 of them within the span of thirty-five days—as well as for quickly training herself, her dogs, and her platoon to demine. The decorating document notes that she had started dog handling at age ten as a Young Pioneer and that she, “furthering the work of civil defense, had prepared tens of excellent dogs for the Red Army.”<sup>13</sup>

### Reliable Mine Detection

The rival empires that allied in World War II and warred coldly thereafter both tried to mobilize canine noses for detecting munitions, and these attempts were structured by the institutional affordances of their respective politico-economic systems. With varying levels of success, several countries attempted to independently implement mine-detector dogs during the war. The American program failed outright. American dogs were trained on “the emotion of fear and the instinct of self-preservation,” with the smell of munitions associated with electric shock, and failed to work in actual battle conditions, in which the smell of munitions inescapably saturates everything.<sup>14</sup> British dogs had more success on the field, but the program was subsequently deemed not to be trustworthy. By 1947, “the British military adopted a more cautious position, describing mine dogs as ‘unreliable’ due to their ‘temperamental’ nature,” notes Robert G. W. Kirk in his study of British and American mine-detector dog programs.<sup>15</sup> This perceived unreliability stemmed from a discord between the military's expectation of objectively replicable material explanations and the dogs' largely subjective selection and training, which relied on “an assumed, albeit ill-defined, notion of cross-species intersubjectivity . . . [such that] personal experience and anecdotal knowledge formed the basis of the [British] military's early promotion of minedogs.”<sup>16</sup>

The Soviets, by contrast, quickly recognized their mine-dog program to be a success. Implemented on all fronts after 1943, mine-dogs were lauded in field reports and regimented alongside other mine-clearing technology: instructions regulated how many dogs were to be included in each sort of demining group, how they were to be

13. TsAMO RF, f. 33, op. 690155, ed. 1144.

14. US Department of the Army, *Dogs and National Defense*, 32.

15. Kirk, “In Dogs We Trust?,” 12.

16. *Ibid.*, 4.



arranged on the field (typically in a checkerboard pattern, 10–15 meters apart), and how far behind the dogs the detonation of munitions must take place (200–300 meters).<sup>17</sup> The front's Engineering Corps commander in his 1944 year-end report noted that "40% of the total quantity of the booby-trap mines discovered [in 1944] on the Leningrad front was discovered with the aid of mine-detection dogs." The report narrates several notable examples of dogs locating munitions in wells, under clutter and snow, by roadsides, and in the bases of bridges and credits canine noses with discovering on one front, in one year, 71,322 antitank mines, 137,978 antipersonnel mines, 1,040 land mines, and 224,931 other undetonated munitions.<sup>18</sup> The 1945 victory parade in Moscow included an entire column of mine-clearance engineers, each holding a metal detector or probing rod over his right shoulder and the leash of a dog heeling to his left. A military instruction manual published the following year, *For the Training and Use of Dogs of the Mine-Detection Service*, credits mine-detection dogs with discovering more than two million land mines, delayed-action bombs, and other explosives over the course of the war.<sup>19</sup>

The Allies' varying success in regimenting, recognizing, and instituting mine-detection dogs during World War II relates to the fact that while America and Great Britain had both abandoned their military dog programs after World War I, the Soviet Union actively developed theirs: a program mobilizing the capacities of centrally planned institutions to regiment the evaluation, selection, breeding, and training of dogs. Motivating urban dog-lovers to invest their leisure time and affectionate labor in this program, the Soviet Union's centrally planned institutions standardized dogs' evaluation, breeding, and training along predetermined guidelines, which promised to make interspecies communication an impersonal question of reflexes, untroubled by the sentimental subjective ties formed between animals and their handlers. Such personal interspecies relationships had formed a stumbling block for many twentieth-century studies of human-animal communication. Assuming selection and training to rely at least partly on the animals' subjective affinities to, and social relations with, their human handlers, these studies were often irreconcilable with the canonical image of objective and depersonalized science.<sup>20</sup> And while the image of depersonalized objectivity curtailed some studies of interspecies communication with accusations of subjectivism, unreliability, and bad methodology, it also drove others to investigate avowedly "subjective" realms through explicitly "objective" parapsychological experimental methods.<sup>21</sup> Thus shortly after World War II, the US military initiated a series of investigations to

17. Igantiev, Korshunov, and Rupasov, *Demining*, 38–40.

18. *Ibid.*, 114–15, 179.

19. Zavodchikov, Muldevich, and Orlov, *Manual for the Training and Use of Dogs*, 3.

20. For a discussion of how the image of depersonalized and de-passioned scientific objectivity becomes especially problematic for studies of animal behavior, see Despret, "Body We Care for," and Haraway, *When Species Meet*. For a discussion of how this image of objectivity specifically encumbered French and British police and military dog programs, see Pearson, "Between Instinct and Intelligence," and Kirk, "In Dogs We Trust?"

21. De Sio and Marazia, "Clever Hans and His Effects."

develop parapsychological approaches to training mine-detection dogs, “premised on the capacity of dogs to detect land mines through extrasensory perception (ESP).”<sup>22</sup> Interspecies parapsychology experiments were also carried out in the early Soviet Union—most notably in Vladimir Bekhterev’s 1920s collaborative experiments with the famous circus trainer Vladimir Durov.<sup>23</sup> But the Soviet military-service dog husbandry program took a distinctly different approach: one premised on a seemingly unproblematic “scientifically objective” theory of selection and training.<sup>24</sup>

The science behind the Soviet program was laid by Vsevolod Yazykov’s theory of dog training, first outlined in his 1927 book *Military Dog: Basic Concepts of the Scientifically-Objective Method of Training*. Based on Yazykov’s 1924–26 lectures at a series of NKVD and military dog-handling divisions, the book sustained several revised editions by the state publisher’s department of military literature and was foundational to subsequent Soviet service-dog training manuals—including Yazykov’s own 1937 manual for young dog-trainers, by which Eranina and Menshyagina are likely to have studied.<sup>25</sup> Explaining that proper and rationally motivated training requires one to understand the psychology of the dog, Yazykov dismisses the assumption that animal minds can be understood by analogy to human ones. Training, he insists, “has its own hard-set laws that it obeys,[”] and an objective, entirely external method, which does not depend on subjective (personal) worldview.<sup>26</sup> These hard-set laws derive from Ivan Pavlov’s studies of animals’ higher nervous activity, which allows animal behavior to be broken down into predictable and modifiable reflexes. A reflex, Yazykov writes, is literally a reflection: a necessary reaction to an irritant. It is the simplest psychological act grounding behavioral science; it is the nervous system acting without consciousness. Pavlov’s famous experiment of the drooling dog shows that there are two types of reflexes: innate reflexes that are evoked by the irritant itself and acquired reflexes that are evoked by subsequent associations. The latter may seem like rational behavior, but they are only conditioned responses. And the goal of training is to build associations on first-order reflexes so as to make the animal reflexively react in a desired way.<sup>27</sup>

The variability, strength, and hereditary nature of dogs’ innate reflexes were studied throughout the 1930s at the I. P. Pavlov Institute of Physiology. Specifically, physiologists determined that the defensive reflex takes one of two forms—active defense

22. Kirk, “In Dogs We Trust?,” 22.

23. De Sio and Marazia, “Clever Hans and His Effects,” 100; Ryzl, “Research on Telepathy in Soviet Russia.”

24. An interesting contrast is the other ostensibly totalitarian state, Nazi Germany, which already by 1933 had implemented progressive animal protection laws, sentimentally motivated by the discursive association of animals with the defenseless, seen as pure victims of immoral and abusive vivisection and Jews. See Arluke and Sax, “Understanding Nazi Animal Protection and the Holocaust.”

25. Yazykov, *Young Dog-Handler*. Mention of Yazykov’s name, however, ends abruptly after 1938: arrested on the accusation of espionage, he died in 1941 in the Kolyma labor camps and was largely removed from the official Soviet history of military service dogs. See Maslov et al., *Border-Patrol Cynology of Russia*, 68–70.

26. Yazykov, *Course of the Theory of Dog Training*, 7.

27. Yazykov, *Military Dog*, 39–48.

(aggression) and passive defense (cowardliness)—and that the tendency to react according to one or the other form is hereditary. In a 1938 article, for example, Leonid Krushinsky explains an experiment designed to test whether different types of defensive reactions are inherited and whether they correlate to dogs' phenotype. Noting that the offspring of two seemingly noncowardly breeds—German Shepherds and aboriginal Siberian dogs—exhibit markedly passive-defensive reactions, he theorizes that the aboriginal dogs' lower overall level of excitability masks their passive-defensive disposition, which combines in their offspring with the high excitability of German Shepherds. Artificially raising the aboriginal dogs' excitability thresholds by injecting the animals with cocaine, Krushinsky proved that these parent-dogs themselves possessed the passive-defensive disposition that they passed on to their offspring: high on cocaine, they also exhibited markedly cowardly reactions.<sup>28</sup>

The choice of breeds in Krushinsky's experiment is not incidental. The early Soviet Union had native watchdog and hunting dog breeds, but it lacked its own police and military-service breeds, forcing the Red Army's program to rely heavily on imported European dogs.<sup>29</sup> And as Yazykov notes in the 1928 revised edition of his *Course of the Theory of Dog Training*, the latter were expensive and hard to get. Stressing the need to create a Soviet military breed—in light of “the high cost of German dogs, the difficulty of obtaining them—and in war-time the impossibility thereof”—Yazykov suggests propagating military-service dogs among the civilian population. “All dogs that are useful for military ends should be registered,” he writes, “and their owners should be rewarded for rational breeding and training. In light of the relatively limited budget of the USSR . . . it would be good, to attract wide masses of the population, to organize an All-Union society of the friends of the service-dogs, making it one of the sections of the Osoaviakhim.”<sup>30</sup> Yazykov's suggestion was successfully implemented. Indeed, fifteen years later, Mur's puppy card confirmed his registration in the service dog school of the Leningrad Osoaviakhim.

28. Krushinsky, “Study of the Phenogenetics of Behavioral Characteristics in Dogs.”

29. The Soviet theory of breed was predictably Marxist. While Nazi theories of breed intersect heavily with Nazi ideologies of race—whereby domesticated species' assumed genetic weakness served to justify eugenics, and the “wild” appearance of certain breeds was aligned with notions of Aryan purity and strength (Sax, “What Is a ‘Jewish Dog’?”; Skabelund, “Breeding Racism”; Wang, “Heavy Breeding”)—Soviet theories relate breeds to human history not by the analogy of race but by the practical implementation of labor. Breeds, Yazykov writes, developed together with the uses humans required of their animals: as advancements in weaponry eliminated the need to fight prey directly, dogs came to be valued not for ferocity and strength but for retrieving and tracking; the best dogs were bred and the breed qualities altered. “Man always and invariably saw the dog for its usefulness, using it for various goals. The dog's labor was always based on its dedication to man, faithfully sharing in his privations and need.” Listing the many uses that dogs have historically served, Yazykov includes everything from camp protection, to means of transport, to the dog's usefulness as food, fur, and grease: “Man was not mistaken; having drawn the wild dog near to him in the distant past, he has received from the dog more than he has given in return” (Yazykov, *Course of the Theory of Dog Training*, 26–27).

30. *Ibid.*, 241.

Described by historians as a “mass voluntary organization,” the Osoaviakhim was established in 1927 with the goal of propagating civil defense training among the civilian population and of garnering popular support for Soviet armed forces. It began with three voluntary societies—for support to aviation, chemistry, and civil defense—and quickly branched out in several other directions, including mailer pigeon and military-service dog sections.<sup>31</sup> Like other early Soviet mass mobilization campaigns (for literacy, hygiene, youth organizing), Osoaviakhim organizations served both to incite genuine excitement and to direct that excitement toward state-set goals.<sup>32</sup> The service-dog husbandry program was no different. By endowing civilians with high-class pedigreed dogs and by materially incentivizing the civilians to train these animals and make them available for breeding, the program effectively channeled the enthusiasm of dog lovers toward properly militaristic goals. “The work should always have military-defense determination,” notes a 1939 manual for organizing service-dog clubs, “and should educate patriots of our motherland, limitlessly faithful to the party of Lenin and Stalin, learning some specialization [of service-dog work] and ready to give their knowledge, and if it be necessary also their lives, for the protection of the socialist state.”<sup>33</sup>

The Osoaviakhim’s service-dog husbandry sections relied on the classic carrot-and-stick approach to social organization: a series of incentivizing social and material benefits, combined with a system of legal and fiscal restrictions regulating nonregistered dogs (Noritsyn, 63). Owners were additionally incentivized to make their animals available for evaluation at competitions and shows by the fact that puppy and stud fees were regulated by a predetermined scale based on the animals’ evaluative rank (ibid., 69). Hierarchically organized, these competitions culminated with the annual All-Union Show, at which the best dogs and trainers were selected—and at one of which the Leningrad team of young dog trainers was photographed after winning first place (see fig. 3). Thus incentivizing people to keep, show, and breed service dogs, the Osoaviakhim program quickly replicated several imported breeds into large domestic populations. Indeed, Mur bears such valuable blood: listing his forefathers to the fourth generation (fig. 4), Mur’s puppy card attests that two of his direct grandparents—his mother’s father and his father’s father—were German dogs. German genealogical documents mark the kennel name with the preposition *von*, which this Soviet card carefully notes with the Russian letter *ф*, or *фд* for *von der*. (A mistake made in the registration number of one of Mur’s paternal great-grandfathers is corrected in red pen.)

While dog owners were incentivized to keep service dogs, to train them and make them available for breeding; while they were carefully instructed on how to care for a pregnant bitch and how to socialize puppies; they had little say in selecting their dogs’ mating partners. Centrally organized and striving for the needs of the Soviet state, the

31. Odom, *Soviet Volunteers*, 99.

32. Slepyan, “Limits of Mobilisation.”

33. Noritsyn, *Service-Dog Husbandry*, 3 (hereafter cited in the text).

**РОДОСЛОВНАЯ ТАБЛИЦА**

РОДИТЕЛИ	ДЕДЫ	ПРАДЕДЫ	ПРАПРАДЕДЫ
1 Отец  "Арно"  Лапшиной  № —	3 "Толдо" ф. Рейдмехос № 447993	7 "Орест" ф. Хаус-Шюттинг № 416348	15 "Гуссан" ф. Хаус-Шюттинг № 416348 16 "Фрунцшмиде" ф. Вестфален № 304711 17 "Лотар" ф. Эльберфельд № 37632 18 "Мотард" Бендер Бергенланд № 37643 19 "Эду" ф. Вейзенхоф № 37010 20 "Тимо" ф. Бриггелор № 27688 21 "Тиле" № — 22 "Харта" № —
2 Мать  "Мики"  Успенской  № 2528	5 "Шинкель" ф. Берн № 439348	11 "Виканд" ф. Бладенберг № 405718 12 "Виски" ф. Берн № 38637	23 "Борон" ф. Рейтен Верен № 372 24 "Анни" ф. Лобратсгрунтен № 296986 25 "Ути" ф. Хаустингтон № 331229 26 "Оле" ф. Берн № 314866 27 "Викон" 1000 № 37 28 "Лотта" № — 29 "Ферро" № — 30 "Дисса" № —
Регистрационные пометки		Дополнительные сведения	
		Занесена в Всесоюзную картотеку №	
<small>подделка щепячей карточки и завписей преследуется в уголовном порядке</small>			
<small>Ленгортант 211-40 г.</small>		<small>119-2900 2-й ХУДОЖ. АИТ.</small>	

Figure 4. Mur's puppy card, reverse side. Courtesy of the authors

service-dog husbandry program ranked animals by a consistent system of evaluation and selected the best possible breeding matches among all dogs available that season instead of, as in owner-oriented systems, selecting the best possible match for some particular dog. Cognizant of guidelines regimenting how the animals ought to be valued, service-dog clubs compiled breeding plans twice a year, in the spring and the fall (Noritsyn, 68).<sup>34</sup> And in 1943, in a city besieged and surrounded by minefields, the Leningrad Service-Dog Club planned the breeding of several personally owned, family-raised dogs: Mur's father belonged to a woman by the last name of Lapshina; his mother belonged to Nikolai D. Uspensky, and Mur himself was given in ownership to Olga Koshkina.

Why breed dogs in a besieged city? The threat of losing valuable German blood was one likely reason; the objective need for more service dogs, especially with the growing need to demine, was another. With its relatively uniform population of animals whose similar genetic constitution and baseline training made them quick to retrain and predictable to the population of human service-dog handlers whose training to train and handle the dogs was similarly uniform, the Osoaviakhim's service-dog husbandry program created a militarized multispecies reserve base that could quickly be mobilized for arising defense needs, even previously unstudied needs like demining. In a 1943 decree about demining newly liberated areas around Leningrad, the Leningrad

34. Also see Petryaev, *Service-Dog Husbandry*, 10–11.

Ispolkom calls on the local Osoaviakhim to organize the training of 100 mine-detection dogs and 110 instructors and handlers.<sup>35</sup> The decree was issued in November 1943, about two weeks before Mur was born. It does not specify where Osoaviakhim would get the dogs, but we can assume that they came from the Sosnovka kennel. By 1943, most other dogs in Leningrad had been eaten.

### Interspecies Affection

There remains one more important factor in this story, really the most important: that of the interspecies affection fostered by these militarized institutions. The propagation of service dogs among the civilian population was strategically important for the Soviet military dog program not only because it extended the number of purebred dogs potentially available for breeding and mobilization and not only because the program created a civilian population of dog handlers trained to work with the dogs. It was important also because the quality of service dogs is heavily affected by early socialization. Through a series of experiments in which puppies were raised in isolation chambers, kennels, or homes, Soviet scientists had established that the dogs raised with the most variable socialization were the least likely to exhibit passive-defensive (cowardly) reactions, even if they were so genetically predisposed.<sup>36</sup> These findings were incorporated directly into service-dog husbandry policies. A 1952 rearing and training manual, for example, explains that dogs raised in kennels display the active-defense reaction less prominently than dogs raised in the homes of hobbyist dog lovers, where puppies have more opportunity to encounter a variety of new experiences.

Academician I. V. Pavlov explains this by the fact that all puppies at a certain stage of their development exhibit the reflex of initial natural wariness of all new irritants. As the dogs meet their environment, this reflex is gradually ceased and switched to an investigatory reaction. Those puppies who did not have the opportunity to meet with the multi-faced variety of this world do not overcome this puppy passive-defensive reflex and remain cowardly their entire lives.<sup>37</sup>

Dogs raised in families, in other words, are better dogs. And while the British World War II military dog program relied on the state's acquiring such personally raised dogs from the civilian population, the Soviet program was preconditioned by the state's mobilization of civilians to first raise such dogs according to predetermined standards.<sup>38</sup>

As with many things of Soviet distribution, these military-family dogs were at once one's own and not. They had their own place in the centralized system of obligations

35. Igantiev, Korshunov, and Rupasov, *Demining*, 277–80.

36. Vyrzhikovskij and Majorov, "Materials toward the Question of the Influence of Upbringing"; Krushinsky, "Hereditary 'Fixation.'"

37. Krushinsky, Merkur'eva, and Izrailevich. *Service Dog*, 191–92.

38. For a discussion of the British military acquisition and selection of dogs, see Kirk, "In Dogs We Trust?," 5–8.



and entitlements: they could be mobilized if needed, like Eranina's Jules-Barnes, who was mobilized for the 1939 war; they could be entitled to meat rations, to their own living space, to the right to ride on public transport. But, raised at home, they were also family dogs: beloved and coveted, trusted and scolded and enjoyed. "Migulya, Migulya! My most faithful, most honest dog," Eranina says of the dog she still loves, despite the one fatal mistake that cost her her heel ("Whose fault was it? Mig's or mine?"):

We worked our dogs patiently, on positive food reinforcement—we dried bits of horse-meat, we gave them the sugar from our rations. What clever ones they were! On the operation to break the blockade we worked morning to night and night to morning. . . . My Migulya drove a team on the front lines under fire. A dog team, crawling, delivered sleds to the wounded. Just imagine—100–150 meters crawling. One time a heavily wounded soldier, a large man, yells: "Stop, stop sister, stop!" I thought he needed to be re-bandaged. And with his last strength he says: "Sister, in my bag I have some sausage and sugar, give it to the doggies. Give it to them now, so I can see." (Quoted in Tipikina, 7)

Eranina was demobilized in 1945, at the end of the war. But Mig continued to serve in the demining of Leningrad: Eranina gave him to the military kennel after the war because she had nowhere to keep him. Forty years later, when she was given a state-subsidized apartment, she chose one in the north of the city, near Sosnovka, where she was stationed during the war and where she thought Mig might lie buried.

Crucial to Eranina's relationship with Mig are institutions of the quickly modernizing Soviet state: a state that needed its borders, railways, and labor camps guarded by service dogs, which had to be bought for hard currency from foreign breeders. The state imported these dogs like it imported factories, machinery, specialists, and other implements of modernization: bought in exchange for the natural resources that were extracted by often unfree labor, guarded by dogs. But while the state's centrally planned institutions collectivized farm animals and standardized work and school schedules, they entrusted expensive pedigreed puppies to citizens for home raising, not least because these naturally social animals need to be raised with personal affection. These affectionate interspecies relationships, however, did not threaten the scientifically objective nature of the dogs' rearing and training: "In the USSR, dog-husbandry is organized on the basis of science," notes the above-cited 1952 manual. "I. P. Pavlov's teachings about the higher nervous function and about conditional reflexes put an end to amateur subjective approaches to the training of dogs. Trainers received a unifying scientifically-based method by which to prepare service dogs."<sup>39</sup>

The apparent tension between affectionate subjective interspecies bonds and the dog husbandry program's claims to scientific objectivity is most obvious with military-service family dogs. This same tension also appears in discussions of the military dogs that fully belonged to the state and is resolved by the planned selection of people with

39. Krushinsky, Merkur'eva, and Izrailevich. *Service Dog*, 15.

unplannable personal qualities, such as a tendency toward interspecies affection. Military manuals of the 1950s prescribe how dogs are to be housed, fed, exercised, groomed, bred, and trained. They prescribe how often and under what conditions dogs are to be allowed to swim and what activities they are to be allowed while swimming. They prescribe even that the bodies of dead dogs be skinned for their hides before being buried. But they also stress that the success of all training relies on something that cannot be planned: on the dog's trust, which must be developed through long-term interaction with his or her trainer. Commanders are instructed that the "success of military dog-husbandry in its entirety, and the use of dogs in the armed forces [in particular] is above all provided by the correct selection of personnel to [serve in] the military dog husbandry subdivisions. People selected into these subdivisions should have a propensity toward working with dogs and should love animals."<sup>40</sup>

Taking seriously the seemingly ludicrous idea with which we began, that of dogs suffering under totalitarianism, we can now return to Tsing's haunting image of intimate family homes protected by an empire's regimes of property, affection, and domestication. What happens when private property is removed from this interrelation?<sup>41</sup> Liberal theories of totalitarianism tell us that the state's control over property inevitably extends into all that which ought to be private: into the intimate relationships one forms to family members, to friends, and to truth itself. That which escapes such planning does so through furtive resistance. "Liberal historians have long identified 'two Russias,'" as Timothy Colton summarizes this theoretical approach: "one official attached to the mighty State, and the other unofficial and popular. Even high Stalinism could not stamp out society's underground life, some of which gained acceptance during de-Stalinization."<sup>42</sup> But the third of Tsing's interrelated regimes—that of domestication—forces us to rethink such models of total control and resilient resistance. Soviet dogs were not brainwashed by central planning into abandoning their need for affection, no more so than their canine relatives elsewhere are seduced by the freedom of liberal democracy. And neither can we say that their demand for such interpersonal affection survived being "stamped out" by the state; quite the contrary, this state's militarized institutions fostered affectionate relationships as the precondition for effective interspecies work. A careful study of Soviet service-dog husbandry shows that there is no contradiction in this dual demand for unplannable affection and for rigorously planned scientific objectivity. There is only a different logic of empire, another way of delimiting economic rationality and sequestering unplannable love. Indeed, the "unruly edge"—on which humans are caught in dialogue with other species' biosocial demands—leaves us no assuredness of how others' subjective worlds ought to work. Triangulating between

40. Medvedev and Golovanov, *Instructions about Training and Use of Military Dogs*, 40.

41. Private property was factually abolished by the 1936 Constitution, which instead guaranteed citizens the right to "personal property."

42. Colton, "Gorbachev and System Renewal," 154.

Figure 5. Broom closet at the St. Petersburg Service-Dog Club, October 10, 2016. Photograph courtesy of the authors



self and other, between market and plan, it deposes the pretense that history can be read by empathy, that other social organizations are the nefarious reflection of our own.

#### **Coda: After the Plan**

A product of early Soviet institutions, the military-service dogs described in this article are a historical artifact whose conditions of possibility eroded as the planned economy evolved and ended after this empire finally collapsed. And while the Service-Dog Club still exists in St. Petersburg, it no longer authenticates pedigrees, chooses dogs' mating partners, distributes puppies, or trains dogs. (Indeed, while the language of "planned" and "unplanned" breeding remains, it now means something like the unplanned children born of accidental trysts). Today, dogs in St. Petersburg are distributed by market forces and trained in private sports sections; mating partners are selected by private breeders; and pedigrees are issued by the FCI (the World Canine Organization). Even the Soviet genealogical document—that object of Osoaviakhim striving, concern, and control—has fallen into oblivion. And when an investor remodeled the club in 2003 in

honor of St. Petersburg's third centennial and in exchange for the right to open a shop in the lecture hall, no one objected to these documents being reshelved into the broom closet (fig. 5). Somewhere in that broom closet, perhaps, is information about Mig and the other dogs named in World War II decorating documents, many of whose ancestors were also bought by the Soviet state from German kennels: genealogies translated and registered—and maybe corrected, like Mur's paternal great grandfather's, carefully in red pen.

Mur's puppy card does have a definite story. It was found in 2003, wrapped in a plastic bag together with an autographed photo of Petr Zavodchikov, commander of the 34th Battalion, and a poster advertising the first postblockade service dog show, which took place on August 20, 1944. It was found by Elena Tipikina, who was digging around in the broom closet because she has the tendency to dig in piles of interesting trash and because she was looking for references for a wholly unrelated article. The poster Tipikina gave back to the club—where today it hangs in the director's office, framed, next to a portrait of President Vladimir Putin; and the puppy card she pilfered, without a second thought. Ten years later, on the seventieth anniversary of Mur's birth, we (the authors) organized this document's "single object show" at the St. Petersburg Zoological Museum and passed it to the museum for archival keeping.

It can be found in the archive of the Museum of the Zoological Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, acquisition number 6/2013 of private collections.

XENIA CHERKAEV is a postdoctoral scholar at the Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies. She holds a PhD in anthropology from Columbia University and is currently completing a book manuscript titled "Personal Property: Obtaining, Totalitarianism, and a Planned Economy Neoliberalized." Her articles have been published in the journals *Ab Imperio* (2014) and *Anthropology and Humanism* (2017).

ELENA TIPIKINA is the author of many articles, essays, lectures, and broadcasts about interspecies translation and the role of animals in human history. In 2005, she founded and edited *Lev* (Lion), a monthly magazine devoted to "the animal kingdom in the world of man," which was included in "Golden Fund of the Russian Press" ("Zolotoj fond pressy rossii") and awarded the 2006 Centaur. Her latest book, *Konskaya porcha* (*Corrupted by Horses*), is a collection of stories about the animals whose lives had intertwined with her own (2017).

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