Lived Nationality: Policy and Practice in Soviet Georgia, 1945-1978

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Lived Nationality: Policy and Practice in Soviet Georgia, 1945-1978

Abstract
This dissertation asks how nation-ness “happens” at the level of experience. Although the Soviet state was founded on principles of Marxism-Leninism, which sought ultimately to transcend national distinctions, the experience of the Soviet project constructed and consolidated rather than dissolved nationality among its multiethnic population. Existing scholarship on Soviet nationality policies has largely focused on the interwar era from Moscow’s perspective, when the state’s distinctive approach toward managing ethnic difference was conceived and initially implemented. Relying on archival materials in Georgian and Russian, this dissertation examines nationality from the viewpoint of the post-World War Two Georgian SSR, when early Soviet nation-building policies gained traction among its multiethnic citizenry.

By the late Stalin era (1945-1953), internal understandings of Georgian national identity were closely intertwined with pride in Stalin as a co-national. Newly endowed Soviet institutions of nation-building from this period gave form to nationalizing aspirations of local- and republic-level actors in Georgia, from Party cadres to academics. I refer to these processes as productive and excisional institutions of nation-building. The aftermath of Khrushchev’s revelations in 1956 of Stalin’s crimes marked a crucial turning point in Georgia, yet for different reasons than the resistance, confusion, or hope expressed elsewhere in the USSR. The violent suppression in 1956 of demonstrations in Tbilisi against Khrushchev’s perceived denigration of Stalin as a Georgian national figure compelled a reevaluation of what it meant to be Soviet and Georgian in a post-Stalin society. This reevaluation took place among republic leaders and “ordinary citizens” alike, as a new national-social contract emerged that facilitated the hegemony of the entitled nationality by the late 1970s. From the nationalization of the republic’s capital to negotiation of cultural practices to political mobilization toward national interests, citizens in Georgia increasingly inhabited nationality through – rather than in spite of – Soviet institutions and collectives. This study sheds new light on shifting imperial, republican, and local center-periphery dynamics in the postwar Soviet Union and situates the subtleties of the Georgian case within a broader trajectory of twentieth-century Eurasian nation-building practices.

Degree Type
Dissertation

Degree Name
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Graduate Group
History

First Advisor
Peter Holquist

Keywords
Caucasus history, Nationalism, Soviet history, Twentieth-Century history

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DEDICATION

For Mike
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the generous contributions and support of a number of individuals and institutions. First and foremost, I thank Peter Holquist and Ben Nathans for encouraging this project since its inception, providing close readings at every stage of the project, and pushing me to explore new directions. Bruce Grant’s work was an early inspiration for the project, and I am grateful for his involvement in its later stages and for helping me to think anthropologically. I feel fortunate to have been at Penn at a time when we built a robust cadre of Russianist and Eurasianist graduate students. In particular, I thank Sam Casper and Alex Hazanov for their collegiality and friendship.

I conducted research for this project with the support of the American Councils/Department of State Title VIII Program for Research and Training on Eastern Europe and the Independent States of the Former Soviet Union, the American Research Institute of the South Caucasus, the Pew Foundation, and the University of Pennsylvania. The project also benefited greatly from participation in two workshops: the project on “Georgian Nationalism and Soviet Power,” organized by Jeremy Smith; and the Hoover Institution Workshop on Totalitarian Regimes, organized by Paul Gregory and Mark Harrison. Additionally, feedback from presentations at a number of other conferences and from Maike Lehmann, Ron Suny, Erik Scott, Krista Goff, and Kevin Platt helped improve individual chapters.

In Tbilisi, the staff of the Archive Administration of the Ministry of Internal Affairs made my extended research periods productive, efficient, and enjoyable. I
especially thank Ivane Jakhua, Dodo Baghaturia, and director Omari Tushurashvili. My Georgian language teachers Ramaz Kurdadze, Tea Ebralidze, and most of all Nino Sharashenidze equipped me with the tools necessary to carry out the project I envisioned. Frequent conversations with Tim Blauvelt, Oliver Reisner, Giorgi Kldiashvili, and Levan Asabashvili made for a stimulating intellectual environment in Tbilisi.

I came to Russian and Soviet history while I was an undergraduate at Georgetown through the dynamism of the late Richard Stites. Nelson Cunningham’s encouragement and counsel have been invaluable. I thank my parents, Paul and Shelley Pogue, for their constant support and for encouraging an interest in history from a young age. Most of all, I thank my husband, Mike Kaiser, for joining and supporting me on this journey. I dedicate this work to him.
ABSTRACT

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Claire Pogue Kaiser
Peter Holquist

This dissertation asks how nation-ness “happens” at the level of experience. Although the Soviet state was founded on principles of Marxism-Leninism, which sought ultimately to transcend national distinctions, the lived experience of the Soviet project constructed and consolidated rather than dissolved nationality among its multiethnic population. Existing scholarship on Soviet nationality policies has largely focused on the interwar era from Moscow’s perspective, when the state’s distinctive approach toward managing ethnic difference was conceived and initially implemented. Relying on archival materials in Georgian and Russian, this dissertation examines nationality from the viewpoint of the post-World War Two Georgian SSR, when early Soviet nation-building policies gained traction among its multiethnic citizenry.

By the late Stalin era (1945-1953), internal understandings of Georgian national identity were closely intertwined with pride in Stalin as a co-national. Newly endowed Soviet institutions of nation-building from this period gave form to nationalizing aspirations of local- and republic-level actors in Georgia, from Party cadres to academics. I refer to these processes as productive and excisional institutions of nation-building. The aftermath of Khrushchev’s revelations in 1956 of Stalin’s crimes marked a crucial turning point in Georgia, yet for different reasons than the resistance, confusion, or hope expressed elsewhere in the USSR. The violent
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A Note on Names and Spellings

Georgian and Russian transliterations follow their respective Library of Congress systems, with exceptions made for more common English-language spellings, such as Georgia rather than sak’art’velo, Tbilisi rather than t’bilisi, Ajaria rather than Ačara, or Shevardnadze rather than Ševardnaže. The Georgian language does not use capital letters, which I retain in citations for accuracy. I do, however, capitalize proper nouns in the main text for readers’ ease. I transliterate Georgian names and places into their Georgian variants, and Russian, Abkhaz, Ossetia, Armenian, etc. names, in the Russian transliteration style. In cases where I am citing a Georgian author of a Russian-language work, I transliterate the name from Russian in the citation.

Because the archival trail and its protagonists tell their stories in a mixture of Russian and Georgian, I use translated acronyms of Soviet institutions rather than Russian or Georgian versions (e.g. CC for Central Committee rather than TsK or c’k; MFA for Ministry of Foreign Affairs rather than MID or sss). Notable exceptions are the security services (NKVD/MGB/KGB) and the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries and its Georgian branch (VOKS/GOKS), for which I use the more commonly known Russian acronyms. I also use the Obkom abbreviation (for district committee – oblastnyi komitet) with regard to Abkhazia, as the Abkhaz Obkom of the Georgian Communist Party was the highest Party organ in the autonomous republic.
Several of the locales discussed in the dissertation went through name changes in the period under examination and/or continue to have disputed nomenclature. For these reasons, I use the common English-language version for: Abkhazia (Georgian ap’xazet’i, Abkhaz Apsny); Sukhumi (Georgian soxumi, Abkhaz Sukhum); and Tbilisi (called Tiflis until 1936).
## Archival Abbreviations Used

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<thead>
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<td>Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii</td>
<td>GARF</td>
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<td>(State Archive of the Russian Federation)</td>
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<td>Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Noveishoi Istorii</td>
<td>RGANI</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Russian State Archive of Contemporary History)</td>
<td></td>
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<td>xelnac’ert’a erovnuli c’enti</td>
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Introduction

_K’art’l-Kaxet’i, Imeret’i, Guria and Samegrelo,
Glorious Rača-Lečxum-Javaxeti and Mesxet’i;
Xevi, T’uš-P’sav-Xevsuret’i, Svanet’i and Ap’xazet’i;
Fairytale-like Mtiulet’i and Ačara’s sea and grassland;
All is my homeland (samšoblo),
beloved Sak’art’velo!_

This short poem, written in the late nineteenth century by Dutu Megreli (1867-1938) captures the regional diversity of what a member of the Georgian intelligentsia imagined fell under the purview of a Georgian ethnoterritorial nation. Georgians were a “historic nation” with religion as the key marker of ethnic identification in the premodern period, and not until the late nineteenth century did a developing national intelligentsia, epitomized by writer and politician Ilia Čavčavaže (1837-1907), recognize that a Georgian nation centered around culture and language needed to be actively constructed among the territory’s peasant populace, as signaled in the lyrics above. Yet it was ultimately _Soviet_ policies that produced a “Georgian” Georgia (sak’art’velo) for the first time in modern history. As Ronald Grigor Suny argues, the “re-formation” of the Georgian nation was the result of a 150-year project, which crystallized in the post-Stalin era.

The entity that would become the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) in 1921 and its entitled nationality, the Georgians, hail from the Caucasus region, nestled among Russian, Turkish, and Iranian imperial peripheries and the Black Sea.

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1 In the nineteenth-century sense, a “historic nation” was a nation with a history of self-rule, if only in the distant past.
The Georgian language (k’art’uli ena) belongs to the Kartvelian group of languages, a completely autonomous linguistic group with a unique alphabet, unrelated to Indo-European languages or any languages outside the Caucasus. Written Georgian emerged around 430 AD as the language of the Georgian Orthodox Church, and modern Georgian is largely recognizable from that initial form.

At its height in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Kingdom of Georgia extended throughout the Caucasus and what is today northeastern Turkey; at other points in its long history, the kingdoms and principalities of what was and would become Georgia were sacked and occupied by Arab conquest (seventh-eighth centuries), Mongols and Tamerlane (1235, 1386), and incorporated into the Safavid and Ottoman empires (sixteenth-eighteenth centuries). Georgians proved useful imperial subjects, and it was not uncommon to encounter Georgians in the court of the Shah or Sultan, or among the most valued commodities in the Ottoman and Safavid slave trades. At the same time, for much of its history, rival Georgian principalities undermined and fought against one another as imperial proxies. The longue durée narrative of Georgian history, as told by Soviet-era and contemporary historians alike, is one of unification and re-unification of a Georgian state amid imperial conquest and internecine conflict.

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3 The only other Kartvelian languages are Svan, Laz, and Mingrelian, Donald Rayfield, *The Literature of Georgia: A History*, 2nd. ed. (New York: Routledge, 2000).

4 Caucasian Iberia’s King Mirian III converted to Christianity in the early fourth century AD. While the date had been estimated around 343, Rayfield suggests that the conversion occurred earlier, in 317 AD, Donald Rayfield, *Edge of Empires: A History of Georgia* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 39.

By the late eighteenth century, after numerous conflicts with Turks and Persians, the Russian Empire began a more earnest push for incorporation of lands of the lesser Caucasus (that is, territories south of Chechnya, Dagestan, and Cherkessia) into its growing imperia. The leader of the Kingdoms of K’artl’i-Kaxet’i, Erekle II, signed the Treaty of Georgievsk with Catherine II in 1783, a treaty that placed the kingdom under the protection of the Russian Empire, but the agreement was re-negotiated in 1801, following the sacking of Tbilisi by Persians in 1795. Between 1801 and 1828, the Russian Empire “gathered,” through treaty agreements, the kingdoms of Samegrelo (1803), P’oti, Sukhum-kale, and Axalk’alak’i (1806-1812), Abkhazia (1809), and Guria (1811). Following the Russo-Turkish War of 1828-1829, the khanates of Yerevan, Ganja, and Baku were likewise incorporated into the empire. The Tbilisi that was destroyed in 1795 reemerged as Tiflis, the cosmopolitan administrative center of the Russian Viceroyalty of the Caucasus.

The long nineteenth century saw two important trends in Georgia: the incorporation of Georgians into imperial service in the Russian Empire and the

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ethnicization of Georgians as a nation. The Georgian Orthodox Church was subsumed into the Moscow Patriarchate after 1811, and the corresponding decrease in church authority left greater room for the construction of a primordial vision of Georgian nationhood that emphasized language and shared culture – a project taken up by three generations of Georgian national intelligentsia, the so-called (and self-anointed) pirveli, meore, and mesame dasebi (first, second, and third groups) beginning in the 1860s. The imperial Georgian society that gave birth to these early national thinkers was stratified according to ethnic group, such that in practice Armenians and Russians dominated urban areas in the spheres of business and government administration, respectively. Georgians, meanwhile, largely lived in rural areas; those in urban areas comprised the intellectual elite. As part of Georgian imperial incorporation, the extensive lineages of Georgian nobility were permitted to keep their noble statuses – much like among the Polish szclachta – and many nobles remained on rural family estates in lieu of residing in urban areas. Georgian nobles and intellectual elites found common cause with imperial administrators as fellow Orthodox Christians among a diverse Caucasian Muslim populace, as demonstrated through projects with a mission civilisatrice, particularly in the aftermath of the Crimean and Caucasian Wars.

11 On the interplay of Georgian nationalism and Russian mission civilisatrice in the imperial Caucasus, see Austin Jersild, Orientalism and Empire: North Caucasus Mountain Peoples and the Georgian Frontier, 1845-1917 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002); Oliver Reisner, Die Schule der georgischen Nation: eine sozialhistorische Untersuchung der nationalen Bewegung in Georgien am Beispiel der “Gesellschaft zur Verbreitung der Lese- und Schreibkunde unter den Georgiern” (1850-
By the late 1870s, the Georgian intelligentsia had begun to fracture into three strands: the gentry-centric nostalgic nationalism of Ilia Čavčavaże (pirveli dasi); the reformist liberalism of Niko Nikoladže and Giorgi Ceret’eli (meore dasi); and adherents of the emerging Marxist movement (mesame dasi).\textsuperscript{12} Noe Jordania, Pilipe Maxaraže, and other Georgians educated in Russia were first exposed to Marxism in Warsaw, and they brought this critique with them upon return to Georgia in the 1890s. By that time, the beginnings of industrialization and urbanization had brought a nascent Georgian working class to the cities from the countryside. Through Marxism, Jordania and his compatriots could address the perceived constraints of the territory’s ethno-economic makeup (that is, Russian administrators and Armenian bourgeoisie in positions of power over Georgian workers and peasants) with something other than a nationalist ideology.\textsuperscript{13} Jordania’s Marxism was modeled on German social democracy, and though it aimed to unite Georgian nobles, peasants, and workers in a common cause, Georgian Marxism remained part of the broader Russian social democratic movement. In the 1903 schism of the Russian Social Democratic Workers’ Party (RSDRP), the Georgians sided with the Mensheviks, and henceforth Georgia became one of the greatest Menshevik strongholds in the Russian Empire. Bolshevism, on the other hand, was driven out or underground, as young Bolshevik revolutionaries like Ioseb

\textsuperscript{12} Suny, \textit{The Making of the Georgian Nation}, 132.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid, 145.
Juğašvili migrated from Tiflis and Batumi to Baku.\textsuperscript{14} Georgian social democracy proved appealing to broader swaths of the Georgian populace and was soon able to be measured (to some extent, at least) by strong Georgian Menshevik representation in the Duma.

One of the by-products of Russia’s “continuum of crisis” between 1914-1921, in which the lands of the Russian Empire endured the Great War, two revolutions, and a civil war, was the emergence of independent states (influenced by German, Turkish, and British geopolitical interlocutors) along the empire’s former peripheries.\textsuperscript{15} As the Bolshevik Revolution erupted in in Petrograd in late 1917, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan declared their independence from the fledgling revolutionary state, first as a short-lived Transcaucasus Federation, then as three discrete states. The Republic of Georgia, declared on 26 May 1918, was the world’s first social democratic state, and only by invasion from without by the Red Army was Georgia incorporated into the Bolshevik polity on 25 February 1921.\textsuperscript{16} Georgia was the final piece of the puzzle to fall to Bolshevik power at this initial stage of Soviet gathering of lands.


Georgia may have been the least willing member of the new Soviet polity. Yet Georgians (and Caucasians more generally) quickly rose to prominent positions in the all-Union Party and state structures, most famously, Sergo Orjonikiże, Avel Enukiże, Armenian Anastas Mikoyan, and Ioseb Juğašvili, more commonly known by his revolutionary nom de guerre, Iosif Stalin. The Caucasus region likewise proved a productive arena in which to build a Soviet career, as the examples of Sergei Kirov, Lavrenti Beria, and (later) Eduard Shevardnadze show. In spite of Georgia’s small population (between three and five million in the Soviet period) and compact territory (slightly larger than West Virginia), Georgian culture and Georgian individuals made noticeable contributions to Soviet politics and society. Georgian wine, citrus, tea, mineral waters, and tobacco were regarded as luxury goods within the USSR, and only the most highly valued workers in the USSR earned coveted vacations on Georgia’s Black Sea coastal resorts. Moreover, as Jeremy Smith has shown, the question of Georgian nationalism proved fundamental in the formation of early Soviet nationality policy.

At first glance, Georgia might seem a strange choice for a case study examining the longer-term trajectory of the Soviet approach toward managing

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17 On the cultivation and proliferation of Georgian cuisine within the Soviet Union, see Erik R. Scott, “Edible Ethnicity: How Georgian Cuisine Conquered the Soviet Table,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 13, no. 4 (Fall 2012): 831-858.
18 The so-called “Georgian Affair,” which drew in Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky, Felix Dzerzhinsky, Sergo Orjonikiże, and P’ilip’e Maxaraże, was a debate over whether and the extent to which the new Soviet state should make concessions (on Lenin’s instruction) to Georgian nationalism to gain a greater foothold in the region. This debate, coinciding with Lenin’s incapacitation and “final testament,” had implications for the formation of the Transcaucasian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, the USSR, Caucasian border-making, and approaches toward nation-building in the Caucasus, Jeremy Smith, “The Georgian Affair of 1922 - Policy Failure, Personality Clash or Power Struggle?,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 50, no. 3 (1998): 519–44.
ethnonational diversity. At the time of the establishment of Soviet power in Georgia in 1921, Georgians already boasted a distinct language and church; a historically defined territory; a premodern and modern history of statehood, most recently as the independent social democratic Republic of Georgia from 1918-1921; a prolific and multigenerational national intelligentsia, active since the 1860s; and a rich literary and cultural tradition.

By contrast, the Soviet nation-building apparatus actively constructed languages, drew borders, and invented nationalities in Central Asia even as it worked through Ukrainian national leaders to appropriately indigenize linguistic and territorial Ukrainianness among the population, for both local and foreign policy purposes. This was the so-called “affirmative action empire,” which would “maximally support those ‘forms’ of nationhood that did not conflict with a unitary central [Soviet] state. This meant a commitment to support...national territories, national languages, national elites, and national cultures.”¹⁹ This policy, elaborated in 1923 and soon known as korenizatsiia (indigenization), aimed to cultivate and institutionalize national distinctions in order to accelerate the process of overcoming them. The Soviet approach toward managing ethnic difference not only promoted and subsidized national elites, languages, and territorial boundaries; sometimes, it even invented new nations.

Top-down studies from Moscow and local studies of Central Asia, Ukraine, the Far North, and Azerbaijan served as the main foci for the initial wave of

“nationality policy” scholarship after the so-called “archival turn” in Soviet history.\(^{20}\)

Moreover, the historiography of Soviet nationality policy has overwhelmingly focused on the interwar period, when this policy was explicitly articulated by Moscow at the height of Soviet “ethnophilia,” as Yuri Slezkine has coined the *korenizatsiya* era and ethos.\(^{21}\) This body of research set the terms of scholarly inquiry on the Soviet approach toward nationality, emphasizing how the Soviet empire was a maker (rather than breaker) of nations.\(^{22}\) It also tested the

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applicability of imperial frames for this rather peculiar Soviet case, an anti-imperial empire.\textsuperscript{23}

Yet the scale, products, and durability of Soviet nation-building in Georgia demonstrate how such an active, institutionalized approach to managing difference can take hold among the broader population across generations even in the unlikeliest of locales. Nation-building is not only a process of construction and categorization: it requires an acceptance over time by individuals to inhabit nationality and national identity. It is this more gradual process, and the events that inspire it, that I explore in depth among Georgia’s residents in the postwar period.

In this dissertation, I ask how those individuals or groups who never sought to be a part of the Bolshevik project – violent, worldwide revolution in the name of the proletariat – came to engage with and become a part of the postwar Soviet project – active, participatory citizens living in developed socialism.\textsuperscript{24}


\textsuperscript{24} The Georgian SSR was the only republic that had been invaded and forcibly incorporated (in February 1921) into the developing Bolshevik state from without, by the Red Army, rather than by Bolshevik cells operating within the country, as had been the case in neighboring Azerbaijan and Armenia. On the transition from "Bolshevik" to "Soviet" discourse, see Anna Krylova, "On 'Being Soviet' and 'Speaking Bolshevik': Disentangling Histories and Historiographies of the Socialist Self,"
experiment provided a peculiar environment in which to experience a national birth, and such conditions necessarily influenced the senses of belonging and understandings of the Soviet project experienced by the experiment’s children and grandchildren. If the “ethnophilia” of the interwar period was a crucible of nationalities, it was only in the postwar period – and especially after 1956 – that we can actually see what kinds of nations emerged from this crucible among second- and third-generation Soviet citizens.

Historians are only beginning to explore the spectrum of national experiences of Soviet citizens in the postwar era, and this dissertation is the first among these to examine such postwar developments on the territory of the Georgian SSR. The spectrum of national experiences in the post-Stalin USSR revealed by this evolving body of work likewise contributes to a wider scholarly interest in types and variations of Soviet communities after Stalin, including

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religious, urban and rural, professional, youth, dissident, veteran, and disabled, among others. This recent research tests the applicability of extending the frames and discourse for analyzing high Stalinism to the Khrushchev era and beyond. Such frames reach from the totalitarian/revisionist debates of the 1970s and 1980s and questions of modern and neo-traditional paradigms of the 1990s and 2000s to explain the Soviet experiment. New research likewise tackles the ability to extend questions of Stalinist subjectivities, the tactic of “speaking Bolshevik,” and issues of periodization to the post-Stalin USSR.

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28 Stephen Kotkin, Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), has served as the fulcrum for much of this discussion; see, for example, Igal Halfin and
assumption that the Soviet Union was Stalinism (by focusing on the 1930s) exposes the surprising variation in community and experience possible in the Soviet half-century after Stalin.

Nationality was a – if not the most – important marker of social categorization in the Soviet Union. From early debates about nationality policy and its ethnoterritorial implications to the introduction of the (singular) nationality category on Soviet passports, over time, nationality supplanted class as a marker of status and entitlement in the world’s first workers’ state. What Rogers Brubaker describes as the “dual – and unprecedentedly thoroughgoing – institutionalization of nationhood and nationality on the sub-state level” via a system of ethnoterritorial federalism and personal nationality entailed a tension between these simultaneously promoted definitions of nationhood.29 This produced important relationship dynamics between national majority and minority populations at the republic and sub-republic levels. I use the term “entitled” (rather than the more customary “titular”) to refer to the status of Georgians in the Georgian SSR (and the Abkhaz in the Abkhaz ASSR, etc.). The “entitlement” terminology embraces both the statistical and legal implications of living in “one’s own” territory, endowing such individuals with special rights and privileges to which they could appeal in a variety

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of ways. “Entitled” nationals not only enjoyed such privileges in theory; they likewise demanded these rights in practice.

Soviet definitions of nationality, which described the nation as, in Stalin’s words, “an historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture,” did not guarantee that official ascriptions of this category would be experienced by citizens in the same way. Moreover, nationality and its variants (nation, nationalism, nationalist) remain contested categories in their own right, whether from the perspective of nation-builders (Soviet or otherwise), scholars and theorists, political leaders, or citizens. Toward this end, I look at nation anthropologically, as suggested by Katherine Verdery:

...as a basic operator in a widespread system of social classification. Systems of social classification not only classify; in institutionalized form, they also establish groups for authority and legitimacy through the categories they set down and they make their categories seem both natural and socially real. Nation is therefore an aspect of the political and symbolic/ideological order and also of the world of social interaction and feeling.

Viewing the nation as both symbolic and social permits us to more effectively “lodge agency back in human beings.” While Verdery qualifies this human agency as “constrained by social structures,” following Rogers Brubaker, I emphasize how

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30 I.V. Stalin, Marksizm i natsional'nyi vopros (Moscow: Politizdat, 1950), 51. In the Georgian translation, “community/obshchnost” is translated as ertioba, which in addition to community also means unity and appears frequently in part one of Stalin’s work, on “nation.”
32 Ibid., 39.
such social structures and institutions can also enable actors vis-à-vis nation, nationalism, and nation-building projects.\textsuperscript{33}

Second, I look at nationalism and nation-ness not necessarily as something that simply develops – in the tradition of Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, or Miroslav Hroch – but rather as something that happens or, in other words, nation-ness as event.\textsuperscript{34} Following Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, viewing the nation as “a category of practice” and “contingent event” rather than a “category of analysis” permits us to understand how the idea of the nation “can crystallize, at certain moments, as a powerful, compelling reality”\textsuperscript{35} and “come to structure perception, to inform thought and experience, to organize discourse and political action.”\textsuperscript{36} The case of postwar Georgia shows just how nation-ness and nationalism as events can come to occur, even if suddenly, somewhat unexpectedly, and at particular (and multiple) points of conjecture.

Building upon a question posed by Bruce Grant in his study of the Nivkh, an ethnic group on Sakhalin Island, I argue that emphasizing the difference between Soviet and Georgian identities eschews “the very mechanisms that enabled the

\textsuperscript{33} Brubaker, \textit{Nationalism Reframed}, 24.


\textsuperscript{36} Brubaker, \textit{Nationalism Reframed}, 7.
Soviet administration to recruit a patriotic” Georgian “collective.” Thus, rather than speaking of identity formation in the Georgian SSR, I investigate identity negotiation – between Soviet and Georgian, between that of Georgians and those non-ethnic Georgians who also inhabited the republic, between national and local, and between Soviet understandings of nationality and preexisting currents of Georgian national sentiment. Nation-building policies produced among second- and third-generation Soviet citizens a particularly Georgian variant of Soviet experience in late socialism, or “Georgian Sovietness.” I use the phrase “Georgian Sovietness” (rather than “Soviet Georgianness”) to emphasize that the processes examined in this dissertation illustrate Georgian perspectives of “the Soviet” rather than Soviet variants of a broader spectrum of Georigianness. These are related, yet distinct, ideas.

Put simply, I show how nation-ness “happens” at the level of experience. By the late Stalin era (1945-1953), understandings of Georgian national identity were closely intertwined with pride in Stalin as a co-national (Part I: Chapters 1 and 2). Newly endowed Soviet institutions of nation-building from this period gave form to nationalizing aspirations of local- and republic-level actors in Georgia, from Party cadres to academics. Even in the tumult of World War Two and the early days of the Cold War, Stalin and Beria remained actively involved in Georgian nationalizing projects and their foreign and geopolitical implications (Part II: Chapter 5). I refer to these processes as productive and excisional institutions of nation-building. The

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37 Grant, In the Soviet House of Culture, 14.
aftermath of revelations at the Twentieth Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in 1956 marked a crucial turning point in Georgia, yet for different reasons than the resistance, confusion, or hope expressed elsewhere in the USSR (Part II: Chapter 3). The violent suppression in 1956 of demonstrations in Tbilisi against Khrushchev’s perceived denigration of Stalin as a national figure compelled a reevaluation of what it meant to be Soviet and Georgian in a post-Stalin society. This reevaluation took place among republic leaders and “ordinary citizens” alike, as a new national-social contract emerged that facilitated the hegemony of the entitled nationality by the late 1970s. From the nationalization of the republic’s capital to negotiation of cultural practices (Part II: Chapter 4) to political mobilization toward national interests (Part II: Chapter 6), citizens in Georgia increasingly inhabited nationality through – rather than in spite of – Soviet institutions and collectives.

This story interrogates what it meant to be Soviet and Georgian after World War Two, and therefore it takes seriously the notion that it was not only possible, but also advantageous for members of the entitled nationality to inhabit these identity categories simultaneously. Yet it is important to emphasize that to be “Soviet” did not mean to be “Russian” or “Russified,” as it did in some other republics: the post-Stalin national-social contract in Georgia and increasing hegemony of the entitled nationality in the postwar period meant that the entitled nationality – that is, Georgians – had the most to gain from the republic that Soviets built. And gain they did.
The contours and peculiarities of inhabiting Georgian Sovietness reveal the value of adopting perspectives that, in a sense, “provincialize Moscow,” in a similar vein as Dipesh Chakrabarty called for “provincializing Europe” among scholars of and in the postcolonial experience. As Chakrabarty notes,

Insofar as academic history is concerned, Europe remains the sovereign, theoretical subject of all histories, including the ones we call “Indian,” “Chinese,” “Kenyan,” and so on. There is a peculiar way in which all these other histories tend to become variations on a master narrative that could be called the “history of Europe.” In this sense, “Indian” history itself is in a position of subalternity; one can only articulate subaltern subject positions in the name of this history.38 Narratives that assume a Moscow/Leningrad or more broadly Russocentric dominance continue to prevail in scholarly and popular portrayals of the Soviet experience. While the “imperial turn” demonstrated that there was more to the Soviet populace than Russians, Ukrainians, and Jews, much of this scholarship still adhered to narratives of Moscow’s policy prescriptions, a top-down political narrative, and a centralized political chronology, whereby the history of any locale still told the story through a periodization and normativity dictated by central rather than local conditions. “Provincializing Moscow,” as a metaphor and project, is not simply a question of demonstrating local agency or highlighting local voices, though those do play a role. The project more broadly aims to illustrate the spectrum of what Soviet peripheries – territorial and otherwise – actually produced,  

along the lines of Mayhill Fowler’s recent recognition of Soviet “internal transnationalism.”

This is primarily a Soviet story, but it is not only a Soviet story. The story of national experience in postwar Georgia also provides a lens into three other key arenas. First, it shows the local and lived implications of geopolitics and ideology. Second, it enriches our understanding of the mechanisms of empire and capacity for a multiplicity of centers and peripheries. Early Soviet approaches toward nationality were more indicative of a “modern mobilizational state” or “nationalizing state,” comparable to contemporary Turkey, Iran, or interwar Poland. The Soviet ethnofederal structure equipped members of the entitled nationality with the institutional tools of a “nationalizing state” to construct their republics through the mechanisms of empire – a process that came to fruition most fully in the postwar years. And third, it reveals the importance of the experience of inhabiting nationality which, in spite of its European origins in the long nineteenth century, gained wider currency in the twentieth century as the international system organized into nation-states.

The narrative and conclusions I present here are the products of over fifteen months of archival research in Tbilisi and in central Soviet collections held in the

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40 Adeeb Khalid, “Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization: Early Soviet Central Asia in Comparative Perspective,” Slavic Review 65, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 231–51; Edgar, Tribal Nation; Beissinger, “Soviet Empire as Family Resemblance.” On interwar Poland as a “nationalizing state,” see Brubaker, Nationalism Reframed, Chapter 4. The arguments about the USSR as a modern, mobilizational state go against that of Northrop, Veiled Empire, which portrays Soviet policies toward Uzbekistan in the Stalin era as a type of traditional colonial rule.
United States between 2011 and 2015. The main archival collection for the project was the fond of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Georgian SSR, but other central, republic, and local collections included: the Academy of Sciences of the Georgian SSR, the Georgian Council of Ministers, the Tbilisi Party Committee, the Tbilisi City Archive, academics’ personal papers, the Georgian SSR Central Statistical Administration, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the Hoover Institution’s “Communist Party of the Soviet Union on Trial” series, and the Fourth Special Department of the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs. I also draw from parts of the remaining Georgian security services archive, which was largely destroyed in a fire during the civil war in Tbilisi in 1992-1993; and published archival documents from Abkhazia, as the main Soviet-era collections in Sukhumi were destroyed during the Georgian-Abkhaz war. In addition to these archival sources, I incorporate materials from Tbilisi- and Moscow-based periodicals and journals and a number of memoirs written by citizens in Soviet Georgia.

In addition to the Party and government reports, memoranda, communiqués, stenogramms, and decrees that help construct the political narrative of Soviet Georgian history, I use letters and petitions (Georgian ganc’xadebebi or Russian zhaloby and prosheniiia) from citizens to better convey the nuances of the experience.

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of nationality in the postwar Georgian SSR. As historical sources, such letters bear specific merits and caveats. Though a letter conveys opinions of an individual writer or group of writers, the authors were politically engaged enough to send a letter in the first place, making it somewhat difficult to tell just how representative such opinions were within the broader populace. At the same time, similarities between several letters – in diction, appeal, argumentation, or location – suggest the existence of more commonly held beliefs and signal the limits and possibilities of a Soviet Georgian culture and worldview. Signed letters that frequently included detailed contact information suggest that letter writers did not view this action as an act of dissent but, rather, one that was firmly within the bounds of their duties as engaged citizens. Anonymous letters, on the other hand, suggested a fear of reprisal due to the sensitivities of the opinions expressed.

The several hundred letters I analyzed addressed a diversity of issues, citizen positions, and agendas: from deportees advocating return to complaints about the housing list; from defenses of Stalin’s Georgian reputation to appeals to repatriate co-ethnics from abroad; and from protesting a constitutional change about language


to complaints about violations of minority rights. Writers were Georgians and non-Georgians, urban and rural, young and old, male and female, and their letters spanned the entire period covered in this dissertation. While I do not claim that these letters represent public opinion writ large or the viewpoint of an “ordinary” citizen, they still permit us to chart changes over time in the vocabulary, narrative, and argumentation mobilized by diverse citizens attempting – and succeeding -- to negotiate Soviet and national forms of belonging. In other words, this helps us to see not just how policymakers approached nationality, but how citizens themselves actually deployed and lived nationality in Soviet Georgia.
Part I: Institutions of Nation-Building
Chapter 1: Census, Historiography, Map

The Georgian nation is composed of diverse brotherly tribes. The main Georgian tribes are: Karts, Mingrelian-Čans, and Svan. These tribes were in turn divided into separate communities. The Kart (k’art’ebi) communities were Georgians (k’art’velebi), Kaxet’ians, P’šav-Xevsre’tsi, Mti’ulmoxevians, Imeret’ians, Gurians, Račans, Leč’xumians, Ajarians, Mesxet’ians, Javaxe’tsi, Šavšians, Klarjet’ians and others.44

sak’art’velos istoria (History of Georgia), Volume I (1943)

In his landmark treatise on nationalism, Benedict Anderson observed that official nationalism in the colonized world had a direct link to the “imaginings” of the colonial state, in spite of the anti-nationalist proclivities of colonial administrations. The “grammar” that facilitated this relationship worked through three crucial “institutions of power”: the census, the map, and the museum, which “profoundly shaped the way in which the colonial state imagined its domain – the

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nature of the human beings it ruled, the geography of its domain, and the legitimacy of its ancestry.”\textsuperscript{45} Somewhat contrarily, the ostensibly anti-imperial Soviet Union employed these same modern “colonial technologies of rule” as cultural institutions of nation-building in the early decades of the Soviet experiment, providing the foundation upon which a system of developed, entitled Soviet nationalities would be constructed and elaborated.\textsuperscript{46}

At first glance the Soviet use of technologies of rule toward the institutionalization of difference – perhaps the key feature of an empire – seems to resemble in form its paradigmatic application in mid- to late nineteenth-century European overseas empires.\textsuperscript{47} Yet the Soviet application was distinguished by its ideological aim: to cultivate and institutionalize national distinctions in order to accelerate the process of overcoming them. The tools of institutionalizing difference may have been borrowed from a French, British, or Dutch colonialist’s toolbox, but the impetus behind their application made early Soviet approaches toward nationality more indicative of a “modern mobilizational state” or “nationalizing


\textsuperscript{47} I employ Anderson’s framework with the understanding that empire as a system of rule had a much deeper history than the “new imperialism” of the mid- to late nineteenth century. This genealogy has been instructively conveyed in Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, \textit{Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010). See also Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, eds., \textit{Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), and Ann Laura Stoler, \textit{Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).
state,” comparable to contemporary Turkey, Iran, or interwar Poland. In short, the Soviet “affirmative action empire” equipped members of the entitled nationality with the institutional tools of a “nationalizing state” to construct their republics.

In this chapter, I trace the elaboration and implementation of the census, the map, and historiography as institutions of nation-building in the Stalin-era Georgian SSR. I tell a roughly chronological story of the amalgamation of disparate census categories into a single, entitled Georgian nationality; the creation by prominent historians of the first textbook of Georgian history; and Georgian irredentist claims to territories in northeastern Turkey. Far from being inert recipients of central policy, local and republic-level officials in Georgia and their academic collaborators used the developing institutions of nationality to both establish the local dimensions of Soviet power and advance agendas that did not always coincide with Moscow’s. The ideological underpinnings of the Soviet nationality regime meant that the process of categorizing peoples, delimiting territory, and creating histories likewise included an intentional, multi-layered engagement with local actors, members of the entitled nationality. Such “imperial intermediaries” were common features of empire in both its landed and overseas iterations, yet again the ultimate goal behind such activities and their audience distinguished in particular what Georgian “intermediaries” could undertake and (aspire to) achieve. “Intermediaries” were not merely Party members answering to the all-Union hierarchy that peaked in

48 Adeeb Khalid, “Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization”; Edgar, Tribal Nation; Beissinger, “Soviet Empire as ‘Family Resemblance.” On interwar Poland as a “nationalizing state,” see Brubaker, Nationalism Reframed, Chapter 4.
Moscow. They also served local agendas and communities that revealed the complexities of constructing an entitled nationality in Georgia. In practice, census, map, and museum as institutions of Soviet nation-building could be as much about local and republic-level imperial imaginations as those of a Moscow center.

To fit Anderson’s paradigm to conditions in Soviet Georgia, I make three important adaptations. First, I broaden the “museum” to include a more expansive examination of historiography as nation-building institution. Georgian historical writing was professionalized in this generation, and history, ethnography, and archaeology as disciplines were intimately linked in Stalin-era Georgia. In order to emphasize the interconnectedness of these processes, I highlight the careers of two Georgian scholars – Simon Janašia and Nikoloz Berženišvili -- whose work in the fields of history, ethnography, and archaeology inspired or legitimized claims made and policies undertaken in the name of these three facets of Soviet Georgian nation-building. Second, Anderson’s discussion of census, map, and museum depicts colonial deployment of these technologies as simultaneous endeavors, while in Georgia, a rough chronology emerged in which the census preceded historiography and map. Therefore, I discuss the nation-building institutions in that order. Third, in the Stalin era, productive institutions of nation-building (i.e. census, historiography, and map) were deployed alongside related excisional counterparts, discussed in Chapter 2, whereby those individuals and groups deemed incompatible with the homogenizing Soviet Georgian collective were excised via expulsion to Central Asia.

49 On Party members as Soviet “imperial intermediaries,” see Burbank and Cooper, Empires, 397.
or Siberia and replaced by ethnic Georgians forcibly resettled to newly available lands in southern and western Georgia.

The development of a vocabulary of nationality in the Russian Empire and the Soviet state had important implications for how early Soviet nationality policy functioned. From the *inorodtsy* and *plemena* chronicled by imperial ethnographers and census-takers to the status as *narodnosti* and *natsional’nosti* to which all peoples of the empire, large and small, should purportedly aspire, the architects of Soviet nationality policy took great care to endow and mobilize these imperial categories with socialist content. The categorized had stakes in where “they” fell on the hierarchy of Soviet nationalities due to a nationality’s associated entitlements. In the lead-up to the 1926 First All-Union Census, for example, Georgian and Ukrainian representatives argued against using the (ultimately prevailing) term *narodnost’* for the census questionnaire, preferring the term *natsional’nost’* due to their belief that Georgians and Ukrainians were already developed nations. By the time of the 1937 census, *natsional’nost’* had become the dominant term for labeling the major national groups of the Soviet Union in an effort to demonstrate the ethnohistorical progress made since the first all-Union census.

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Translating the newly forming Soviet bureaucratic lexicon of nationality into the Georgian language likewise confronted a preexisting Georgian vocabulary about nation, language, and territory. Of this vocabulary, eri – typically translated as nation – served as an important focal point. Tracing the meaning of eri over time likewise shows how the Georgian concept of a national community developed around this terminology. While prior to the nineteenth century, eri carried connotations of a community united by faith (in Georgian Orthodoxy), as a Georgian national intelligentsia came into being from the mid-nineteenth century, eri acquired a meaning closer to the European notion of “nation.” Thus eri saw a transition from a community of language and faith to an ethnic category, centered on language and custom. By the late nineteenth century, Georgian writer and politician Ilia Čavčavaže and his followers further grounded the eri not only in language, but in territory, rooted in the so-called mica-cqali (literally earth-water, but translated as homeland) and mamuli (fatherland). Ivane Javaxišvili, the founder of Georgian history as a discipline and of Georgia’s first university, wrote his History of the Georgian Nation (k’art’veli eris istoria) in 1908 and granted eri an explicit history and territory – work that his students, Simon Janašia and Nikolo Berženišvili, would continue in a Soviet guise in the Stalin era and beyond.

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54 Ibid.; Jones, Socialism in Georgian Colors.
In addition to the notion eri (and its variants – erovneba [nationality], erovnuli [national]), Georgian terms such as samšoblo (motherland), deda-ena (mother tongue), and mica-cqali appeared frequently in both Imperial- and Soviet-era Georgian discourse, from academic writing to poems to speeches to citizen petitions. Appeals to k’art’veloba (the Georgians, as a collective entity), sak’art’velo (Georgia), k’art’veli xalxi (the Georgian people), k’art’veli eri (the Georgian nation), or k’art’uli ena (Georgian language) likewise provide important benchmarks for understanding how Georgian speakers engaged with the developing Soviet structures and institutions of nation-building across the duration of the Soviet experiment.

For instance, the translation of Stalin’s foundational essay on nationality issues, Marxism and the National Question (1913), demonstrates how the Soviet-Russian institutional language of nationality would be rendered into Georgian. The Georgian translation of this work, mark’sizmi da nac’ionaluri sakit’xi, does not include such native Georgian terms as erovnuli, samšoblo, deda-ena, or mica-cqali, but rather nac’ionaluri, teritoria, and ena.\(^{56}\) In lieu of rendering the Russian cognate natsiia as a cognate into Georgian (nac’ia), eri is used instead. This example presents an incongruity in application between such indigenous Georgian terminology and the internationalist language of Marxism (or, for that matter, nationalism), exemplified by the more neutral teritoria and ena (rather than mica-cqali and deda-

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\(^{56}\) Ioseb besarionis-że Stalini, mark’sizmi da nac’ionaluri sakit’xi (Tbilisi: saxelgami, politliteraturis sek’tori, 1951).

ena). Just as ethnographers and statisticians grappled with the implications of distinguishing between natsional’nosti, narodnosti, plemen, natsional’nye gruppy, and others, Soviet Georgian nation-builders were faced with a challenge in how precisely to reconcile their national forms with socialist content.

Census

For all the census’s significance in assisting empires and states in the decidedly modern aspiration to fully “count” and “know” their inhabitants, Anderson registers the irony that, “The fiction of the census is that everyone is in it, and that everyone has one – and only one – extremely clear place. No fractions.”

With this caveat in mind, who, exactly, was considered a Georgian in the developing Soviet state? How did Georgian actors themselves deploy this question? And what did census architects aim to achieve through the census with regard to nationality? Debates over these issues emerged in the context of the All-Union Censuses of 1926, 1937, and 1939. The process of developing and implementing census projects revealed tensions among Moscow planners, Georgian bureaucrats, and academics involved in census development, as well as between census takers/categories and the surveyed populations.

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More importantly, the outcome of these debates – the categorical amalgamation of Kartvelian populations (speakers of all languages related to Georgian) into a single, entitled Georgian nationality – set the stage for the ethnic consolidation policies that would define the postwar era in Georgia. In the shorter term, the institutionalization of unitary and entitled Georgian nationality would support national historical research agendas and territorial expansion goals, explored later in the chapter.

The first All-Union Census of the Population in 1926 had an important precursor in the First General Census of the Population of the Russian Empire in 1897. In the 1897 census, imperial subjects were categorized according to native language, estate (soslovie), and religion: imperial statisticians used comparisons of these three census categories to paint a picture of the empire’s ethnic composition without explicitly asking respondents to state their nationality or ethnicity. For example, the entire Caucasus region was administered as a single viceroyalty, with its administrative center in Tiflis (Tbilisi’s name until 1936). In the Caucasus viceroyalty, the relevant linguistic categories included:

- **Kartvelian dialects** (*narechia*): Georgian, Imeretian, Mingrelian, Svan
- Other Indo-European dialects: Armenian, Persian, Tat, Talysh, Greek, Ossetian
- Dialects of the Caucasian mountaineers:
  - Cherkess dialects – Kabardin, Cherkess, Abkhaz
  - Chechen dialects – Chechen, Ingush, Kist
- Turk-Tatar dialects

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60 As categorized in “Pervaia vseobshchaia perepis’ naselenii Rossiiiskoi Imperii 1897 g.: Raspredelenie naselenii po rodnomu iazyku, guberniiam i oblastiam: Kavkaz,” Available via Institut
The “dialects” listed in the Kartvelian group appear equal and distinct from one another, yet related linguistically due to the unique *mexedruli* alphabet and Kartvelian structure which bears no relationship to other linguistic groups (i.e. Indo-European, Turkic, etc.). In this schema, Mingrelian or Svan are distinct dialects as is Georgian, which would have implications for later Soviet censuses. The religion categories of the 1897 census included Orthodox (*pravoslavnaia tserkov*), Armenian-Gregorian, Armenian Catholic, Jewish, and Muslim. The “Orthodox” category comprised both Russian and Georgian Orthodox believers because, unlike the Armenian church, which until 1898 maintained its autocephaly, Georgian Orthodox institutions were incorporated into the Russian Orthodox Patriarchate in 1811, a decade after the beginning of the annexation of Georgian lands.61

In accordance with the “ethnophilia” of early Soviet nationality policy, the process of developing a list of nationalities for the First all-Union Census of the Population in 1926 proved a daunting task that elicited help not only from Bolshevik ideologists, but also ethnographers and other experts from the imperial academy, as Francine Hirsch has carefully described.62 With regard to Georgia, the developing list posed several points of dispute regarding the relationship among groups in Georgia whose languages fell under the Kartvelian language family. These included Mingrelians, Svars, Ajarians, and Laz, all who traditionally resided in the western parts of the Georgian territory (and northeastern Turkey, in the case of the

61 On Russian acquisition of Georgian kingdoms and institutional incorporation into its empire, see Gvosdev, *Imperial Policies and Perspectives towards Georgia*.
62 On Soviet “chronic ethnophilia,” see Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment.”
Laz), and the Georgian entitled nationality, whose language more closely resembled dialects in the central and eastern parts of the territory.

Reflecting the "ethnophilia" ethos, an early draft list of nationalities "appearing in the Georgian SSR" for the 1926 census included Abkhaz, Ajarians, Armenians, Greeks, Georgian Ajarians, Georgian Muslims, Georgian Svans, Georgians, Georgian Jews, Kartvelians, Kartlians, Kists, Kurds, Laz, Lezgins, Mingrelians, Ossetians, Persians, Svans, Tatars, Osman Turks, Turks, Khashurians, Khemshins, and Chans, among others.63 This partial list contains a number of potentially redundant, conflicting, or simply unclear categories – what was the difference between an Ajarian, a Georgian Ajarian, and a Georgian Muslim, for instance? Or a Georgian and a Kartvelian? Were Laz and Chan not synonyms? Why did Khashurians and Kartlians appear on this list, yet Imeretians not?

The actual list of nationalities used at the time of the 1926 census in the Georgian SSR included Georgians, Ajarians, Mingrelians, Svan, Laz, Abkhaz, Georgian Jews, Ossetians, Russians, Jews, Turks, Persians, Greeks, others, and foreign subjects, taken from an overall list of 191 narodnosti throughout the USSR.64 Most notably, Georgians, Ajarians, Mingrelians, Svans, and Laz all appeared as separate nationalities when the census was taken. Yet debates persisted about how these groups were to be considered and tabulated in the final results of the census. Indeed, Francine Hirsch cites the classification of the peoples of Transcaucasia as

63 “Spisok narodnostei (v 1926 g. Vsesoiuznoi perepisi), kotoryi vyiavljen v Gruz. SSR,” uic’a, f. 334, op. 12, d. 10. Laz and Chan are synonyms, with Laz as the Russian term and Chan as the Georgian.
64 “Naselenie Gruzii po narodnosti: Vsesoiuznaia perepis’ naseleniia 1926 goda (predvaritel’nye itogi), 31 August 1927, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 3, d 438, l. 22.
“the most controversial topic in discussions about the official list of nationalities” because the “national-political stakes gave these discussions a high emotional pitch.”\(^\text{65}\) Whereas the All-Union Central Statistical Administration (CSA) endeavored to adhere to the categories as executed by census-takers – that is, by treating Georgians, Mingrelians, et al. as distinct nationalities – representatives from the Georgian SSR branch of the CSA argued for a different approach.

The 1926 all-Union census was carried out in Georgia between 23 and 31 December 1926. Georgian CSA chief A. Ruxaże boasted that his team of census-takers, comprised mostly of pupils and students, had even managed to reach communities in very remote mountain regions such as Svanet’i, Xevsuret’i, and T’ušet’i. In Svanet’i, residents themselves reportedly supported the census process by shoveling snow and making a path to move census-takers from one house to the next.\(^\text{66}\) While Ruxaże reported that the actual administration of the census had surpassed logistical expectations, once the tabulation and analysis of results began, several concerns emerged.

In a letter to the Georgian Central Committee (CC) and Georgian CSA in September 1927, A. Ruxaże, Odišaria, and Bregvaże sent their preliminary calculations for the national composition of Georgia’s population according to the 1926 all-Union census materials yet advised against publicizing these figures due to their preliminary nature. They likewise made three important suggestions that distinguished “their” project from that carried out by the “center.” First, in the

section on population composition by literacy, they noted that for “Georgian tribes: Mingrelians, Laz, and Svans,” the written language is only the Georgian language, therefore Mingrelians, Laz, and Svans should be assessed for literacy in Georgian and should be counted as part of the category “literate in the language of one’s nationality.” Second, while the “center” described the options for population composition by native language as Georgian, Mingrelian, Laz, and Svan, Ruxaże and his colleagues suggested these be rephrased as “Georgian languages, which consist of: proper Georgian, Mingrelian, Laz, Svan.” Finally, they proposed a similar change regarding the population composition by narodnost’: while the “center” designated Georgians, Ajarians, Mingrelians, Laz, and Svans as distinct narodnosti, Ruxaże recommended instead that it read “Georgians, which includes: Ajarians, Mingrelians, Laz, Svans.”  

Ruxaże elaborated his reasons for these changes in a report to the Georgian CC later that month. While it was too late to change the census categories themselves, as the census-taking process had already concluded, Ruxaże urged that Mingrelians, Ajarians, Laz, and Svans be counted in the published results of the census as “Georgian tribes.” As planned by the Academy of Sciences Commission, the results would be distinguished by nationality, yet “the whole sum of all Georgian

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67 A. Ruxaże, Odišaria, and Bregvaže to Georgian CC, 1 September 1927, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 3, d. 438, ll. 20-28.
tribes will not be mentioned.” This problem had practical and ideological implications.  

First, Ruxaže argued, “the idea of an Ajarian, Mingrelian, Svan, and others is absolutely not contradictory to the notion of a Georgian (k’art’veli). Consider that the notion of a “Georgian” includes all the others just as a whole is [composed of, CK] separate parts.” Self-description as a Svan or Mingrelian was due merely to a sense of “provincial posterity” and could still contribute to the notion of a Georgian. In fact, these “tribes” made up “an indivisible part of the national consciousness of one Georgian nation.” The Academy of Sciences’ classification, on the other hand, “does not recognize this one Georgian nationality (erovneba). According to this classification, “Georgian/k’art’veli” was a separate national group (erovnuli jgup’i), a separate people (xalxi), a narodnost’, and Svan, Mingrelian, and Ajarian – these are yet other separate, independent narodnost-ebi...A national consciousness before all else creates a nationality (erovneba).”

Second, argued Ruxaže, the census results had significance beyond the Georgian SSR and the Soviet Union. As only the second census of its kind in the region (after 1897), the results of the census should convey to the “wider cultural world” a “real picture” of the Caucasus. Separating Georgians into Mingrelians, Svans, etc. would therefore portray an incomplete picture because the number of Georgians would appear 20 to 25 percent lower than in reality. Third, separating the

69 “sakavširo aģceris k’art’vels tom’ta šesaxebi masalebis gamok’veynebis gamo,” A. Ruxaže to Georgian CC, 12 November 1927, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 3, d. 438, l. 29.
70 Ibid., ll. 29-30. “ebi” is the plural ending for Georgian nouns, so in this usage, Ruxaże uses a Georgian plural of the Russian term “narodnost’.”
Georgian groups per the Academy of Sciences schema presented a political risk as it could permit enemies of the Soviet government (i.e. Georgian émigrés from the Menshevik government) to say that the Soviet Union was “anti-Georgian and restoring the old epoch of Russification through division of Georgians.” The fixity and magnanimity of the census results as official statistics – and the foundational statistics, at that -- provided a fourth source of concern because, in Ruxaże’s view, only a portion of Georgians were represented in the results.71

Finally, Ruxaże explained a further source of incongruity related to nationality and language. The census categories on this point were structured in such a way as to reflect whether a member of a nationality spoke “his own” language and, if not, which other language was his primary language. Therefore, as Ruxaże detailed, a Mingrelian who declared himself to be Mingrelian and his mother tongue as Georgian would be categorized as a “resident who does not speak his national language.” On the other hand, some Svans and Mingrelians reportedly claimed their nationality as Georgian but spoken language as Mingrelian, which placed them in the “other” category rather than Georgian, Mingrelian, or Svan. In the latter example of the Mingrelian-speaking Georgian, this resident would likewise count as neither a Georgian nor Mingrelian but as a “resident who does not speak his national language.” Because his spoken language did not match his nationality, he would be counted in the census totals as “other.” Moreover, only five language options were offered in this instance – Georgian, Russian, Turkish, Armenian, and other – and did

71 Ibid., ll. 30-31.
not include Mingrelian, Svan, or Laz languages. This rather circuitous thought exercise shows that, according to Ruxaże, this massive case of incongruence between nationality and language meant that tens of thousands of Georgians were in fact concealed within the “other” category.\textsuperscript{72}

In short, for actors engaged in the census process in both Moscow and Tbilisi, it was vital to maintain congruence between nationality and language. However, as Ruxaże demonstrated, it remained difficult to reconcile the center’s ethnophilia with the design of the census and with individual understandings of one’s own nationality and language use. Ruxaże’s proposed solution was to simplify the process in favor of a single Georgian nationality with designated Ajarian, Mingrelian, Laz, and Svan subgroups. Ruxaże stated quite explicitly that he and his colleagues’ project was to “unify the total number of Georgians” as depicted in census publications.

On the other hand, Moscow-based Academy of Sciences ethnographers questioned the accuracy of the Mingrelian count because over half of their estimate for the Mingrelian population registered as Georgian in the census. This could be due to individual respondents’ self-definition, the persuasiveness of local census-takers, or some combination thereof, but central ethnographers and statisticians suspected a heavy tilt toward the latter explanation.\textsuperscript{73} It seems that a Moscow-based

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., ll. 31-33.
\textsuperscript{73} Hirsch, \textit{Empire of Nations}, 132-133.
cohort sought to retain the separate nationality category for each smaller Kartvelian group in order to leave room to “champion their national rights” later.\textsuperscript{74}

In the end, central and local census organs struck a compromise: separate census data was tabulated for Mingrelians, Ajarians, Laz, and Svans, but they would be counted as subgroups of the Georgian nationality, per Ruxaże’s schema. As collected (with discrete Kartvelian categories), the total population by \textit{narodnost’} in the Georgian SSR for the 1926 census was:

\begin{tabular}{ll}
Georgians: 1,461,349 & Armenians: 306,376 \\
Ajarians: 71,538 & Russians: 95,922 \\
Mingrelians: 243,244 & Jews: 9,675 \\
Svans: 12,155 & Turks: 129,456 \\
Laz: 660 & Persians: 2,220 \\
Abkhaz: 56,983 & Greeks: 54,044 \\
Georgian Jews: 18,435 & Other nationalities: 68,115 \\
Ossetians: 113,099 & Undeclared: 1,438 \\
& Foreign subjects: 21,695 \\
\end{tabular}

**TOTAL: 2,667,440**\textsuperscript{75}

The numbers listed above reflect Ajarians, Mingrelians, Svans, and Laz as their own \textit{narodnosti} (that is, \textit{not} as sub-groups of Georgians), per Moscow’s original plan. According to the final distribution, in which Ajarians, Mingrelians, Svans, and Laz were listed as Georgian subgroups, Georgians of all stripes comprised just over two-thirds of the republic’s population.\textsuperscript{76}

Yet the compromise solution still left room for further questions of categorization in the subsequent decade between censuses. In the interim,

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{75} “Naselenie Gruzii po narodnosti: Vsesoiuznaia perepis’ naseleniiia 1926 goda (predvaritel’nye itogi),” 21 August 1927, ssrsa (II), f. 14, op. 3, d. 438, l. 22.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., l. 21.
peculiarities of the Ajarian, Laz, and Mingrelian issues emerged in discrete ways as these groups responded to early Soviet policies of korenizatsiia. Moreover, the related emergence of the categories of entitled nationalities, major nationalities, and national minorities raised the stakes for advocates of a single Georgian nationality.

Perhaps the most perplexing issue was that of the Ajarians. The Ajaristan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) was one of three autonomous territories in the Georgian SSR (in addition to the Abkhaz ASSR and the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast’). As subjects of the Ottoman Empire until 1878, Ajarians were Sunni Muslims who spoke Georgian. Thus rather than autonomy based on national distinctions – as was the case with the Abkhaz or Ossetian example – Ajarian autonomy was based on religious difference (between Muslim Ajarians and Orthodox Georgians). This peculiarity was a result of diplomatic compromise rather than ethnographic research, however, as Atatürk granted this territory to Lenin in March and October 1921 as part of the Treaties of Moscow and Kars on the condition that Ajaria’s inhabitants would enjoy autonomy based on this religious distinction. Even with the intensification of Soviet anti-religious campaigns from the late 1920s, Ajarian autonomy remained intact. As a result, Ajaria became an institutional outlier in a Soviet state with an ideologically-grounded system of ethnoterritorial autonomy and entitlements. In the absence of religious distinction, what made Ajarians Ajarian? Or, whom did Soviet census-takers and policymakers want to categorize as Ajarian? In preparations for the 1939 census, Nikolai Iakovlev,

77 The official name of the republic changed in the 1930s to the Ajarian ASSR I employ the more colloquial term “Ajaria” in this chapter.
head of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography’s (IAE) Caucasus detachment, acknowledged that Ajarians were Georgians “in the ethnographic sense” yet maintained that Ajarians should retain a separate census category as the entitled core of the Ajarian ASSR.\(^78\) Meanwhile, Lavrenti Beria and Valerian Bak’raże, the respective Georgian First Secretary and Council of Ministers Chairman, argued that distinguishing between Ajarians and Georgians directly contradicted Stalin’s definition of a nation because Ajarians and Georgians were united “by common language, territory, economic life, and culture.”\(^79\)

The Ajarian question was geographically linked to concerns about the Laz. Of the Kartvelian nationalities/Georgian subgroups, the Laz were by far the smallest group according to the 1926 census, with only 660 registered in the results. Unlike the Mingrelians, Svan, and Ajarians, the majority of the Laz population resided outside the borders of the Georgian SSR, in northeastern Turkey. Known as Lazistan, this region had an estimated 300,000 Laz inhabitants in the early 1930s and presented a potentially receptive audience in Turkey for Soviet propaganda and outreach based on cross-border ethnic ties. However, it seems that promises of national, indigenizing institutions in the 1920s and early 1930s created the opposite effect for the Laz residing in Georgia. The former editor of a Soviet Laz newspaper claimed that in the past five years (1929-1934), a significant number of Laz residents had fled Abkhazia and Ajaria (where most Laz in Georgia resided) for Turkey, diminishing the Laz population in these autonomous republics by more

\(^{78}\) Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 287.

\(^{79}\) Ibid., 289.
than half. Interestingly, N.A. Tsitashi, the author of this report, cited a current (ca. 1935) Laz population in Georgia of 5,000, which had allegedly been reduced by half since 1929. These numbers are considerably larger than the 660 Laz reported in the 1926 census, which lends some support to the suspicions of Moscow-based ethnographers that Georgian census-takers perhaps “Georgified” responses of some of the Kartvelian populations. Alternatively, Kartvelian respondents may have “Georgified” themselves when faced with census-takers. In any case, not only had local authorities failed to support specifically Laz linguistic, cultural, and economic institutions in practice, they also had yet to devise a plan to work among the Laz population of Turkey for propaganda purposes. In the end, Tsitashi’s prediction, that development of Soviet Laz institutions would be rendered obsolete due to heavy outmigration, proved prescient due to concurrent migration to Turkey and consolidation of Laz into a larger Georgian nationality category. Interest in the larger Laz population in Turkey, on the other hand, would be revisited a decade later, as I discuss later in the chapter.

Of the Kartvelian narodnosti tabulated for the 1926 census, the Mingrelians had the largest population by far (243,244). This included not only residents of Mingrelia (samegrelo in Georgian), in northwest Georgia, but also much of the “Georgian” population of neighboring Abkhazia. Like Laz and Svan, the Mingrelian language (megruli) was primarily an oral form of communication and, though part of the Kartvelian language family, was not mutually comprehensible with Georgian.

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Like the Laz, the ethnophilia ethos of the mid-1920s inspired some Mingrelians to call for institutional support for Mingrelian language and cultural rights, which were granted in the form of newspapers and Mingrelian-language education. Moreover, from 1925, a movement for Mingrelian autonomy emerged, based on comparisons to the numerically smaller Abkhaz and Ossetians, who had “their own” autonomous republic and oblast’, respectively. The so-called “Mingrelian question” – which entailed determining the extent of Party-state support of Mingrelian institutions – acquired a greater urgency than similar issues vis-à-vis Laz populations due to the larger size of the Mingrelian population and the involvement of key Mingrelian actors, such as Lavrenti Beria, who became the face of the campaign against Mingrelian autonomy and used his rising career to advocate for amalgamation of Mingrelian and other subgroups into the Georgian nationality. Though efforts to promote Mingrelian institutions continued into the 1930s, with the promotion of Beria to First Secretary in 1931, the newspaper and educational apparatus initiated in the 1920s was gradually dismantled in favor of the Georgian language, as support for a single Georgian nationality overtook early korenizatsiia goals to nationalize smaller collectives.81

The discrete Kartvelian groups subordinated to the Georgian “major nationality” created an ambiguous situation: on the one hand, as “Georgians,” they enjoyed privileges as members of the entitled Georgian nationality, such as preferential status for jobs, education, Party membership, and institutional support

for Georgian language and culture within the territory of the Georgian SSR. On the other hand, Mingrelians, Svans, and Laz in many instances sought to mobilize the ethnophilic institutions of *korenizatsiia* to advance their own languages and reinforce the bounds of their collectives in the face of a hegemonic Georgian major nationality. The latter behavior was more reminiscent of the so-called national minorities, which comprised approximately a third of Georgia's population.

As part of the “affirmative action” policies designed to privilege entitled nationalities in “their” territory, statisticians and others engaged in the process of national categorization began to amalgamate all non-Georgians (as non-entitled nationalities) as “national minorities” (Russian abbreviation *natsmeny*). Thus, rather than the highly ethnically diverse populace depicted in the raw data from the 1926 census, a Georgian CC sub-commission on national minorities amalgamated the Kartvelian groups as Georgians and the rest of the populace simply as *natsmeny*. In Georgia, the largest of the national minorities were Armenians (11.6% of total GSSR population), “Turks” (5%), Ossetians (4.3%), “Russians, with Ukrainians and Beloussians” (4%), Abkhaz (2.1%), and Greeks (2%).

Even this seemingly straightforward list reveals much about how Georgian planners understood national distinctions and ethnoterritorial consolidation. First, Abkhaz and Ossetians were regarded as *natsmeny* even though the vast majority resided in the Abkhaz ASSR and South Ossetian AO, respectively, where they were the entitled nationalities. The

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82 “Zakluchenie po glave obshchego obzora rasselenia natsmenov po territorii SSRGruzii,” sšsa (II), f. 14, op. 2, d. 117, l. 177-183. The “Turk” category refers to those groups who would be classified as “Azerbaijani” in later Soviet censuses. In the 1926 census, this iteration of “Turk” appears as a “nationality of the Transcaucasus,” unlike the diaspora nationality “Osman Turk” of Turkey.
Russian group is phrased in the same way as “Georgians, with Mingrelians and Svans,” which suggests a similar understanding of ethnic amalgamation and hierarchy among the dominant Georgian and Russian nationalities.\(^83\) The particular national distinctions among these groups mattered less than their collective status as non-Georgians.

The question of national minorities likewise had important geographic ramifications, as certain regions in the south, on the Black Sea coast, and in Tbilisi had particularly high concentrations of non-Georgians. For example, in Axalk’alak’i and Borčalo districts, *natsmeny* comprised 94.3/90.2 percent and 98/89.6 percent of the urban/rural populations, respectively. Due to their proximity to the borders of the Armenian and Azerbaijani SSRS, these areas had (and have) large Armenian and Azerbaijani populations.\(^84\) In Tbilisi, Georgia’s capital and largest city, *natsmeny* made up over 59 percent of the population: 34.4 percent of Tbilisi’s residents were Armenian by nationality, according to the 1926 census, and 16.4 percent were Russian.\(^85\) The prevalence of non-Georgians in the republic was therefore not merely an issue of border or coastal regions, but one that was readily visible in the national capital.

The Second All-Union Census of the Population, and the first census “under socialism,” the achievement of which Stalin announced in a speech in 1936, was to

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\(^83\) The “national majority” was described in this manner in “Gorodskoe i sel’skoe naselenie SSR Gruzii po priznaku: natsmen i nats.bol’sh.,” ššssa (II), f. 14, op. 3, d. 268, ll. 186-187. This description reflects the tiny number of Laz and recognition already that Ajarians and Georgians were one and the same for the purposes of majority/minority classification.

\(^84\) “Prilozenie k glave obshchego obzora rasselenia natsmen’shinstva na territorii SSR Gruzii,” ššssa (II), f. 14, op. 2, d. 117, l. 179.

\(^85\) Ibid., l. 183.
take place in 1937. Two five-year plans after its predecessor, the 1937 census was supposed to demographically and statistically depict the progress made in the development of “socialism in one country” in all spheres, from population growth and literacy to national development. As early as 1934, census officials expected that the list of 191 narodnosti of the 1926 census would need to be condensed in order to account for the “ethnohistorical evolution of the population” into a smaller number of developed nationalities.\(^{86}\) As the USSR IAE and the Institute of Nationalities began to refine their lists, however, Stalin mentioned in a speech about the 1936 constitution that “there are about sixty nations, national groups, and narodnosti in the Soviet Union.”\(^{87}\) While the IAE and Institute of Nationalities had already cut their lists to around 100 natsionalnosti (the choice of category reflecting progress purportedly made in ethnohistorical development), cutting a further 40 groups would prove challenging. Many of the “cuts” they already made dealt with the so-called “diaspora nationalities,” or nationalities with “homelands” outside the USSR (such as Germans, Poles, or Koreans). These would become a category unto themselves in the lead up to World War Two, as such populations were considered a security threat, particularly in border regions. With regard to Kartvelian populations, the 1937 list amalgamated Mingrelians, Svans, and Laz into the “Georgian” category yet retained a separate position for Ajarians, most likely due to Ajarian autonomous status (in the Ajarian ASSR).\(^{88}\)

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\(^{87}\) Quoted in ibid., 283. See also Slezkin, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment.”

to its task, however, as it depicted a decrease in the overall Soviet population and likewise reflected sharp drops among Ukrainians and Kazakhs, victims of collectivization-induced famine. For these and other reasons, the data from the 1937 was deemed “defective,” was not released to the public, and the census was re-administered in 1939.89

The 1939 “Second” All-Union Census of the Population adopted a simplified and consolidated vocabulary of nationality and, in doing so, likewise presented a smaller number of consolidated, indigenous Soviet nationalities (62 “nations, national groups, and narodnosti”) and their diaspora nationality counterparts (30). Census-takers still needed to be prepared to encounter self-designations that did not correspond with the current Soviet nationality nomenclature, however. While Georgians, Abkhaz, and Ossetians appeared on the official list of “nations, national groups, and narodnosti,” census-takers in the field could encounter the following terms as listed in the “systematic dictionary” provided by the CSA:

GEORGIANS: Kartveli (Vratsi, Giurdzhi, Pshavy, Khevsury, Tushiny, Ingiloi)90
Mingrelians (Megreli, Margali, Mintrel’tsy, Mingrely)
Svans (Shvanar, Mushvan, Ebze)
Laz (Lazi, Atintsy, Chani)
Batsbii (Batsbiy, Batsav, Batsoi, Batsuo, Tushi, Tsova/Tushiny)
Ajarians (Adzhareli)

ABKHAZ: (Apkhazi, Apsatsva, Apsua, Azega, Bzyby, Bzybtsi, Abzhuitsy)

89 Ibid., 22.
90 For example, Kartveli, Vratsi, and Giurdzhi mean Georgian in Georgian, Armenian, and Turkish/Azerbaijani, respectively, whereas Pshavy, Khevsuri, Tushiny, and Ingiloi refer to specific territories in which Georgian-speakes reside (the first three are in the mountainous northeastern region of Georgia, whereas the Ingilo are in the Zaqatala, Balakan, and Qax districts of the Azerbaijan SSR I examine the Ingilo case in detail in Chapter 5). This list was in Russian, so I retain the Russian system of transliteration here instead of Georgian.
The terms in parentheses comprise words for Georgian, Abkhaz, and designated subgroups in local languages and dialects. Other major nationalities and national minorities also contained the Georgian terminology for those groups, including Armenians (somexi) and Greeks (berženi).91

The results of the 1939 all-Union census reflected the processes of *categorical* ethnonational consolidation in favor of major nationalities – and above all, in favor of the Georgian nationality – that took place in the preceding decade.

*Table 1: Georgian SSR Population by Nationality according to the 1939 All-Union Census*92

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Georgian SSR (%)</th>
<th>City of Tbilisi (%)</th>
<th>Abkhaz ASSR (%)</th>
<th>Ajarian ASSR (%)</th>
<th>South Ossetian AO (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Georgian</td>
<td>2,173,922 (61.4)</td>
<td>228,394 (44)</td>
<td>91,967 (29.5)</td>
<td>127,542 (63.7)</td>
<td>27,525 (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenian</td>
<td>415,013 (11.7)</td>
<td>137,331 (26.4)</td>
<td>49,705 (15.9)</td>
<td>14,085 (7)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>308,684 (8.7)</td>
<td>93,337 (18)</td>
<td>60,201 (19.3)</td>
<td>30,535 (15.3)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azerbaijani</td>
<td>188,058 (5.2)</td>
<td>5,874 (1.1)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ossetian</td>
<td>147,677 (4.2)</td>
<td>9,328 (1.8)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>72,266 (68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>84,636 (2.4)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>34,621 (11.1)</td>
<td>7,959 (4)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abkhaz</td>
<td>57,805 (1.6)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>56,197 (18)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
<td>45,595 (1.3)</td>
<td>7,415 (1.4)</td>
<td>8,593 (2.8)</td>
<td>6,866 (3.4)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>42,300 (1.2)</td>
<td>13,915 (2.7)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>20,527 (0.6)</td>
<td>5,528 (1.1)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>55,806 (1.7)</td>
<td>13,587 (2.6)</td>
<td>10,601 (3.4)</td>
<td>6,706 (3.4)</td>
<td>6,327 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>3,540,023</td>
<td>519,220</td>
<td>311,885</td>
<td>200,106</td>
<td>106,118</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the simplification and reduction of Georgian and non-Georgian categorical distinctions via the 1939 census, the geographic distribution of nationalities likewise became clearer. Of the fifty-three districts in Georgia proper, forty-one had

91 “PERECHEN’ natsional’nosti, vydeliaemykh pri razrabotke vsesoiznoi perepisi naselenii 1939 goda” and “Sistematiceskii slovar’,” uic’a, f. 334, op. 12, d. 127, ll. 1-9.
“Georgian” majority populations (or, in many cases, almost exclusively Georgian populations). The remaining twelve districts, however, had either exclusively non-Georgian inhabitants or a non-Georgian population that was between twice and ten times higher than the Georgian one. Of particular note are Adigeni, Aspinža, Axalk’alak’i, Axalc’ixe, and Bogdanov districts, from which 90,000 “Turks, Kurds, and Khemshins” (Armenian Muslims) would be expelled in 1944, as detailed in the next chapter. Borčalo and Calka districts likewise had considerable Azerbaijani, Armenian, and Greek populations with almost no Georgians reported, yet later expulsion operations seem to have avoided these areas. Tbilisi remained divided among Georgians, Armenians, Russians, and Azerbaijanis (with adult populations of 139,444; 118,160; 48,805; and 17,779 respectively). In Abkhazia, most Abkhaz residents lived in the Gudauta and Ochamchire districts, and Georgians, Armenians, and Greeks in Sukhumi and its environs. The Gali district, which bordered Mingrelia, was the most Georgian by nationality of Abkhazia’s districts.

In short, the consolidation of Georgian categories for the 1939 all-Union census allowed nation-building statisticians and officials alike to find what they were looking for – a more “Georgian” Georgia -- by limiting the official discourse of available options for expressing one’s nationality. However, the extent to which ethnonational consolidation was experienced in practice remained a considerable work in progress that would continue for subsequent decades.

93 uic’a f. 334, op. 12, d. 137, l. 7.
94 Ibid.
The Soviet Union did not conduct another all-Union census until 1959 – two decades and a world war away from the most recent one in 1939. As a result, it remains difficult to account for the enormous changes among Soviet inhabitants in the interim years. War casualties, voluntary resettlement, and forced deportation certainly altered the ethnonational composition of Soviet republics, yet from the perspective of the census the specifics of such trends remain challenging, if impossible, to track. For the purposes of the census nationality categories in the Georgian SSR, however, the 1959 categories (as well as those in the 1970 and 1979 censuses) remained the same as those in 1939. The consolidation of “Georgian tribes” into a single Georgian nationality, which over time increasingly reaped the benefits of its entitled status, set the stage for the conceptual, historical conquest of Georgian territories and peoples in the 1940s. Not only would there be “no fractions” at the individual/personal level of nationality (that is, one could claim only one nationality), there would be no ethnolinguistic distinctions – or “fractions” – among Kartvelians in contemporary, Soviet Georgia.95 Such distinctions were historical rather than a living feature of the modern Georgian nationality built by Soviet institutions.

**Historiography**

The categorization and enumeration of Georgia’s populace went hand-in-hand with a search for a usable past for the entitled Georgian nationality. Because, in

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95 The “fraction” terminology is again adapted from Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 166.
Stalin’s formulation, the nation must be “historically constituted,” determining the narrative and parameters of such a history presented a task of existential significance for academic nation-builders and their policymaking counterparts. Though the founder of the discipline of Georgian history, Ivane Javaxišvili, wrote his most influential works during the tsarist and independent periods, a form of Georgian academic nationalism came into being in practice via the dual Soviet institutional infrastructure of national Academies of Sciences and the enabling mechanisms of korenizatsiia and ethnic consolidation. I tell the story of the development and propagation Georgian academic nationalism through a three-way biography of its most prominent protagonists: Simon Janašia, Nikoloz Berženišvili, and their eventual institutional home, the Ivane Javaxišvili Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography of the Georgian SSR Academy of Sciences.

Simon Nikolozis že Janašia was born in 1900 in Ozurget’i district, in western Georgia. He was the son of prominent Georgian ethnographer and teacher N.S. Janašia. He attended secondary school in Sukhumi (Abkhazia) and, in 1918, began his studies in the departments of history and linguistics at the newly established Tbilisi State University. Upon his graduation in 1922, he entered the department of history at TSU as a graduate student under the supervision of Ivane Javaxišvili, focusing on ancient Georgian history. During the course of his graduate studies, he lectured at TSU and at the Tbilisi Pedagogical Institute on the history of Georgia, the Abkhaz language (in which he was fluent), the history of the Caucasian mountain tribes, and source studies in Georgian history, and led seminars on the history of
Georgia. In 1932, Janašia became a member of the Georgian CEC’s Committee for the Protection of Ancient Monuments and, in 1934, was invited as a scholar to the Institute of Caucasus Studies (Kavkazovedenie) at the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. In 1936, he was appointed director of the new Nikolai Marr Institute of Language, History, and Material Culture of the Georgian branch of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. After defending his doctoral dissertation on “The Feudal Revolution in Georgia” at the (renamed) Stalin Tbilisi State University in 1938, he became a member of the aforementioned branch of the Soviet Academy of Sciences.96

Janašia was, by all measures, a prolific scholar and writer. He published over fifty academic works, mostly about the ancient history of Georgia. Underlying his research lay a new conception of history that argued that “ancient” Georgia was an organic yet original part of the wider world, including not only the Caucasus, but also the larger region comprising the Near East. Moreover, Janašia incorporated a variety of disciplines and methodologies in his work, from linguistics, archaeology, and history to ethnography and anthropology. Some of the main ideas and themes explored by Janašia included: the genetic link between Georgian tribes and peoples of the Caucasus and the ancient Near East; ancient social structures among Georgian tribes; the historical geography of Georgia, the Caucasus, and the Near East; state formation in Georgia and the Caucasus; and the movement of populations on the

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96 “Avtobiografiia S.N. Dzhanashiiia,” smeaa, f. 15, op. 1, d. 20, ll. 3-4.
territory of Georgia. In addition to writing and teaching, he led numerous scholarly expeditions throughout Georgia and the Caucasus, including an Abkhaz-language expedition in Abkhazia (1921), archaeological expeditions around K’art’li (1922-1923), Axalc’ixe district (1924), and Upper Imereti and Javaše’ti (1932), and ethnographic and linguistic expeditions in Adigei, Ossetia, Kabarda, and Dagestan (1929). Later in his career, he directed the Georgian Academy of Sciences’ first major archaeological expedition, in Mc’xe’t’a, from 1940. As his academic and professional profile expanded, Janašia became increasingly involved in state and Party structures. Highlights included membership in the Institute’s Party committee and in the All-Union Communist Party in 1940. He was awarded the Order of Lenin (1941), the Stalin Prize (1943), a second Order of Lenin (1944), and the medal “For the Defense of the Caucasus” for work during the Great Patriotic War (1945).

Nikoloz Aleksandres że Berženišvili was born in 1895 into a peasant family in Čoxatauri district (western Georgia). He attended primary and secondary school in Batumi, but the outbreak of the Russian revolution and civil war (in his words) prevented him from accepting admission into Moscow University’s philosophy department. In 1920, he began studying in Tbilisi State University’s philosophy faculty, but soon transferred to history. From 1926, Berženišvili began his doctoral work on Georgian history under the guidance of Javaše’tvi. Beginning in 1929, he lectured at TSU on Georgian history, source studies, and the history of Georgian law.

97 “Zhizn’ i deiateľnost’ S.N Dzhanashia, 18/11/1900-15/11/1947 g.,” smeaa, f. 15, op. 1, d. 20a, ll. 145-159 and N. Berženišvili, “prop’ simon nikolozis že janašias samec’niero mogvaebis daxasai’eba,” April 1941, smeaa, f. 15, op. 1, d. 20a, ll. 85-89.
98 For his field diary from the 1929 Cherkess expedition, see Simon Dzhanashia, Cherkesskie dnevnik (Tbilisi: Kavkazskii Dom, 2007).
the topic of his doctoral dissertation. His research interests focused on Georgia in the era of feudalism (ca. thirteenth-eighteenth centuries) and Marxist interpretations of the social, economic, and political history of Georgia in the middle ages, including questions of state formation. Within these topics, Berženišvili examined the struggle of the Georgian people against foreign conquest, the history of Russo-Georgian relations, and the development of culture and the national liberation movement. Like Janašia, he incorporated historiography, source studies, archaeology, and historical geography into his scholarship. In addition to his research and publications, Berženišvili taught at universities and pedagogical institutes in Tbilisi and K'ut’aisi and co-authored or edited textbooks on Georgian history. He also served as the primary Georgian contributor to the Moscow-led series, Ocherki istorii SSSR. Berženišvili led TSU’s department of Georgian history from 1946-1956 and, from 1948 to his death in 1965, served as director of the Javaxišvili Institute. He served as a deputy to the Tbilisi City Soviet and became a member of the All-Union Communist Party in 1944.

Janašia’s and Berženišvili’s professional lives intertwined in many ways: as contemporaries and colleagues splitting their time between Georgia’s flagship university and the Academy of Sciences, they collaborated on a variety of projects in the 1930s and 1940s. Both historians shared an academic “father” in Ivane

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99 “Avtobiografiia N. Berdzenishvili,” 16 May 1938, smeaa f. 9, op. 2, d. 51a, l. 30.
100 “Uchenyi, pedagog, grazhdanin: Pamiati Nikolaia Aleksndrovicha Berdzenishvili,” smeaa, f. 9, op. 2, d. 51a, ll. 224-228.
101 Ibid.
102 “Kratkaia nauhchnaia i delovaia kharakteristika,” smeaa, f. 9, op. 2, d. 51a, ll. 117-126.
Javaxišvili, who supervised their dissertations at TSU. The establishment in Tbilisi of the Nikolai Marr Institute of Language, History, and Material Culture in 1936 as an affiliate of the USSR Academy of Sciences initiated the institutionalization of interdisciplinary and Marxist-Leninist approaches toward Georgian history advocated by Janašia and Berženišvili. On 22 February 1941, coinciding with the twentieth anniversary of Soviet power in Georgia, the Georgian Council of People’s Commissars established the Academy of Sciences of the Georgian SSR, and Janašia was chosen as the Academy’s vice-president. The concurrent trends of greater academic decentralization and rising interest in nationalism (with regard to the war) emanating from Moscow- and Leningrad-based institutes not only allowed, but enabled the new republic academies of sciences to pursue research agendas in accordance with local and national interests. As part of the Academy of Sciences reorganization, the aforementioned Marr Institute was reestablished as the Ivane Javaxišvili Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography in 1943 (Javaxišvili died in 1940), and Janašia was named as its director. Berženišvili succeeded Janašia as director in 1948, following Janašia’s death.

From their inception, the scholars of the Marr and Javaxišvili Institutes pursued such diverse projects as ethnographic expeditions in rural regions of

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103 The first USSR Academy of Sciences branch in the Caucasus was established as the Transcaucasian branch in 1931, which split into the three Azerbaijan, Armenian, and Georgian branches in 1935, from which the Marr Institute developed, Alexander Vucinich, Empire of Knowledge: The Academy of Sciences of the USSR (1917-1970) (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 145.

104 The Georgian Academy of Sciences was the first republic-level academy established, followed shortly thereafter by Uzbekistan (1943), Armenia (1943), Azerbaijan (1945), and Kazakhstan (1945). The final republic academy to be established was Moldova (1963).

105 Vucinich, Empire of Knowledge, 202.
Georgia, studies in Abkhaz linguistics and history, and historical research on Georgian communities in Turkey. Ethnographic expeditions focused not only on gathering objects of material culture, but also on documenting so-called “survivals” of older Georgian traditions in the more remote areas, from pagan religious practices to family structures. Additionally, Marr Institute scholars prepared textbooks for teaching Georgian as a foreign language to Armenian, Abkhaz, Russian, and Ossetian speakers and developed a new orthographic system for Abkhaz and Ossetian based on the Georgian alphabet.  

This latter project would be implemented in 1945, when the Abkhaz and Ossetian languages were officially converted to a Georgian alphabet. In its Javashi Institute iteration from 1943, the Institute continued to study “the Georgian nation and history of the peoples of the Caucasus since antiquity” and “ethnography and archaeology of Georgia and the Caucasus.” In conjunction with the Great Patriotic War, the Institute introduced a research theme in 1943 on “the Georgian people's struggle against foreign invaders.” Scholarly and political goals were fused as the work of the institutes

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107 On the switch to Georgian orthography for Abkhaz and Ossetian languages from 1938-1954 and increased teaching of Georgian in Abkhaz and Ossetian schools, see sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 21, d. 298, ll. 1-128; sšsa (II), f. 14, op. 27, d. 133, l. 9; and RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 882, ll. 51-54. This occurred at the time (from 1938) of increased Russian-language education and closure of national minority schools (e.g. German, Estonian, Finnish) elsewhere in the Soviet Union, RGANI, f. 89, op. 62, d. 8.

108 “sak'art'velos ssr mec'nierebat'a akademia istorii instituty angariši: 1943 cels č'atarebuli mušaobisa,” uieč'a, f. 600, op. 1, d. 7100, ll. 67-71.
became increasingly tied to nation-building efforts and political projects – an appropriately Marxist-Leninist symbiosis.\(^\text{109}\)

The projects carried out by the Marr and Javaxišvili Institutes under Janašia and Berženišvili’s tutelage helped apply a Marxist-Leninist framework to the study of ancient and medieval Georgian history and cast Georgian national development within the rubric of Stalin’s definition of nation. By the mid-1940s, Janašia’s research in particular had led the conceptual territorialization of the nation as an ethnos in Soviet Georgian history.\(^\text{110}\) One of the most prominent avenues for this endeavor was in Soviet Georgia’s first major archaeological expedition of the ancient Georgian capital of Mc’xet’a, which Janašia led from its inception in 1936 to his death in 1947.\(^\text{111}\) Yet for all the scholarly and public significance of the Mc’xet’a excavation, Janašia and Berženišvili’s most influential and ambitious project was the creation of an authoritative textbook of Georgian history – the first of its kind – to be used in high schools throughout the republic. The project was initiated under the guidance of Georgian First Secretary Lavrenti Beria in 1936. With Javaxišvili, who wrote his contributions prior to his death in 1940, Janašia and Berženišvili led the

\(^{109}\) See, for example, the discussion of the scholarly council of the Marr Institute regarding antireligious propaganda efforts and studying pagan religious traditions among Georgian mountain communities. “Stenogramma: Rashirennoogo zasedaniia Uchenogo Soveta IIaIMK im. Marra ot 26/7/1938 goda,” smeaa, f. 15, op. 1, d. 71, ll. 31-32.

\(^{110}\) Reisner, “Zur Geschichte des Begriffs ‘Eri’ in der modernen georgischen Historiographie.”

\(^{111}\) On the Mc’xet’a archaeological expedition, see mc’xet’a: arkeol. kveleva-ziebis šedegeba, vol. 1 (Tbilisi: sak’art’velos ssr mec’n. akad., 1955); sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 12, d. 195, ll. 74-75; sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 13, d. 284, ll. 6, 42-50; sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 20, d. 184, ll. 97, 100; uic’a, f. 600, op. 1, d. 6969, l. 158; uic’a, f. 600, op. 1, d. 7100, ll. 121-122; smeaa, f. 15, op. 1, dela 88-91; and smeaa, f. 15, op. 1, d. 320.
textbook project from inception to its publication, in Georgian, in 1943. The result, sak’art’velos istoria (History of Georgia), Volume I (from antiquity to the nineteenth century), would be the first in a proposed three-volume series that treated Georgia under Russian imperial rule and Georgia under Soviet power in subsequent volumes.

Unlike Javaxišvili’s k’art’veli eris istoria (History of the Georgian Nation), which, albeit unfinished in toto, was published between 1908 and 1914, the sak’art’velos istoria project applied a Marxist-Leninist historical and developmental framework to the longue durée story of Georgian nation- and state-building. Javaxišvili’s earlier work was a history of Georgians as a nation, whereas the new textbook elaborated and territorialized a history of Georgia as a political-cultural entity. Drawing from their own scholarly writings and involvement in ethnographic and archaeological expeditions, Janašia and Berženišvili set out in their textbook to “construct primordialism,” in Ronald Grigor Suny’s evocative turn of phrase, for a Georgian ethnoterritorial community that emphasized Georgians’ antiquity, rootedness in a territorial homeland, prominent and distinct role in the histories of the Caucasus and the Near East, and perpetual struggle for survival.

112 To my knowledge, the initial 1943 edition of sak’art’velos istoria was not published in Russian, unlike the later editions.
113 The authors divided the work along chronological lines: Janašia wrote introductory material and chapters from antiquity up to the tenth century AD; Javaxišvili wrote chapters on the eleventh through fifteenth centuries; and Berženišvili wrote from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries.
114 In practice, there was considerable overlap in the broad ethnonational imaginings of the two projects, particularly with regard to Javaxišvili’s involvement in the textbook project. But the statehood focus and Marxist-Leninist framework still differentiated the latter project from the former.
among hostile neighbors and invaders. This goal allowed the authors to integrate the ancient and historical kingdoms of Hittites and Urartu (ca. 1000 BC), Iberia (sixth to first century BC), Colchis (first and second centuries AD), Egrisi (sixth century AD), Abkhazia (ninth-tenth centuries AD), Tao-Klarjet’i (eighth-tenth centuries AD), K’art’li, and Kaxet’i, into a teleological consolidation of disparate “Georgian tribes” – including Mingrelians, Laz, and Svan -- into a national core exemplified by K’art’li, a region located at the territorial center of the Georgian SSR

> Figure 2: “Georgian (k’art’uli) Kingdoms and Principalities in the Tenth Century”

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115 Ronald Grigor Suny, “Constructing Primordialism: Old Histories for New Nations,” The Journal of Modern History 73, no. 4 (December 2001): 862–96. Suny chronicled a similar process of historical construction among Armenian scholars in the mid- to late-twentieth century, which at times contradicted or challenged the developing Georgian narrative.

116 For Janašia’s view on the etymological development around K’art’li into Georgian national vocabulary, see “k’art’veli eris carmošobis šesaxeb,” in Simon Janašia, šromebi, vol. 6 (Tbilisi: Mec’niereba, 1968), 172-190.

117 Javaxišvili, Berženišvili, and Janašia, sak’art’velos istoria, 144-145. This map depicts the Kingdom of Abkhazia, Č’aneti, Ačara, K’art’li, T’rialet’i, and “Kingdoms of Georgians (k’art’vel’t’a).” The final
group extends from what is today's central and northeastern Turkey into southern Georgia. Simon Janašia covered this period in the textbook.  

118 Ibid., 208-209. This map introduces the Ottoman Empire and “Iran”. Across today's Georgia is written “All Georgia (qovelı sak'art'velo).” Ivane Javaxišvili covered this period in the textbook.
This was history as epic, complete with enemies and traitors, heroes and martyrs, and a defense of civilization against savagery. The theme and language of struggle (brżola) pervades the textbook's narrative, as various Georgian tribes struggled for independence, unification, and reunification against: “Persians,” “Arabs,” “Mongols,” “Tamerlane,” “Iran,” and the “Ottoman Empire,” in rough chronological order. In his section, Janašia wrote about “sak’art’velo” as early as the sixth century BC, in the context of Greek encounters on the Black Sea coast, and he used the terms “Iberia” and “K’art’li” interchangeably for the BC period and “K’art’li” and “Georgia” interchangeably from the seventh century AD. Janašia’s contribution, which covered over a millennium of Georgian history, conveyed a broad narrative about struggle for Georgia’s unification. The “unified Georgia” of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, chronicled by Javaxišvili, not only marked a golden age of Georgian literature, cultural development, and state-building under the leadership of Davit’ Ağmašenebeli and T’amar-Mep’e, but also of foreign policy achievements which made Georgia “the Near East’s most powerful state.” Invasion and occupation by the forces of the Mongols and Tamerlane rendered unification ephemeral, however, as the Georgian kingdom had dissolved entirely by the fifteenth century. From there, in Berženišvili’s narrative, the struggle resumed – this time for independence and liberation – in the sixteenth through eighteenth

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119 Ibid., 352-353. This map includes the Ottoman Empire, Iran, and numerous principalities and regions of Georgia, including: Abkhazia (ap’xazet’i), Ossetia, Imeret’i, AÇara, the Kingdom of Axalc’ixe, K’art’li, Kaxet’i, Odişi (Mingrelia), Svanet’i, Guria, and the Kingdom of Kars. While Cherkessian tribes and Kabarda are labeled, Russia is not written anywhere on the map. Nikoloz Berženišvili covered this period in the textbook.

120 Javaxišvili, Berženišvili, and Janašia, sak’art’velos istoria, 177-188.
centuries, when the kingdoms of K’art’li and Kaxet’i unified to form a new Georgian core under Iranian and Ottoman rule. Uprisings (ajanqebi) and shifting alliances in the context of wars between Iran, the Ottoman Empire, and Russia ultimately led King Erekle II of K’art’li-Kaxet’i to enter into a treaty agreement with the Russian Empire in 1783 and 1801, at which point the kingdom was incorporated into Russia. The textbook ends on a high note, explaining that the dawn of the nineteenth century ushered in a new stage in Georgia’s long history, in which it embarked on a European developmental path.

The story of the consolidation of “Georgian tribes” into a Georgian nation on a Georgian territory as told in sak’art’velos istoria mirrored the amalgamation of Kartvelian census categories in the 1920s and 1930s. In short, as stated in the textbook:

The remains of this division [among “Georgian tribes,” CK] are preserved to this day, but they are gradually disappearing. Georgian tribes were close to one another even in antiquity. The drawing together in the middle centuries contributed to the unification of Georgian tribes into one state and the adoption of the Georgian language as the common national written language. In the nineteenth century, particularly in its second half, the Georgians (k’art’veloba) bound together even more closely, as the common economic and cultural life became more alive and strong. But the economic, social, and cultural ties in our country have never been so close and solid as they are today, at the time of Soviet power. That is why literary language is now diffusing even faster and takes the place of local, provincial dialects. Old, provincial, outdated customs disappear as well, which clears the way for a new, socialist life.121

Moreover, the search for links among the ancient peoples of the Caucasus and migration patterns reflected contemporary political agendas that expanded the

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121 Ibid., 6-7.
geographic and cultural footprint of Georgianness. Nikolai Marr’s theory of a Japhetic (Iberian-Caucasian) language family linked Georgian and other Caucasian languages (such as Abkhaz, Adyghe, and Chechen), which allowed nation-building historians to expand the terrain of greater Georgia to the north and incorporate the components of the histories of north Caucasian peoples as Georgian history.\footnote{Victor A. Shnirelman, *The Value of the Past: Myths, Identity and Politics in Transcaucasia* (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 2001), 233-240. Shnirelman goes so far as to argue that the Iberian-Caucasian linguistic theory provided an “ideological grounds” for the transfer districts from the Checheno-Ingush ASSR to Georgia following the 1944 deportation of Chechens and Ingush to Kazakhstan. I have yet to find decisive evidence connecting this “historiographic expansion” with the deportations and territorial transfer, however. On Nikolai Marr, see Slezkine, “N. Ia. Marr”; Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*; and Kevin Tuite, “The Reception of Marr and Marrism in the Soviet Georgian Academy,” in Florian Mühlfried and Sergey Sokolovskiy, eds., *Exploring the Edge of Empire: Soviet Era Anthropology in the Caucasus and Central Asia* (Berlin: LitVerlag, 2011): 197-214.} Similarly, while the textbook presented the medieval kingdom of Abkhazia as a vital force in the history of Georgia, Japhetic theory provided grounds for integrating Abkhaz and Abkhazia into a broader Georgian story. Janašia went so far as to refer to the Abkhazian kingdom as the “west Georgian state,” which was a descendant of the “west Georgian tribe” of Colchis.\footnote{Javaxišvili, Berženišvili, and Janašia, *sak’art'velos istoria*, 133-134.} In the textbook, the key turning point with regard to Georgian unification – a prominent theme – came with the kingdom of Tao-Klarjet’i and the rise of the Bagrationi dynasty in “southern Georgia.”\footnote{Ibid., 134.} Yet while Tao-Klarjet’i provided the administrative form for Georgian unification, the Georgian language, alphabet, and literary tradition spread from the medieval Kingdom of K’art’li to other kingdoms and principalities, including Abkhazia.

In his analysis of the historical roots of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, Victor Shnirelman notes the “rich repertoire of symbols, legends, and historical accounts
with which to construct a modern national consciousness” and “sense of national danger” present in the narrative of *sak’art’velos istoria* despite the dominance of the Georgian entitled nationality within the Georgian SSR.\(^\text{125}\) Yet even if Georgians enjoyed the benefits of Soviet affirmative action policies as the entitled nationality within the republic, in the 1940s this was still very much a work in progress, as the ethnodemographic makeup of the republic demonstrated. Rather, the eventual hegemony of the Georgian nationality and national narrative within the republic’s borders was a postwar phenomenon that reflected the particular imaginings of Janašia and Berženišvili as enshrined in the *sak’art’velos istoria* textbook.

*sak’art’velos istoria*, Volume I was published in Tbilisi in 1943. At the height of the war, however, Stalin did not have the time to read the work (according to Georgian First Secretary Kandid Č’arkviani, who succeeded Beria in the post after 1938) and when he eventually got around to the task in mid-1945, he sought a meeting with the authors.\(^\text{126}\) In October 1945, Stalin asked Č’arkviani to invite Janašia and Berženišvili to a Black Sea dacha in Sochi where he was vacationing at the time to discuss his suggestions for improving future iterations of the textbook. According to Berženišvili, over the course of the three-day visit, Stalin and the historians discussed in particular: the origins of Georgians and their links to cultures of ancient peoples of the East; the character of Georgia’s feudal monarchy, especially Davit’ Ağmašenebeli; Georgia in the late feudal era and Georgians’

\(^{125}\) Shnirelman, *The Value of the Past*, 236-239.

\(^{126}\) Kandid Č’arkviani, *ganc’dili da naazrevi: 1906/1994* (Tbilisi: Merani, 2004), 381-394. The episode described here was chronicled by both Č’arkviani in his memoir and Berženišvili in a note in his personal papers. I draw from both accounts in my version.
struggle of encirclement by “less cultured peoples” (Ottomans and Qizilbash, the predecessors to the Safavids of Iran); Erekle’s struggle to save Georgia and his role in the overthrow of Georgian statehood; and the formation of the Georgian community and period of struggle against tsarism. Berženišvili noted, “We returned [to Tbilisi] loaded with gifts from Stalin, with opinions for the textbook about the history of Georgia, Georgian culture, literature, literary language, and the prospects for the development of the Georgian nation.” Indeed, Berženišvili wondered “where, when, and how Stalin found time to specialize in these issues” and marveled at the breadth of conversations with this “genius.”

Even Č'arkviani remarked in his memoir at the “pathetic” and “grotesque” manner in which Berženišvili interacted with Stalin. Following their meeting, the historians returned to Tbilisi and immediately began incorporating Stalin’s “suggestions” into the revised edition of sak'art'velos istoria, which was published in 1946 in Georgian and Russian. For their efforts, the textbook was awarded the Stalin Prize.

The initial run of sak'art'velos istoria coincided with the publication of several other republics’ histories: The History of the Kazakh SSR (1943), The History of Ukraine (1943), A History of the Armenian People (1944), and The Tajik People in the Struggle for Freedom and Independence of its Motherland (1944). All of these

128 Č'arkviani, ganc'dili da naazrevi, 389.
129 Ibid., 393-394.
130 M. Abdykalykov and A. Pankratova, eds., Istoriia kazakhskoi SSR. S drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei (Alma-Ata, 1943); N.N. Petrovskii, et al., ed., Istoriia Ukrainy (Ufa, 1943); K.G. Kafadarian and M.T. Nersisian, eds., Istoriia armianskogo naroda, vol. 1 (Yerevan, 1944); and B. Gafurov and N. Prokhorov, Tadzhikskii narod v bor'be za svobodu i nezavisimost’ svoei rodiny. Ocherki iz istorii
histories took advantage of the greater academic freedom and appeals toward Soviet and national patriotisms made possible by the war environment and, at least in the Georgian case, the sponsorship of the new republic Academy of Sciences. Yet the works themselves saw very different fates: most famously, *The History of the Kazakh SSR* faced especially grave criticism for its treatment of Kazakh revolts against Russian rule and the issue of Russian imperialism. The Georgian textbook, on the other hand, enjoyed favorable reviews from the outset, and directions for revisions in subsequent editions seemed to come from Stalin himself, which could account for the distinct reception history. Unlike many of their scholarly counterparts elsewhere during the *Zhdanovshchina* and the campaign against bourgeois nationalism in Georgia in 1952, Georgian historians remained largely unaffected by these trends in their individual careers and scholarship.

Berženišvili, Janašia, and their colleagues “constructed primordialism” of a Georgian nation and Georgian state through projects such as the *sak'art'velos istoria* textbook. This was the advent of a new, Stalin-era “Georgian academic nationalism” that held more strongly to the claim of Georgian territory as historical property than to earlier, nineteenth-century variants of religious and populist nationalisms. In doing so, the historians not only elaborated a peculiarly Georgian “imagining of history and power” through a Soviet lens, but also “created a historical depth of

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*Tadzhikov i Tadzhikistana* (Stalinabad, 1944). On the Ukrainian history textbooks, see also Yekelchyk, *Stalin’s Empire of Memory*, Chapter Five.


field” that provided legitimacy for nationalizing pursuits throughout the postwar era.\(^\text{133}\) Reconstituting Georgia’s historical geography, as elaborated in the national narrative they crafted, would provide a final opportunity for collaboration between Janašia and Berženišvili that propelled the scholars and Georgian territorial ambitions to a world stage.

**Map**

In 1945, Stalin’s Soviet Union achieved arguably its greatest feat: victory over Nazi Germany. With this geopolitical apex, Soviet leaders sought to extract as much territorial and political capital as possible in the climate of postwar settlements and reparations. In the “bloodlands” of eastern Europe, this meant: a Soviet sphere of influence that quickly hardened into the Stalinist “people’s democracies”; an expansion of Soviet borders to include Moldova, western Ukraine, the Baltic republics, and Kaliningrad; and expulsions and population transfers, most notably between Poles and Ukrainians.\(^\text{134}\)

The Soviet Union’s southern periphery likewise presented opportunities for territorial and political gain, particularly in the developing climate of the early Cold War, as Turkey, Iran, and Greece ultimately aligned with the western powers. In the Caucasus, such opportunities took the form of Georgian and Armenian claims to

\(^{133}\) Paraphrased from Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 185.

territory in northeastern Turkey; “repatriation” of Armenians and Georgians from Iran and elsewhere; support for Iranian Azerbaijan and the so-called “Azerbaijan crisis”; and population expulsions and exchanges of minority groups. In a conversation with Marshal F.I. Tolbukhin at a seaside dacha in Novyi Afon, Abkhazia, in mid-1945, Abkhaz Obkom head Ak’ak’i Mgelaže claimed (in his own account),

In the early morning, on a clear day, from here it is possible to see our Georgian lands, all of which are located in the hands of Turkey, and that has lasted for several centuries...Stalin knows best, but just now we have the opportunity to correct this injustice. It turned out well with Ukraine, Belarus, but Georgian lands are still not gathered into a unified national state. Let’s hope that it will come true.\textsuperscript{135}

This section examines Soviet Georgian attempts to claim the territory in Turkey described by Mgelaže, and the prominent roles of Berženišvili, Janašia, and Georgian People’s Commissar of Foreign Affairs Giorgi Kiknaże in this effort in order to demonstrate how this (ultimately unsuccessful) scheme was not simply a centrally managed, geopolitical gambit, but rather advanced local interests among Georgian nation.builders.\textsuperscript{136}

As the war in Europe ended, Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov and Turkish Ambassador to the USSR Selim Sarper began to attempt to renegotiate the Soviet-Turkish Treaty of Kars of 1921. Turkey’s liaisons with Germany during World War Two gave the ostensibly neutral power an incentive to curry favor with the Allied victors in the postwar order. Soviet leaders, meanwhile, viewed this as an

\textsuperscript{135} As recounted in Akaki Mgeladze, \textit{Stalin: Kakim ia ego uznal}, (Tbilisi: No publisher given, 2001), 61-62.

\textsuperscript{136} The related expulsions and repatriation schemes are explored in Chapters 2 and 5, respectively.
opportunity for strategic gains in the region. As part of this process, Molotov proposed: granting the USSR guarantees for basing rights and joint control of the Dardanelle and Bosporus Straits in the event of war; and transferring territory from Kars, Ardahan, and Artvin districts of northeastern Turkey to the Soviet Union. The Turkish ambassador rejected both demands, leading Molotov to reiterate them in June, adding this time that the Armenian SSR in particular needed the territories in northeastern Turkey. In spite of repeated refusals from Turkey, Molotov continued to press the issue, mentioning it again at the Potsdam Conference in August 1945. Initially, this exchange appeared to be an effort to entice Turkey to align more closely with the Soviet Union (and therefore distance itself from Great Britain and the US) by making a Soviet-Turkish treaty of cooperation and alliance and access to the straits more palatable than outright territorial transfer.

This issue was not among the many resolved at Potsdam, and Western and Turkish leaders remained openly opposed the proposal of territorial transfer from Turkey to the Soviet Union. Yet shortly thereafter, Molotov enlisted new republic-level foreign policy organs to build cases for the legitimacy of Soviet claims to Turkish territory. As the Allied victors began to redraw the postwar map of Europe, the Soviet Union established republic-level ministries of foreign affairs (People's

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138 Suny, Looking Toward Ararat, 164-177.
Commissariat of Foreign Affairs [PCFA]/ Ministry of Foreign Affairs [MFA]) ostensibly to gain a larger representation at the new United Nations. Though ultimately only the Ukrainian and Belarusian SSRs gained their own UN representations, Georgia and other republics retained their MFAs for the duration of the Soviet period. From 1944, when the Georgian PCFA was formed, this institution provided the main avenue through which to pursue Georgian interests abroad, largely due to the proactive efforts of Georgian People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs Giorgi Kiknaże (in office 1944-1953).

In September and October 1945, Kiknaże penned notes to Beria and Molotov during a trip to Moscow describing the issue of Georgian claims to territories in Turkey. In Kiknaže’s telling, the issue of Georgian territorial claims emerged from the 13 October 1921 agreement between the RSFSR and the Kemalist Turkish government, in which the southern sector of the former Batumi okrug and the entirety of the Artvin, Ardahan, and Oltu okrugs were “sawn off” of Georgia and granted to Turkey, which occupied the regions at that time, as part of the Treaty of Kars. However, Kiknaże argued that Turkey violated the terms of this “friendship” treaty during World War Two by promoting “pan-Turkist” organizations on its territory, advocacy for a “greater Turkey” comprising Crimea and the Caucasus, and activities as German agents. As a result of these alleged treaty violations, Kiknaže recommended that the USSR denounce the Treaty of Kars and raise the issue of

139 It is evident that Kiknaże, at least, saw the Turkey (territorial claims) and Iran (repatriation of Fereydan Georgians, see Chapter 5) issues as linked at this time, as he noted to Čarkviani in his description of activities undertaken during a recent trip to Moscow, where he met with Molotov and Beria on those topics, Kiknaže to Čarkviani, 26 October 1945, sôssa (II), f. 14, op. 19, d. 209, ll. 52-53.
“returning territory to the Soviet republics of the Transcaucasus that had originally belonged to them.”

Kiknaže noted that Armenian Commissar of Foreign Affairs S.I. Kavtaradze had already raised these issues with Soviet Foreign Affairs Commissar Molotov. Kavtaradze argued that the territory under question comprised 26,000 square kilometers, of which 20,500 square kilometers should be transferred to the Armenian SSR and the remaining 5,500 square kilometers to the Georgian SSR. In Kavtaradze’s schema, the former Ardahan and Oltu okrugs would be joined to Armenia. Kiknaže, on the other hand, argued that Ardahan and Oltu okrugs (designated for Armenia in Kavtaradze’s plan) should be joined to the Georgian SSR in addition to the southern part of the former Batumi okrug and the Artvin okrug, which both foreign affairs commissars assigned to Georgia. The revised territorial distribution according to Kiknaže would therefore make Armenian and Georgian territorial claims more equal (12,760 sq. km to Georgia and 13,190 to Armenia), with the former Batumi, Ardahan, Artvin, and Oltu okrugs to Georgia and the former Kars and Kağızman okrugs and Surmali uezd to Armenia.

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140 Kiknaže to Beria, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 19, d. 209, ll. 49-51.
141 Kavtaradze had also already approached D. Zavriev, a senior Georgian Academy of Sciences historian, in May 1945 about writing a scholarly work titled “National districts of Turkey under the power of the Kemalists,” uic’a, f. 600, op. 2, d. 623, l. 2.
142 Ibid.
The violation of the 1921 Treaty of Kars provided the immediate legal justification for Georgian and Armenian territorial claims to these districts of northeastern Turkey, yet this rather hollow argument about the legality of Soviet-Turkish friendship provided a convenient cover for more ambitious arguments about authenticity and historical geography. Kiknaže acknowledged as much in a September 1945 report to Beria and Molotov, in which he described the territories in question as “Georgian lands since ancient times and her native population closely linked to Georgians in national, ethnographic, and linguistic relationships.”

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143 Kiknaže to Molotov and Beria, “K voprosu o gruzinskikh territoriakh, vkluchenym v sostav Turtsii,” 4 September 1945, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 19, d. 209, ll. 54–57.
area, he reminded them, was the site of the twelfth-century cultural and administrative capital Artanuji, of the medieval Georgian state of Tao-Klarjet’i.144

Moreover, Kiknaże called Beria and Molotov’s attention to the plight of Georgian populations in areas of Turkey adjacent to claimed territories (in so-called Southwest Mesxet’i), where “Turks completely denationalized the old Georgian population”; and of the Laz population of Turkey which had likewise experienced, in Kiknaże’s telling, forced Turkification.145 At the very least, Kiknaże raised the idea of promoting autonomy for the Laz – as a “Georgian people who speak a dialect of the Georgian language” – within Turkey. Yet the presence of historically Georgian populations in Southwest Mesxet’i and Lazistan likewise presented an opportunity for wider territorial claims, as Kiknaże explained, that would expand Georgia to its “natural border” from the Çoruh/Čoroxi River basin to the Arax River basins. This “natural border” would arguably provide greater security to southern Georgia and, more importantly, protect the Black Sea port of Batumi.146 Indeed, Kiknaże’s expanded geography combined claims to “the southern provinces of Georgia, transferred to Turkey according to the treaties of 16 March and 13 October 1921” – that is, territories that had been incorporated into the Russian Empire between

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144 In Georgian national historiography, Artanuji is one of the four historic capitals of Georgia, along with Tbilisi, Mc’xet’a, and K’ut’aisi. Artanuji (8th-11th centuries) was the center of the so-called Tao-Klarjet’i state, which was the focus of much of Janašia’s research.

145 Meanwhile, Kiknaże neglected to mention the Laz population’s “voluntary” Georgification in Georgia.

146 Ibid. These rivers flow from northeastern Turkey into Batumi and from Erzurum to the Caspian Sea, respectively.
1878 and 1917 – and “historical provinces of Georgia, located under Turkish rule (pod turetskim vladychestvom)” – Southwest Mesxet’i and Lazistan/Čanet’i.\(^{147}\)

While preparatory work by the Georgian Commissariat of Foreign Affairs occurred in the autumn of 1945, the public campaign to advocate for Georgian territorial claims began in December, with the publication of a letter to the editor in komunisti (the Georgian-language Pravda affiliate published in Tbilisi) on 14 December 1945 by historians Janašia and Berženišvili titled “On our legal claims toward Turkey” (t’urk’etisadmi č’veni kanonieri pretenziebis šesaxeb).\(^{148}\) The Russian translation of the letter appeared in Zaria Vostoka the following day, in Pravda and Izvestiia on 20 December, and in Pravda Ukraini on 22 December.\(^{149}\) The staggered rollout of this piece and its wide proliferation in Union newspapers suggests a high level of coordination from Party organs to publicize Georgian claims not only in Georgia, but throughout the USSR. The letter was also broadcast by radio in Georgian and in Russian throughout the Union. The placement in Pravda and Izvestiia likewise guaranteed a foreign press readership at a time when Soviet territorial claims had a particularly thorny resonance in the early days of the Cold War.\(^{150}\) Moreover, the publication of the piece occurred in the same month as a

\(^{147}\) Kiknaže to K. Č’arkviani and V. Bak’raže, “Ob ottoğnutikh Turtsiei gruzinskikh provints iiakh (kratkaia spravka),” uic’a, f. 600, op. 2, d. 623, ll. 23-37.

\(^{148}\) S. Janašia and N. Berženišvili, “t’urk’etisadmi č’veni kanonieri pretenziebis šesaxeb,” komunisti (14 December 1945), p. 3. This public approach differed from that taken in connection to Armenian claims, which were made via the Armenian diaspora and church rather than Soviet Armenian organs.

\(^{149}\) Simon Dzhanashia and Nikoloz Berdzenishvili, “O nashiikh zakonnykh pretenziiahk k Turtsii,” Zaria Vostoka (15 December 1945), p. 3.

\(^{150}\) Rather than enlisting republic organs in the Armenian SSR to publicy advocate for territorial claims, as Georgians did, the Armenian diaspora, Armenian Catholicos, and Armenian political parties in exile (i.e. the Dashnaktsutiun) mobilized to promote Soviet territorial demands. The Armenian
meeting of Western foreign ministers with Stalin in Moscow, where Stalin once again raised the issue of territorial demands.

As its title implies, Janašia and Berženišvili’s letter not only articulated the specific Georgian claims to territory in Turkey, but more importantly, established the “legally” and historically grounded bases of said claims. They specifically claimed Ardahan, Artvin, Oltu, Tortum, İspir, Bayburt, and Gümüşhane districts and included eastern Lazistan, Trabzon and Giresun districts as part of “our ancient homeland (č’veni žvelisžveli mica-cqali),” which therefore should be “returned” to the “Georgian people (k’art’veli xalxi).” Though Janašia and Berženišvili began the letter by lauding Georgians’ contributions to the Soviet victory in the Second World War and the project of the United Nations, their overall argument for “uniting” these territories with Georgia was grounded in a Georgian national historical narrative, based on language, material culture, historical geography, and archaeology – not, interestingly, on Turkish violations of the 1921 Treaties of Kars and Moscow. Indeed, the 1920-1921 period is only briefly described as a “difficult time (mżime dro),” when these territories were taken from Georgia. Instead, according to Janašia and Berženišvili,

The issue at hand is neither insignificant territorial oppression, nor the cradle of our people’s individuality, which was captured from us, a crime which dissected the living national body in two. The issue at hand is the object of the Georgian people’s centuries-old struggle – the return of our ancient homeland (mica-cqali).

In short, the historians confidently claimed that “The entire territory of southern, or more accurately, southwest Georgia, since ancient times was completely inhabited by Georgian tribes, who subsequently united as a Georgian nation.”

Much of Janašia and Berženišvili’s argument revolved around the role of the medieval kingdom of Tao-Klarjet’i, with its capital at Artanuji, in the national narrative of Georgian state-building. As the successor to the early medieval kingdom of K’art’li (also known as Caucasian Iberia), the principalities of Tao-Klarjet’i emerged as a political, cultural, and religious center of Georgia between the ninth and eleventh centuries. The family that would come to rule Tao-Klarjet’i, the

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151 S. Janašia and N. Berženišvili, "t’urk’etisadmi č’veni kanonieri pretenziebis šesaxeb."
152 Javaxišvili, Berženišvili, and Janašia, sak’art’velos istoria, 180-181.
Bagrationi, would remain the primary royal lineage in Georgia to the present day. The formation of Tao-Klarjet’i in this period is regarded as the first iteration of Georgian unification, which was expanded upon in the eleventh and twelfth centuries by Bagrationi leaders Davit Aghmašenebeli and Tamar-Mep’e. Janašia and Berženišvili highlighted the importance of this region to the development of Georgian statehood, the modern Georgian literary language, and Georgian ecclesiastical geography.¹⁵³

Moreover, the historians situated this history within a broader struggle of Georgian national development in the face of neighboring Muslim threats. In spite of Arab, Turkish, and Iranian conquest, “the Georgian people never lost its national self-consciousness and unbreakable union with its great past” and, “carrying the faith of Christ...did their best” though surrounded by Turkey and Iran. Indeed, in Janašia and Berženišvili’s account, historical experience demonstrated that Georgians’ strength was in unity: “K’art’li, Imeret’i, and Southern Georgia’s united struggle repeatedly taught invaders a bitter lesson. For example, in 1545 Georgians won a brilliant victory against the invading Turkish army at Laskarze Basin, near Erzurum.” The historians set up the not-so-subtle contrast between the sacred Georgian people and the Turkish overlords who would come to rule them in the subsequent centuries. The Turks “brutally and inhumanely persecuted the holy Georgian people – its language, its laws and traditions, its ancestors’ culture and

¹⁵³ Ibid.
faith. With fire and sword they spread the Turkish language and Islam.” For Janašia and Berženišvili, the reunification of “southern Georgia” with the rest of its homeland would therefore right a historic wrong for which generations of Georgians had struggled.

The unambiguous appeals to blood, faith, territory, and primordial Georgianness put forth by Janašia and Berženišvili intertwined the subject of the scholars’ academic work with passionate depictions of national struggle against enemies. Yet for a piece that would be disseminated quickly by the Pravda network of distribution for domestic and international audiences, “O nashikh zakonnykh pretenziakh k Turtles” contained no mention of the Soviet project, communism, or Stalin. Moreover, for a piece highlighting a Georgian-Christian struggle against Muslim neighbors, familiar odes to the merits of Russo-Georgian friendship were also absent. Brief statements about Georgian contributions in the Great Patriotic War provided seemingly little Soviet justification for what came across as brazenly nationalist territorial claims. With the article’s tone in mind, what was the strategy behind making public the Georgian territorial claims in this way? Most other scholarly interpretations of this episode attribute little agency to Janašia and Berženišvili in the matter, viewing it instead as a geopolitical gambit orchestrated by Stalin and/or Beria, via Č’arkviani. The historians’ involvement and intentions are thus treated with skepticism. In this scenario, the more nationalist tinge of the Georgian territorial claims conveyed by Janašia and Berženišvili perhaps served as

\[^{154}\text{Ibid.}\]
an attempt to distance the claims from their actual source – that is, Georgians in Moscow rather than Georgians in Tbilisi – in an effort to provide a wider range of justification for the claims. Indeed, this episode occurred at perhaps the apex of Beria’s political power in Moscow: as a Georgian who owed his rise to deep patronage networks in the Caucasus, he was well equipped to mobilize local Georgian resources to advance a Soviet geopolitical agenda.\footnote{Indeed, Suny suggests that the Georgian territorial claims were made by Stalin at Beria’s instigation and demonstrates the extent of Beria’s influence over Stalin in this period, Suny, \textit{The Making of the Georgian Nation}, 284-285. Zubok and Pleshakov, on the other hand, leave Beria out of the equation entirely, viewing the territorial claims strategy as one driven by Stalin, which Molotov somewhat reluctantly carried out, Zubok and Pleshakov, \textit{Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War}, 93.} Yet even if Berženišvili and Janašia’s letter in \textit{komunisti} was utterly political rather than a voluntary expression of sentiment, they still drew from and appealed to a Georgian national narrative that they themselves spent their careers actively constructing. Stalin, Beria, and Molotov likely surmised that this gave the scholars sufficient legitimacy to advocate for territorial claims on an international stage. But Janašia and Berženišvili’s lives’ work was intimately tied to the greater Georgia for which they appealed in this letter, whether or not it was a cynical and over-determined ploy by leaders in Moscow to play geopolitics.

Janašia and Berženišvili’s article garnered attention from foreign press outlets, which encountered the \textit{Pravda} iteration of the article. However, interpretation of the article’s significance varied by country in important ways, as emphasized by officers in the Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs charged with summarizing foreign reception of the article. Turkish papers, for example, connected the Georgian claims to efforts by the Armenian diaspora in the United
States and elsewhere to “return” lands from Turkey to Soviet Armenia. Yet Turkish writers focused more on the move as one of Russian expansion, driven neither by Georgian and Armenian national aims nor Soviet ideology. English papers, on the other hand, viewed the “romantic demands of the Georgian scholars” as part of a “game in which the Georgian professors allowed themselves to be used in order to divert attention from the events in Azerbaijan.”

Moreover, English papers found it odd that the “new” territorial demands came not from “Russia,” but from “her dominion, Georgia.” Finnish papers hit upon perhaps the most significant point, however: that Georgia was the first of all the Soviet republics to “independently come forth with demands in international politics. This republic is the homeland of Stalin and this circumstance exacerbates the seriousness of the issue.”

Other than Janašia and Berženišvili’s December letter, the only time Georgian territorial claims were mentioned further in Union-level newspapers was in Č'arkviani’s address of 25 February 1946, in honor of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Soviet Georgia, which was published in Pravda. In this address, the Georgian First Secretary reiterated claims to Ardahan, Artvin, Olti, Tortum, Ispiri, Bayburt, Gümüşhane, and Lazistan. In Georgia, meanwhile, articles by prominent Georgian scholars and public figures appeared in komunisti and Zaria Vostoka further

156 This most likely refers to the so-called “Azerbaijan crisis” during the Soviet occupation of Iranian Azerbaijan. See Dzhamil Gasanly, SSSR-Iran: Azerbaidzhanski krizis i nachalo kholodnoi voyny (1941-1946 gg.) (Moscow: Geroi Otechestva, 2006).

157 I. Natrošvili and B. Lordkipanize, of the Political Section of the Georgian MFA, prepared this report for Kiknaże, who forwarded it to Č'arkviani in August 1946, “Otkliki inostrannoi pressy na pis’mo gruzinskikh akademikov S. Dzhanashia i N. Berdzenishvili ‘O nashikh zakonnykh trebovaniiakh k Turtsii,’” 28 April and 28 June 1946, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 20, d. 253, ll. 60-86.

elaborating on the historical bases of Georgian territorial ambitions once or twice per month through May 1946. That this editorial discussion was confined to a Georgian readership is telling: the forum devoted considerably more space to promoting the legitimacy of these territorial claims to Georgians than to a Union-wide or foreign audience. Among those contributors to the public discussion were Arnold Č’ik’obava, a renowned Georgian linguist, Rasix Sulieimanis že Beriže, a member of the Ajarian branch of the Transcaucasian Muslim Ecclesiastical Authority, Georgian Orthodox Patriarch Kalistrate, historians S. Jik’ia, D. Zavriev, and Ek’t’ime T’aqaishvili, and a group of assistant professors from universities in Tbilisi and Batumi.159 The institutional affiliations of these writers – encompassing multiple academic disciplines, religions, and locales (Tbilisi and Batumi) – suggest a coordinated and multifaceted campaign to unite a Georgian readership (in which Ajarians were Georgians more than they were Muslims) against a past and present Turkish foe of the Georgian people.

The ensuing discussion in Georgian republic newspapers reiterated the territorial demands made by Janašia and Berženišvili, yet the subsequent articles did not merely reproduce the original argument. Č’ik’obava, for example, focused on the issue of Lazistan and emphasized reuniting the Laz in Turkey with their fellow

Georgian tribes as a fundamental concern, focusing not only on the territory and its history, but also on the people who currently inhabited it.\textsuperscript{160} Beriże and Kalistrate, meanwhile, wrote explicitly on behalf of Georgian Muslims and Christians, respectively, reiterating the precise territorial claims mentioned in earlier accounts and making corresponding appeals to the great achievements of the Soviet state – an association largely ignored by Janašia, Berženišvili, and Č'ik'obava. Beriže and Kalistrate both maintained the theme of struggle against enemies, yet with important distinctions: Beriže insisted that Georgian Muslims and Georgian Christians were “brothers,” all of whom had struggled against Turks. Kalistrate, on the other hand, distinguished not between Georgian Muslims and Christians, but between “Georgia under the Ottoman yoke” and “free Georgia,” where after the Great October Revolution the “free Georgian nation” lived in a brotherly union with other Soviet peoples.\textsuperscript{161} The group of professors from Tbilisi and Batumi continued the “brotherhood” trope and described the progressive achievements (in the fields of economics, culture, and women’s rights) brought to Ajaria by Soviet power, in contrast to the experience of their “brethren” in Turkey. Returning the territories in question would therefore bring “freedom” to their “sisters and brothers.”\textsuperscript{162}

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnote{Č'ikobava did not mention specific territorial claims, but he argued that the historical injustice must be corrected – that the natural place of the Laz was among blood-related Georgian tribes, especially Mingrelians. Č'ikobava likewise sought to disprove the official Turkish policy that because Laz were Muslims, they should be counted as Turks. Moreover, in his words, “Islam is antinational and presents a threat more than any other religion to the existence of small peoples,” Chikobava, “Nesko'ko zamechanii o lazakh.”}

\footnote{Beriže, “t'urk'ma modzaladeebma unda dagvibrunon č'veni mica-cqali”; Kalistrate, “cerili redak’c’iiis mimart”.

\footnote{Nadim Nijaraže, Jemal Moğaideli, Memed Stambolišvili, Xusein Axvlediani, “movit’xovt’ t’urk’ebis mier damonebuli č’veni debisa da žmebis gant’avisup’lebas.”}
\end{footnotesize}
of the nuances of each article, the komunisti forum participants shared the belief with Janašia and Berženišvili that the territories in question were, without a doubt, the mica-cqali of the Georgian people, using this terminology consistently in lieu of other possibilities, such as samšoblo or eri. The newspaper discourse on the issue in Georgia shifted in mid-1946, at which point Georgian writers and poets took the mantel previously occupied by scholars to periodically publicize the romance of Georgian attachments to these territories and their inhabitants through 1952.\textsuperscript{163}

Ultimately, the scholars’ demands and public advocacy campaign failed to win any territorial concessions from Turkey. The official claims were withdrawn shortly after Stalin’s death in 1953, at which point Molotov announced, “The governments of Armenia and Georgia deem it possible to waive their territorial claims against Turkey. The Soviet government consequently states that the USSR has no territorial pretensions against Turkey.”\textsuperscript{164} Even in mid-1953, at which point Turkey had been a member of NATO for over a year, Soviet officials still maintained the line that the territorial claims emanated from Yerevan and Tbilisi rather than Moscow. This stance likely served to distance the Soviet central government from this geopolitical failure.

Yet using Armenian and Georgian republic-level actors as a cover did not preclude their actual investment in pursuing national foreign policy goals. In the case of Armenia, “The coincidence of the local Armenian claims with the geo-

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{163} Jaba Samušiam, ed., ert’i ideologiuri kampaniis istoriidan: sabčot’a kavširis teritoriuli pretenziebi t’urk’isadmi 1945-1953 clebši (Tbilisi: Artanuji, 2003).}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{164} As quoted in Suny, The Making of the Georgian Nation, 285.}
strategic ambitions of the Soviet leadership allowed the Armenian elite to identify the two positions together and then adjusted to far-reaching interpretations of Soviet interests.”\(^{165}\) While the territorial campaign was the first – and boldest – endeavor of the new Georgian Foreign Ministry, it would not be the last, as Kiknaže and his successors attempted to project specifically Soviet Georgian power and interests elsewhere. This postwar episode revealed a broader “synergy between Stalin’s strategic goals and the nationalist aspirations of Communist apparatchiks from the South Caucasus” and, in doing so, cultivated the institutional bases at the national level to fuse Soviet and national interests that could outlast the Stalin era.\(^ {166}\) These Georgian bureaucratic and scholarly nation-builders looked toward the Andersonian tool of “historical maps” as a political and national opportunity, which demonstrated “the antiquity of specific, tightly bounded territorial units. Through chronologically arranged sequences of such maps, a sort of political-biographical narrative of the realm came into being, sometimes with vast historical depth.”\(^ {167}\) Even if Kiknaže, Janašia, Berženišvili and their collaborators were ultimately unsuccessful in their attempt to “unite” historically Georgian lands into a single nation-state in Soviet colors, the failure of this ambition likewise had a lasting impact. The more limited map of the modern Georgian homeland – that is, the precise territory of the Georgian SSR rather than the historical map of greater

167 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 174-175.
Georgia – would serve as the terrain for the post-Stalin process of nationalization and ethnoterritorial consolidation.

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This chapter has shown how census, historiography, and map could be as much local, Georgian institutions of nation-building as Soviet “colonial” technologies of rule or geopolitical projections of power. Yet while a “linkage” described by Anderson existed between census, historiography, and map as productive institutions of nation-building, their interconnectedness was not without “disjunctures.”

Such disjunctures were reflected in the relative success and failure of the census, historiography, and map as the nation-building institutions detailed above. From the perspective of Georgian nation-builders, the initial subordination of Georgian subgroups to a Georgian nationality and eventual elimination of categorical nuances within the official Georgian census nationality provided an important achievement in the all-Union transition from a Soviet ethos of “ethnophilia” to a consolidation of a limited number of entitled, developed nationalities. Accounting for historical distinctions among Kartvelian populations and tracking their consolidation across the centuries motivated scholarly nation-building projects such as sak’art’velos istoria and other research agendas pursued by Janašia, Berženišvili, and their colleagues in the Stalin era. The historical narrative of Georgia that emerged expanded considerably the temporal and geographic reach of

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168 Emphasizing “interconnectedness” and “disjunctures” comes from Hirsch, Empire of Nations, 13.
k’art’veloba through the ages and appropriated histories and territories of Caucasian neighbors into a Georgian story of struggle and agency. The elevation of historical maps to foreign policy claims demonstrated the geopolitical limits of the nation-building imagination, even as local Georgian Party and scholarly institutions continued to impart a sense of the larger mica-cqali among the Soviet Georgian populace. In its most ambitious form, the map component of the Georgian nation-building institutional agenda was, in the event, decidedly less successful than its census and historiography counterparts. Yet the failure of the campaigns for Georgian (and Armenian) territories in Turkey allowed scholars and policymakers in Georgia to concentrate their nation-building gaze on the territory of the Georgian SSR proper, particularly in Abkhazia, Ajaria, and Tbilisi. Turning Kartvelian peasants into Soviet Georgians, to paraphrase Eugen Weber, required the mobilization of new nation-building institutions to construct, consolidate, refine, historicize, and reinforce the ethnoterritorial composition of a modern Soviet Georgia.169

Chapter 2: The Last “Wave”:
Expulsions, Ethnic Consolidation, and the Postwar Experience

Alongside the productive institutions of nation-building examined in the previous chapter – from census-taking to historical writing and territorial irredentism – the Soviet state under Stalin pursued excisional policies within the population to isolate and remove elements believed to threaten the larger body politic. Deportation of alleged enemy elements was therefore a defining feature of Stalin's Soviet Union.170 This was as much the case in Georgia as elsewhere in the USSR.

While deportation and execution based on nationality occurred as early as the 1919 de-Cossackization campaigns, scholars have noted the “gradual shift” in the mid-1930s from the class-based terror of collectivization campaigns and party purges to terror waged against specific nationalities.171 The shift from enemy class to enemy nationality was closely tied to security concerns and perceived foreign threats, whether from Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan, or simply “diaspora

170 “Deportation” typically implies expulsion from one country to another (such as the deportation of an illegal immigrant from the United States to his or her country of citizenship). However, scholars of the Soviet Union tend to use this word in lieu of the official Soviet terms “expulsion” or “special settlement” (vyselenie/spetsposelenie) to refer to the practice of moving large groups from their places of origin to Central Asia or Siberia as punishment. I interchangeable employ the terms deportation and expulsion in this chapter in accordance with the latter application. Pavel Polian argues that around six million people endured "internal forced migrations" between 1919 and 1953 in Against Their Will: The History and Geography of Forced Migrations in the USSR (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003), 4.

nationalities” that were citizens of the Soviet Union yet had external homelands.\textsuperscript{172} Such security imperatives manifested a kind of “Soviet xenophobia,” or “the exaggerated Soviet fear of foreign influence and foreign contamination” which was “ideological, not ethnic.”\textsuperscript{173} Yet an overreliance on security concerns as an explanation for nationally-based deportations underestimates the importance of the Soviet nation-building ideology for the practice of expulsions. While “diaspora nationalities” did present security concerns from the perspective of Soviet leaders, as Francine Hirsch argues, “Soviet leaders were concerned that these nationalities could not be ‘re-invented’ as Soviet nations – national in form, but socialist in content – because other states or class enemies had ‘control’ over the histories and traditions that shaped their national consciousness.”\textsuperscript{174}

Several scholars have developed typologies of Soviet deportations in an effort to situate this Soviet practice along modern, imperial, and wartime population management strategies.\textsuperscript{175} However, most studies focus on prewar and wartime deportations to develop such typologies and therefore struggle to effectively explain postwar expulsions and population exchanges. Pavel Polian, for instance, offers a

\textsuperscript{172} On “external homelands”, see Brubaker, \textit{Nationalism Reframed}, Chapter 3.


\textsuperscript{175} Aleksandr M. Nekrich, \textit{The Punished Peoples: The Deportation and Fate of Soviet Minorities at the End of the Second World War} (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978) was the first to provide an analytical framework for Soviet nationally-based deportations, which was further elaborated by Robert Conquest, \textit{The Nation Killers: The Soviet Deportation of Nationalities} (London: Macmillan, 1970). Whereas scholars arguing for the genocidal components of such policies tend to focus on the North Caucasian and Crimean Tatar cases (1944), scholars emphasizing the security imperative highlight expulsion operations between 1937 and 1941 (such as Koreans, Germans, Finns). Other scholars have focused on the deportation of individual groups, such as Michael Gelb, “An Early Soviet Ethnic Deportation: The Far-Eastern Koreans,” \textit{Russian Review} 54, no. 3 (July 1995): 389–412.
useful distinction between “preventive” and “retributive” deportations that is instructive through 1944 but still relies primarily on a security explanation for the operations. Hirsch’s broader categorization more adequately integrates prewar, wartime, and postwar national deportations as part of a longer trend. In this schema, the types of nationalities subject to deportation in the Soviet Union fell into three main categories: “diaspora nationalities,” with either a nation-state or large community outside the Soviet Union (such as Germans, Finns, or Jews); nationalities that resisted Sovietization efforts (such as Chechens); and nationalities who had lived outside the Soviet Union (in German-occupied lands during World War Two, for instance). These categories more effectively account for changes over time regarding which groups were targeted for expulsion and the purported grounds – including but not limited to security concerns -- for such operations. The shift from the wartime to the postwar period further challenges the simple security explanation for continued expulsions up to 1953.

Postwar deportations and population exchanges built upon Soviet practices honed in the prewar and wartime eras. Yet unlike the prewar and wartime deportations, nationally-based deportations in the postwar period remain understudied, particularly in English-language historiography. Polian estimates that a total of 380,000-400,000 people were deported in the postwar period. While smaller in scale than prewar and wartime deportations, these numbers remain

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178 Polian, *Against Their Will*, 171.
significant and disproportionately affected the Soviet peripheries. In this chapter, I examine three deportation operations that took place in Georgia between 1944 and 1952: the expulsion of Meskhetians, a group of Muslim populations in southern Georgia, in November 1944; Operation “Volna” (wave), which was carried out in June 1949 against Greeks, Turks, and Armenians (suspected former Dashnaks) living in Georgia, elsewhere in the southern Caucasus, and on the Black Sea coast; and the expulsion of suspected Georgian enemy elements under the auspices of the so-called “Mingrelian affair” of 1951-1952. I argue that postwar deportations in Georgia were not strictly a function of perceived external military threats, but also played a role in the more longue durée processes of Soviet territorial nation-building.

Furthermore, a comparative examination of postwar deportations from Georgia sheds light on the peculiar center-periphery dynamics at play between Tbilisi and Moscow in the late Stalin era. As a result of competing Georgian “fiefdoms,” it remains difficult to distinguish between center and periphery in

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179 I use the terms “Greek,” “Turk,” “Dashnak,” etc. in this chapter to reflect the categorization of these persons and groups in Soviet Party and Security archival documents. The categories often obscure the issues of Soviet citizenship or long-term generational residence. For instance, the “Greek” community in Georgia was part of the Pontic Greek diaspora, a group that had lived on the Black Sea coast for hundreds of years. Similarly, the “Turk” label at various points referred to Muslims, Tatars, Azerbaijanis, or subjects of the Ottoman Empire or Turkey. The “Dashnak” label reflects an accusation rather than active participation. As this chapter will show, the manner in which Soviet authorities constructed these categories often encountered practical difficulties during implementation of deportation operations and the rehabilitation and return processes. “Dashnak” refers to a member of the Dashnaktsutiun, or Armenian Revolutionary Federation, an Armenian nationalist party that led the independent Republic of Armenia (1918-1920) and, following the Bolshevik takeover of the Transcaucasus, continued to exist among Armenian diaspora communities. As was the case with “Mensheviks” in Soviet Georgia, “Dashnaks” remained a convenient enemy for Soviet authorities to invoke. On the role of the Dashnaktsutiun in modern Armenian history, see Suny, Looking Toward Ararat and Girard J. Libaridian, Modern Armenia: People, Nation, State (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2004).
Georgia under Stalinism. Was Lavrenti Beria, Georgian First Secretary from 1931 to 1938 and, from there, head of the state security apparatus in Moscow, a Georgian emissary representing his co-ethnics’ interests in Moscow? Or did Beria impose Moscow’s will on Georgia through his robust patronage network in the Caucasus? To what extent did local struggles and issues in Georgia play out in Moscow, among prominent Caucasians such as Beria, Stalin, and Anastas Mikoyan, for example, and vice versa? Postwar deportation campaigns reflected central power struggles and evolving security concerns while at the same time provided an opportunity for local actors to refine the contours of the Soviet Georgian collective.

**Deportations and Georgia**

Like the rest of the Union, Georgia saw multiple waves of repression and deportation throughout the period prior to and during the Second World War, from the participants in a 1924 uprising against Soviet rule to ethnic Germans and other “diaspora” nationalities targeted in the 1937-38 national operations and after.\(^{180}\) With the outbreak of World War Two, Soviet authorities began to view Turkish border regions as potential areas of vulnerability should Turkey decide – as had been the case in World War One – to support Germany.\(^{181}\) German military advances into the Caucasus in 1942 further exacerbated this sense of threat, though German troops never reached the lands of the southern Caucasus republics. From the

\(^{180}\) Rittersporn and Martin focus closely on these “national operations” to make arguments about the national dimension of the Terror.

\(^{181}\) On the geopolitical origins of nationalism in the Caucasus in the World War One period, see Reynolds, *Shattering Empires.*
perspective of Soviet central authorities, the Turkish-Georgian border therefore appeared increasingly vulnerable, in spite of Soviet military successes at Stalingrad and after. In particular, central authorities sought to preempt potential local collaboration with Turkish (and by association, German) power among “Turkish” populations residing in the border region.

These groups, known most commonly as “Meskhetians” or “Meskhetian Turks,” comprised a collection of Muslim populations residing in Axalc’ixe, Aspinža, Axalk’alak’i, and Bogdanov (now Ninocminda) districts in southern Georgia (an area known as Mesxet’i) as well as in Ajaria ASSR. The “Meskhetian Turk” nomenclature obscures the diversity of these populations, which also included Armenian Muslims (known as Khemshins or Khemshils) and Kurds. Further, Russian Imperial and Soviet nomenclature referred to the “Meskhetian Turk” group as, at various points, Tatars, Turks, Muslim Georgians, and Azerbaijanis. The 1926 census classified Meskhetians as Turks (including “Georgian Muslims,” who reportedly categorized themselves as Turks), whereas in the 1939 census most Meskhetians were classified as Azerbaijanis. Khemshins and Kurds appeared as distinct narodnosti in the 1926 census but did not appear in the 1939 list of nationalities. As detailed in the previous chapter with regard to “Georgian”

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182 More commonly known as “Meskhetian Turks,” I use the term “Meskhetian” here to more accurately reflect the scope of the deportation operation, which officially included “Turks”, “Khemshins”, and “Kurds” in this region. Today, this region is called Samcxe-Javaxet’i. Deportation planning and orders did not employ the “Meskhetian Turk” terminology.

183 Georgian CC Secretary P. Kovanov to CC CPSU, September 1957, ssssa (II), f. 14, op. 32, d. 219, ll. 1-2. The 1926 census listed “Tiurk (Azerbaijani Turk)” and “Osman Turk” as narodnosti, whereas “Turk” appeared only as a national minority/diaspora nationality in the 1939 list of nationalities. “Azerbaijani” appeared for the first time in the 1939 list. For comprehensive lists for these censuses, see Hirsch, Empire of Nations, 327-335.
categories, reconciling religious distinctions with ethnonational categories via census technologies challenged Soviet planners and presented opportunities for local actors to pursue agendas according to this framework.\footnote{Ibid. Nat’melaže claims that, at the time of the 1939 census, the Meskhetian population was offered to register as “Georgian,” which most of them rejected. During the June 1944 registration, agents registered “old Georgian” surnames among Meskhetians who had previously been registered with Turkish names, Maqvala Nat’melaže, \textit{demograp’uli proc’esebi sak’art’veloši XX saukunis 40-idan ciebši} (Tbilisi: CIPDD, 2002), 34.} In the preparations for the Meskhetian deportation, the “Azerbaijani” category disappeared in favor of the “Turk” designation, perhaps to more clearly link these populations to Turkey.\footnote{Chislennost’ i natsional’nyi sostav sel’skogo naseleniia pogrаничnykh rajonov Gruzinskoi SSR po dannym perepisi 1939 goda,” sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 18, d. 266, l. 17. They did, however, retain the “Kurd” category, though the numbers listed (3,830) were far below the number of Kurds actually deported to Central Asia (8,627). This perhaps indicates that some Kurds were still classified as Turks. For more on the nomenclature debate, see Tom Trier and Andrei Khanzhin, eds., \textit{The Meskhetian Turks at a Crossroads: Integration, Repatriation or Resettlement?} (Berlin: LitVerlag, 2007).}

Some Georgians’ efforts to include the Meskhetians in the Georgian nation compounded this rather common Soviet challenge of ethno-religious categorization. In an essay included in materials from the Georgian Central Committee, historian Simon Janašia linked Mesxet’i and Lazistan, two regions with historically Kartvelian populations that had been under Ottoman (“Turkish”) rule for 250 years. In “Southern Georgia,” according to Janašia, the Laz and Mesxi populations belonged to the Georgian nationality (\textit{narodnost’}), and the so-called Mesxi spoke Georgian. Though Muslim and often Turkish-speaking due to Ottoman rule, the Mesxi, Janašia insisted, were conscious as Georgians even if they avoid referring to themselves as such.\footnote{“Sochinenie,” S. Janašia (date unknown), sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 25, d. 229, ll. 33-56.} Janašia clearly mobilized the Laz and Mesxi examples for Georgian national purposes, yet in the context of the Meskhetian deportations, this insider-outsider narrative of what (or who) constituted Georgianness came into conflict with...
perceived wartime security imperatives. Therefore, the “frontier zone cleansing”
and concurrent resettlement of entitled nationals to this region was not so tidy:
rather, if one regarded the Meskhetians as Georgian Muslims, as Janašia did, the
1944 deportations could be interpreted as an anti-Georgian measure. Islamicization
did not preclude Georgianness at this time, as the Ajarian and Laz examples show.

In May, Georgian First Secretary Kandid Č’arkviani and Georgian Council of
Ministers Chairman Valerian Bak’raże calculated that 77,500 people (14,860
families) from Axalc’ixe, Adigeni, Aspinža, and Axalk’alak’i districts’ “Turkish
population” were subject to resettlement. At that time, Č’arkviani and Bak’raże
planned for resettlement within Georgia, to a variety of locales in the eastern parts
of the republic more distant from the Turkish border.187 They recommended leaving
the 961 Kurdish families in the border districts in place, yet they deemed it
necessary to deport 200 families of enemies of the people and emigrants to
Kazakhstan.188 In June, Č’arkviani, Bak’raże, and NKVD head Rap’ava extended their
planning to include Bogdanov district and Ajaria ASSR. Rather than simply
surveying the “Turkish” population, these plans included Turks, Kurds, and
“Khemshils” and organized a “special resettlement” of 86,000 people (16,630
households).189

By July 1944, Beria recommended resettling “Turks, Kurds, and Khemshins”
away from the border regions, and a 31 July GKO resolution #6279 ordered the

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187 Č’arkviani and Bak’raże justified the choice of eastern Georgia for resettlement due to its rich
agricultural production potential.
188 Č’arkviani and Bak’raže to Beria, May 1944, sšsssa (II), f. 14, op. 18, d. 266, l. 3. This meant that a
total 14,660 families were to be resettled within Georgia from the border districts.
189 Č’arkviani, Bak’raže, and Rap’ava to Beria, June 1944, sšsssa (II), f. 14, op. 18, d. 266, ll. 20-22.
expulsion of these groups by the NKVD to the Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Uzbek SSRs. The GKO order authorized the deportation of 45,516 people, which the Georgian CC expanded with a 9 August resolution to include Ajaria in the operation. Bugai and Gonov emphasize that the 31 July resolution drew purely on information provided by Georgian NKVD chief Rap'ava. Between 15 and 18 November 1944, NKVD forces deported 91,095 people from Axalc’ixe, Adigeni, Aspinža, and Bogdanov districts and the Ajarian ASSR to the Uzbek, Kazakh, and Kyrgyz SSRs. The Georgian NKVD subsequently established a more strictly controlled border regime along the Turkish border. Party members were among those “Turks” deported. According to Bugai and Gonov, smaller deportations continued under the auspices of this operation until June 1948, though by the end of 1944, 94,955 “Turks”, “Kurds”, and “Khemshins” had already been deported to Central Asia.

With the freeing of lands in the Turkish border region, Č’arkviani and Bak’raže recommended resettling “Georgian populations” to these newly-available lands from other, land-poor regions of Georgia with the (ostensible) hope that the resettled kolkhozniki could improve agricultural output in the border region. Georgian and Armenian populations already residing in the area would remain in

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191 Ibid.
192 Ibid., 217.
193 “Spiski kommunistov nemtsev i tiurkov pereselennykh iz predelov GSSR (1944),” sšsa (II), f. 14, op. 18, d. 626, ll. 7-14.
They planned to resettle 7,000 households (ca. 30,000 people) through this operation no later than 1 March 1945. Resettlement of Georgian *kolkhozniki* to Mesxet’i began as early as December 1944, though the paucity of local men (due to the war) may have delayed some resettlement plans. For example, between 8-11 December, 526 households (2,487 persons) resettled from Borjomi district to Axalc’ixe district. By April, 2,321 households (9,248 persons) had been resettled in Axalc’ixe district. Meanwhile, the 4,009 persons resettled from T’ušet’i and Č’xara districts did not arrive in Aspinža district until May 1945. I unfortunately do not know the total number of Georgians successfully resettled to Mesxet’i in this scheme, but the figures listed above provide some sense of scale. Nevertheless, the “Georgian populations” resettled through this operation resemble a familiar colonial policy of replacing suspect populations with “reliable elements” to secure border or other presumably vulnerable regions.

The November 1944 expulsion of Meskhetians was the last in a series of wholesale deportations in the Caucasus and Black Sea region that took place in 1943.
and 1944. Among these included Karachais (1943), Kalmyks (1944), Chechens and Ingush (February 1944), Balkars (1944), and Crimean Tatars (1944). These groups comprised the paradigmatic “punished peoples” whose cases provided the impetus for early research on Soviet ethnic deportations and are most frequently invoked in arguments about ethnic cleansing and genocide in the Soviet Union.\(^{201}\) While these expulsions ostensibly punished alleged collaboration with or support of German occupiers in 1941-1942, Alexander Statiev has more recently argued that concerns about security and resistance fail to explain why these groups were expelled in 1944. Not only was the front a thousand kilometers away from the Caucasus (and Kalmykia) in 1944, resistance to Soviet rule among North Caucasians declined considerably after spring 1943, becoming “a nuisance rather than a menace,” and Crimean and Kalmyk resistance was nonexistent at that point.\(^{202}\) Diverting scarce NKVD and military resources to facilitate these deportations, distant from the front lines, at a time when war still raged similarly casts doubt on the pragmatic, security necessity of the 1944 operations.

Moreover, the expulsion of Meskhetians and non-Tatar Crimean populations at the same time (including Bulgarians, Armenians, and Greeks) – groups not charged with collaboration with Germans and, in the Meskhetian case, that had not even experienced occupation – suggests more complex and wide-reaching


motives. The Meskhetian and additional Crimean expulsions look more like efforts to cleanse frontier zones than attempts to punish real or suspected collaboration with Germans or resistance to Soviet rule. In Polian’s terminology, these operations were “preventive” – like those that targeted Germans, Finns, and others in 1941 – rather than “retributive,” as was the case with the 1944 North Caucasian and Crimean Tatar expulsions. The concurrent pursuit of these aims beginning in 1944 suggests a shift to postwar expulsion practices, applied to punish simultaneously: groups in newly acquired territories who, due to wartime deeds or past citizenship, were assumed by Soviet authorities to be unable to join the Soviet collective; and groups in territories that did not see German- or Romanian occupation yet whose diversity and past citizenship made the Caucasus borderland potentially vulnerable. Increasingly entitled national republics in Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan would allegedly provide some protection against foreign ties or anti-Soviet inclinations of minority populations, even if such suspicions were ultimately unfounded.

In this context, the Meskhetian case fits within the framework of a preventive deportation, even if the Turkish enemy had yet to be proven. The Meskhetian operation provided a template for future operations in the Caucasus to cleanse developing frontier zones in the unfolding Cold War and further the process of ethnic consolidation in Georgia. With the Soviet occupation of Iranian Azerbaijan, the territorial claims to Kars, Ardahan, and Artvin provinces made by Georgian and

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203 Ibid., 317.
204 Polian, Against Their Will.
Armenian officials (discussed in Chapter 1), and the beginning of repatriation campaigns to Armenia and Georgia (discussed in Chapter 5) all occurring in 1945-1946, the immediate postwar environment provided new opportunities for local actors in the Caucasus to pursue national agendas commensurate with Soviet goals, yet in some ways independent from them.

To take a different example, in a December 1947 letter to Stalin, Azerbaijan First Secretary Bagirov and Armenian First Secretary Arutiunov suggested resettling 130,000 Azerbaijanis living in Armenia to Azerbaijan to purportedly increase agricultural production in certain areas of Azerbaijan. Moreover, the resettlement of the Azerbaijani population from Armenia to Azerbaijan would “ease the conditions of reception and organization of Armenians returning to the homeland from abroad.” Comparable exchanges in Georgia did not occur, but taken alongside the policies described above, one senses the incredible mobility (much of it involuntary) and local maneuvering in the name of nation-building and ethnic consolidation made possible across the Caucasus in the aftermath of World War Two.

**Operation “Volna”**

As Jan Gross has argued, the widespread experience of deportations suggests a continuity between the wartime and postwar periods and, consequently, blurs

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205 Bagirov and Artinov to Stalin, 3 December 1947, National Archive of Armenia (NAA) f. 1, op. 27, d. 47, ll. 137-138. I thank Svetlana Savranskaya of the National Security Archive for sharing this file with me.
clear periodization between war and postwar in the context of this practice. The postwar incorporation of new territories into the Soviet Union and solidification of “people’s democracies” in Eastern Europe entailed ambitious campaigns of population transfer and expulsion. Such policies not only aimed to “excise” from the Soviet body politic those individuals who allegedly collaborated with German or Romanian occupation regimes, but also to territorially consolidate ethnic groups in this historically multiethnic region.

Following the expulsion of alleged Ukrainian nationalists, accomplices, and their families to Central Asia and Siberia in 1947-1948 and operation “Vesna” (May 1948), which expelled nearly 50,000 Lithuanians to Central Asia, expulsion campaigns spread to new regions in 1949. Operation “Pribi”, between January and March 1949, expelled 87,000 alleged kulaks, bandits, nationalists, accomplices, and

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208 Operations “Vistula” (April-July 1947) and “Zapad” (Autumn 1947) are especially illustrative in this regard. Operation “Vistula,” carried out by Polish forces, resettled over 140,000 Ukrainians from the south and east of the country to new Polish territories in the north and west, previously inhabited by Germans, in an effort to force assimilation into Polish culture and distance Ukrainians from the shared Polish-Ukrainian border region. Meanwhile, the first mass deportation in Soviet Ukraine, operation “Zapad,” expelled alleged Ukrainian nationalists and their families from western Ukraine to Siberia and Central Asia. On “ethnic cleansings” in postwar Poland and Ukraine, see Timothy Snyder, “To Resolve the Ukrainian Problem Once and for All’: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ukrainians in Poland, 1943-1947,” Journal of Cold War Studies 1, no. 2 (1999): 86–120; Snyder, Bloodlands, Chapter 10.
their families from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. In April 1949, 40,850 people were expelled from Moldova for alleged collaboration with fascist occupiers, work in German or Romanian police units, participation in illegal religious sects, former White Guard membership, kulak or landowner status, or trading. These “thrice occupied” territories saw expulsions of entitled nationalities for alleged actions undertaken in the prewar, wartime, and postwar period as well as for social statuses deemed incompatible with membership in the Soviet collective.

Newly-acquired Soviet territories in the Baltics and Ukraine contributed greatly to the postwar deportation waves, yet territories in the Caucasus untouched by German troops likewise experienced large operations in the postwar era. In the spring of 1949, plans were underway for a new operation in the larger Black Sea and Caucasus region to “cleanse” the area of politically unreliable minority populations. As early as March, Abkhaz Obkom leaders surveyed the autonomous republic for individuals in three categories: Greeks (Greek subjects, stateless Greeks, and former Greek subjects with Soviet citizenship), Turks (Turkish subjects, stateless Turks, former Turkish or Ottoman subjects with Soviet citizenship, and Armenian former Turkish subjects), and Iranians (Iranian subjects, stateless

\[209\] Nikolai Fedorovich Bugai, *L. Beria - I. Stalinu: “Posle vashikh ukazaniy provedeno sleduiushchee...”* (Moscow: Grif i K, 2011), 350-353. The total number for this operation may be slightly higher, as indicated in a 21 July 1949 letter from S. Kruglov to Malenkov, which stated that “In March-April 1949 kulaks and their families and families of bandits and nationalists were expelled in perpetuity from the Baltic to Krasnoiarsk krai, Novosibirsk, Tomsk, Omsk, Irkutsk, and Amursk oblasts in the amount of 30,630 families, or 94,211 people,” GARF f. R-9479, op. 1, d. 475, ll. 231-232, accessed via Hoover Institution Archives, reel 3.5938.


\[211\] I borrow the term “triple occupation” (Soviet-German-Soviet) from Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 239.
Iranians, and former Iranian subjects with Soviet citizenship) residing on the territory of Abkhazia, whereas other orders included Dashnaks rather than Iranians. Initially, central authorities conceived these plans as disparate orders.

Though as the categorization from Abkhazia shows, local authorities in Tbilisi and Sukhumi adopted a more comprehensive approach toward this aim.

By late May, the USSR Council of Ministers combined these efforts as the date for implementation approached. On 29 May 1949, a top secret Council of Ministers resolution signed by Stalin and M. Pomaznev instructed local and republic MGBs to “expel” (vyselit’) “Dashnaks; Turkish citizens, stateless Turks, and former Turkish citizens who have Soviet citizenship; Greek subjects, stateless Greeks, and former Greek subjects who have Soviet citizenship” from the Georgian, Azerbaijan, and Armenian SSRs and the Black Sea coast. The destinations, by nationality, were Dashnaks to Altai krai (RSFSR); Turks to Tomsk oblast’ (RSFSR); and Greeks to Iuzhno-Kazakhstan and Dzhambul oblasts in Kazakh SSR.

212 Abkhaz Obkom Secretary A. Mgelaže to Č’arkviani, 28 March 1949 and “Tsifrovye svedeniia,” ssssa (II), f. 14, op. 27, d. 252, ll. 60-63. The totals provided in the report, for the Abkhaz ASSR, were 30,245 Greeks, 2,597 Turks (including 43 Armenians), and 278 Iranians.

213 For example, on 17 May 1949, the All-Union CC issued a report (protocol 69) “O vyselenii grecheskih poddannykh, ne imeiushchikh v nastoiasche vremia grazhdanstva, i byvshikh grecheskih poddannykh, priiatykh v sovetskoe grazhdanstvo,” which resolved, in order to rid this region of “politically unreliable elements, to “Oblige the MGB USSR (t. Abakumov) to expel all Greek subjects and former Greek subjects who obtained Soviet citizenship living on the Black Sea coast (Krasnodar krai, Crimea, Kherson, Nikolaev, Odessa, and Ismail oblasts), and in the Georgian and Azerbaijan S.S.R.s to permanent exile” under the supervision of the organs of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, TsKhSD (now RGANI) f. 3, op. 58, d. 179, l. 105, quoted in Bugai and Gonov, Kavkaz, 221-222. Gasandy notes earlier orders to expel Dashnaks from Armenian and Azerbaijan S.S.R.s on 4 April 1949; from Georgia on 11 April 1949; and Turks without citizenship, former Turkish citizens with Soviet citizenship on the Black Sea coast and Transcaucasus on 4 April 1949, RGASPI f. 17, op. 162, d. 40, ll. 140-141, cited in Dzhamil Gasandy, SSSR-Turtsia: Ot neutraliteta k kholodnoi voine, 1939-1953 (Moscow: Tsentr propagandy, 2008), 502-503.

214 “Sovet Ministrov SSR postanovlenie ot 29 maia 1949 g. #2214-856cc ‘Ob obespechenii perevozok, rasseleniiia i trudovogo ustroistva vyselentsev s territorii Gruzinskoi, Armianskoi
Iranians occurred through a separate yet related operation. The order for expulsion framed the targeted populations by subjecthood or citizenship rather than by nationality per se. Yet, Greeks, Turks, and Iranians fit within the official list of national minorities (diaspora nationalities) devised for the 1939 All-Union Census of the Population. The Dashnak label, while an accusation uniquely applicable to Armenians, entailed an explicit ideological content that allegedly distinguished nationalist Dashnaks from loyal Soviet Armenians.

The deportation orders and related documents do not indicate a clear motive for the operation from central authorities in Moscow. However, in a 16 June 1949 report on attitudes about operation “Volna” among Tbilisi residents, Georgian Minister of State Security Nikolai Ruxaże noted to First Secretary Č’arkviani that,

>According to unofficial material in the MGB GSSR, the vast majority [of the population, CK] treats this event as a measure to cleanse the frontier region of the country of a dubious element in connection with the supposed war coming in the near future.

If, as Peter Holquist contends, such surveillance materials served the “purpose not of reporting the population’s collective mood but of managing and shaping it,” then Ruxaže perhaps revealed the local reception of this operation from the perspective of republic authorities charged with implementing it.

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216 “Spetsial’noe sooobshchenie,” N. Ruxaże to Č’arkviani, 16 June 1949, sšsسا (II), f. 14, op. 27, d. 252, l. 83. I examine this report in greater detail in the next section.

We may also glean a degree of local intent from post-operation plans proposed by republic leaders. On 7 June 1949 – a week prior to the operation – First Secretary Č’arkviani and Council of Ministers Chairman Č’xubianišvili wrote to Stalin about their plans to resettle kolkhozniki from other districts of Georgia to the tea, citrus, and tobacco plantations in Abkhazia and Ajaria inhabited by “Greeks and Turks” slated for deportation. To replace the estimated 3,700 Greek and Turk families, Č’arkviani and Č’xubianišvili expected to resettle around 14,000 people from land-poor districts and requested funds from central institutions to facilitate the effort. The USSR Council of Ministers, via Stalin and Pomaznev, passed a resolution approving this effort shortly thereafter that also indicated that property of the special settlers would be transferred to the newly-resettled kolkhozniki.

The Georgian MGB began preparing for operation “Volna” in late March and calculated 7,242 families subject to deportation. These included:

**Turks:** 918 households
- Turkish subjects: 213
- Stateless Turks: 144
- Turkish subjects with Soviet citizenship: 561
Among calculated “Turks” were to be 1,112 men, 975 women, and 770 children, for a total of 2,857.

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218 They urged to conduct the resettlement 10-15 days following “Volna” in order to maintain production in these sectors, particularly tobacco.
219 Č’arkviani and Č’xubianišvili to Stalin, 7 June 1949, ssasa (II), f. 14, op. 27, d. 252, ll. 64-65.
220 “Sovet ministrov SSSR postanovlenie o pereselenii 2800 khoziaistv kolkhoznikov v subtropicheskie raiony Gruzinskoi SSR,” June 1949, ssasa (II), f. 14, op. 27, d. 252, ll. 66-67 and Pomaznev to Č’xubianišvili and Č’arkviani, “Tekst postanovleniiia Soveta Ministrov Soiuza SSR ot 17 iunia 1949 goda za #2417-955,” 18 June 1949, ssasa (II), f. 14, op. 27, d. 252, l. 88.
221 The earliest record I have is a penciled-in calculation of Dashnaks in Ajaria and Abkhazia, prepared by Georgian MGB chief N. Ruxaże for Pitovranov of the USSR MGB on 22 March 1949, followed a week later by Mgelaże’s report from Abkhazia noted above. The post-operation report claims that preparations in the republic began on 9 April 1949.
Greek: 5,619 households
  Greek subjects: 3,989
  Stateless Greeks: 1,218
  Former Greek subjects with Soviet citizenship: 412
Among calculated "Greeks" were to be 7,957 men, 8,224 women, and 7,811 children, for a total of 23,992.

Dashnaks: 705 households
Among calculated Dashnaks were to be 1,131 men, 1,132 women, and 623 children, for a total of 2,886.

In all categories, 10,200 men, 10,331 women, and 9,204 children – a total of 29,735 people – were marked for deportation in operation “Volna” by republic MGB authorities.

Ruxaże and the procurator approved each individual household’s “eviction.”

Designated families lived in 575 localities in 57 districts of Georgia. To carry out this republic-wide task, 58 Georgian SSR MGB agents worked alongside local MGB officials organized around 13 railway points. On the eve of the operation, the USSR Ministry of Communications gave control of all inter-city and lower-level telephone lines to the MGB so that at the time of the operation, telephone services could be discontinued for all but Party and MGB organs. Five days prior to the beginning of the operation, the border guards of the Georgian district of the MIA were warned about the need to protect and strengthen the state border to prevent possible attempts to flee across the border by those subject to expulsion. In total, the operation called upon: 3,945 “operational workers” (from the Georgian MGB and Transcaucasus Military District); 7,159 MGB officers and soldiers; 14,318 persons from Soviet and Party actives; and 3,303 automobiles.
The operation began in urban areas (Tbilisi, Sukhumi, Batumi, P’oti, K’ut’aishi, and Gagra) at 3 a.m. and in more provincial areas at 4 a.m. on 14 June 1949. Deportees had been loaded onto wagons bound for Central Asia and Siberia by midnight on 15 June. In total, 7,220 households (31,606 people) were deported in this operation. The breakdown by category was the following:

Turks………………………………………………831 households (2,508 people)
Greeks………………………………………………5,710 households (26,332 people)
Dashnaks…………………………………………679 households (2,766 people)

While the number of Turks and Dashnaks subject to deportation was higher than the number actually deported, the Georgian MGB deported more Greeks than initially planned. The most significant change occurred in Abkhazia, where some additional families and relatives of the deportees allegedly “voluntarily” joined the evicted. This required a later operation that resulted in the deportation of an additional 1,074 households (5,099 people), consisting overwhelmingly of Greeks. At least 730 of these households were from Sukhumi district. In spite of the “voluntary” nature of their exile, at the time of their deportation the Georgian MGB had already begun to categorize these “dobrovol’tsy,” (volunteers) who were Soviet citizens, according to whether the MGB had any “compromising” material about them. In the majority of cases, the MGB did not manage to gather such

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222 Consisting of 10,240 men, 10,512 women, and 10,854 children.
223 Only 40 Turks and 5 Dashnaks were in this additional group.
material. The USSR MGB did not authorize these additional deportations at the time.

In total, across the entire Georgian SSR, operation "Volna" expelled 8,294 households (36,705 people), including: 845 Turk households (2,548 people); 6,769 Greek households (31,386 people); and 680 Dashnak households (2,771 people). 1,484 wagons in 25 troop trains transported them to their destinations in Central Asia and Siberia. According to the official report, the operation proceeded without "excesses."

According to General Major V. Kakuč’iaia of the Georgian MIA, Operation "Volna" contributed to a total deportation from Georgia in 1949-1950 of 9,923 households (43,344 people). This included:

- Turkish subjects ........................................ 240 households (797 people)
- Stateless Turks ............................................ 241 households (760 people)
- Former Turkish subjects with Soviet citizenship .... 426 households (1,277 people)
- Greek subjects ............................................ 4,246 households (19,531 people)
- Stateless Greeks ........................................... 1,441 households (7,088 people)
- Former Greek subjects with Soviet citizenship .... 421 households (1,623 people)
- Greek "volunteers" ........................................ 1,059 households (5,054 people)
- Former Dashnaks ........................................ 677 households (2,718 people)
- Iranian subjects .......................................... 712 households (2,722 people)
- Stateless Iranians ........................................ 226 households (844 people)
- Former Iranian subjects with Soviet citizenship .... 234 households (930 people)

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224 No title, 1949, šïssa (I), f. 13, sp. 12, ll. 1-186.
225 "Spravka o dobrovol’no vyekhavshikh na spetsposelene grekakh," Commander of Section "A" MGB GSSR Security Lieutenant I. Gudushauri, 21 March 1953, šïssa (I), f. 13, sp. 27, ll. 5-6.
226 "Dokladnaia zapiska," N. Ruxaze and A. Valis to USSR MGB officer N.N. Selivanovskii, June 1949, šïssa (II), f. 14, op. 27, d. 252, ll. 72-77.
227 Kakuč’iaia to Beria, April 1953, šïssa (I), f. 13, sp. 27, ll. 1-3.
The deportation of Iranians occurred in an operation following “Volna.” In October 1949,  Č’arkviani wrote to Stalin regarding the 1,670 households (ca. 5,600 people) with current or former Iranian citizenship, regardless of whether members were Soviet citizens. He recommended resettlement for approximately 4,500 of this group. According to Č’arkviani, many in this population maintained ties and correspondence with contacts in Iran, practiced speculation and other anti-Soviet activities, and those residing in border regions presented a threat to state security due to the potential for espionage among them.228 While Iranian citizenship provided the grounds for deportation, by nationality this contingent was more diverse: of the approximately 5,600 Iranian citizens in Georgia, most were Armenian or Azerbaijani by nationality (2,128 and 1,506, respectively). Smaller nationalities included Iranians, Jews, and Assyrians.229 I unfortunately do not know the breakdown by nationality of the nearly 4,500 “Iranians” ultimately deported or have further details about the operation, but the correlation between Č’arkviani’s October proposal and the Iranian totals in the comprehensive 1949-1950 list point to the conclusion that his proposal was carried out sometime between late 1949 and 1950.

The geography of the 1949 deportations from Georgia was considerably broader than what Moscow authorities ordered and what scholars and advocates have portrayed. While many of the expulsions took place in Abkhazia and Ajaria, the operation extended throughout the republic. Persons subject to expulsion resided in

228 Č’arkviani to Stalin, October 1949, sšss (II), f. 14, op. 25, d. 229, ll. 4-5.
46 different districts (raiony) in Georgia (of 67 total), including in Abkhaz and Ajaria ASSRs and South Ossetia AO. Most Greeks were expelled from Sukhumi, Gul’ripskii, Gudauta, and Batumi; Turks -- from Sukhumi and Batumi districts; and Dashnaks -- from Axalk’alak’i, Axalc’ixe, and Bogdanov districts and Tbilisi. In Tbilisi, Dashnaks and Turks were the largest groups of deportees. Sukhumi and Gul’ripskii districts were the largest total expulsion areas, whereas some districts had only a few families expelled. Operation “Volna” largely took place on the Black Sea coast, but not exclusively. Further, the rather scant scholarship on this operation tends to portray it as levied against Greeks or Armenians rather than a broader swath of potentially “unreliable elements” in the Caucasus. Again, though “Greeks” comprised most of the “Volna” deportees, the operation still expelled thousands of Dashnaks, Turks, and later, Iranians to Central Asia and Siberia.

Moreover, as noted in the USSR Council of Ministers’ order, the 1949 operations reached throughout the southern Caucasus. An estimated 80,000 Armenians were deported from Armenia at this time in “Volna” and other operations, among whom 40,000 were Armenians who had been recently repatriated (1946-1949) from abroad, a project discussed further in Chapter 5. Armenians typically fell either under the “Dashnak” or “former Turkish subject”

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230 “Statisticheskie dannye o sem’iakh, podlezhashchikh vyseleniiu iz Gruzinskoi po dannym na 30 aprelia 1949 g., N. Ruxaže, 30 April 1949, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 27, d. 252, ll. 109-127.
232 Lehmann, Eine sowjetische Nation, 110.
charge, as many Armenian refugees from the Ottoman Empire found their way to Armenia and Georgia after 1915.\footnote{On aid and post-World War One repatriation schemes for Armenian refugees, see Jo Laycock, “Displacing, Circulating and Resettling Armenians: Transcaucasia and Transnational Relief and Resettlement in the Inter-War Period,” presentation at the American Research Institute of the South Caucasus’ “Caucasus Connections” Conference, Indiana University, 5 April 2014 and “Relief, Resettlement and the Construction of Armenian Identities in Early Soviet Transcaucasia,” paper presented at the Association for the Study of Nationalities 14\textsuperscript{th} World Conference, Columbia University, 26 April 2014.} On 14 June 1949 alone, as part of this operation, 12,000 Armenians were expelled from the Armenian SSR to Siberia.\footnote{Lehmann, \textit{Eine sowjetische Nation}, 110-111.} Dzhamil Gasanly credits Azerbaijani First Secretary Bagirov and (to a lesser extent) Georgian First Secretary Č’arkviani with identifying the potential Dashnak threat among new repatriates in the south Caucasus and bringing this issue to Moscow’s attention.\footnote{Gasanly, \textit{SSSR-Turtsiia}, 495-502. Gasanly focuses overwhelmingly on Bagirov’s involvement via documentary evidence from Azerbaijan archives, yet in Tbilisi archives I did not encounter similar evidence regarding Č’arkviani on this issue. Though Gasanly also conducted research in the Georgian Party archive, his Č’arkviani source is instead a secondary source that I have not managed to find.}

The initial plan for the entire “Volna” operation, as estimated by USSR Minister of State Security S. Kruglov, anticipated expelling a total of 12,500 households from the Caucasus and Black Sea coast.\footnote{S. Kruglov to L. Beria, 26 May 1949, GARF f. R-9479, op. 1, d. 476, l. 1, accessed via Hoover Institution Archives, reel 3.5938.} The actual number expelled exceeded the plan, and the largest number of expulsions took place from Georgia.

Expulsions occurred from:
Odessa, Nikolaevskii, Kherson, and Izmail oblasts (Ukrainian SSR).....476 people (mostly Greeks)  
Krasnodar krai......5,233 people (164 Dashnaks, 4394 Greeks, 673 Turks)  
Azerbaijan SSR......3,058 people (323 Greeks, 1,045 Dashnaks, 1,690 Turks)237  
Armenian SSR....12,000 people (Dashnaks)238  
Georgian SSR.....36,705 people

“What are they doing? After all, we’re not Germans.”239

For all their contributions to our understanding of the operational mechanisms of deportation, many studies of Soviet deportations emphasize the comprehensive over the individual, providing estimates of total numbers, the paths of deportation, possible motivations, and the financial burden on the country.240 However, the experiences of those individuals and families affected by deportation remains a crucial part of this story.241 This includes not only deportees themselves, but also family and friends left behind, former neighbors, and newly resettled Georgians from other parts of the republic. Each group offered different understandings of deportation and provided a range of responses to these policies, particularly in their engagements with the state. In this section, I draw from MGB

238 Lehmann, Eine sowjetische Nation, 110-111.  
239 Georgii Iakovlevich Chakhalian, a worker at the Tbilisi Sapurtrest, reported in “Spetsial’noe soobshchenie,” Ruxaże to Ćarkviani, 16 June 1949, šsssa (II), f. 14, op. 27, d. 252, l. 85.  
240 Bugai, L. Beriia - I. Stalini; Polian, Against Their Will; V.N. Zemskov, Spetsposelentsy v SSSR, 1930-1960 (Moscow: Nauka, 2003); and Nat’melaze, demograp’iuli procesebi sak’art’veloši.  
241 For an illuminating approach to understanding the lived experience of deportation – in this instance, of Poles to Kazakhstan – see Kate Brown, A Biography of No Place: From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004). I focus less on the experience of life as a deportee in Central Asia or Siberia than on the process of deportation and how deportees understood the reasons for their exile.
case files, petitions, memoirs, and MGB svodki to convey the experience and reception of operation “Volna” among affected sectors of the population. In doing so, witnesses reveal how they understood the reasons for deportation, constructed their autobiographical narratives when engaging with the state, and protested their sentences. Such eyewitness perspectives also illuminate vernacular understandings of such concepts as nation-building, socialism, citizenship, nationality, and foreign threats that pervade the discourse surrounding deportations.

Republic and local organs had been preparing for operation “Volna” since at least March 1949. The visit of an MGB official to the homes of designated deportees still came as a surprise to those families affected, and the reasons for deportation remained unclear for many of the deportees. Arpenik Aleksanian, a young Tbilisi native who was Armenian by nationality, recorded in her diary that her father heard rumors around town on 13 June that “Greeks and Ajarians” were to be expelled and that someone asked about “our Greeks.”242 When an MGB captain arrived at their home later that day and informed the Aleksanians that they were to be expelled from the city as former Turkish citizens, Aleksanian noted, “Not one of us could understand that shock.”243 The captain gave the family thirty minutes to collect their belongings. Nonna Erifriadi, young Greek resident of Batumi, recalled that on 13 June, she went to a friend Ioakimidi’s home to borrow a book and found it in complete disarray. Upon surveying the situation, “With difficulty I realized that the expulsion was prepared for all Pontic Greeks. Returning home, I told father

243 Ibid., 59.
everything.” 244 Nonna and her father surmised that rumors about expulsion of Greeks probably only applied to those Greeks with foreign citizenship, such as Ioakimidi. 245 Neither Aleksanian nor Erifriadi struggled to comprehend the possibility of another’s expulsion, yet both girls failed to understand why their own families — as Armenian and Greek Soviet citizens — ultimately faced deportation. Oral history interviews conducted among Greek deportees suggest that at least some Greeks with close ties to the Party had limited knowledge of an impending operation, but that for the majority of respondents, their expulsion came as a complete surprise. 246

Some deportees remained unaware of the reason for their expulsion long after they arrived in Kazakhstan or Siberia. Levon Nikolaevich Matinov claimed he only learned that he was sent to Altai krai as an “active Dashnak-nationalist” a year after the operation took place (May 1950). 247 Indeed, in an earlier petition from December 1949, Matinov described how he and his family, “together with other Armenians were expelled from Tbilisi by administrative order to Altai krai in permanent exile.” 248 Similarly, Il’ia Semenovich Bidzhamov, an Assyrian born in the Ottoman Empire who obtained Soviet citizenship in 1923 after fleeing to the Russian Empire in 1915, as of December 1949 did not know the reason for his

245 Ibid.
246 Hionidou and Saunders, 1484.
247 “Zaiavlenie,” Matinov Levon Nikolaevich to MGB GSSR, 11 July 1952, sëssa (l), f. 13, d. 46, t. 3, l. 16.
248 “Zaiavlenie,” Matinov Levon Nikolaevich to N.M. Shvernik, 11 December 1949, sëssa (l), f. 13, d. 46, t. 1, l. 12.
family's deportation to Tomsk oblast' from Tbilisi. Bidzhamov perhaps suspected his expulsion was related to his “Turkish” origins because he emphasized his refugee background and enthusiasm for Soviet citizenship in his petitions as a means to correct this biographical liability. Matinov’s initial interpretation focused on nationality rather than citizenship and, subsequently, attempted to refute ideological charges.

Confusion also existed among deportees regarding whether their expulsion was due to who they were (by nationality or citizenship) or what they allegedly did (namely, participated in anti-Soviet groups or maintained ties to Turkey). Autobiographical statements of deportees provide contradictory accounts. As she and her family arrived in Avlabari to embark, Aleksanian observed that nearby they had gathered “nearly all the Armenians of Tbilisi, and there are even more Armenians in Tbilisi than Georgians.” Upon further reflection during the journey, she wondered:

We could not understand just why they expel us, what we had done wrong. If they expel such honest people, just why they left behind all gamblers, speculators, thieves, and robbers. They did not expel a single Georgian with us. Why did they expel us? If they expel us for being born in Turkey, as former Turkish subjects, then in fact they, my parents, fled from Turkey at the time of the Armenian massacres (rezni) in 1915. And Papa left Turkey in 1912 in search of work. They obtained Soviet citizenship in 1924. In Tbilisi already for 25 years they are considered to be Soviet citizens, enjoy all the same rights as

249 “Zaiavlenie,” Bidzhamov I'a Semenovich to MGB SSSR, 12 December 1949, ssssa (I), f. 13, d. 41, t. 1, ll. 17-20.
250 Aleksanian, 67. Avlabari is a neighborhood in Tbilisi with predominantly Armenian residents.
everyone has since 1936 [referring to the 1936 “Stalin Constitution,” CK].

Aleksanian correctly deduced that her parents’ former Turkish citizenship provided the grounds for deportation, yet she conveyed her experiences as a more broadly Armenian problem. Not all Armenians in Tbilisi had fled the Ottoman Empire in 1915, yet in Aleksanian’s mind, the city’s entire Armenian population appeared subject to deportation in this operation. With his similar refugee background, Bidzhamov thanked the “wise Lenin-Stalin national democratic policy” for granting him and his wife Soviet citizenship and saving them from “the wild and barbaric national oppression and persecution at the hands of Turkish powers in the First Imperialist War.” Again, if former Turkish citizenship was the crime, lavishly demonstrating commitment to Soviet authorities and laws seemed a logical strategy for appeal.

Aleksanian does not mention Dashnak-nationalist charges in her diary. For Solomon Vartanovich Postoian and his family, who were deported to Altai krai from Tbilisi, the Dashnak issue proved central. For these charges, Georgian MGB officials relied upon testimony and accusations from 1938, in which a group of witnesses in Nar-Baiazet, Armenian SSR, claimed Postoian was an active member in local Dashnak party activities – an accusation Postoian completely denied in petitions to

251 Ibid., 69. The reference to 1936 is most likely regarding the Soviet constitution of that year, which also lifted restrictions on categories of citizenship and associated rights. See Alexopoulos, Stalin’s Outcasts.
252 “Zaiavlenie,” Bidzhamov Il’a Semenovich to MGB SSSR, 12 December 1949, süssa (I), f. 13, d. 41, t. 1, ll. 17-20.
Georgian authorities. His son, Migran Solomonovich Postoian, emphasized his own service in the Great Patriotic War as a way to distance himself from Dashnak charges made against his father. Matinov likewise denied any involvement with the Dashnak party, claiming “I was never a member of this party, that is, neither an active nor passive Dashnak. And as for nationalism, is it forbidden to love one’s long-suffering people?...After all, I was born and lived in Georgia, which is just as close to me as Armenia.”

Residents of Tbilisi surveyed by Georgian MGB officials in the immediate aftermath of the operation depict more confident portrayals of the reasons for deportation. As noted above, the opinions highlighted in this report perhaps reflect more accurately the preoccupations and intentions of the state than genuine popular opinion. The deportations from Tbilisi primarily consisted of alleged Dashnaks, therefore the report focuses on Armenians. Writing to Čarkviani on 16 June 1949, MGB chief Ruxaže warned that, while “In most cases, the action to expel is regarded as extremely necessary in today’s international situation...among a

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255 “Zaiavlenie,” Matinov Levon Nikolaevich to MGB GSSR, 11 July 1952, sšssa (I), f. 13, d. 46, t. 3, l. 16. Shortly thereafter, Matinov further questioned the motive behind deportation, noting that he was initially registered as an “active Dashnak-nationalist” which soon changed to “expelled from the Black Sea coast,” a justification he found curious considering the fact that Tbilisi is not located on said coast, “Zaiavlenie,” Matinov Levon Nikolaevich to A.I. Mgelaže, 17 July 1952, sšssa (I), f. 13, d. 46, t. 3, ll. 21-22.
known part of the Georgian population, such a necessity is construed with clearly nationalist positions.”

So-called “characteristic” responses from workers and members of the intelligentsia emphasized the coming war and the role of non-Georgians in the republic. Šalva Jikia, a radio committee worker, remarked, “I was convinced that war will break out this summer. No wonder they continuously send trains of troops to the Turkish-Iranian borders.” S.I. Čik’ovani, a member of the Georgian Writers’ Union, went further, noting “The action is correct and useful, but it created such a mood in the masses as if there would soon be war. I know that today, for example, someone, in anticipation of war, even began to stock up on groceries.”

While these observations tend toward the practical, other interviewees aimed more directly at the targeted populations. Vasili Kakauriže, an engineer, commended the action “to purge (ochistit’) Georgia completely of dubious elements. Among Georgians they scarcely find those who would not commend this action.”

Theatre historian S.L. Gersamia, meanwhile, explained, “There’s no need to stand on ceremony with two-faced people. It simply angers me that many Armenians, it seems, were Turkish citizens. Indeed Turks hate Armenians, so why include [them] in their citizenship […] it seems, such individuals need this [Turkish citizenship, CK]

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256 “Spetsial’noe soobshchenie,” Ruxaże to Čarkviani, 16 June 1949, ssssa (II), f. 14, op. 27, d. 252, l. 83.
257 Ibid., l. 85.
258 Ibid., l. 84.
259 Ibid., l. 85.
in order to more easily speculate.” Konstantin Ninua, of the Academy of Sciences, proclaimed,

Finally, the city is released from the Armenians. This is the positive side of the activities undertaken. The only pity is that this action is partial (nosit chastichnyi kharakter), and the issue of unburdening Georgia is not brought to a logical end, insofar as a significant amount of the Armenian population still remains in Georgia.

Poet D.A. Gač’eč’ilaże anticipated that “under various pretexts nearly all non-Georgians will gradually be expelled from Georgia.”

Furthermore, the part of the Armenian population that was willing to comment on the operation regarded it as “oppression” of Armenians. Aram Nikitich Ter’ian, a senior scholar at the Academy of Sciences’ Institute of Minerals observed, “I remember that the Mensheviks wanted to unburden Tiflis of Armenians, but even they did not take practical steps in that direction. Not a social moment, but a national [moment, CK] appears as the principle basis for this action.” Georgii Grigorian, a technician, explained, “They began to pursue us Armenians in Georgia because we are smarter (umnee) than Georgians. It is a pity only of unfortunate people that they are sent elsewhere like cattle. It does not suit us.” Homemaker Anna Mikhailovna Chitaeva (described in the report as Armenian by nationality) reported, “There were appalling scenes. One woman even lost her mind. Rumor has it that in Vake district Armenians chopped up their
belongings with an axe because they were not allowed to take them with them.”

Like the Georgian Tbilisi residents quoted above, the “characteristic” Armenian respondents framed the Tbilisi expulsions as unambiguous national offenses against Armenians simply for being Armenian. The term “Dashnak” does not appear anywhere in Ruxaže’s report, in spite of the fact that Dashnaks and Turkish citizens were the stated objects of the operation.

The security imperatives and Georgian chauvinism offered by Tbilisi residents as reasons for the expulsion of Armenians were likewise mentioned by Greek deportees in oral history interviews. According to some respondents, Greeks were expelled from Georgia to clear the border region and make room for Georgian settlement in those regions. Others offered the additional explanation that such policies altered the ethnic balance in Abkhazia, where most of the Greeks in Georgia resided prior to expulsion, in the favor of ethnic Georgians.

With time, deportees and their families came to realize the scope of the charges against them as well as ways to appeal to authorities for amnesty, return to their places of origin, and return of property (or compensation for loss thereof). Immediately following the operation, the Georgian MGB began to receive petitions (zaiavlenia) regarding the deportees and requests to return to their places of residence in Georgia. The overwhelming majority of these letters came from Tbilisi

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266 Ibid.
267 Hionidou and Saunders, 1483. The twenty in-depth interviews for this article took place between 2006 and 2008. Hionidou and Saunders note that, while deportees themselves provided the security and ethnic balance explanations, their children emphasized the role such operations played in populating and developing Kazakhstan, a much more optimistic interpretation of the operation.
(e.g. 230 from Tbilisi, yet only 18 “from the periphery”) as early as 20 June 1949. By April 1953, the Georgian MIA processed 1,714 petitions and 213 cases about expulsions.

The petition campaign increased significantly after 1953, as waves of amnesties swept the Union. Among the “Volna” special settlers, the Greek Soviet citizens deported from Abkhazia lobbied most actively for the right to return and for property compensation. Given their numbers, this perhaps is not surprising. However, one particular group of Greek “Volna” deportees presented a distinguishing set of challenges for the newly-installed Georgian leadership: those additional 5,000 Greek “dobrovol’tsy” deported from Abkhazia during the “Volna” operation on Abkhaz Obkom First Secretary Mgelaže’s orders. Arrangements to compensate financially Greek “dobrovol’tsy” for their lost property in Abkhazia began in December 1951, but petitioners among this group continued to write thereafter. Managing and responding to these claims fell to the post-1953 leader of Georgia, First Secretary Vasil Mžavanaże. Yet in their letters, Greek “dobrovol’tsy” brought to light the dynamics at play in postwar Abkhazia and the state of inter-ethnic relations in the autonomous republic.

Greek petitioners viewed the 1949 deportations as a problem specific to Abkhazia and as part of a broader trend of alleged “Georgification” of the

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268 “Spravka s postupivshikh v MGB GSSR zaiaavlenniakh po voprosu vyseleniia spetskontingente s 14/6/1949 g.,” MGB GSSR Major Xo’štaria, 20 June 1949, sëssa (II), f. 14, op. 27, d. 252, l. 82.
269 Kakuč’ia to Beria, April 1953, sëssa (I), f. 13, sp. 27, ll. 1-3.
270 Dobson, Khrushchev’s Cold Summer.
autonomous republic initiated by Beria and continued by Mgelaże. For example, in a 1955 petition to Council of Ministers Chairman Bulganin, Dmitri Khristoforovich Mistakidi highlighted the spurious circumstances of the "voluntary" expulsion of Greek Soviet citizens from Abkhazia during operation "Volna." For Mistakidi, this violation of rights had deeper underpinnings:

The entire five-year period of work of the racist Mgelaże prior to our expulsion, characterized by inhumane oppression, discrimination, and other crimes, took on clear signs of genocide, with brutal chauvinism, carried out not only in relation to Greeks, but also in general. The preparatory five-year "work" of Mgelaże had its apotheosis in the events of 14-21 June 1949.

In a series of petitions to Moscow authorities in late 1953, E.S. Makridi employed a similar discourse on race to describe the position of Greek Soviet citizens in Abkhazia, comparing the position and rights of Greeks in Abkhazia to that of "negroes" in America due to the policies carried out by Beria and Mgelaże. Such petitions distinguished between Beria, Mgelaże, and their clients, on the one hand, and the broader Georgian populace. For instance, Mistakidi described an incident in which a local militia leader, Guguchia, allegedly organized a crowd of Georgians to interrupt a Greek funeral procession (two weeks prior to operation "Volna," coincidentally or not) to signal the fact that Greeks did not deserve land in the area.

According to Mistakidi’s account,

This provocative attack was instigated by local powers to confirm that these Georgians are a "savage people" (dikii narod), that they can kill someone without hesitation if he asks for his home to be

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273 sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 28, d. 323, ll. 5-16.
returned...But it is known that there have been no savages on the earth for a long time and Georgians are not savages and not as savage as they [Guguchia, CK] want to present them, but among them [Georgians, CK] are savage nationalists and this is without a doubt because we are victims of this nationalism.274

Mistikidi distinguished between “local powers,” who allegedly sought to incite fear among Greeks, and Georgian neighbors who otherwise lived alongside Greek populations without incident. Yet the influence of such “savage nationalists” – even if in the minority among local Georgians – proved instrumental in how Greeks comprehended their overall treatment in Abkhazia as well as the “Volna” operation specifically. As was the case with petitioners, memoirists, and eyewitnesses, many “dobrovol’tsy” interpreted the “Volna” deportation as an explicit attack on Greeks as Greeks, made most clear by the expulsion of Soviet citizen and foreign citizen alike, even if this departed from the purported ideological and security imperative of the operation. Such grievances were sufficient enough to garner attention and involvement of Union-level authorities by 1955.275 As the next chapter shows, exposing and attempting to resolve such tensions from the immediate postwar period proved a key part of a more complex process of de-Stalinization and national re-negotiation in Georgia.

275 See especially RGANI f. 5, op. 31, d. 25, ll. 69-95, 117-169.
Deportations as a Soviet practice required close collaboration between central decision-making authorities in Moscow and local implementers at the republic and district levels to carry out the operations. Preparations and planning for the Meskhetian and “Volna” operations show the important roles played by actors within Georgia, from First Secretary Č'arkviani and Abkhaz Obkom head Mgelaże to the provincial MGB agent or border guard. In the case of Georgia, distinguishing between central and local agency is complicated by the overarching role of Lavrenti Pavle ze Beria, his continued influence in Georgia, and the mechanism of his police apparatus in facilitating deportation operations. As a result, postwar deportations in Georgia remain intimately linked to cadre politics and power struggles in Georgia and in Moscow between the end of the war and 1953.276

When Stalin promoted Beria from First Secretary of the Georgian CP to head the all-Union NKVD in 1938, his replacement in Georgia, Kandid Nestoris ze Č'arkviani, continued to foster the republic’s “cult of Beria” as Beria attempted to maintain Georgia and Transcaucasia as his “fiefdom” from Moscow through an extensive patronage network in Caucasian and secret police institutions.277 Though


\[277\] Suny, The Making of the Georgian Nation, 277-278 and Fairbanks, “Clientelism and Higher Politics in Georgia,” 339-341. Suny argues that Beria represented a new type of Soviet leader in Georgia, one who built his legitimacy in the Cheka rather than as a revolutionary (in contrast to Sero Orjonikidze) and one who lacked a local patronage network at the time of his promotion to first secretary in 1931. Instead, Beria’s power stemmed directly from Stalin. Suny proposes that Beria was an attractive option precisely because he was a local who knew well the environment yet was unencumbered by
Č'arkviani managed to develop his own networks within Georgia as First Secretary, Beria (and Stalin) remained members of the Georgian CC and retained much control over issues in the republic.\textsuperscript{278} One important manifestation of this was the absence of the Russian second secretary customary in other republics.\textsuperscript{279} As Ronald Grigor Suny has shown, Beria maintained his “fiefdom” in Georgia by acting as Stalin’s interlocutor on Georgia and managing the information Stalin received about his native land.\textsuperscript{280}

Beria’s influence in Georgia, however, remained contingent upon Stalin’s favor. If the postwar irredentist scheme for Kars, Ardahan, and Artvin provinces depicts the apex of Beria’s influence over Stalin, several subsequent maneuvers sought to reduce Beria’s power in Georgia and in Moscow. In the context of the Leningrad Affair and the Zhdanovshchina, for instance, several of Beria’s clients in Georgia were demoted between 1946-1948.\textsuperscript{281} The more significant move came on

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\textsuperscript{278} Indeed, Oleg Khlevniuk shows that this relationship worked both ways, as Georgians in Georgia appealed to Beria in Moscow on their behalf to resolve local disputes. Khlevniuk describes these relations as “political intimacy,” whereby citizens viewed Beria as the republic’s protector in Moscow, Oleg Khlevniuk, “Kreml’ – Tbilisi. Chistki, kontrol’ i problemy gruzinskogo natsionalizma v pervoi polovine 1950-x godov,” paper presented at workshop on “Georgian Nationalism and Soviet Power,” Joensuu, Finland, 27 August 2012.


\textsuperscript{280} Suny, \textit{The Making of the Georgian Nation}, 287. The institution of the Russian (or, occasionally, Slavic) second secretary ostensibly served to check any overly nationalistic tendencies in non-Russian republics. Georgia did not have a Russian secretary until 1956.

\textsuperscript{281} Bak'raže, Sturua, Šaria, and Rap'ava were all demoted or removed from their positions in this period.
9 November 1951 with the revelation of the so-called “Mingrelian affair,” a direct attempt orchestrated by Stalin to break up Beria’s patronage network in Georgia.\footnote{282}{Cadre shifts in Moscow preceded the affair, in particular the replacement of Beria’s client Abakumov with S.D. Ignat’ev as head of the MGB. Ignat’ev played a key role with Stalin in conceiving the Mingrelian affair charges.}

Officially an attack on corruption among officials of Mingrelian (\textit{megreli}) descent in Georgia affiliated with Second Secretary M.I. Baramia, the Mingrelian affair marked Stalin’s re-entry into Georgian affairs in a pronounced way.\footnote{283}{The resolution technically addressed “corruption in Georgia” and the “anti-Party group of comrade Baramia.” It also explicitly stated that “This group consists of Mingrelian nationalists,” “Postanovlenie Politiuboro o vzatochnichestve v Gruzii i ob ‘antipartiinoi gruppe t. Baramia’,” 9 November 1951, RGASPI f. 17, op. 3, d. 1091, ll. 72-75, reprinted in O. V. Khlevniuk, ed., \textit{Politbiuro TsK VKP(b) i Sovet Ministrov SSSR 1945-1953} (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2002), 249-251. In Mgelaże’s memoir, he describes (in an interrogation by Beria, no less) a conversation with Stalin regarding the alleged “Mingrelian-nationalist group.” Mgelaže recalled asking Stalin how it could be a nationalist group if Mingrelians do not constitute a distinct nation. Stalin reportedly responded that some Mingrelians do not consider themselves Georgians and that previously some sought autonomy for Mingrelia, Mgelaże, \textit{Stalin: Kakim ia ego uznal}, 252. I discussed the amalgamation of Kartvelian subgroups into the Georgian nationality in Chapter 1. For more on earlier movements for Mingrelian autonomy, see Blauvelt, “The ’Mingrelian Question.’”} Though at this time Beria himself, also a Mingrelian, was not targeted, the arrests and purges among Georgian-Mingrelian officials for a time significantly reduced Beria’s political power in the republic.\footnote{284}{Though easily labeled a Mingrelian, Beria did not exhibit any particular affinity for a Mingrelian identity and in fact actively worked to combat such policies in the early 1930s. Instead, the “Mingrelian” charge permitted Stalin to attack Beria’s network without attacking Beria directly, Blauvelt, “March of the Chekists,” 85.} This led to massive personnel changes, including the removal of Mingrelians Baramia, Minister of Justice (and former republic MGB head until 1948) A.N. Rap’ava, Procurator V. la. Šonia, and others. In March 1952, First Secretary Ć’arkviani (who was not a Mingrelian but was reprimanded for permitting such manifestations to occur on his watch) was replaced by Ak’ak’i Ivanis že Mgelaže, who had managed the Abkhaz ASSR since 1943 and the newly-established
The purge took on several stages between late 1951 and early 1953 and extended to secondary and tertiary levels of Party and government officials.\textsuperscript{286}

Though the Politburo resolution of 9 November focused on the Mingrelian group, it noted the danger of the potential rise of other provincial “bosses” in K’art’li, Kaxet’i, Imeret’i, Guria, and Rača if the so-called “principle of Mingrelian patronage” was not rebuffed properly, leading to the deterioration of Georgia’s Party into a series of “provincial Party principalities.”\textsuperscript{287} The purges affected the entire republic, yet they disproportionately focused on western Georgia (Mingrelia, Guria, Svanet’i, and Imeret’i) and Tbilisi and, later on, Kaxet’i and Ajaria. Mountainous areas of northeastern Georgia, Mesxet’i, and South Ossetia and Abkhazia ASSRs saw less of an impact.\textsuperscript{288} The geographic distribution of the purges makes sense for several reasons. First, the northeastern mountainous areas were also less populous and more remote than more urban areas elsewhere in the republic. Second, the perceived threat to the Mesxet’i region had already been addressed in 1944 with the

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\textsuperscript{285} “Postanovlenie Politbiuro o polozhenii del v kompartii Gruzii,” 27 March 1952, RGASPI f. 17, op. 3, d. 1093, ll. 36-39, reprinted in Khlevniuk, \textit{Politbiuro TsK VKP(b)}, 352-354. Mgelaže was born in 1910 in Ozurget’i district and spent his childhood in Gudauta, Abkhazia. As a Georgian in Soviet Abkhazia, Mgelaže became the head of the autonomous republic’s and Georgia’s Komsomol, served on the Caucasus front during World War Two, and served as the Abkhaz Obkom and Sukhumi Gorkom first secretary from 1943 to 1951. In an effort to provide greater oversight in Georgia, at the time of the “Mingrelian Affair,” central authorities divided Georgia into two new oblasti (east and west) – Tbilisi and Kutaisi. They were abolished in April 1953, when Beria began to restore his network in Georgia.

\textsuperscript{286} Conquest goes so far as to note that the Georgian purges in this period were comparable (“in dismissals rather than deaths”) to those during the \textit{Yezhovshchina}, Robert Conquest, \textit{Power and Policy in the USSR: The Study of Soviet Dynastics} (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1961), 144.

\textsuperscript{287} “Postanovlenie Politbiuro o vziatochnichestve v Gruzii i ob ‘antipartinoi gruppe t. Baramiia,’” 9 November 1951, RGASPI f. 17, op. 3, d. 1091, ll. 72-75, reprinted in Khlevniuk, \textit{Politbiuro TsK VKP(b)}, 349-351.

\textsuperscript{288} Fairbanks, “Clientelism and Higher Politics in Georgia,” 354-355.
Meskhetian deportations and Georgian resettlements. Finally, in Abkhazia especially, Mgelaże maintained his own patronage network and had already cleansed the republic of potentially suspect populations in operations such as “Volna” by the time of the Mingrelian affair.

Charles Fairbanks suggests that the attacks waged against Beria’s clients indicate that clienteles in Georgia “may have had an ethnic basis,” demonstrating a “surprising exception to the atomization practiced by the Stalin regime.”\(^\text{289}\)

Expanding on Fairbanks’ point, we may even consider the Mingrelian affair alongside other deportation waves in the republic discussed earlier in this chapter. In addition to the high political purges, over 11,200 Georgians were deported to Central Asia on 26 December 1951 according to the 19 November Politburo resolution “On the deportation of enemy elements from the Georgian SSR.”\(^\text{290}\) While the Mingrelian affair and ties to Baramia’s alleged nationalist ring provided the grounds for expelling “enemy elements,” this umbrella term concealed several more specific categories for the accused and their families, who were also deported to the Kazakh SSR at this time: ties to émigré Georgians; ties to Ajarian or Azerbaijani émigrés; suspected smugglers, border crossers, and accomplices with ties to Turkish intelligence services; recent “reemigrants” to Georgia from France, Iran, and China;

\(^{289}\) Fairbanks, “Clientelism and Higher Politics in Georgia,” 353.

\(^{290}\) The 9 November 1951 resolution ordered only to prosecute the anti-Party and anti-state activities of Baramia and his “nationalistic group,” though this rather vague charge was followed by a 16 November (29 November in the Council of Ministers) order that arrested and deported to Kazakhstan 37 purported leaders and more than 11,200 others, “Zapiska L.P. Berii v prezidium TsK KPSS o nepravil’nom vedenii dela o tak nazvyvaemoi mingrel’skoj natsionalisticheskoj gruppe,” 8 April 1953, Arkhiv Prezidenta Rossisskoi Federatsii (AP RF), f. 3, op. 61, d. 83, ll. 144-157, reprinted in V. Naumov and Iu. Sigachev, eds., Lavrentii Beriia 1953: Stenogramma iul’skogo plenuma TsK KPSS i drugie dokumenty (Moscow: Demokratia, 1999).
and prisoners-of-war who allegedly collaborated with German forces by serving in the Georgian National Legion. In his condemnation of the operation, Beria emphasized the innocence of those citizens expelled in 1951, noting the lack of evidence for their alleged enemy activities and citing the noble participation of many deportees in the Great Patriotic War and the process of socialist construction. He remarked further that Georgia’s workers and intelligentsia failed to comprehend the meaning and purpose of this “revelry, comparing it with the invasion of Tamerlane or Shah Abbas.”

Though billed as an attack on “enemy elements” not unlike the “Volna” operation, the deportations associated with the Mingrelian affair were viewed not as an assault against Mingrelian nationalists, but rather as a campaign against Georgians more broadly – a sentiment Beria marshaled in 1953.

During his tenure managing Abkhazia, Mgelaze maintained a direct relationship with Stalin, thereby leaving him outside Beria’s patronage system – a tactic Beria himself had successfully employed earlier in his career against Abkhaz


292 “Zapiska L.P. Berii v prezidium TsK KPSS o nepravilnom vedenii dela o tak nazyvaemoi mingrel’skoi natsionalisticheskoi gruppe,” 8 April 1953, AP RF, f. 3, op. 61, d. 83, ll. 144-157, reprinted in Naumov and Sigachev, Lavrentii Beriia 1953, 35. Tamerlane and the Mongols conquered the Georgian territories in the thirteenth century and Shah Abbas of the Safavid Empire fought many wars across the Caucasus in the early seventeenth century. Both figures are regularly invoked as enemies in Georgian national narratives.
leader Nestor Lakoba. In his memoir, Mgelaże recalled in detail the conversation in which Stalin asked him to replace Č’arkviani as first secretary. In Mgelaže’s account, Stalin said to him:

We chatted with you on the Black Sea coast about the challenges facing the Communist Party of Georgia. We must end bribery, embezzlement, and other disgraces. We must end provincial “leaders.” After all, a feud between Georgian provinces has always been a great disaster for the country. The Iranian shah and Turkish sultan took advantage of this in their time. If one looks at the tragedy of Georgia, then one may claim without question that neither shah, nor sultan, nor Tamerlane caused her as much harm as did internecine struggle. Of course, there is not this danger now, but there is a different danger – provincial “vozhdizm” engenders squabbles and intrigues. Each pulls to his own side, seems to nominate cadres from “his province,” create better conditions for “his countrymen ( svoim zemliakam).” These trends are especially apparent in Ajaria and Mingrelia. If tendencies of patronage ( shefstvo) are not prevented, then it will lead to the fact that the role of the Georgian CC and government in the leadership of the republic will be reduced to zero. Without regard for anything or anyone!

Stalin elucidated his preoccupation with longue durée Georgian history and Turkish and Iranian enemies in his charge to Mgelaže. He likewise sought to motivate Mgelaže’s sense of Georgian patriotism in waging his campaign against the alleged Mingrelian conspirators. Robert Conquest postulated that Mgelaže’s appointment as first secretary of Georgia reflected an “almost completed pilot project for a larger central scheme” of appointments at the center in Moscow. If so, Mgelaže’s promotion signaled a significance far beyond Georgia’s borders: not only was he to be the face of a new generation of cadre loyal to Stalin, but he also represented a

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294 Mgelaže, 197.
295 Conquest, Power and Policy in the USSR, 130.
desire to break the power of local patron-client networks that provided autonomous 
sources of power, whether Zhdanov’s Leningrad, Beria’s Caucasus, or even 
Khrushchev’s Ukraine.296

Mgelaže likewise served as the new face of the anti-Mingrelian campaign as 
his appointment propelled him to republic-level prominence. 297 In his 
pronouncements on the matter, he noted especially the danger posed by “localist 
tendencies,” that is, sub-nationality nationalism, as exemplified by the Mingrelians. 
Mgelaže likewise related the threat of Mingrelian localism to potential 
vulnerabilities along the Georgian-Turkish border, which by 1952 had also become 
a Soviet-NATO border. Mingrelia’s lack of a shared border with Turkey 
notwithstanding, Stalin seemed to have connected Mingrelians (and Mingrelian 
national sentiments) with links to and support for Turkish interests.298

Mgelaže’s experiences identifying and deporting Abkhazian residents with 
suspected ties to Turkey in 1949 thus served as a precursor to the republic-wide 
campaign waged against the Mingrelians. In an interrogation in Moscow by Beria in 
April 1953, which Mgelaže included in his memoir, Beria explicitly asked about the

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297 This was in spite of the fact that he claimed he was not the source who “uncovered” the alleged 
Mingrelian circle, Mgeladze, 251.
Mingrelia borders Abkhazia, in northwest Georgia, whereas Ajaria and Mesxet’i border Turkey. The 
Mingrelia-Turkey connection could perhaps be due to the presence of the Laz minority in 
northeastern Turkey, whose language among Kartvelian languages is most closely related to 
Mingrelian. In his memoir, Sего Beria notes that his father cultivated and maintained spy networks 
among the Laz in Turkey early in his career in the Georgian state security services, Sего Beria, Beria, 
deportation of approximately 13,000 people from Georgia.\(^{299}\) Mgelaże distanced himself from this action and attributed it instead to Č’arkviani and the Georgian MGB.\(^{300}\) However, archival material regarding operation “Volna” shows not only Mgelaže’s active involvement in planning the operation, but also his proactive effort to expand the parameters of operation to include persons subject to deportation beyond the Moscow-sanctioned orders.

By June 1952, Georgian Minister of State Security Nikolai Ruxaże, a formerly close ally of Beria who had been integral in carrying out operation “Volna” and leading the attack against the “Mingrelian” circle, was also dismissed.\(^{301}\) Ruxaże purportedly misread signals from Stalin at a meeting in Cqaltubo (a spa town frequented by Stalin) that the efforts to curb “corruption” among Mingrelian circles were actually an effort to rein in Beria’s patronage network and not a call to probe corruption allegations more broadly in the republic – a campaign that would have certainly implicated Stalin-protégé Mgelaže and his network.\(^{302}\) Ruxaže also revealed to the USSR CC Mgelaže’s responsibility for the expanded Greek deportations from Abkhazia in an effort to implicate the new first secretary in his anti-Baramia investigation – a move that the CC quickly deemed inappropriate and that led to his downfall.\(^{303}\)

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\(^{299}\) Though it is not stated directly, this number most likely refers to those deported as part of the Mingrelian affair in December 1951.

\(^{300}\) Mgelaže, 260-261.

\(^{301}\) Knight, *Beria*, 163.

\(^{302}\) Blauvelt, “March of the Chekists,” 85.

\(^{303}\) “Telegramma TsK VKP(b) A.I. Mgelađe i členam Biuro TsK kompartii Gruzii o spravke N.M. Rukhadze,” 4 June 1952, RGASPI f. 558, op. 11, d. 135, l. 89, reprinted in Khlevniuk, *Politbiuro TsK VKP(b)*, 356.
Mgelaže’s tenure as first secretary ended with Stalin’s death on 5 March 1953, when Beria immediately maneuvered to establish his authority in Moscow. At the same time, he endeavored to restore his network in Georgia and undo the damage caused by the Mingrelian affair. As part of that process, Alek’sandre Iordanes  že Mirc’xulava replaced Mgelaže as first secretary in April 1953. A Mingrelia native and long-time Beria client, Mirc’xulava only served in this position until September 1953. Beria’s fall from power from June 1953 ensured a brief tenure for Mirc’xulava, though in that period the fabrication of the Mingrelian affair was exposed and those persons arrested or deported under its auspices were freed. This included not only high-level officials, but also 11,671 special settlers deported in December 1951 to Kazakhstan under the auspices of the Mingrelian affair. The deportees returned to their former places of residence on re-installed Minister of Internal Affairs Beria’s order in late May and early June 1953.304

Vasil Pavles že Mžavanaże, a K’ut’aisi native but Georgian political outsider, replaced Mirc’xulava as first secretary. The republic Mžavanaże inherited in late 1953 seemed ripe for tensions on several fronts due to the tumults of late Stalinism and the subsequent loss of prominent Georgian “advocates” in Moscow after 1953.305 Mžavanaže would spend much of his nineteen-year tenure as Georgia’s

304 “Spravka: Vo ispolnenie prikaza Ministra Vnutrennih del Soiuza SSR tov. L.P. BERIA #00112 1953 goda,” sšssa (I), f. 13, sp. 27, ll. 226-228. See also “Zapiska L.P. Berii v prezidium TsK KPSS o neprav’nom vedenii dela o tak nazyvaemoi mingrel’skoi natsionalisticheskoi gruppe,” 8 April 1953, AP RF, f. 3, op. 61, d. 83, ll. 144-157, reprinted in Naumov and Sigachev, Lavrentii Beria 1953, 36-37.
305 By 1956, for instance, the CC had been completely rid of Georgian representatives after an era of prominent representation in the Stalin period.
leader attempting to move beyond these legacies and negotiate more effectively between Moscow’s imperatives and local needs and practices.

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Between 1949 and 1951, at least 54,544 people were expelled from Georgia to Central Asia. This number comprises approximately 14 percent of Polian’s total estimated 380,000-400,000 postwar deportations.306 Considering that in the 1939 and 1959 all-Union censuses the population of the Georgian SSR comprised approximately two percent of the USSR’s total population, a 14 percent share of the postwar deportation total is quite disproportionate.307 The expulsion of at least 80,000 residents from the Armenian SSR in the same period presents a related picture.308

Why are postwar deportations and cadre struggles in Georgia part of the same story? The “fiefdom” model and the ideology of “Soviet xenophobia” provide background explanations for why and how postwar population politics coalesced in this particular fashion. As early as 1961, Conquest identified three competing patron-client networks in Georgia in the postwar period: Beria’s allies, clients directly linked to Stalin (the “new men of 1951”), and a third group of Č’arkviani clients cultivated – likely with Stalin’s consent – since Beria’s move to Moscow in

306 Polian, Against Their Will, 171.
308 Lehmann, Eine sowjetische Nation, 110.
In 1938, Beria regarded the Č’arkviani group as an enemy by the 1950s, as evidenced by his rehabilitation of Mingrelian affair victims (1951) but not Č’arkviani and his associates, including Ruxaže (spring 1952). Furthermore, as his replacement, Mgelaže and Č’arkviani vied directly for Stalin's influence, both working against Beria’s group in the process. This is a complicated picture, indeed, and its implications reached beyond the annals of Party and state power.

As a result of competing Georgian “fiefdoms,” it remains difficult to distinguish between center and periphery in Georgia under Stalinism. The multifaceted roles played by Beria, Stalin, and their clients in Georgia show how postwar deportation campaigns reflected central power struggles and evolving security concerns while at the same time provided an opportunity for local actors to refine the contours of membership in the Soviet Georgian collective. Beria’s heavy involvement in the Meskhetian operation in 1944 (as head of the NKVD) contrasts with the 1949 operations, in which Č’arkviani, Ruxaže, and Mgelaže played key roles and took orders directly from Stalin. Ruxaže (initially) and Mgelaže acted upon similar direction from Stalin and Ignat’ev during the Mingrelian affair. These differences reflect Beria’s shifting standing vis-à-vis Stalin as well as an increasing reliance on local Georgian agents to conceive and implement deportation policies. In some ways, the autonomy created by the Beria “fiefdom” permitted this trajectory yet was also limited by it, such that restoring the balance between competing

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310 In 1946, Beria left the NKVD to manage the USSR’s atomic weapons program. He did not return until immediately after Stalin’s death, when he briefly took charge of the re-named MVD.
patron-client networks in Georgia (Beria, Č’arkviani, and Mgelaže) required direct intervention from Stalin. The ebbs and flows of this process between the end of the war and Khrushchev’s rise to power preserved Stalin’s cult while implicating Georgian networks with alleged crimes committed prior to 1953, including but not limited to deportations.

The tension that developed between center and periphery via patron-client networks reveals itself in the resulting discourse on assigning blame. Waging the campaign against the alleged “Mingrelian nationalist group” entailed assigning blame to Beria by association if not in name. When the fabrication of the Mingrelian affair came to light, most of the official blame targeted Ruxaže.311 During the CC plenum discussing Beria’s arrest in July 1953, Bak’raže and others questioned the sincerity of Beria’s revelations regarding the Mingrelian affair, suspecting instead that he had knowledge of the falsification all along.312 Mgelaže, on the other hand, somewhat evaded responsibility for the Mingrelian affair (because he was not yet first secretary) yet assumed much of the blame for violations of nationality policy in Abkhazia since 1943. For example, the 1955 Georgian CC protocol that revoked Mgelaže’s CPSU membership reveals the significance of his breach and responsibility for deporting the Greek “dobrovol’tsy,” as this is the first evidence offered to demonstrate his violation of Lenin-Stalin nationality policy.313

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312 “Zasedanie vtoroe (utrennee, 3 iulia),” Ibid., 256-257.
As the hearings and trials surrounding Stalin’s death and Beria’s power grab reveal, the deportations of both 1949 and 1951 provided important examples of abuse of power that protagonists were keen to employ in their attacks against Ruxaże, Mgelâże, and Beria. Beria’s fall and Mgelâže’s loss of his patron (Stalin) meant that, in spite of the fact that they actively worked against one another in the late Stalin-era, they assumed most of the blame as co-conspirators for carrying out deportations and resettlements discussed in this chapter, and a longer-term charge of “Georgification” of Abkhazia attributed to both Beria and Mgelâže. This association continued into the Khrushchev-Mžavanaže era as deportees appealed to new leaders for return, rehabilitation, and property compensation as well as non-entitled nationality rights. Tellingly, the discourse on blame was not about familiar Soviet foes such as class enemies, enemies of the people, leftovers of the past, or representatives of the bourgeoisie, as had been the case in the prewar era. The language of class seems to have been entirely displaced by the language of nation by the late Stalin era – and this in an ethnically diverse borderland where nations still competed with local and kin networks for preeminence.

Second, the idea of “Soviet xenophobia” provided support not only to postwar deportations, but also the campaign against the so-called “Mingrelian nationalist group” in Georgia. Martin uses this term to refer to the absolutizing of cross-border ethnic ties among “nationalities of foreign governments,” or diaspora nationalities, in the context of the 1938 national operations. Members of such diaspora nationalities were in most cases Soviet citizens whose relatives had
resided in Russia or the USSR for multiple generations.\textsuperscript{314} With purported cross-border ties as the “only salient aspect of their identity,” diaspora nationalities provided “sufficient proof of their disloyalty and sufficient justification for their arrest and execution.”\textsuperscript{315} Though Martin restricts this concept to the late 1930s, its explanatory power for the postwar period shows a reinvigorated “Soviet xenophobia” during the late Stalin era, as the Union struggled to incorporate newly-acquired territories in Europe, enact retribution for wartime crimes, and ensure control and security in border regions. The unfolding Cold War created new arenas for contestation and, likewise, a revised application of “Soviet xenophobia” toward “new” enemies. In Georgia, purported ties with (geopolitically) Western-leaning Turkey, Greece, and Iran or the Armenian nationalist diaspora overrode Soviet citizenship, service in the Red Army, Party membership, or other key markers of participation in the Soviet collective.\textsuperscript{316} This was true in both the 1949 and 1951 deportations.

An ideology of “Soviet xenophobia” continued through the immediate postwar period, yet it does not sufficiently explain why expulsions in this period were carried out in both the European borderlands and in the Caucasus. Unlike the European borderlands, Georgia did not experience German or Romanian occupation, and deportees were expelled from Georgia less for wartime deeds than prewar citizenship status or absolutized ethnic ties to nearby states such as Turkey,

\textsuperscript{315} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{316} These sources of legitimacy likewise provided persuasive evidence in appeals for amnesty and rehabilitation.
Greece, and Iran. Furthermore, expellees from Georgia were typically from ethnic minority populations, whereas European borderland expulsions targeted suspected collaborators, class enemies, and bourgeois nationalists from among the to-be-entitled nationalities of the Baltics, Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus. Processes of ethnic consolidation occurred in both locales, yet the ideological mechanisms of “excision” differed in subtle, yet important ways.317

Even if postwar operations had ideological rather than ethnonational intent, the experience of deportation caused those affected to comprehend and explain these processes through ethnic lenses. Expulsion from Tbilisi as a suspected Dashnak or former Turkish subject meant expulsion as an Armenian from the perspective of both the deportees and local residents. Though wholly fabricated, revelations of a Mingrelian nationalist group had some basis in recent history and could likewise appear at least plausible to a homogenizing Georgian populace for whom sub-national identities remained palpable. This larger ethnic consolidation effort entailed expelling Muslim Meskhetians due to purported diaspora nationality ties to Turkey; Greeks, Turks, and Iranians not only for diaspora nationality status, but also for experiences living outside Russian or Soviet control, signaled by recent repatriation or former citizenship status; and Armenian “Dashnaks” and Georgian “enemy elements” whose alleged political deeds and affiliations made the expelled incompatible with membership in the increasingly homogenizing yet still diverse Soviet collective in Georgia. While these reasons remain tied to fluctuating security

317 I borrow the “excision” terminology from Weiner, Making Sense of War, Chapter 3.
concerns, the postwar Georgian expulsions likewise show how “nationalities...were stigmatized as potential traitors to Soviet power because of their supposed allegiance to a pre-Soviet or non-Soviet national past.” The deliberate consolidation of alleged enemy nationalities in exile (e.g. Turks to Tomsk oblast’, Greeks to Iuzhno-Kazakhstan and Dzhambul oblasts, Armenian Dashnaks to Altai krai) further suggests that the expulsions were not about simply eliminating a security threat but about forging new Soviet nationalities (even if in special settlement regimes).

Whereas comparable deportations elsewhere acquired a Russian versus non-Russian tinge, in Georgia the division fell broadly between Georgians and non-Georgians, with little to no reference to “Russian” interference or machinations. Indeed, as explained above, with a muddled distinction between center and periphery in Stalin-era Georgia, the same person could embody the colonial official and the nation-builder due to the deep permeation of the patron-client networks of Stalin, Beria, and Č’arkviani. Such patron and client nation-builders did not necessarily enact deportation policies solely out of opportunism. When considered alongside concurrent Georgian official and popular campaigns to reach out to diaspora communities in Iran and Azerbaijan (discussed in Chapter 5), and territorial irredentism in the postwar period, deportations look less like a Moscow-driven, opportunistic Cold War power play than a more local effort to define and

319 Much of the “punished peoples” literature adopts this point of view, such as Nekrich, The Punished Peoples; Conquest, The Nation Killers.
refine the constitution of Soviet Georgia’s citizenry. In other words, the tools embraced by Georgian nation-builders in the Stalin era show the spectrum of practices at the disposal of a "nationalizing republic" to define, categorize, and refine the republic's populace through Soviet institutions. Deportations were the darker mechanisms in a wider process in late Stalin-era Georgia motivated by genuine belief in a Soviet Georgian nation-building ideology among key local actors such as Čarkviani, Ruxaże, or Mgelaże; and Janašia, Berženišvili, and Kiknaže, discussed in Chapter 1. The concurrent pursuit of territorial irredentism and national deportations in late Stalin-era Georgia affirms rather than retreats from Soviet long-term goals, whereby smaller ethnic groups were to be amalgamated into a smaller number of developed Soviet nationalities over time. In this way, even such geopolitical maneuvers as those in the greater Caucasus region at the dawn of the Cold War could involve the active participation of governmental actors and other nation-builders in the Caucasus.

320 On “nationalizing states,” see Brubaker, Nationalism Reframed, Chapter 4.
321 The concurrent pursuit of these aims goes against the trajectory Martin provides, which sees Soviet xenophobia as replacing the Piedmont Principle. See Martin, “The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing.” My line of thinking expands Hirsch’s critique of Martin as detailed in Hirsch, Empire of Nations, 8-9. Hirsch directly refutes Martin’s portrayal of this process as a "retreat" from affirmative action and nation-building policies pursued in the 1920s.
322 This is reminiscent of Suri’s argument for détente as a process driven from below rather than from above, Jeremi Suri, Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Detente (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).
Part II: Popularizing the Nation: Event and Everyday Life
Chapter 3: De-Stalinization, k’art’ulad:
Deciphering Georgia’s 1956

Stalin’s death on 5 March 1953 shocked the entire Soviet Union, and no less so Georgia, his birthplace. The vozhd’ had not visited Tbilisi for several years, yet the cults of Stalin and his long-time emissary in the Georgian SSR, Lavrenti Beria, dominated public life in the republic through the late Stalin era. Beria’s fall from power and execution in 1953 required expunging his cult from Georgia. Stalin, however, retained his revered status in Georgia in his afterlife. On the first anniversary of Stalin’s death, Georgian writer and critic Geronti K’ik’ože recalled the following scene:

On 5 March 1954, the first anniversary of Stalin’s death, a Georgian girl brought a bouquet of violets to the Stalin monument and laid it on the pedestal...Baskets of little bouquets and wreaths followed and finally the entire huge bronze monument’s pedestal and steps were filled with flowers.

This mourning continued for ten days. Almost all the residents of Tbilisi passed in front of the leader (beladi)’s statue with feelings of goodwill. Some came there with wine to drink toasts in honor of the deceased. Honor guards stood on the pedestal steps from morning until midnight. They consisted mainly of students and teachers. Not once was decency undone, participants kept themselves in order by duty. Speeches changed into verses, verses – into chanted hymns. The people often bowed on their knees upon hearing “Nana” and “Jump, Black Swallow”.323 Very often the word immortality was mentioned. Vaxtang Gorgasali, Davit’ Aġmašenebeli, T’amar-Mep’e, and Little Kaxa’s names were also often heard.324 It was clearly seen that the long-suppressed patriotic feeling found an outlet and spontaneously gushed forth with great strength. It was as though Georgian young people had forgotten the harm that Stalin’s dictatorship had inflicted

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323 These were reportedly two of Stalin’s favorite Georgian songs.
324 These are all major figures in Georgian history: Vaxtang Gorgasali founded Tbilisi (558 AD), Davit’ Aģmašenebeli (“the builder”) and Tamar-Mep’e ruled during Georgia’s “golden age” in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and Little Kaxa is Erekle II’s nickname, who was king of K’art’li-Kaxet’i at the time of the Treaty of Georgievsk (with Russia) in 1783.
on Georgia for thirty years, had forgiven his severity and Satanic pride and were trying to move the halo-clad leader into myth.\textsuperscript{325}

Similar commemorations of Stalin’s death the following year secured his mythic status, yet in Georgia, such veneration acquired a distinctly national tinge unparalleled in the rest of the Union. K’ik’odze keenly observed the “patriotic feeling” already evident in 1954. “The protest of Tbilisi’s youth,” he wrote, “was especially strong. This protest took on a character similar to a national demonstration.”\textsuperscript{326}

These national, Stalin-centric trends came to the fore most overtly in 1956 in the aftermath of Khrushchev’s revelations on 25 February at the Twentieth Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), during which he denounced in the so-called “secret speech” the alleged cult of personality created around Stalin and revealed a plethora of crimes committed by Stalin himself to sustain his cult. In spite of Khrushchev’s prohibition of commemorations for the third anniversary of Stalin’s death, memorial events evolved into demonstrations across Georgia in March 1956 that produced a range of demands with regard to Stalin’s commemoration, Georgians’ status in the Union vis-à-vis other nationalities, and relations between Tbilisi and Moscow.\textsuperscript{327} The result was a two-tiered response

\textsuperscript{325} Geronti K’ik’oże, t’anamedrovis č’anacerebi (Tbilisi: Arete, 2003), 143-144.
\textsuperscript{326} K’i k’oże, 143. K’i k’oże’s observations reveal that such sentiments did not appear spontaneously in 1956 but, rather, are more closely tied to the way in which Stalin’s death had been commemorated in Georgia in previous years. For an example of official commemoration preparations for 1954, see “Protokol ızasednii biuro TsK KP Gruzii 141 ‘o provedenii pervoi godovshchny so dnia smerti I.V. Stalina,” 13 February 1954, sšssa (I) f. 14, op. 28, d. 83, ll. 1-2.
\textsuperscript{327} For other treatments of the March events, see Vladimir A. Kozlov, Mass Uprisings in the USSR: Protest and Rebellion in the Post-Stalin Years (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2002), Chapter 7; Suny, The Making of the Georgian Nation, Chapter 13; Jürgen Gerber, Georgien: Nationale Opposition und
to Khrushchev’s revelations at the Twentieth Party Congress: the demonstration targeted current government leaders (in particular Khrushchev, Bulganin, and Mikoyan) rather than the Soviet system as a whole. More importantly, the national dishonor and offense visited upon Stalin by his successor brought many Georgians across the republic to the streets in his defense.

The conflict did not end with the violent suppression of Tbilisi demonstrations by the Red Army on 9 March, which resulted in dozens of casualties. Rather, the demonstrations, suppression, and subsequent public relations campaign ultimately altered the relationship between Tbilisi and Moscow and widened the cultural-political space for Georgia’s entitled nationality to pursue its own variants of Sovietness in the post-Stalin era. At the same time, Abkhaz intellectuals and leaders took this opportunity to connect pre-existing grievances about Beria’s policies in Abkhazia with an academic debate about the role of Abkhazia in Georgian history. In the longer term, the March events outlined the triangular relationship between Moscow, Tbilisi, and Sukhumi that would reorient centers and peripheries in the years to come, as the entitled Georgian nationality increasingly held decisive power over affairs on the republic’s territory.

In this chapter, I reconsider the events of 1956 in Georgia apart from their subsequent mobilization in nationalist narratives and historiographies. Rather than

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serving as a foundation for Georgian national dissidents, I argue that the March 1956 events marked a foundation for experiencing Georgian Sovietness in the postwar era. Following Shahid Amin’s event-metaphor-memory “historical fieldwork” approach toward an allegedly foundational event in Indian nationalist historiography, the “peasant riots” at Chauri Chaura in 1922, I return to reconstructing the event itself; interrogating the metaphors derived from and constructed around the event in its immediate aftermath by republic leaders, Georgians, and non-Georgian citizens across the republic; and situating the event in memory among subsequent generations. More than the caesura of the Great Patriotic War, the changes wrought in 1956 in Georgia marked a profound turning point through which nationality transformed from an ascribed, elite category to a lived category among much of the republic’s citizenry. As Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper have suggested, viewing the nation as a practical category and contingent event permits us to understand how the idea of the nation “can crystallize, at certain moments, as a powerful, compelling reality” and “come to structure perception, to inform thought and experience, to organize discourse and political action.” The initiation of the anti-Stalin campaign and March events provided such a moment of crystallization for many Georgians, for an early wave of Abkhaz activists, and for other minorities in the republic.

330 Brubaker, Nationalism Reframed, 7.
331 Though early from a current perspective, the postwar cadre of Abkhaz activists was not the first to challenge the status quo. For an earlier example, see Timothy K. Blauvelt, "Resistance and
In a year otherwise known for such disparate milestones as Khrushchev's speech to the Twentieth Party Congress (25 February) and the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian uprising (4 November), knowledge of the March events in Georgia remained largely limited to the republic itself and policymakers in Moscow. Yet, in many ways the situation in Georgia encapsulated the political high and lows of Khrushchev's anti-Stalin campaign: the attempt to distance the Soviet present from its Stalinist past and the willingness of the (allegedly) post-Stalinist state to use force to quell dissent, whether in the Soviet periphery or in a Warsaw Pact state. Further, the March 1956 events and their immediate interpretations in Georgia illustrate one variation of the disorder and confusion surrounding Khrushchev's revelations or, in Alexei Yurchak's formulation, the removal of the Stalin “master” at the heart of the “authoritarian discourse” which governed Soviet life to that point. The rupture initiated by Khrushchev's revelations in 1956 reverberated throughout the Soviet Union, causing many citizens to reevaluate their life stories and social

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333 Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*. Yurchak argues, drawing extensively from the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, that, beginning in the early 1950s, Stalin instigated a paradigm shift in the field of linguistics (inspired by the work of Georgian linguist Arnold Čik'obava), in which he positioned himself as “master” external to the authoritative discourse framing Soviet society.
roles. However, the post-1956 transformation described by Yurchak did not proceed unidirectionally: in the case of Georgia, the mixed reaction among the republic's citizenry reveals the extent to which many citizens understood membership in a Soviet collective, a specifically Georgian national identity, and loyalty to Stalin (as Soviet and/or Georgian) as intertwined.

Finally, the events of 1956 in Georgia capture the utility and resonance of a form of dead-body politics for nation-building efforts. As Katherine Verdery has argued with regard to postsocialist states in Eastern Europe, “dead bodies have an additional advantage as symbols” in that they “lend themselves particularly well to politics in times of major upheaval.” Additionally, for Verdery, dead-body politics bear a close connection not only with national identities, but also with related notions of kinship: “The identities produced in nation-building processes do not displace those based in kinship but – as any inspection of national rhetorics will confirm – reinforce and are parasitic upon them.”

Verdery argues that the postsocialist space has proven particularly ripe for the “political lives of dead bodies.” Yet the changes wrought in 1956 in the Soviet Union can be regarded as a major upheaval as well, in which Stalin's bodies – whether in statue form in Tbilisi or Gori or in a Red Square mausoleum – saw a disavowal from without and re-appropriation from within, as a specifically Georgian symbol rather than the Soviet

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cult of Stalin propagated since 1929. The symbolic value of dead bodies also extended beyond Stalin, as Beria’s body provided a powerful scapegoat that permitted the further preservation of Stalin’s form and meaning among Georgians and source of blame among Abkhaz.

The March demonstrations and their aftermath in Georgia revealed a rupture in what had previously been an uncomplicated coexistence of a popular, national veneration of Stalin as a Georgian and the proliferation of the Stalin cult throughout the USSR. During his lifetime, the “Stalin cult” emphasized the leader’s Soviet identity (albeit in a subtly Russian cast), deliberately eschewing or avoiding Stalin’s Georgianness in the production of portraits, poetry, journalism, and other media, as Jan Plamper has shown. Stalin himself went through numerous identity iterations presented publicly – from Georgian to Marxist to revolutionary to Soviet internationalist – as he rose to prominence on a national and international stage. Yet the top-down construction of the Stalin cult as explicitly non-national still left room for popular interpretations of the Stalin cult in a national idiom in Georgia. As was the case throughout the Soviet Union, Stalin’s (and Beria’s) name dominated the territorial landscape, from the republic’s oldest university to district, kolkhoz, and


factory names. Stalin also played an active role in the creation of a Georgian national canon, from the propagation of twelfth-century poet Šota Rust’aveli to close involvement in writing Georgian national histories, as discussed in Chapter 1. Stalin could distance his public image from a Georgian identity while continuing to serve as editor-in-chief of Georgian cultural production, popularized through the korenizatsiia dictum that culture must be “national in form, socialist in content.” As a result, the cults of Stalin and the nation in Georgia intertwined in ways that were revealed only after his death. As long as Stalin’s cult survived, even posthumously, so too could a coterminous Georgian national cult. Khrushchev’s secret speech and subsequent anti-Stalin campaign exposed the limits and contradictions of this dual cult among Georgians.

The Twentieth Party Congress and Georgia

In a closed session of the Twentieth Party Congress on 25 February 1956, Nikita Khrushchev delivered the address that ushered a paradigm shift away from his predecessor. In “On the Cult of Personality and its Consequences,” Khrushchev detailed specific crimes attributed to Stalin over the course of his tenure, from repression and purges during the Great Terror to deportations of alleged “enemy nationalities” to the so-called “Doctors’ Plot” and Mingrelian Affair.339 Khrushchev further described how, through the extensive repression of “enemies of the people,” a “cult of personality” (kul’t lichnosti in Russian and pirovnebis kulti in Georgian) was

339 The entire text of the speech may be found in Doklad N.S. Khrushcheva o kul’te lichnosti Stalina na XX s”ezde KPSS dokumenti, K. Aimermakher, V. Afiani, et al. (eds), (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2002), pp. 51-119.
created around Stalin – a notion explicitly criticized by Karl Marx in his writings.\(^{340}\)

In denouncing Stalin through a specifically Marxist vehicle, Khrushchev cast the Stalin era as a deviation from the proper Marxist-Leninist trajectory, which he aimed to correct through a campaign to expose and overcome Stalin’s cult of personality.

The deep permeation of the personality cult in Soviet society and culture, however, unsurprisingly led to confusion over how to actually expunge the cult in practice. The ensuing challenge to public opinion proved even more difficult because, as Polly Jones has shown, Khrushchev’s pronouncement in the short term blurred the boundaries of the permitted with regard to public discourse and expression.\(^{341}\) The resulting confusion regarding how to react toward the pronouncement led, throughout the country, to “iconoclastic” responses which were, “at least initially, seen as excusable excesses of emotion,” whether through emphasizing or even exaggerating Stalin’s crimes, excessive personal reflection on the Terror, or comparisons with Tsarist oppression.\(^{342}\) More than any other, the Georgian variant of response tested the limits of “emotional excess” (through five days of speeches, poetry readings, and songs at Stalin monuments across the republic), as evidenced by the forcible suppression of the Georgian demonstrators.

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\(^{340}\) The term coined by Marx in an 1877 letter to Wilhelm Blos was “der Personenkult.” Both the Russian and Georgian variants translate literally as “cult of the individual,” though this term is more frequently translated as “cult of personality.”


Reactions in Georgia to Khrushchev’s revelations at the Twentieth Party Congress reflected the resistance and confusion seen elsewhere in the Union. However, it is perhaps not surprising that some Georgians saw as particularly offensive Khrushchev’s specific points about Georgia and Georgians in the speech – points which went beyond the Stalin-Georgia link. For example, Khrushchev explained,

We know that in Georgia, as in some other republics, there were once manifestations of local, bourgeois nationalism. The question arises as to whether, in the period when the above decision was taken, the nationalistic tendencies grew to such an extent that there was a threat of Georgia leaving the Soviet Union...This, of course, is nonsense. It is hard to even imagine who could have come up with such notions.343

Furthermore,

It is clear that in Georgia, in the realm of economic and cultural development and the growth of socialist consciousness of the workers, the soil on which bourgeois nationalism feeds is disappearing. And as it turned out, there were no nationalistic organizations in Georgia. Thousands of innocent Soviet people became victims of tyranny and lawlessness. And this was all done under the “genius” leadership of Stalin – “great son of the Georgian people,” as Georgians love to call their countryman.344

In these excerpts, Khrushchev’s antipathy toward Georgia and Georgians is thinly, if at all, veiled. Whether his jocular and dismissive attitude toward Georgian nationalism reflected real concerns or merely supported his derision of Stalin as a Georgian figure, Khrushchev nevertheless provided ample fodder in this speech for critics in Georgia.

343 Doklad N.S. Khrushcheva..., 96.
344 Ibid., 97.
On the one hand, Khrushchev denied the existence of local “bourgeois” nationalism in Georgia – a purported success of the Stalin-era purges and Terror. On the other hand, Khrushchev mocked Georgians’ attitude toward Stalin as one of their own, as an explicitly national figure. The resulting protests in Tbilisi and elsewhere in Georgia arose once word of Khrushchev’s ban on commemorations on the third anniversary of Stalin’s death spread informally in the week prior to this date. The timing of the announcement colored the way in which the anti-Stalinist campaign was received in Georgia. The nearly concurrent timing demonstrated, in the words of Elena Zubkova, an “utter neglect of social psychology” on the part of the Soviet government.\(^{345}\) However, while the content and timing of Khrushchev’s proclamation may explain why Georgians demonstrated en masse to commemorate Stalin’s death despite the new, anti-Stalinist campaign, they explain neither the violent crackdown in Tbilisi on 9 March nor how Georgians viewed these events as linked in their immediate aftermath.

**Event: 5-9 March 1956**

Shortly after the Twentieth Party Congress, rumors allegedly began to spread in Georgia among those congress delegates who returned to Tbilisi earlier than the republic’s Party leadership. However, according to KGB representative and Army General I. Serov, as reported on 22 March in a top secret report to the CPSU CC, “among the population they began to exaggerate rumors about the cult of

personality in an arbitrary manner,” and Party activists could not effectively respond to said rumors because the report was not yet public knowledge.346

On the evening of 4 March 1956, crowds began to gather at the Stalin monument in Tbilisi, which was located along the bank of the Mtkvari River, down the hill from the city’s main thoroughfare, Rust‘aveli Avenue. In addition to laying wreaths at the base of the monument, as had been the tradition since 1953, in accordance with Georgian commemoration of the deceased, attendees recited poems, delivered speeches, and sang songs dedicated to Stalin.347 While some reports emphasized that this act was entirely peaceful, others noted that some visitors were drunk and disorderly.348 The next day, this smaller commemoration expanded into several funeral-like processions, bearing portraits of Stalin, by car and by foot from all over the city to the Stalin monument to lay wreaths and pay homage to the departed beladi.349 Though the processions bore the trappings of an official function – rife with Soviet ritual and symbols – the participants in these “improvised” demonstrations were “usually high school and university students, and the urban intelligentsia.”350 At the demonstrations in Tbilisi, attendees read poems by Georgian poets and sang Georgian songs in honor of Stalin. Meanwhile, in Gori, mourners gathered outside Stalin’s birthplace in the center of the town. In

346 Serov to CPSU CC, 22 March 1956, sšsša (I), f. 6, d. 159, l. 29.
347 Nozaże, 1956 tragikuli 9 mærti, 6.
348 Ibid. and Serov to CPSU CC, 22 March 1956, sšsša (I), f. 6, d. 159, l. 30.
349 “Zakrytoe pis’mo,” Trud Georgian SSR correspondent S. Statnikov to Editor-in-Chief of Trud Burkov, 12 March 1956, RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 140, l. 54.
350 Serov to CPSU CC, 22 March 1956, sšsša (I), f. 6, d. 159, l. 28.
Sukhumi, Georgian schoolchildren brought wreaths to the Stalin monument in the center of town, and similar commemorations occurred in Batumi and Kutaisi.

On 6 and 7 March, commemorations continued in the aforementioned cities, albeit in a more “organized” manner. In Tbilisi, mourners began to carry portraits of Lenin, with red flags and funeral ribbons, alongside portraits of Stalin. On the afternoon of 6 March, the Georgian CC convened a public forum to read “On the Cult of Personality and its Consequences.” The CC proposed to acquaint all republican Party and Komsomol members with its contents in the coming days, though at the reading of the document itself leaders did not address questions from attendees.

On the morning of 7 March, students at Stalin State University, the main university in the republic, boycotted classes and went to the streets, where students from other universities and high schools joined them. They proceeded from their campus in the Vake district down Rust’aveli Prospect to Lenin Square while singing and reciting verses about Stalin, such as “Glory to the great Stalin” (dideba did stilins) and “Glory to the leader Stalin” (dideba belade stilins). At the same time, a new demonstration began at the Stalin monument, where attendees gave speeches about attempts to blacken Stalin’s name. In Gori, an additional 5,000 to 6,000 people visited Stalin’s house daily, and participants organized an honor guard in that location.

351 “Zakrytoe pis’mo,” Trud Georgian SSR correspondent S. Statnikov to Editor-in-Chief of Trud Burkov, 12 March 1956. RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 140, l. 54.
352 Ibid.
353 Ibid.
354 Ibid.
By 8 March, Tbilisi ceased to function as a city as the demonstrations grew. Many people stayed home from work, transport remained difficult, and demonstrators occasionally clashed with policemen. Two centers emerged around the Stalin monument and on Lenin Square, across from the CC headquarters and the House of Government. Per the demonstrators’ request, First Secretary Mžavanaže delivered a brief speech to the Lenin Square crowd, promising to defend Stalin. Following his speech, a group of demonstrators presented the following demands:

1. Declare 9 March a day of mourning with all work cancelled
2. Publish articles dedicated to Stalin’s life and work in all local papers
3. Screen “The Fall of Berlin” and “Unforgettable 1919” in movie theatres
4. Invite Marshal Zhu De, of the People’s Republic of China, to the demonstration
5. Perform the GSSR hymn in full text (without excluding Stalin’s name)
6. Install a microphone at the Lenin Square demonstration
7. Invite poets and writers to speak to the Georgian people

Yet in spite of escalations of violence and increasing demands from demonstrators, the Trud Tbilisi correspondent Statnikov observed that the militia did not intervene to quell the situation because, “All that was done in those days was connected with the name of the son of the Georgian people – Stalin-Juğašvili – this name was often mentioned in order to emphasize their feelings.” Soon thereafter, on the afternoon of 8 March, a crowd of 500-600 traveled to Krcanisi, the elite dacha where Chinese delegate to the Twentieth Party Congress Zhu De was staying, to try to

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355 The two movies laud Stalin’s role in the victory in World War Two and Russian Civil War, respectively.
356 Zhu De visited Tbilisi and other cities in the USSR following his participation as a representative of the People’s Republic of China at the Twentieth Party Congress.
357 Kozlov, 117.
358 “Zakrytoe pis’mo,” Trud Georgian SSR correspondent S. Statnikov to Editor-in-Chief of Trud Burkov, 12 March 1956, RGANI, f.5., op.30, d. 140, l. 56.
359 Ibid.
convince him to visit the Stalin monument. Though he greeted the group, he declined their offer. Demonstrators attempted to appeal to Zhu De by reciting “Long live Mao Zedong” in addition to “Long live the USSR,” “Long live the party of Lenin-Stalin,” “Glory to Lenin,” and “Glory to Stalin.”

Per the demonstrators’ request, a microphone was installed on the evening of 8 March at Lenin Square. Speeches in Lenin Square garnered even more attendees, as speakers could now be heard clearly, and the range of issues and imperatives elicited by speakers conveyed both the gravity and confusion of the situation at hand. For example, one speaker proclaimed that, “With the death of Stalin, everything that had been achieved perishes already, the country, and above all, Georgia, will die.” Holding up his Party card, he called on attendees to fight for the cause of Stalin and, if necessary, give their lives. A student speaker derided the Party leadership and recalled the history of Georgians’ struggle against foreign enemies, concluding that “The Georgian people will not forgive whoever decided to tarnish the bright memory of Stalin. Do not succumb to criticism of Stalin, our leader. The revision of Stalin is a revision of Marxism. They will pay for Stalin with blood.” Meanwhile, a woman asserted, “Listen, Georgians! They support us in Moscow. Demonstrations are happening now not only in Georgia, but also in

360 Serov to CPSU CC, 22 March 1956, sōssa (I), f. 6, d. 159, l. 30; Nozaže, 13-15.
361 Nozaže, 1956 tragikuli 9 marti, 15.
362 “Zakrytoe pis’mo,” Trud Georgian SSR correspondent S. Statnikov to Editor-in-Chief of Trud Burkov, 12 March 1956, RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 140, l. 57.
363 Ibid.
Stalingrad, Leningrad, and other cities." In addition to speeches, Georgian poets and writers read poems dedicated to Stalin, and according to Statnikov, “they even found a priest, who blessed the Georgians for their sacred cause – the defense of Stalin’s name.” While initial crowds on 5 March numbered around 2,000-3,000 between the Stalin Monument and Lenin Square, in the following days crowds swelled to as many as 15,000-20,000 people, in Serov’s estimate. The historian Vladimir Kozlov describes crowds as large as 70,000 in Tbilisi.

On 9 March, conceding to some of the demonstrators requests, newspapers published memorial articles about Stalin, alongside a photo of Stalin and Lenin from 1922. Officially sanctioned memorial meetings throughout the republic were scheduled for 1:00 p.m. in all enterprises, institutes, and higher educational institutions. At the same time, local party authorities read the report from the CPSU “On the Cult of Personality and its Consequences” to Party audiences. Statnikov understood these measures as an effort (albeit a belated one) by the Georgian CC to attempt to restore order in Tbilisi. Yet in Tbilisi, Gori, and Sukhumi, demonstrators overtook the official meetings: in Gori, by that time, as many as

364 Ibid., l. 58. This comment proved to be an exaggeration: while Soviet citizens in other locales questioned or challenged dethroning the vozhd’, demonstrations on the scale of those in Tbilisi were unmatched elsewhere.
365 Ibid., l. 59.
366 Serov to CPSU CC, 22 March 1956, sšssa (I), f. 6, d. 159, l. 30.
367 Kozlov, 114-116.
368 See, for example, “Tret’e godovshchina so dna smerti I.V. Stalina,” Zaria Vostoka, 9 March 1956, p. 1. The front page also announced that official commemorations would be held at 1:00 that day.
369 “Zakrytoe pis’mo,” Trud Georgian SSR correspondent S. Statnikov to Editor-in-Chief of Trud Burkov, 12 March 1956, RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 140, ll. 59-60.
70,000 people had gathered, and some attempted to drive to Tbilisi. Mžavanaže, meanwhile, attended the demonstration in Lenin Square and told the crowd he would review some of their additional requests and return with an answer.

That evening, demonstrators presented a series of demands, or, in Serov's telling, “ultimatums” to the Georgian CC. These included establishing an honor guard of military officers at the Stalin monument that day; organizing a military flyover for Tbilisi and Gori depicting the words “Glory to Stalin”; sounding the horns in factories to mark Stalin's funeral; lifting a balloon over Tbilisi with portraits of Lenin and Stalin; delivering radio addresses by demonstrators; restoring the Stalin prize and the name of the “Stalin Constitution”; completely describing Stalin’s life and activities in the Great Soviet Encyclopedia; designating 9 May as the Day of Stalin’s Victory; determining the whereabouts of Vasili Stalin (Stalin's son); resuming production of Stalin’s works; and naming the Transcaucasian Railway after Stalin.

A list of demands allegedly read by Ruben Qip’iani near the Stalin monument further escalated the stakes:

1. Return the closed letter to the CPSU CC
2. Remove Mikoyan, Bulganin, and Khrushchev from their posts
3. Create a new government
4. Free Bagirov from prison
5. Promote Mgelaže and Mžavanaže to the CPSU CC presidium

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370 Kozlov, 130.
371 “Zakrytoe pis’mo,” Trud Georgian SSR correspondent S. Statnikov to Editor-in-Chief of Trud Burkov, 12 March 1956, RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 140, l. 61.
372 Serov to CPSU CC, 22 March 1956, sšsa (I), f. 6, d. 159, ll. 31-32 and “Vyskazyvaniia otdel’nykh lits, vystupavshikh u pamiatnika tov. Stalina l.V.,” 8 March 1956, sšsa (II), f. 1, d. 13, ll. 9-10, 19-25.
373 Demonstrators referred to the text read at local party meetings about the “on the cult” speech as a secret letter from Moscow.
374 Mir Jafar Bagirov served as the First Secretary of the Azerbaijan CP from 1933 to 1953. A close ally of Beria, Bagirov was arrested in 1954.
6. Appoint Vasili Stalin to the CPSU CC
7. Institute an amnesty

Speeches continued in both locales on the evening of 9 March and took on a more fateful tone. A speech from around 10:30 that night by poet Jansul Čarkviani, a recent graduate of Stalin State University, reflected the passion and intensity of the moment:

Comrades, Georgians, please listen to me. The majority of the people here are martyrs, I've been together with you for these five days and felt these difficult days. Comrades, I am a Georgian as you all are. I also love the Soviet Union and the great Communist Party, as you all love them. As the Communist Party loves you. (Crowd: We love it, we love it.)...Long live free Georgia (crowd: hooray!)! Long live Soviet Georgia (crowd: hooray!)! Comrades! No one may defile the name of the great Stalin if we will be together and, in this remarkable initiative, defend great Stalin's name to the end, without fail, consciously and honestly...Comrades, we must be awake, we must remember that next to us are our repulsive enemies, who also remember our Georgian courage that repelled Turkey and Persia. Comrades, we do not agree with those who say we do not love great Russia, this is a lie. We love the great Russian people, we only must walk with them side by side in an honest way, in such a way as Georgia was from the beginning. Comrades, we are Christians, we are courageous men (važkac’ebi), we learned from our ancestors that we are free and will be eternally. Comrades, long live great Stalin, we are together with Stalin's glory.

Čarkviani appealed to a wide range of historical and identity markers in this speech, demonstrating the intricacy of Soviet Georgian views of Stalin. Concurrent odes to communism, freedom, historical enemies, Christianity, and Georgian values – as contradictory as they may seem – were mobilized to bring Georgians to Stalin's defense. And this blend of appeals and interpretations, emphasizing Sovietness and

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375 Kozlov, 121.
376 As reported in Nozaże, 1956 tragikuli 9 merti, 26-27. The transcript of speeches he provides in his book reportedly comes from a recording made during the demonstrations for the KGB.
Georgianness, was likewise evident in statements collected via KGB eyewitness reporting and *svodki* from 8-9 March.\(^\text{377}\)

After receiving reports on the situation in Tbilisi, the Red Army, via the Transcaucasus Military District, intervened to re-establish order.\(^\text{378}\) Meanwhile, a group of demonstrators from the Stalin monument processed toward the House of Communications at 11:45. As the crowd forced its way into the House of Communications (on Rust'aveli Avenue) to attempt to radio and telegram Moscow, troops fired into the crowd. Tanks subsequently moved to disperse the demonstrations at the Stalin monument, just down the street. Whether the troops fired the first shots or were acting in self-defense from attacking demonstrators, there were casualties in the chaos: according to the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs, the crackdown resulted in twenty-one demonstrators killed and fifty-four wounded. Of the twenty-one killed, eleven were Komsomol members, and ten were students. Four were unemployed, and three were under the age of sixteen. Among the injured were twenty-three Komsomol members and four teenagers.\(^\text{379}\) Though similar demonstrations occurred in at least Gori, Sukhumi, K’ut’aisi, and Batumi, they were “without serious excesses” and therefore no military intervention took place.\(^\text{380}\)


\(^{378}\) “Prikaz 14, g. Tbilisi, Nachal’nika Tbilisskogo Garnizona,” 9 March 1956, RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 140, l. 68.

\(^{379}\) “SPISOK ubitykh grazhdan 9 marta 1956 goda (sov. sekretno)” and “SPISOK lits, postradavshikh 9 marta 1956 goda,” sšssa (II), f. 1, d. 14, ll. 1-22.

\(^{380}\) Serov to CPSU CC, 22 March 1956, sšssa (I), f. 6, d. 159, l. 33.
In response to the disorder, security organizations identified and arrested the alleged “organizers and active participants in anti-Soviet, nationalistic declarations.” While establishing order in Tbilisi, the Red Army arrested up to 300 people on 9-10 March. Over the course of the next twelve days, state security organs conducted investigations and found 39 individuals responsible for the disturbances.\footnote{Ibid.} By 12 March, order had been restored in Tbilisi.\footnote{Zakrytoe pis’mo,” Trud Georgian SSR correspondent S. Statnikov to Editor-in-Chief of Trud Burkov, 12 March 1956, RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 140, l. 64.}

**Metaphor: Aftermath and Explanation**

What went wrong? Citizens throughout Georgia struggled to interpret the meaning of the so-called “March events,” from victims to demonstration participants to witnesses to Party leadership. Serov and Statnikov, for instance, in their immediate reports to Moscow, emphasized the influence of hooliganism, idlers, and manipulation of national feeling among students and the urban intelligentsia in their attempts to explain the March events.\footnote{Ibid.; Serov to CPSU CC, 22 March 1956, ssssa (I), f. 6, d. 159, ll. 28-34.} Writer Ak’ak’i Ceret’eli, meanwhile, sensed already that these “bloody days” would have echoes in the future as the Georgian people continued its “struggle” for “freedom.”\footnote{Ak’ak’i Ceret’eli, *9 martis monacilis dğiurebidan* (Tbilisi: C’odna, 1994), 45-46.} Still others expressed more muddled and convoluted explanations for what had transpired in the republic in March, as will be examined below.
To begin to understand the initial fallout of the campaign against Stalin’s cult of personality in Georgia, we must first consider the explanations offered by First Secretary Mžavanaže to account for the events. Mžavanaže, who had been First Secretary only since September 1953, was an outsider to Georgian politics, having honed his credibility and networks as a political commissar during the war in Ukraine and deputy to Khrushchev in Kiev. The republic Mžavanaže inherited was “extremely tense” by 1956, in the aftermath of purges, deportations, poor economic performance, and increasing dissatisfaction among non-entitled nationalities. Even if his job security improved with Khrushchev’s solidification of power in Moscow, Mžavanaže still had to gain legitimacy in Georgia among his new constituents. It is this peculiar situation that likely influenced Mžavanaže’s actions surrounding the March events. Moreover, in spite of his failure to effectively manage the March 1956 crisis as it unfolded (a fault for which he was certainly blamed by Moscow), Mžavanaže himself suffered little as a result of his actions as the republic’s leader; in fact, he was shortly thereafter promoted to Presidium status in perhaps a delayed response to the demands of some Georgians to retain a Georgian representative in Moscow.

In reports to the CPSU CC shortly following the March events, Mžavanaže emphasized in particular how “Stalin’s cult of personality was combined with national feelings in Georgia.” While “these feelings are especially strongly

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385 Khlevniuk, “Kreml’–Tbilisi.”
386 “Dokladnaia zapiska Biuro TsK KP Gruzii o massovykh volneniakh naselenia gg. Tbilisi, Gori, Kutaisi, Sukhumi i Batumi 4-9 Marta 1956 g. v sviazi s osuzhdeniem kul’ta lichnosti Stalina,” RGANI f.
expressed, primarily, by university and high-school students and by a part of the intelligentsia,” he acknowledged that “a large portion of Communists and Komsomol members are sympathetic to the young peoples’ statements, and some Communists and large number of Komsomol members actively participated in [the March demonstrations] as long as it did not clearly result in an anti-Soviet provocation.” Furthermore, “many Communists, Komsomol members, and Party and Soviet workers expressed confusion and took a passive stance.”

In an April report Mžavanaže also noted the “complication of the national question” in Georgia: “Among many Communists and a part of the population unhealthy discussions of a nationalistic character have taken place, and fear, stress and aggravation of relations between different nationalities can be noticed, and also elements of mistrust between them.” Later, in his May reports, Mžavanaže seemed to switch course on this issue, insisting that “it would be wrong to conclude that in Georgia there exists an anti-Russian or anti-Georgian sentiment” in spite of the fact that the 5-9 March events showed that “in the republic there are individual manifestations of abnormal, unfriendly relations between persons of different nationalities.” Yet Mžavanaże devoted an entire subsequent report to supporting the claim that animosity between Russians and Georgians was widespread in the republic, maintaining that while “unfriendly relations” existed between Russians

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387 Ibid., 290-291.
388 Ibid., 292.
389 Mžavanaže to CPSU CC, “Informatsiia ob oznakomlenii kommunistov s dokladom t. Khrushcheva N.S. 'o kul'te lichnosti i ego posledstviakh,” April 1956, sšsa (II), f. 14, op. 31, d. 201, l. 35-36.
390 “Dokladnaia zapiska Biuro TsK KP Gruzii o massovykh volneniiakh naselenia...”, 295.
and Georgians, “even in the days of disorder of 5-9 March there were no excesses between Russians and Georgians, between representatives of different nationalities.”\footnote{Dokladnaia zapiska Biuro TsK KP Gruzii N.S. Khrushchevu o proiavleniiakh natsionalisticheskikh nastroenii gruzinskogo naseleniia v sviazi s osuzhdeniem kul’ta lichnosti Stalina na XX s”ezde KPSS.” RGANI f. 3, op. 12, d. 47, ll. 29-39. In Fursenko, A.A. (ed.) Prezidium TsK KPSS 1954-1964, tom 2 (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2006), 297.} On the one hand, he noted, from the perspective of individuals of Georgian nationality (above all students and the intelligentsia), it seemed that “Russians do not want Stalin because he was a Georgian: Russians want to destroy Georgians, eventually all Georgians will be expelled.” From the Russian perspective, on the other hand, as Mžavanaže saw it, “Stalin was a traitor; they shot at the Georgian people a little on 9 March; it was necessary to destroy them more fully; it is necessary to expel half of the Georgians and settle fresh people here.”\footnote{Ibid., 298.} Even if these were the opinions of some individuals, Mžavanaže also mentioned that “enemy elements, provocateurs” emphasized the use of force on 9 March in a series of anonymous letters addressed to the Georgian CC and other republic organs. These letters were of a “threatening, terrorist character” and conveyed “insults toward the Russian nation, individual leaders of the party and government, and raised the question of secession of Georgia from the Soviet Union.” Additionally, “there is talk that on 9 March the friendship of the Russian and Georgian peoples was annihilated.”\footnote{Ibid.} As these contradictory and convoluted reports imply, Mžavanaže struggled initially with how to relate the March events to the national situation in the republic. While clearly attributing the March demonstrations to
national feelings among Georgian students and the intelligentsia – with the tacit or overt support of many Party and Komsomol members – Mžavanaže also attempted to downplay charges of widespread animosity between nationalities in Georgia, likely in an effort to protect his own reputation as republican manager. In the early aftermath of the March events, then, Mžavanaže blamed individual manifestations of national animosity rather than widespread anti-Russian or anti-Georgian sentiment in the republic.

Mžavanaže’s explanation in August to his Party subordinates in Georgia differed in significant ways from the reports he filed to the Central Committee and Khrushchev in Moscow from April and May. As Mžavanaže noted in a speech at the August Party plenum in Tbilisi, in spite of the fact that Georgia had over 180,000 Party and 350,000 Komsomol members, between 5-9 March, “large crowds, provoked by enemy nationalistic elements, committed excesses, violated public order, and permitted anti-Soviet attacks.” 394 Mžavanaže attributed this development to two causes: the legacy of Beria’s hold on the republic and the failure of the republic’s Party organs to effectively educate the populace about the cult of personality.395 Beria, as First Secretary of the Georgian Communist Party between 1931 and 1938, presided over the Terror and purges in the republic and from there led the Union-wide secret police until Stalin’s death. Mžavanaže rooted the recent expressions of Georgian nationalism in Beria-cultivated “feelings of national

394 “Stenogramma zasedanii II-go Plenuma TsK KP Gruzii ot 6-8 avgusta 1956 g.,” sšsšša (II), f. 14, op. 31, d. 19, ll. 6-7.
395 These were both safe, “Orthodox” explanations, fully within the available realm of meaning of Soviet governance.
exceptionalism among the Georgian population.” These feelings allegedly led in Abkhazia and South Ossetia to manufactured “discord among Georgians, Abkhaz, Armenians, and Ossetians” and Georgians “intentionally held the line [of Beria’s policies in Abkhazia, CK] on the liquidation [of the] national culture of the local Abkhaz, Armenian, and Ossetian populations.”396 In this sense, Mžavanaže linked the negative ramifications of alleged Beria-esque Georgian nationalism to current Georgian national expression: as a survival of the era of high Stalinism in Georgia, Georgian nationalism in the face of the anti-Stalinist campaign threatened other local nationalities in the republic and “criminally violated Leninist principles of nationality policy.”397 Mžavanaže further acknowledged that Party organs in the republic had not “used all methods of oral and printed propaganda to expose and discredit Beria and his cult of personality.”398 Thus, Mžavanaže attacked Beria’s allegedly “nationalistic” excesses through the resurrected mechanism of the personality cult.

Second, Mžavanaže placed blame squarely with his own Communist establishment in Georgia for lacking the “courage and political maturity...to deal with those nationalists and provocateurs among them, who praised and demanded the absolution of this despicable enemy of our people [referring to Beria CK].”399 This was because the “Central Committee of the Georgian Communist Party

396 “Stenogramma zasedanii II-go Plena TsK KP Gruzii ot 6-8 avgusta 1956 g.,” sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 31, d. 19, l. 9.
397 Ibid., l. 9.
398 Ibid., l. 11.
399 Ibid., l. 10.
underestimated the fact that Stalin’s personality cult was deeply ingrained in the minds of the population of Georgia and assumed especially exaggerated dimensions and a nationalistic color.”

The conflict that arose between 5-9 March was no accident: rather, the events were caused by “gross distortions in the past of the economic, political, and ideological party line, by neglect of the ideological-political education of the population, and by the low level of Georgian Communist Party leadership in the economic and political life of the republic.” As a result, “nationalistic, enemy elements” were able to take advantage of the “carelessness and complacency of the leadership of Party, Komsomol, and Soviet organs” to use the third anniversary of Stalin’s death to protest the campaign against Stalin’s cult of personality initiated by the Twentieth Party Congress. Not only did “many Communists take a position as passive observers,” several Communists were even “themselves complicit in the disturbances and appeared with anti-Party speeches and appeals.” For these reasons, according to Mžavanaže, the “Presidium of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party quite correctly criticizes us, that we did not conduct a determined struggle with certain manifestations of bourgeois nationalistic ideology.”

In reporting to the CPSU CC on the progress of ideological work among Party members in Georgia, Mžavanaže noted at first that: “In the majority of district party organizations attention was not drawn to the events which took place from 5-9

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400 Ibid., l. 12.
401 Ibid., l. 17.
402 Ibid., l. 17.
403 Ibid., l. 18.
March...a proper political assessment of these events was not given.” However, he also suggested, “A number of Communists and Komsomol members are dismayed and confused. One observes [in questions posed about the events in 5-9 March] a manifestation of dissent, discontent, or even a kind of silent protest.” Even if questions about the 5-9 March events were, indeed, exceptional, as Mżavanaže reported, that does not make the claims less significant. Rather, it points to the uncertainty surrounding these events and how they were understood by at least some of the republic’s residents over the course of the year. Furthermore, if the “confusion and dismay” exhibited by many Party and Komsomol members were indicative of “a kind of silent protest,” toward what was this silent protest aimed?

**Metaphor: Views from Georgians and Non-Georgians**

The peculiar environment engendered by the March events in Georgia led the republic’s citizens to reflect on the state of nationality and national relations within Georgia in addition to questioning the bounds of the anti-Stalin line and the truth about the Stalin era. Active participation in demonstrations across the republic between 5-9 March constituted the most visible conflict between the planned Moscow-led anti-Stalin campaign and conditions in Georgia, yet Party members across Georgia exhibited their own reservations regarding Stalin’s association with a cult of personality. These were expressed during special meetings devoted to discussion of Khrushchev’s secret speech, which took place across the Soviet

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404 “Dokladaia zapiska Biuro TsK KP Gruzii o massovykh volneniiakh naselenia...”, 294.
405 Ibid.
Meetings elsewhere in the Union (including the RSFSR, Ukraine, Armenia, Estonia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Belarus) occurred prior to the majority of the meetings in Georgia, in early to mid-March, and throughout the Union, these sessions continued until December 1956.407

While organized discussions about Khrushchev’s speech took place throughout the Soviet Union in 1956, in Georgia, these formal discussions first occurred in late March and early April more explicitly as a retroactive effort to manage public opinion in the aftermath of the demonstration and violent crackdown on 9 March. The meetings were held for two purposes: first, to formally read and discuss Khrushchev’s report “On the Cult of Personality and its Consequences”; and second, to discuss a 28 March article which appeared in Pravda (Russian) and in komunisti (Georgian) titled “Why the cult of personality is alien to the spirit of Marxism-Leninism.”408 These discussions occurred in Party district and city committees across the republic, as well as in factory and professional party committees. Subsequent waves of meetings occurred that summer and autumn to discuss the CPSU Central Committee resolution “On the Mistakes and Shortcomings in the Work of the Central Committee of the Georgian Communist Party” and to continue to monitor reception of the Twentieth Party Congress’s proclamations.

406 Jones, ed. The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization; Zubkova, Russia after the War; and Dobson, Khrushchev’s Cold Summer in particular.
407 For a collection of these reports from elsewhere in the Union, see Doklad N.S. Khrushcheva o kul’te lichnosti Stalina na XX s”ezde KPSS: Dokumenty (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2002).
In this section, I draw from questions and speeches posed in districts across the Georgian SSR (including from the three autonomous regions) and from the comments of officers of the 74th Georgian Rifle Division, stationed in K’ut’aisi. By examining questions posed by meeting attendees, we may see not only how Khrushchev’s revelations were first received among Georgians, but also how Georgians and non-Georgians alike understood this shift in discourse in the context of the unfolding events between 5-9 March in the republic. Including locations across the republic reveals those issues that are raised regardless of locale, and those which express local concerns, particularly in the cases of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Across the republic, meeting attendees sought a definition of what, precisely, constituted a “kul’t lichnosti” or “pirovnebis kulti” (literally “cult of the individual” in both Russian and Georgian, yet more commonly rendered into English as “cult of personality”). Initially such questions explicitly asked for a definition of the term, and probed the definition’s limits and further applications. This suggested that, despite its Marxist pedigree, the “cult of personality” terminology was essentially alien to the Soviet lexicon. In Signagi, an attendee asked, “Where did the creation of the cult of personality come from? Did the masses create the cult of personality, or

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409 The district committees included: Orjonikize (Tbilisi), Kalinin (Tbilisi), Kirov (Tbilisi), Lenin (Tbilisi), Stalin (Tbilisi), Gareubani (Tbilisi), Orjonikize (Imereti’i), Gudaut’a, Bogdanov, Poti, K’edi, Cali, Signagi, Gurjaani, K’achreti, K’areli, Kaspi, T’ianeti, Kutaisi, Cit’elqaro, Axmeta, Lagodexi, Bolnisi, Ambrolauri, Qvareli, Xobi, Xa’uri, Zestap’oni, Culukize, Gali, Çoxaturi, and Samtredi. City committees included Batumi, Gori, K’ut’aisi, Poti, and Čtat’ura.
did it come from above, from the leadership?” While this questioner attempts to locate the origins of the problem denounced by Party leadership, an attendee in Kāčret’i District asked, “Please explain how to understand the cult of personality and who is meant by cult of personality. The people are the creators of history, and if the people rightly exalted the personality, then is it a cult of personality.”

Furthermore, the distinction between the Soviet triumph in World War Two and a cult of personality around Stalin appeared problematic for one attendee, who said “As we all know, when the Great Patriotic War ended, Stalin said that he had not won the war personally, but that [it was won by] our heroic Soviet people and, above all, the great Russian people. Is this a cult of personality?” In many locales, questioners asked whether cults of personality existed, on the one hand, for Marx, Engels, and Lenin and, on the other hand, whether currently such a cult existed around Khrushchev, Anastas Mikoyan, and Nikolai Bulganin, two other CPSU CC members. Though the temporal parameters of Stalin’s personality cult seemed clearly demarcated, the extent to which the cult paradigm could be retroactively applied to other individuals (or, in a more expansive move, to the Soviet or Russian people) remained, at this point, more open to interpretation among questioners.

In spite of attempts to extend the applicability of the cult of personality to other historically relevant periods and individuals, questions devoted more attention to the position of Stalin himself, both with regard to the cult of personality

410 “Voprosy, postupivshie na sobraniakh partaktiva raiionnykh partiinykh organizatsii Gruzii,” šsса (II), f. 14, op. 31, d. 201, l. 53-4.
411 Ibid.
412 “Informatsiia,” Kalinin District Agitprop Chairman Z. Beriśvili to N.U. Jaši, šsса (II), f. 14, op. 31, d. 251, l. 9.
and to his relationship with Georgians. In particular, questions sought to understand the timing of Khrushchev’s announcement. In T‘ianet‘i District, an attendee asked why Stalin’s mistakes were “attributed to the cult of personality” only after his death. In Kirov District (Tbilisi), a factory worker asked “Why did they not speak of a cult of personality and criticize while comrade Stalin was alive, and if they did, how did comrade Stalin react?” and “Did Stalin promote those people who praised him?” Developing this inquiry further, a question from Gareubani District (Tbilisi) explained, “The goal of criticism is to correct a living person. After death [the goal of] criticism is not clear.” This speaker thus casts the exposure of Stalin’s “mistakes” within the Soviet (and Stalinist) ideal of criticism and self-criticism (*kritika i samokritika*), in which self-improvement through acknowledgement and correction of defects would create a vigilant, dutiful Soviet citizenry. At a later wave of meetings that summer, M.S. Golaže, a Tbilisi Party member at “Gruzneft,” agreed: “it was necessary to criticize and speak about Stalin’s mistakes during his lifetime so that he could respond and correct his mistakes.” Further, he noted that “We should criticize the living and if we do not criticize an individual, do not tell the truth, he may revive the cult of personality. For example:

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413 “Voprosy, postypivshie na sobraniiakh partiinikh organizatsii Gruzii,” sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 31, d. 201, l. 56.
414 Kirov District Secretary I. Tandilašvili to Department of Propaganda and Agitation of Georgian CC, 3 April 1956, sšssa (II), f. 14, op 31, d. 251, l. 27.
415 Head of Department of Propaganda and Agitation of Tbilisi City Committee M. Gaprindašvili to N.U. Jaši, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 31, d. 251, l. 7.
today Comrade Tito leads Yugoslavia, he can also make mistakes, and so it is necessary to warn him promptly of criticism."416

K'ut'aisi Party member Xurc'iże similarly questioned the purpose behind the timing of Khrushchev's announcement: “If during Stalin’s life no one spoke about his mistakes, what benefit will criticism of the deceased bring the party now? Or, why speak with derision about the Georgian people, to what end is a statesman judged based on nationality?”417 As he makes clear in this question, Xurc'iże interpreted the attacks as criticizing Stalin explicitly as a Georgian (rather than Soviet) figure. In a meeting to discuss Khrushchev's report in Orjonikiże District (Imeret'i), among the two hundred questions asked, M. Megrelišvili reported that:

A number of organizations are sensitive to and consider offensive to the Georgian people that in [Khrushchev’s] report it says that “in Georgia,” thousands of innocent Soviet people were victims of tyranny and lawlessness, and it was all done under the “genius” leadership of Stalin, the “great son of the Georgian people,” as Georgians love to call their countryman.418

In this instance, at least, the report author acknowledged the direct link between this particular excerpt from Khrushchev’s pronouncement and the “national offense” in which it was interpreted among Georgians.

The explicit issue of the 5-9 March events was likewise raised at meetings. For example, in Stalin District (Tbilisi), an attendee asked, “How correct is it that they are working over a dead man? In the letter [from Khrushchev] it is written that

416 "Informatsiia o khode obsuzhdeniia postanovleniia TsK KPSS 'o preodolenii kul'ta lichnosti i ego posledstvii' v partiniyh organizatsiiakh Gruzii," sšsssa (II). f. 14, op. 31 d. 201, l. 108.
417 "Informatsiia ob oznakomlenii kommunistov s dokladom t. Khrushcheva N.S. 'o kuľ'te lichnosti i ego posledstviakh," V. Mžavanaże to CPSU CC, April 1956, sšsssa (II), f.14, op. 31, d. 201, l. 31.
418 "Informatsiia,” Head of Department of Party Organs of Georgian CC M. Megrelišvili, April 1956, sšsssa (II), f. 14, op. 31, d. 202, l. 5.
people were executed by Stalin's order. We are interested in by whose order were people killed on 9 March?" Furthermore, a Party-member middle school teacher from Poti, S. T'avaže, explained:

I do not believe it, but even if the documents that you read now are correct, the question remains whether it is possible to lead the state so as not to touch the immortal name of Stalin after his death. After all, Stalin died and he failed to prevent the recurrence of “such mistakes”: in Tbilisi on 9 March, like “Bloody Sunday,” they committed a massacre of unarmed people. Who is to blame for this? Comrade Stalin?! Is it justified when new cadres begin an “improvement” of their authority by affront, as if by criticism, of the old extraordinarily authoritative cadre? Are good results achieved by this method? No, no, and no...

These questions convey two central understandings of the conflict between the center’s exposure of Stalin’s crimes and how this effort was received in by Party members Georgia: first, a discomfort and confusion regarding the denunciation of Stalin’s crimes only after his death; and second, an explicit acknowledgement of the hypocrisy of the center which, while denouncing Stalin’s ordering of executions, proved willing weeks after the Twentieth Party Congress to kill unarmed demonstrators in Tbilisi. Furthermore, for these Party members, Stalin’s posthumous political fate was explicitly linked to those demonstrators killed in Tbilisi.

Though uttered in a less formal forum, frank explanations by officers of the 74th Georgian Rifle Division, stationed in Kutaisi, reported in a spravka clearly demarcate a contrast between Stalin’s service to the Soviet state and the current

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419 "Voprosy, zadannye pri provedenii chitki doldada t. Khrushchev N.S. v partiinykh organizatsiiakh Stalinskogo raiona,” sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 31, d. 212, l. 40.
420 "Informatsiia,” Head of Department of Party Organs of Georgian CC M. Megrelišvili, April 1956, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 31, d. 202, ll. 6-7.
government.\footnote{Serov singled this division out in his report to the CPSU CC, citing their “unhealthy feelings and anti-Soviet utterances.” ššša (I), f. 6, d. 159, l. 34.} As reported by an Agent Abrosimov on 18 March, regarding the demonstrations in Tbilisi and Batumi, Captain Ćankuliège explained that,

The demonstrations and meetings that occurred in Tbilisi and Batumi were organized by the local populations as a protest against the government, which had forgotten the service of Stalin to the state. The government became accustomed to the people applauding its decisions, and bowing their heads before it. So it was during the arrest of Beria, who was indeed the enemy. Therefore the arrest was endorsed by the people. But when they began to criticize Stalin, the people did not approve this action of the government, and therefore [the people] protests now.\footnote{“Spravka po reagirovaniiu lichnogo sostava chastei Zakavkazskogo Voennogo Okruga na sobytiia v sviazi s godovshchinoi smerti tovarishcha STALINA,” Head of the 2nd Sector of the Special Department of the KGB/ZakVO Lieutenant Dunaev, 20 March 1956, ššša (II), f. 14, op. 31, d. 297, ll. 36-7.}

As this excerpt demonstrates, “the people” and Stalin were aligned in support of and service to the state, whereas their protests were directed toward the current government. Medical Service Captain C’xomeliège made a similar connection when he claimed, “How our youth is growing, because even they do not fear to go against the government. This is a true political demonstration about which has never been heard or written in history. It is not so easy to dirty Stalin’s name.”\footnote{Ibid., l. 6.} A Lieutenant Oraželiège also distinguished between, on the one hand, the will of the people and Stalin, and on the other, the party: “You speak about the unity of the people. Typically it can be verified by the responses of the people. But the recent event suggests otherwise. The party wants to impose its will on the people – to make the people forget Stalin.”\footnote{Ibid., l. 18.}

Finally, in a discussion on 14 March between several
majors, Major Kuxaleišvili explained, “the crowd was against comrades Khrushchev and Bulganin because in a secret letter about Stalin they allegedly called him a crook and other bad words.” After hearing this, Major Gogoliuk (likely a Ukrainian by nationality, based on his surname) suggested instead that it was a demonstration “against the Soviet government and Soviet power.” Kuxaleišvili retorted, “It was only against the two aforementioned comrades.”

While the Twentieth Party Congress pronouncements were associated with Khrushchev in particular, some Party member servicemen interpreted the demonstrations as against Mikoyan rather than Khrushchev. Captain K’itošvili, a company commander, singled out Mikoyan as the embodiment of the government and, as such, the target of the 5-9 March demonstrations. After discussions about the Twentieth Party Congress among a group of officers on 13 March, K’itošvili exclaimed, “How can this miserable Armenian speak out against Stalin and spoil his name? Not for nothing were these demonstrations held against him, which brought about victims. This will not happen for nothing.”

Senior Lieutenant C’omolašvili expanded on this point by recounting how Mikoyan’s portrait had been allegedly hung upside down on a train and that this was done correctly because he had soiled Stalin’s name. Whether interpreted as demonstrations against Khrushchev, Bulganin, or Mikoyan, the sentiment remained, as noted by I.M. Berikac’išvili that “At the current time, of course, it is not right that in the government in Moscow

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425 Ibid., l. 35.
426 Ibid., l. 18.
427 Ibid.
there is not a single Georgian. The government is a great power and it is not a coincidence that recently for us in Georgia there were killings and injuries.”

As these comments demonstrate, attacks levied against Mikoyan in particular acquired a national (and at times xenophobic) tinge, both for his position as a prominent Armenian – a nationality with a tangible presence in Georgia and against whom Georgians historically have identified – and for the perceived lack of a comparable Georgian spokesman at the all-Union, Presidium level in the aftermath of Stalin’s death and Beria’s execution.

The questions and explanations posed above reveal an underlying confusion and concern with the timing of Khrushchev’s denunciations, which point in some cases to a distinctively “national” interpretation of the situation, and in others, one which is more concerned with the historical context of de-Stalinization and the 9 March Tbilisi crackdown. Non-Georgians outside of the autonomous regions likewise used the opportunity afforded by these discussions to promote their own national priorities in an official setting. For example, at Party meetings in Axalk’alak’i, Bolnisi, Dmanisi, and Marneuli districts, which had large Armenian and Azerbaijani populations, Party members “spoke about the necessity of organizing radio programs in Armenian and Azerbaijani languages, about the creation of

\[428\] Ibid., l. 36.
\[429\] A particularly glaring example of this link was reported on 13 March in Axalk’alak’i, a city with a large Armenian population. A make-shift announcement was posted in Armenian that read: “Dear Georgians, do not be afraid of Armenians, destroy Armenians and always remember the native Beria, our own. Respectfully, a Georgian...” Ibid.
republican newspapers in the Azerbaijani language and Azerbaijani theatre.”

Rather than speaking directly about the cult of personality or the March 1956 events, in these locales meeting attendees raised their own long-standing grievances. In the immediate aftermath of the March event, the CPSU CC received a number of letters and petitions from Russian residents of Georgia (in Rustavi, Tbilisi, and Cxaltubo), citing discrimination against non-Georgians for professional assignments, Party membership, and in daily interactions in a developing “Georgia – for Georgians.” Just as a Georgian national discourse coalesced around the March 1956 events, the opening provided by the cult of personality discussions similarly inspired non-Georgians to voice more vociferously their own opinions on issues of nationality in the republic.

Metaphor: Views from the Autonomous Regions

Discussions in the autonomous regions demonstrate that, while the March events were first and foremost a Georgian national affair, the fallout of the demonstrations and opening offered by Khrushchev’s discourse shift caused citizens in Abkhazia, Ajaria, and South Ossetia to express their own spectrum of concerns regarding their status within the republic. Though Abkhaz representatives in particular voiced certain grievances against the Tbilisi center prior to 1956, the

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430 “Informatsiia ob itogakh obsuzhdeniiia postanovleniiia Prezidiuma TsK KPSS ‘ob oshibkakh i nedostatkakh v rabote TsK KP Gruzii’ v partiinnykh organizatsiakh respubliki,” Second Secretary of Georgian CC P.B. Kovanov, сшssa (II), f. 14, op. 31, d. 201, l. 180.
431 RGANI, f. 5, op. 31, d. 60, ll. 69-71, 75-86, 93-94, 98-165; RGANI, f. 5, op. 30, d. 141, ll. 20-21.
tenor, breadth, and quantity of their concerns increased markedly from this point – a trend that would continue, haltingly, for the duration of the Soviet period.

In all three regions, the specter of 1937-1938 dominated discussions among Party members. Even in the largely ethnically Georgian, historically Muslim Ajaria, for instance, T. Čik’ovani, a representative of the Ajaria KGB, noted that over the course of 1937-1938, Beria and his “henchmen” (prispeshniki) arrested 11,000 innocent people, of whom 4,000 were executed, in the “small autonomous republic of Ajaria” for having “family ties in Turkey” and “smuggling honest workers to the Turkish border region” in addition to purported spy and terrorist activities. In South Ossetia and Abkhazia, charges regarding the national dimension of the Terror were even more glaring. In a 6 September Party meeting of the Staliniri (South Ossetia) State Pedagogical Institute, F.Z. Chuchiev claimed,

From Georgia [Beria] wanted to create a “great” Georgia and separate her from the family of socialist republics. He and his henchmen strove to foster national exceptionalism among the Georgian population and confine it in a narrow national framework, at the same time creating a feeling of superiority over and hatred toward other nations (natsiia): Ossetian, Abkhaz, Armenian and others living in Georgia; they sowed enmity between them. His approach against Ossetians and Abkhaz began in 1937. He decided to assimilate Ossetians and Abkhaz. But in order to carry out assimilation, he had to clear the path himself and he did so.

Similarly, during a meeting of the Party organization of the Mugudzirkhva kolkhoz, in Gudauta District (Abkhazia), attendees took the opportunity offered by discussions of the cult of personality to openly address the issue of “atrocities and

433 “Protokol 8 zakrytogo partiinogo sobraniiia pervichnoi partorganizatsii Stalinirskogo Gospedinstituta ot 6-go sentiabria 1956 g.,” sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 31, d. 210, ll. 249-250.
lawlessness” in Abkhazia during 1937, when eighty kolkhozniki from this village were “repressed,” some of whom had been posthumously rehabilitated. According to the report prepared by M. Megrelišvili for the Georgian Central Committee, Party members Dzhikirba, Agrba, and Gubaz, who themselves were arrested in 1937, asked “Do we need portraits and monuments to such a person who so mercilessly destroyed people? After all, by his actions he was, in fact, an enemy of the people, only this was not revealed until now.”434 Based on their surnames, Dzhikirba, Agrba, and Gubaz were likely Abkhaz by nationality. Their strong anti-Stalin sentiments (rather than simply anti-Beria), as expressed in this statement, depart significantly from the concerns expressed by Georgian Party members described above. M.M. Shamba, procurator of the Abkhaz ASSR, conveyed a similar point when he noted that the crimes of the Terror were the “result of the well-being of Stalin’s cult of personality, giving the possibility to Beria’s band to do its dirty work and treacherously destroy the best cadres of our party and country, and the limits were solicited by Beria and sanctioned by Stalin.”435 While for many Georgians it remained possible at this point to view Stalin positively as a Georgian national figure, among Abkhaz representatives, understanding Stalin – like Beria -- as a Georgian only reinforced animosities between Georgians and Abkhaz in the republic.

434 “Informatsiia,” Head of Department of Party Organs of Georgian CC M. Megrelišvili, April 1956, süssa (II), f. 14, op. 31, d. 202, l. 3. This comment was deemed important enough to be included explicitly in a report from Mžavanaże to the CPSU Central Committee, “Dokladnaia zapiska Biuro TsK KP Gruzii o massovykh volneniakh naseleniia…”, 294.

As Chuchiev makes clear, exposing truths about the Terror remained closely linked with perceived threats to rights of non-Georgians in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Both Abkhaz and Ossetian representatives accused Beria and his cohort of implementing a “policy of forced assimilation” in their territories during his tenure as Georgian First Secretary. In the case of Abkhazia, according to Abkhaz Obkom Secretary Tarba, this policy manifested itself on many fronts: Beria's team allegedly “exterminated” the republic’s best cadres, exclusively promoted those of Georgian nationality to leadership posts, closed Abkhaz schools, mandated instruction of Abkhaz children in the Georgian language, converted the Abkhaz alphabet to Georgian, closed Armenian and many Russian schools, re-named cities, streets, villages, kolkhozes, rivers, and railway stations in a Georgian fashion, and resettled Georgians from other districts of Georgia in Abkhazia. Chuchiev complained of a similar process in South Ossetia, including the destruction of the “best” cadres in South Ossetia and the entire intelligentsia, the “liquidation” of sources of culture, the conversion of the Ossetian alphabet to Georgian, and the destruction of Ossetian and Russian schools.

Abkhaz and Ossetian representatives did not limit their complaints to the Beria era: the recent past, in the form of postwar resettlements, the March events, or the rewriting of Georgian history, all proved ripe sources of grievance as well. In Abkhazia, participants lamented the resettlement policies that changed many parts

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436 “Informatsiiia o sobraniiakh aktiva Abkhazskoi oblastnoi, raionnykh i gorodskikh partiinykh organizatsii KP Gruzii,” šsssa (II), f. 14, op. 31, d. 208, ll. 398-399.
437 “Protokol 8 zakrytogo partiinogo sobraniiia pervichnoi partorganizatsii Stalinirskogo Gospedinstituta ot 6-go sentiabria 1956 g.,” šsssa (II), f. 14, op. 31, d. 210, ll. 249-250.
of the autonomous republic in the post-war period. Shamba, for example, in his speech noted the “impoverished” Greek families with Soviet citizenship, including decorated Great Patriotic War veterans, who were deported from Abkhazia and expelled from their homes.\textsuperscript{438} In the village of Amtqeli (Gul’ripskii District), Comrade Markosian, a representative of the Rust‘aveli kolkhoz (and likely Armenian by nationality based on his surname), similarly pointed to the “illegal deportation of Armenians and Greeks in 1949.”\textsuperscript{439} In the same village, S. Zurabiani of the Malenkov kolkhoz reminded attendees that, in connection with Beria’s cultivation of national enmity in Georgia, “We were resettled here against our will from K‘vemo Svanet‘i District, and the Greeks who were residing here were illegally deported to Kazakhstan and other districts of the country.”\textsuperscript{440} Furthermore, A.A. Beslanže of the Mugudzirkhva kolkhoz (Gudauta District, likely a Georgian) complained about the redistribution of lands by Abkhazpereselenstroi to accommodate newly-resettled kolkhozniki from Svanet‘i to villages such as Otkhara and Dzhirkhva.\textsuperscript{441} These speakers, who included Abkhaz, Armenian, and Svan representatives, not only linked their own fates with the policies of Beria and Stalin, but also that of the Greek population deported from Abkhazia. Though expressing its own grievances, a broader “non-Georgian” consensus within Abkhazia appeared as well. Furthermore,

\textsuperscript{438} Speech by M.M. Shamba to oblast aktiv in fall 1956, reprinted in \textit{Abkhazskie pis’ma (1947-1989)}, 116. Original in Partarkhiv Abkhazskogo obkoma KP Gruzi, f. 1, op. 6, d. 36, ll. 127-134.
\textsuperscript{439} “Informatsiia o sobraniiakh aktiva Abkhazskoi oblastnoi, raionnykh i gorodskikh partiiykh organizatsii KP Gruzi,“ sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 31, d. 208, ll. 419-420.
\textsuperscript{440} “Informatsiia o khode zakrytykh partiiykh sobranii po obsuzhdeniu postanovlenia Prezidiuma TsK KPSS ot 10 iulia 1956 goda ‘ob oshibkah i nedostatkakh v rabote TsK KP Gruzi,“ 19 September 1956, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 31, d. 209, l. 152.
\textsuperscript{441} Ibid., ll. 153-154.
the Georgian Beslanže used the opportunity to express his resentment about the Abkhazpereselenstroi project and resettled Svan populations. The Svan perspective (Zurabiani) in this instance is particularly illustrative: as a sub-Georgian ethnic group (like Mingrelians), the Svan settlers served as both Georgian representatives (from the perspective of Tbilisi) dispatched in an autonomous region as well as non-Georgians in the local landscape of multiethnic Abkhazia.

Not surprisingly, residents of Abkhazia and South Ossetia interpreted the March events in a different light than fellow citizens in Tbilisi or Gori. As noted above, the commemorations and demonstrations that took place in Sukhumi were largely the concern of ethnic Georgians, not Abkhaz or other non-Georgian minority populations. In Abkhazia, a group of Georgians (Getia, Axalaia, and Gabasonia, representatives of two kolkhozes and one village) asked, in a petition, what would be done with those who gave the order to shoot at “defenseless children” on 9 March in Tbilisi. They also described manifestations of “Abkhaz bourgeois nationalism” and “Great Russian chauvinism” among several workers in the Abkhaz Obkom and Abkhaz Presidium, but noted that the Georgian Central Committee had not taken the necessary measures to counter it.\footnote{“Informatsiia o sobraniakh aktiva Abkhazskoi oblastnoi, raionnykh i gorodskikh partiinykh organizatsii KP Gruzii,” šsssa (II), f. 14, op. 31, d. 208, ll. 424-425.} The perceived alliance of Abkhaz and Russian national agendas for this speaker points to the perception that the 9 March crackdown by the Red Army was a Russian action against Georgians, thereby making an Abkhaz-Russian link all the more threatening (from their point of view) for Georgians living in Abkhazia. Similar protests did not occur in Staliniri, despite
its namesake, but residents of South Ossetia still voiced opinions on the March events. For example, Party member V.M. Khetagurov explained that the Tbilisi events were the,

most disgraceful stage in the party life of the Georgian SSR. At first glance it seemed as if nothing peculiar had happened. Workers, especially young students, honored the memory of comrade Stalin, but if one understands it politically, then it was a truly counterrevolutionary and I would say shamelessly nationalistic statement.443

Whereas the Georgians noted in the previous section regarded the 5-9 March demonstrations primarily as a national, cultural statement, non-Georgians such as Khetagurov attributed a stronger, political motivation to the Georgians’ actions. It remains significant (though perhaps not surprising) that on this point many non-Georgian Party members agreed with Mžavanaže: that (in their interpretation) the overtly nationalistic aims of Georgians in the republic not only increased discord between Georgians and other nationalities, but also were detrimental to minority national rights within the Georgian SSR.

From Metaphor to Memory: giorgi merč’ule and Georgian-Abkhaz Relations

Discussions in the aftermath of the March events confronted a more complex recent history in Abkhazia for reasons other than those noted above. In 1954, Georgian literary historian Pavle Ingoroqva published a thousand-page work, Giorgi

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443 Secretary of South Ossetia obkom Sanakoev G.G. to Georgian CC, 28 September 1956, ssssa (II), f. 14, op. 31, d. 210, l. 196.
Merč’ule: A Tenth-Century Georgian Writer, in Tbilisi. 444 Though Ingoroqva had published shorter articles on the topic in the scholarly journal mnat’obi in 1949, at that time, little critical discussion ensued. 445

The scope of Giorgi Merč’ule was considerably broader than the topics in it that generated the most discussion: ostensibly a biography of a man and his world drawn from ecclesiastical sources and linguistics, in his book, Ingoroqva also made more wide-ranging interpretations of Georgian history, long after the period of Merč’ule’s life, through this narrative. Of these, new arguments about the genesis and migration history of the peoples and lands of Abkhazia proved the most controversial. In short, Ingoroqva claimed that Georgian tribes had settled the territories of Abkhazia and the Black Sea coast since at least the eighth century, and that ethnic Abkhaz had only been on the territory since the seventeenth century. Many of Ingoroqva’s claims were based on rather specious evidence that Abkhaz words and place names actually had Kartvelian roots, thereby allegedly proving their Georgianness.

As Academy of Sciences scholars began to review the book within their institution, the first public review, by G. Axvlediani, appeared in Zaria Vostoka on 9

444 Pavle Ingoroqva, giorgi merč’ule: k’art’veli mcerali meate saukenisa: narkvevi žveli sak’art’velos literaturis, kulturis da saxelmcip’oebrivi c’xovrebis istoriidan (Tbilisi: Sabčot’a Mcerali, 1954). Ingoroqva was a prominent literary historian and member of the Georgian Writers’ Union and Academy of Sciences.
July 1955.\textsuperscript{446} This overwhelmingly laudatory review raised the profile of the work not only among Georgians, but also among the Abkhaz readership. The Abkhaz Obkom brought the issue to the attention of Mžavanaże and the Georgian CC in a 22 August 1955 letter, which cast the work in the context of broader attempts to “destroy” everything connected with the name of the Abkhaz people.\textsuperscript{447} In their telling, the 1954 publication of Giorgi Merchule went against the creation of an atmosphere of “necessary friendship” in the republic and failed to adhere to established scholarly standards. Furthermore, they criticized Axvlediani, who “wholly endorse[d] the author’s anti-scholarly ‘new’ view” while “idealizing the vicious book.”\textsuperscript{448} In response to the Abkhaz Obkom’s complaint, the Georgian CC acknowledged that the paper published the review without waiting for sufficient evaluation of the facts from other scholars, especially regarding “the genesis of the Abkhaz people,” and resolved to point out the mistakes to Zaria Vostoka’s editor, I.P. Cxikišvili.\textsuperscript{449} At that point, the problem appeared to have been resolved.

However, Party meetings held in 1956 following the March events to discuss “the mistakes and shortcomings” of the Georgian CP provided a further forum for Abkhaz representatives to link debates about Georgian and Abkhaz history to broader grievances about the status of non-Georgians in the republic. In a speech at

\textsuperscript{446} G. Akhvlediani, “Tsennyi trud po istorii gruzinskoi kul’tury,” \textit{Zaria Vostoka}, (9 July 1955), p. 3. For a concurrent draft review within the Academy of Sciences’ Javaxišvili Institute, see Z. Anchabadze, “Voprosy istorii Abkhazii i abkhazskogo tsarstva’ v knige P. Ingorokva ‘Georgii Merchule, gruzinskii pisatel’ 10 veka,” smeea, f. 9, op. 1, d. 297, ll. 106-137.

\textsuperscript{447} “Pis’mo sekretaria Abkhazskogo obkoma i predsedatelia Soveta Ministrov Abkhazskoi ASSR ot 16 avgusta 1955 g.,” sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 30, d. 374, l. 2.

\textsuperscript{448} Ibid., l. 5.

\textsuperscript{449} “Reshenia, priniatoe 8 sentiabria 1955 goda ’O vystuplenii gazety ’Zaria Vostoka’ po povodu knigi P. Ingorokva ‘Georgii Merchule,’” sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 30, d. 118, l. 1.
a district Party meeting, A.T. Otyrba, from the propaganda and agitation section of the Abkhaz Obkom, highlighted the failure of Party work “especially among the scholarly intelligentsia” as related to the March events. A combination of “nationalistic feelings” and “sycophants” attempted to “liquidate the face of the Abkhaz people,” and the “unfortunate book of P. Ingoroqva Georgii Merchule was generated by this policy.” Though Otyrba argued that the issue of whether the Abkhaz people were an autonomous (samostoiatel’nyi) people was not in dispute, “it is a different matter if the workers of the Georgian CP CC themselves are not sure and doubt this.” The “anti-scholarly conception of the falsifier of history P. Ingoroqva” therefore necessitated a more concerted struggle with manifestations of “bourgeois nationalism” among the scholarly intelligentsia not merely for the benefit of the Abkhaz people, but for relations toward the Abkhaz, Ossetians and other peoples residing in Georgia.450

Scholars continued to review Ingoroqva’s book, and as part of this process, an article by senior historian and Javaxiśvili Institute head Nikoloz Berženišvili appeared in the December 1956 issue of mnat’obi that commended the breadth of the vast work but also detailed several shortcomings.451 Most notably, Berženišvili criticized Ingoroqva’s use of what Berženišvili regarded as a literary source (the writings of the Tao-Klarjet’ian monk Merč’ule) to make claims that necessitated a comparative historiographical, archaeological, ethnographic, linguistic, and folkloric

450 Speech by Otyrba A.T. to meeting of oblast’ Party aktiv, late summer 1956, reprinted in Abkhazskie pis’ma (1947-1989), 123-128. Original in Partarkhiv Abkhazskogo obkoma KP Gruzii, f. 1, op. 6, d. 36, ll. 127-134.
approach. Berženišvili found Ingoroqva’s arguments about the Abkhaz kingdoms to be particularly problematic, as the paucity of sources was most apparent in that section. This was, in short, a problem of method rather than content: in Berženišvili’s view, Ingoroqva wanted to explain the Georgian politics of Abkhaz kings of the eighth to tenth centuries on ethnic grounds. He argued that Ingoroqva was mistaken to think that the making of the Georgian polity could only include those peoples who were descendants of Kartvelian tribes (meaning that Ingoroqva argued for the Kartvelian roots of the Abkhaz). Yet while Berženišvili’s review contained a number of criticisms of Ingoroqva’s work, the review soon became the center of controversy because it challenged the method more than the content of Ingoroqva’s actual claims. Berženišvili later alleged that the journal’s editors changed the text of his article to promote a more positive view of the work without his consent, which he claimed in appeals to Mžavanaże and the Georgian CC in 1957.\footnote{The solution, to compensate for publishing Berženišvili’s article, was to publish a series of more critical reviews of Ingoroqva’s book in mnat’obi in early 1957 by Axvlediani, Qauxč’ašhvili, and Kobiže.\footnote{N. Berženišvili to Georgian CC, “ganc’xadeba,” xec, N. Berženišvili, d. 1493, ll. 1-12; N. Berženišvili to V. Mžavanaże, xec, N. Berženišvili, d. 1494, ll. 1-2.} The solution, to compensate for publishing Berženišvili’s article, was to publish a series of more critical reviews of Ingoroqva’s book in mnat’obi in early 1957 by Axvlediani, Qauxč’ašhvili, and Kobiže.\footnote{G. Axvlediani, “ap’xazet’is istoriuli toponimikis zogiert’i sakitxisat’vis,” mnat’obi 34, no. 2 (February 1957): 107-14; Simon Qauxč’ašhvili, “giorgi merč’ulis’ garšemo,” mnat’obi 34, no. 2 (February 1957): 115-25; D. Kobiže, “termini ‘abxazis’ mnišveloba sparsuli cqaroebis mixedvit’,” mnat’obi 34, no. 2 (February 1957): 126-28. Since the mnat’obi discussions, Berženišvili submitted a number of letters in his defense to the editors of mnat’obi, axalgaardza komunisti, and literaturuli gazeti, which were not published. The Georgian Academy of Sciences also held a special session about the discussion of Ingoroqva’s book, during which Berženišvili attempted to save his reputation. Even though Ingoroqva wrote the book in question and other scholars provided laudatory reviews, Berženišvili received the brunt of the blame for this developing controversy. See “šesavali sitqva carmot’q’muli sak’. ssr mec’n. akademiis sazogadobebriv mec’nierebat’a ganqop’ilbebis mier mocqobil diskusiaze ‘giorgi merč’ules’ gamo,” 31 March 1957, xec, N. Berženišvili, d. 1486, ll. 1-2; “sak’. ssr}}
This only exacerbated the controversy generated by these discussions by attracting attention to the issue at hand to such an extent that the Georgian CC became involved by April, when the Georgian CC and Abkhaz Obkom passed resolutions “On the erroneous discussion organized by the journal mnat’obi on P. Ingoroqva’s book Giorgi Merchule,” which targeted not Ingoroqva’s scholarship itself, but the discussions it generated among Georgian scholars and Abkhaz activists. A group of around 200 persons demonstrated outside the Abkhaz Obkom building in Sukhumi during these proceedings, demanding a retraction of the articles in question and their theses.\textsuperscript{454} Abkhaz drama troupes likewise boycotted performances in protest and threatened to refrain from participation in an upcoming showcase of Abkhaz art in Tbilisi. Demonstrators also conveyed their demands via telegram to Moscow.\textsuperscript{455} The size of these demonstrations was considerably smaller than those across the republic a year earlier, in March 1956. Yet while most of the demonstrators’ demands remained within the spheres of historiography and culture, the controversy created by the {\textit{Merč'ule}} discussions made a space for a more serious proposition: the transfer of the Abkhaz ASSR from Georgia to the RSFSR, a demand articulated by a group of schoolteachers in Gudauta.


\textsuperscript{455} Ardzheniia Sh.A., Khagba A.B., et al. to Khrushchev, 11 April 1957, from Adler, RGANI, f. 5, op. 31, d. 86, ll. 3-4; Aiba, Bartsits, et al. to CC CPSU, 11 April 1957, from Gudauta, RGANI f. 5, op. 31, d. 86, ll. 5-6; Avidzba M.K., Zukhba G.Sh., et al. to Khrushchev, 11 April 1957, from Sochi, RGANI, f. 5, op. 31, d. 86, ll. 7-8.
in a telegram to the CC in Moscow in April 1957. In the aftermath of the March 1956 events, such expressions by Abkhaz representatives carried more weight than they had prior to 1956, when they had levied similar complaints about Ingoroqva’s work (albeit without the request for territorial transfer) to little avail.

From the Georgian Party perspective, the problem lay not with Ingoroqva’s book itself, but rather with the subsequent discussion centered on – but not confined to – the mnat’obi forum. Indeed, as Bruno Coppieters has argued, the Georgian Party’s refusal to censure Ingoroqva’s book can be considered a political act in and of itself. By contrast, Abkhaz Party leaders and intellectuals took issue with the book’s content and the praise it received by Georgian reviewers. Abkhaz Obkom Secretary Tarba and Abkhaz Council of Ministers Chairman Labakhua even claimed the book was part of a Beria-era policy of assimilation of Abkhaz into Georgian history that had been published too late (that is, after Beria’s purge and death). This divide demonstrates the impact of the secret speech and March events in 1956: Abkhaz activists articulated grievances prior to 1956, and the opening offered by the anti-Stalin campaigns only furthered these preexisting efforts, resulting in a new political demand for secession that would re-emerge each decade thereafter. While the public discord in Abkhazia over the Ingoroqva discussions was severe enough to warrant Party resolutions condemning the

456 Aiba, Bartsits, et al. to CC CPSU, 11 April 1957, from Gudauta, RGANI f. 5, op. 31, d. 86, ll. 5-6.
458 Tarba and Labakhua to CC CPSU Presidium, 19 April 1957, RGANI, f. 5, op. 31, d. 86, ll. 18-19.
episode in both Tbilisi and Sukhumi, in the words of Victor Shnirelman, the “formal, demagogic reply” did little to convince either side of the other’s validity.\textsuperscript{459}

Even if Ingoroqva’s work itself became taboo, the ideas it contained continued to be attractive for Georgian scholars in subsequent decades. At least that was the argument made by Abkhaz activists a decade later, when mere mention of “Ingoroqva” had become a metaphor for larger tensions in Georgian-Abkhaz relations. In March-April 1967, a group of Abkhaz intellectuals, students, and Party leaders used the arguments put forth by Berženišvili in a short article (published posthumously in his collected works – he died in 1965) to justify mass demonstrations (which did occur) and demand changes to several place names in the autonomous republic to reflect Abkhaz words.\textsuperscript{460} The Georgian CC’s discussions and resolution condemning the “unhealthy” and “nationalistic manifestations in Abkhazia” said explicitly that the arguments made in Berženišvili’s article were insufficient to justify “spontaneous gatherings” in Abkhazia: Mžavanaže and his colleagues saw the historiographical issues as more of an excuse than legitimate grounds for grievance.\textsuperscript{461} The Georgian CC did, however, concede to changing several place names in Abkhazia per demonstrators’ demands.\textsuperscript{462}

\textsuperscript{459} Shnirelman, \textit{The Value of the Past}, 244.

\textsuperscript{460} Kobakhia V.O. (Abkhaz Obkom), Shinkuba B.V. (Abkhaz Supreme Soviet), and Chikovani M.G. (Abkhaz Council of Ministers) to Georgian CC, 12 March 1967, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 42, d. 65, ll. 12-16. The article in question was Nikoloz Berženišvili, "mc'ire šenišna did sakit'xnis gamo," sak’art'velos istoriis sakit'xebi, cigni 3 (Tbilisi: Mec'niereba, 1966), 277-288.

\textsuperscript{461} \textquotedblleft Protokol 30 zasedaniia TsK KP Gruzii ot 31 marta 1967 goda ‘O faktakh nepravil’nogo reagirovaniiia sredi chasti intelligentsia Abkhaziia na stat’iu akademika N.A. Berdzenishvili,’” sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 42, d. 58, ll. 2-9; “O nezdoctorovykh proiavleniiaakh v Abkhaziia,” sšssa (II) f. 14, op. 42, d. 65, ll. 2-3; “O ser’eznoi oploshnosti, dopushchenoi pri izdaniii 3 toma izbrannykh sochinenii akademika N.A. Berdzenishvili,” sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 42, d. 65, ll. 3-4.

\textsuperscript{462} “O pereimenovanii nekotorykh sel’Abkhazskoi ASSR,” sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 42, d. 65, ll. 4-11.
The way in which this longer-term historiographical debate enveloped the March 1956 events (and their fallout) was no accident, and it proved to be influential for both Georgians and Abkhaz in subsequent decades. This coda to the March events outlined the triangular relationship between Moscow, Tbilisi, and Sukhumi that would reorient centers and peripheries in the years to come, as the entitled Georgian nationality increasingly held decisive power over affairs on the republic’s territory.

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While after the Twentieth Party Congress Stalin’s body existed officially outside the sanctioned discourse of the government, some Georgians, it seemed, sought to preserve the role of his “political” body with regard to the state. Even those Georgians who merely observed or heard about the unfolding events in March 1956 posited a range of interpretations about relations between citizen, state, Party, and Stalin himself. With this in mind, were the demonstrations commemorating Stalin’s death from 5-9 March understood as nationalistic and anti-Soviet, as Mžavanaže claimed? Did “Soviet” refer to the government, the state, or the people (or some combination thereof)? Or did contemporaries perceive the demonstrations to be, above all, about defending Georgians’ honor in the face of Khrushchev’s insult against their most prominent representative?

As evidenced especially by Party member questioners, many attempted to understand the shift introduced at the Twentieth Party Congress through preexisting Soviet categories, terminology, and Soviet and Georgian tradition. By
applying familiar enemy categories to the demonstrators – as nationalist, anti-Soviet provocateurs – Mžavanaže likewise attempted to subsume new types of misconduct under old headings. Both Mžavanaže and local Party members invoked such a high Stalinist vernacular because, at that point, this language provided the only available categories (anti-Soviet, bourgeois nationalist, enemy of the people) through which to understand the events unfolding in Georgia, even if that vocabulary proved inaccurate to describe what was actually taking place. If the anti-Soviet charge referred to the current Party leadership, then the demonstrations in Georgia do, indeed, appear to protest the actions and policies of Khrushchev, Mikoyan, Bulganin, and other architects of the anti-Stalin campaign. However, as the comments of officers of the 74th Georgian Rifle Division clearly demonstrated, it was possible to defend the Soviet state while protesting policies of current officials in power – a new freedom made possible through the uncertainties ushered in by the secret speech itself.

This tension points to the conflicting (and contradictory) meanings of “de-Stalinization” in Georgia: exposing Stalin’s crimes, on the one hand, and offending the national body, on the other. Shifting blame to Beria permitted Mžavanaže to provide a longer-term cause for allegedly nationalist eruptions in the republic that pre-dated his own tenure as republican leader. Similarly, for Party members and Georgians more generally, Beria proved a useful source of blame for Stalin’s crimes in the republic: as a result, individual experiences during the Terror could be attributed to Beria’s reign and his own personality cult, placing Stalin outside the
field of blame as a national figure among Georgians. Non-Georgians (particularly Abkhaz), on the other hand, linked the cults of Stalin and Beria more overtly in their complaints about perceived forced assimilation. Representatives expressed these grievances in national terms, yet they also suggested a broader, non-Georgian cause for complaint, uniting the national interests of Abkhaz, Ossetians, Armenians, and Russians in the republic toward the supranational goal of resisting Georgian encroachments. Georgians and non-Georgians evoked aspects of memory through discussions of the March 1956 events and de-Stalinization campaign. Over time these memories – even in their conflicting forms – would continue to inspire national expression and mobilization in decades to come, as subsequent chapters will show.

While the March 1956 demonstrations in Georgia were characterized as nationalist and anti-Soviet by republic and Union authorities, these actions are more appropriately described as a defense of national honor against a specific government policy. This may seem like a purely semantic distinction; however, it reflects a decidedly different attitude toward Georgia’s position within the Soviet Union. Understanding the demonstrations as nationalist and anti-Soviet sees this as a challenge to the Soviet system writ large. However, in a Soviet state that facilitated national development yet abhorred nationalist aspirations, it was possible to promote the national through dialogue with the state rather than attempting to subvert or overthrow it. The “silent protest” detected by Mžavanaże among Party members, then, was a protest against specific polices rather than an
attempt to undermine Soviet power — power built by Stalin, the “great son of the Georgian people.”

The coexistence of the Stalin cult and Georgian cult of the nation, as codified and popularized in the Stalin era, encountered an unforeseen challenge when Khrushchev denounced Stalin — as a Georgian, no less — in the secret speech. The March demonstrations to defend Stalin’s national honor marked the beginning of a process of disaggregation through which veneration of Stalin as a Georgian figure (even if he discouraged this association when in power) and adherence to current Soviet policy were no longer concurrent. The task remained for Georgians to cultivate coexisting national and Soviet identities and allegiances without the Stalinist link that had, to that point, facilitated a peculiar type of Georgian-Soviet patriotism. The de-Stalinizing, Soviet Georgian nation that came of age in the 1960s and 1970s is the subject of subsequent chapters. Yet, the secret speech and March events in 1956 provided an expansion of political space that generated new types of national, political action in Georgia while remaining under the Soviet umbrella.\(^{463}\) This demonstrates, in other words, an instance when nation-ness happened rather than developed, as Brubaker has described.\(^{464}\) The March events and discussions that followed caused Georgians, Abkhaz, and others not only to reflect on their statuses in the republic and the Union, but also to experience nationality as a lived category in new ways, beginning with participation in the first major demonstration in the USSR in the postwar era.

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\(^{464}\) Ibid., 18-19.
Chapter 4: Inhabiting Nationality After Stalin: A Georgian Tbilisi

I wonder where there is also such a sky, bottomless blue, pure, just as yours is, too.

Scar of the past, Nariqala’s ruin, has stayed gray.

Tbiliso – the side of sun and roses, without you I don’t want to live, where else is there a new Varazi, where is there gray Mt’acminda.

Passing through the tree-lined avenue along the Mtkvari, and blooming trees are the wedding party that let you know that spring is here

Here it is difficult not to sing, here where even asp trees sing and the sky is bluer than turquoise.

Tbiliso – the side of sun and roses, without you I don’t want to live, where else is there a new Varazi, where is there gray Mt’acminda.

Lyrics to “Tbiliso”465

In 1974, a pop song ode to Tbilisi, “Tbiliso,” swept across the Soviet Union and quickly became a hit among Georgians and non-Georgians alike.466 The song’s original Georgian lyrics, composed by Petre Bagration-Gruzkinski for a 1959 documentary film, were supplemented with Russian versions of the verses for greater consumption outside the republic. In Tbilisi, Moscow, and in between, “Tbiliso” would continue to be a favorite cover for prominent singers to perform in concerts and on television, as well as a standard in cafés and clubs. The song’s catchy yet haunting melody, composed by Revaz Lagiże and incorporating a traditional dissonance of Georgian music with a modern, popular music structure, mirrored the delicate balance between preserving tradition and building a Soviet

465 The song is written in the vocative case, with lyrics sung to the city of Tbilisi (hence the –o vocative marker to make “Tbiliso” rather than nominative “Tbilisi”). Nariqala is a mountainside fortress overlooking old Tbilisi that was constructed in various sections between the fourth and seventeenth centuries. Varazi refers to a ravine that separates the Vera, Vake, and Saburtalo districts of Tbilisi. Mt’acminda is the mountainside on which the nineteenth century portion of the city was constructed (parallel to Rust’aveli Avenue). Mt’acminda literally means “mountain saint.” The Mtkvari is the main river that runs through Tbilisi, known in Russian as the Kura.

Georgian modernity in the republic that had defined the postwar decades to that point.

The song’s release also coincided (albeit coincidentally) with the achievement of a majority Georgian population of Tbilisi for the first time in its modern history. At the same time that political figures and residents celebrated Tbilisi’s antiquity, the city itself was undergoing a transformation from a cosmopolitan, multiethnic outpost of empire into a Soviet capital dominated by an entitled nationality. In spite of efforts to emphasize, and at times romanticize, Tbilisi’s ancient roots, the nationalization of the city – from population demographics to built environment to lived experience – was achieved through Soviet institutions, and postwar ones at that.

The aftermath of the March 1956 demonstrations was part of a broader process by which Georgians attempted to inhabit nationality after Stalin. The top-down, compensatory nationalism proffered by Moscow after 1956 provided an official outlet for Georgian national expression through elaborate celebrations of Tbilisi’s 1,500-year anniversary. The postwar development of new neighborhoods in Tbilisi demonstrates the process of urban nationalization on a larger and longer-term scale. In particular, Saburtalo, a neighborhood that developed primarily via Khrushchev’s residential building boom, shifted the residential center of Tbilisi as Georgians from elsewhere in the republic migrated to the capital. I examine this neighborhood as a site that was central to the development of a Soviet, Georgian Tbilisi. Yet like the contrasts in “Tbiliso,” the Soviet Georgian modernity of Tbilisi
developed alongside a delicate balance of eradicating, constructing, and compromising with a spectrum of lingering “traditions” among Georgia’s populace.

In this chapter, I explore the lived experience of the residential building boom in Tbilisi and the negotiation of practices that policy-makers understood as “harmful,” “traditional,” and “modern” to illustrate how Georgians navigated the waters of nationality in the post-Stalin era. What do popular experiences of Tbilisi residents tell us about the ideological imperative behind building communism and building a national capital? What strategies and compromises did local and republic-level leadership deem necessary to satisfy an increasingly hegemonic entitled national citizenry? And, finally, how do those individuals or groups who never sought to be a part of the Bolshevik project – violent, worldwide revolution in the name of the proletariat -- engage with and become a part of the postwar Soviet project – active, participatory citizens living in developed socialism? Recent scholarship on mass housing, urban development, and lived experience in the postwar years has broadened our view of the 1950s and 1960s beyond the fields of struggles over high culture and the “Thaw” and begun to elaborate variations in local experiences and collectivities from the assumed (or projected) all-Soviet norm.\textsuperscript{467} I argue that the nationalization of the Georgian capital and negotiation of

\textsuperscript{467} I refer especially to Stephen V. Bittner, The Many Lives of Khrushchev’s Thaw: Experience and Memory in Moscow’s Arbat (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); Steven E. Harris, Communism on Tomorrow Street: Mass Housing and Everyday Life after Stalin (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2013); and Paul Stronski, Tashkent: Forging a Soviet City, 1930-1966, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010). The recent Slavic Review forum on “Redefining Communities in the Late Soviet Union” explores some of the other varieties of collectivities (national, religious, disability) and negotiation with “the Soviet” in this period, Slavic Review 74, no. 1 (Spring 2015), 1-103.
cultural practices after 1956 reveal the broadened cultural-political space made possible by de-Stalinization. Yet the peculiarities of Georgians’ experience in 1956 ushered in related processes of redefining Georgian culture and enlarging the mental space of what it meant to be Soviet in the Georgian SSR. By the end of the 1970s, Georgian Sovietness meant not only a unique application of local practices to Soviet templates, but also a distinct interpretation of the parameters for discourse and action within the legal and lived bounds of Sovietness. I use the phrase “Georgian Sovietness” (rather than “Soviet Georgianness”) to emphasize that the processes examined in this and subsequent chapters illustrate Georgian perspectives of “the Soviet” rather than Soviet variants of a broader spectrum of Georgianness. These are related, yet distinct, ideas.

We see, then, in the two decades following the March 1956 events both the nationalization of Tbilisi and Georgia in a modern, Soviet guise and the negotiation of traditions to meet the needs of republic leadership and the entitled national populace. The balance between tradition and modernity, unfolding during a more hands-off relationship with Moscow, created the Georgian variant of what I call a new national-social contract under developed socialism. This post-Stalin national-social contract created official “controlled spheres for the expression of non-Russian national identities” yet at the same time cultivated deep, largely autonomous

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national republic-level polities. As long as there was no repeat of the March 1956 demonstrations, republic leaders in Georgia and citizens alike had much room for maneuver within the confines of their own republic. The institutional framework of the Soviet nationality regime was a Stalin-era creation, but the removal of terror as a tool of Soviet governance after 1956 inspired new arenas for discourse about the nation and its relation to the Soviet project, which were as diverse as historiographical debates, the nationalization of urban space, negotiation of cultural practices, and demands for entitled language rights. As a result, this often overlooked period in the histories of Soviet nationality policies was, in fact, fundamental for the development of Soviet entitled nationalities into embryonic nation-states.

**Tbilisi at a Millennium and a Half**

In 1957, a year after the March events and at the same time as the Giorgi Merç’ule demonstrations in Abkhazia, Georgian First Secretary Vasil Mžavanaže wrote to the CPSU CC regarding the approach of an important year in Georgian history: the anniversary of the founding of the Georgian capital 1,500 years earlier. According to legend, in 558 AD, Vaxtang Gorgasali, a K’art’lian king from Mc’xet’a, came across bubbling hot springs near the Mtkvari River while hunting and decided to create a new settlement in the place where his falcon fell. “Tbilisi” was thus founded, named after the warm (t’bili) waters of its natural hot springs.

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In Mžavanaže’s telling, Tbilisi was “one of the most ancient cities in the Soviet Union and in the entire world.” Borrowing a narrative of Georgian struggle akin to that of Berženišvili and Janašia,

The history of the city of Tbilisi is inextricably linked to the history of Georgia, to the history of the Georgian people. As was the case for all of Georgia, Tbilisi was an object of ceaseless incursions by foreign aggressors, Mongol, Iranian, and Turkish invaders, cruelly destroying and plundering the city, decimating its population. During these painful ordeals Tbilisi more than once rose from the ashes and courageously healed its wounds, securing for itself the significance of the most important political and cultural center of Georgia. A millennium and a half later, Mžavanaže explained, Tbilisi continued to flourish under Soviet power thanks to building socialism and the creativity of Leninist nationality policy. For these reasons, the Georgian CC requested permission to mark the occasion of the anniversary with appropriate pomp throughout 1958.

The theme implicitly outlined by Mžavanaže in his letter – of old and new Tbilisi – shaped the public discourse surrounding the anniversary the following year. Though the officially planned jubilee activities took place primarily in October and November 1958, the anniversary theme appeared regularly in republic newspapers to juxtapose and celebrate Tbilisi’s past and future achievements. For example, historian Š. Mesxia outlined the historical importance of Tbilisi to komunisti and Zaria Vostoka’s readerships in June. He claimed that the territory of Tbilisi had been populated by “Georgian tribes” since 400 BC and elided the distinction between Tbilisi the city, Georgia the political entity, and the Georgian people in his summary of Tbilisi history. Tbilisi’s rebirth in the aftermaths of

470 Mžavanaže to CPSU CC, May 1957, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 32, d. 218, ll. 1-4.
decimation and occupation by Mongols, Iranians, and others mirrored the consolidation and reconsolidation narrative of the Georgian people more broadly, as outlined by Georgian historians since the 1940s.\textsuperscript{471}

The official planned activities to commemorate the anniversary in October and November 1958 included jubilee sessions of meetings of the Tbilisi city council and Party organizations; scholarly meetings of the GSSR Academy of Sciences, Tbilisi State University, the State Museum of Georgia; and the Georgian Writers’ Union; and public lectures about Tbilisi history. Special books devoted to Tbilisi architecture, history, and culture were published for the occasion, and a documentary film in color about Tbilisi was produced.\textsuperscript{472} The largest event was a mass meeting in the Dinamo Tbilisi football stadium, reportedly attended by as many as 50,000 people into the early hours of the morning. As first secretary, Mžavanaže delivered the keynote address at the meeting. Mžavanaže emphasized that the Tbilisi jubilee was not only a celebration for residents of Tbilisi, but for all of Georgia. While he briefly mentioned other “brotherly nationalities” residing in the city (who, at that point, made up over half of Tbilisi’s population), Tbilisi’s Georgianness remained the dominant theme of the address. As a city of “Georgian glory,” Mžavanaže lauded the “ancient and eternally youthful capital” and noted that “Tbilisi greets everyone


\textsuperscript{472} “MEROPRIATIIA provodimye v oznamenovanie 1500-letii a g. Tbilisi,” sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 32, d. 218, ll. 7-8.
worthily: an enemy as an enemy, with a raised sword; and a friend as a friend, with an open heart.”

Moreover, city planners used the events to construct new streets, squares, and several monuments – of Vaxtang Gorgasali (on Komsomol Alley), Erekle II (on the Metexi bridge); Sayat Nova (on Shaumian Street); and Nikoloz Barat’āšvili (on Barat’āšvili Bridge). But the most prominent monument constructed to mark the city’s 1,500th anniversary was the enormous k’art’lis deda (typically translated as Mother of Georgia, but literally “K’art’li’s mother”) statue, erected on a hillside near the Nariqala Fortress.

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474 “MEROPRIATIIA provodimye v oznamenovanie 1500-letiia g. Tbilisi,” sšsa (II), f. 14, op. 32, d. 218, II. 7-8. Erekle II was the king of K’art’li-Kaxet’i who signed the Treaty of Georgievsk with Russia in 1783; Sayat Nova was an eighteenth-century Armenian bard who was a Tbilisi native; and Barat’āšvili was a Georgian romantic poet who lived in the early nineteenth century.

475 k’art’lis deda resembles aesthetically other “mother” statues in Yerevan (1962), Kyiv (1981), and Volgograd (1967), yet, contrary to common assumptions, the construction of k’art’lis deda had nothing to do with the Great Patriotic War victory. The other three monuments were constructed either explicitly to commemorate the Great Patriotic War (Volgograd) or to replace a Stalin statue associated with the war victory (Yerevan and Kyiv). The Tbilisi statue, on the other hand, was an explicitly national monument constructed after Stalin’s death with high Stalinist aesthetic motifs to mark Georgian Tbilisi’s and the Georgian people’s longevity. On the Stalingrad/Volgograd memorial, see Scott W. Palmer, “How Memory Was Made: The Construction of the Memorial to the Heroes of the Battle of Stalingrad,” Russian Review 68, no. 3 (July 2009): 373–407. On the broader issue of memory and commemoration of World War II in Russia, see Nina Tumarkin, The Living & the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia (New York: Basic Books, 1994).
k’art’lis deda (A. Amašukeli, sculptor) gazes out over the old city, Metexi Church, and the Mtkvari River, holding a cup of wine in her left hand and a sword in her right. The symbols were meant to depict centuries of Georgians’ “heroic past,” greeting friends with hospitality (stumart’moqvareoba) and enemies with force, to which Mżavanaże alluded in his Dinamo stadium address.\footnote{476} k’art’lis deda embodied a feminized notion of Georgian nationhood, rooted in an ancient and eternal Tbilisi, Georgians’ dedak’alak’i (literally “mother-city”, but used to mean capital city).\footnote{477}

\textit{Soviet Saburtalo}

k’art’lis deda looked out over the oldest neighborhoods of Tbilisi, and indeed it is these districts – with their cobblestone streets, tottering balconies, ancient

\footnote{477} The feminized statue and city reflected a more general feminization of belonging among the trappings of Georgian nationhood: the Georgian language is known as deda-ena (mother tongue), and the primary foundational pillar in a home is known as the deda-bože (mother pillar), for instance, Tamara Dragadze, \textit{Rural Families in Soviet Georgia: A Case Study in Ratcha Province} (New York: Routledge, 1988), 158.
churches, tiled baths, and vibrant color -- which have inspired visitors to the city from Pushkin to the present day. Yet in the middle of the Soviet century, the dynamism and modernization projects of building socialism occurred less in Tbilisi’s picturesque eighteenth- and nineteenth-century centers than in new, planned neighborhoods designed to give the republic capital’s burgeoning population appropriately modern places to live, work, and study.478

With the Bolshevik takeover of Georgia in 1921, Tbilisi already had a population of 233,958.479 After over a century of Russian imperial rule (and as the administrative capital of the entire Caucasus region), Tiflis – as Tbilisi was called between 1801 and 1936 – had a diverse population that reflected its importance as a center of imperial administration, regional (Russian-Turkish-Iranian) trade, and outpost of European culture. As the city developed over the course of the nineteenth century, three main populations dominated respective spheres in Tbilisi life: Russians in politics and administration, Armenians in business and trade, and Georgians in the nobility and intelligentsia.480 Other than the establishment of Tbilisi State University and possible plans to remove certain minority populations, however, the three-year period of Georgian independence (1918-1921) proved too brief for major changes in city development.481 Early Soviet planners were therefore

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478 See, for example, a newspaper feature on Saburtalo as indicative of Tbilisi’s present and future on the occasion of the 1500th anniversary celebrations, S. Geftler, “Saburtalo segodnia,” Zaria Vostoka, (4 October 1958).
480 Suny, The Making of the Georgian Nation, 139-143.
481 See, for example, the analysis of U.S. Vice Consul H.A. Doolittle regarding a new law on residence in Tiflis in 1919, which he and his Georgian interlocutors interpreted as an attempt by the new
tasked with transforming this multiethnic, imperial outpost into a modern capital of a socialist national republic.

Architects Š. T’avaže and M. Sarajišvili cast the task before them and attendant challenges in Marxist-Leninist terms: the old city was characterized by its “feudal-bourgeois essence,” and city planners needed to develop the city to change its “social physiognomy” and serve the interests of the workers after a century of serving the bourgeoisie. They likewise differentiated between their envisioned squares, streets, and architectural layout and the bourgeois market squares, dark, narrow alleys in workers’ districts, and wide streets in the bourgeois center. Tbilisi had grown organically (through feudal and capitalist mechanisms) rather than rationally, and therefore T’avaže, Sarajišvili, and their colleagues sought to reorder and reconstruct Tbilisi according to socialist city principles, as they established in their twenty-five year plan (1932-1957). The challenges and goals of Tbilisi’s first socialist urban plan were not unlike those faced by planners in Moscow and other large, medieval and organically developed cities such as Nizhnii Novgorod; showcase cities on the Soviet periphery such as Vladivostok or Tashkent; and even new Soviet industrial towns, such as Magnitogorsk or Rustavi.

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482 Tbilisi’s first Soviet-era urban plan seems to have predated Moscow’s, which was finalized only in 1935 (after deliberations beginning in mid-1931). On the development of the Moscow general plan, see Andrew Elam Day, "Building Socialism: The Politics of the Soviet Cityscape in the Stalin Era," Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1998, 85-114.

483 Shared challenges...
included working toward the elimination of distinctions between urban and rural areas; and developing newer areas to bring educational and industrial districts in closer contact through planning rather than isolating these populations in “satellite cities.”

The ideological imperative behind “reconstructing” Tbilisi into a socialist city necessarily entailed an important ethnic component.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>1876</th>
<th>1897</th>
<th>1917</th>
<th>1922</th>
<th>1926</th>
<th>1930</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Georgians</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>42.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenians</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>32.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russians</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the six decades shown here, the percentage of Armenians and Russians in Tbilisi fluctuated considerably across the imperial, independence, and Soviet periods, whereas the relative number of Georgian Tbilisians steadily increased across the same period. The proportionate shifts could be due to a variety of factors, including war and displacement, revolution, out- and in-migration during the period of Georgian independence, and difference in birth and death rates between nationalities. For the authors of the study (in Russian) “Ustanovleniia territorii gor. Tiflisa i ego raionirovaniia srokom na 25 let (po 1957 goda),” however, this

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484 “Zakluuchenie po dokladu ustanovleniia territorii goroda Tiflisa i ego raionirovaniia srokom na 25 let (1932-1957),” Š. T’avaže and M. Sarajišvili, t’c’a, f. 14, op. 4, d. 4, l. 1-5.

485 The “reconstructing” terminology used by Tbilisi planners came from Moscow Party chief Lazar Kaganovich’s stated goal for Moscow and Soviet city planning to work toward “the socialist reconstruction of life and habits,” quoted in Day, “Building Socialism,” 89.

486 “PROEKT: Ustanovleniia territorii gor. Tiflisa i ego raionirovaniia srokom na 25 let (po 1957 god),” t’c’a, f. 14, op. 4, d. 4, l. 63.
The ethnodemographic process could only have resulted from deliberate planning facilitated by Soviet nationality policies:

Up to 1917, Georgians comprised a minority in Tiflis’s population, in third place behind Armenians and Russians. In 1922 the Georgian population moved into second place, behind Armenians, and only in 1926 did Georgians move into first place, with Armenians second and Russians third. In this way, since 1917 the rapid growth of the Georgian population over that of other nationalities can be observed. The “re-Georgianification” (peregruzinovka) of the population by nationality that is taking place currently in Tiflis is the result of the correct nationality policy of the government.487

Moreover, in the decade since the Soviet takeover of Georgia, the more recent five-year period (1926-1930) had seen a markedly higher growth in the Georgian population of Tbilisi than the earlier period (1921-1925), with an increase in the relative weight of the Georgian population by 69 percent.488

Table 3: Tbilisi Population by Nationality, 1939-1970

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>1939</th>
<th>1959</th>
<th>1970</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgian</td>
<td>228,394</td>
<td>336,254</td>
<td>511,379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenian</td>
<td>137,331</td>
<td>149,258</td>
<td>150,205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>93,337</td>
<td>125,674</td>
<td>124,316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>13,915</td>
<td>17,311</td>
<td>19,579</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ossetian</td>
<td>9,328</td>
<td>15,565</td>
<td>21,797</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
<td>7,415</td>
<td>10,927</td>
<td>10,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azerbaijani</td>
<td>5,874</td>
<td>9,560</td>
<td>10,810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>5,528</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurd</td>
<td>4,511</td>
<td>12,935</td>
<td>18,409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>7,054</td>
<td>10,696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assyrian</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2,559</td>
<td>2,786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tatar</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1,622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belorussian</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1,402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>13,587</td>
<td>5,419</td>
<td>5,419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Tbilisi Population</strong></td>
<td><strong>519,220</strong></td>
<td><strong>694,664</strong></td>
<td><strong>889,020</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

487 Ibid., l. 64.
488 Ibid., l. 50.
The nationalization and growth of Tbilisi in the postwar period corresponded to an overall trend of urbanization in the republic and the increasing hegemony of the entitled Georgian nationality.

Table 4: Georgian SSR population by urban and rural residence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1939 (%)</th>
<th>1959 (%)</th>
<th>1970 (%)</th>
<th>1979 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total GSSR population</td>
<td>3,540,023</td>
<td>4,044,045</td>
<td>4,686,358</td>
<td>5,014,771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>1,066,226 (30)</td>
<td>1,712,897 (42)</td>
<td>2,239,738 (48)</td>
<td>2,600,448 (52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tbilisi</td>
<td>519,220</td>
<td>694,664</td>
<td>889,020</td>
<td>1,069,538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>2,473,797</td>
<td>2,331,148</td>
<td>2,446,620</td>
<td>2,414,323</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In short, Tbilisi and other urban centers grew as a result of postwar migration of rural residents to cities, which proceeded in spite of the expansion of the propiska and passportization systems (which initially did not include collective farm workers). Though Tbilisi was added to the list of restricted cities in 1956, demographic data indicate that rural residents flowed into urban areas in the 1950s and 1960s in spite of Tbilisi’s restricted status. Because the rural population was predominantly Georgian by nationality, urban populations gradually acquired a more Georgian face through these processes of rural-to-urban migration. Tbilisi, which doubled in population between 1939 and 1979, was emblematic of this trend yet not its sole beneficiary: Sukhumi, for example, likewise saw an increase in total and Georgian populations across a similar period.

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490 Tsentr'noe statisticheskoe upravlenie SSSR, Chislennost' i sostav naseleniia SSSR: Po dannym Vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1979 goda (Moscow: Finansy i statistika, 1984), 709.
The three visions highlighted by planners in Soviet Georgia – of an urbanized, rational, national capital -- were embodied in the new district of Saburtalo (literal translation “ball field”), which linked the educational district of Vake with the ever-expanding residential and industrial landscape of Saburtalo and microdistricts further afield. Architects and planners identified several new areas for further residential development in their twenty-five year plan (from 1932) that would expand Tbilisi’s residential capacity considerably from the districts of Nažaladze, Rust’aveli, Didube, Davidov, and Vera. New districts in Saburtalo and further afield in Diğomi and ĖrmeGele would house the capital’s expanding populace as it built Georgian socialism. As the new district closest to older parts of the city, Saburtalo was a crucial focal point for the realization of planners’ aspirations and the evolution of lived experience in the Georgian capital in the postwar period.

Saburtalo’s postwar development took place alongside republic-wide projects to build new, rational industrial centers and better integrate living and working quarters. Unique to Georgia, an emphasis on resort development and state farms for the production of wine, citrus, tea, and tobacco continued from its inception in the 1930s. In spite of ambitious postwar construction plans throughout Georgia, Georgian architects lamented in 1949 that most of the time projects and plans sent from organizations in Moscow and Leningrad failed to meet local conditions, from weather and climate to the challenges posed by mountainous regions and their inhabitants – a disconnect that would continue into the 1970s.

492 “PROEKT: Ustanovleniia territorii gor. Tiflisa i ego raionirovaniia srokom na 25 let (po 1957 god),” t’c’a, f. 14, op. 4, d. 4, ll. 102-103.
Moreover, these same architects noted challenges in design and implementation regarding local, Soviet, and international practices, in that “The issue of using legacies of national and world architecture has been correctly understood by many of our architects. But an insufficient understanding of modernity among some gives rise to false, ‘national,’ archaic forms and eclecticism.” On a seemingly contradictory note, the architects cited the success of certain low-rise residential buildings that included in their plans “wide balconies, verandas, loggias, and terraces that are an integral part of the living space” and urged the broader population to appreciate the “high level of study of ancient and folk architecture, as well as folk craftsmanship” on display in the republic’s streets. Even with the shift in style, function, and pace of construction during the Khrushchev era, Georgian architects continued to note the tensions between Moscow plans and local needs and tastes, as will be discussed further below.

The district of Saburtalo was bound by the Mtkvari River on the east, mountains on the west and north, and the Vake district to the south, separated from Saburtalo by the Varazi ravine. Given its location between the educational complexes of the Vake district and the industrial Nažaladevi and Didube districts, Saburtalo would be ideally suited to house workers and students alike, according to the plan. Yet in the 1930s, this territory was largely rural, without a sewage system or integration with the city road and transport network. The only way to access

494 Ibid., ll. 45-46.
what would become Saburtalo from the rest of Tbilisi was via Lenin Street. By 1958, Saburtalo was to house 100,000 inhabitants of an expected total Tbilisi population of 900,000. Moreover, the nascent district required not just inhabitants, but utilities, a transport system, apartment buildings, and the services and amenities that make urban life possible and prosperous: schools, bazaars, corner shops, restaurants, cultural and entertainment centers, hospitals, and parks, among other things. If the Saburtalo project presented Tbilisi architects and planners with a relatively blank spatial canvas upon which to map their socialist urban ambitions, then the growth of this district in practice over the next five decades demonstrated the possibilities and limits of such visions from the perspective of Saburtalo's inhabitants.

The process of dividing Soviet Tbilisi into administrative sub-units began in 1931, when Orjonikiże District was one of the city’s four administrative districts and the city’s first general plan was finalized in 1934. Orjonikiże District comprised the developing Vake neighborhood and the more rural Saburtalo area. Saburtalo was included in the 1941 general plan for Tbilisi as a site for residential development in the next twenty years, where squares, streets, and five-story residential buildings were to be built according to a “unified idea,” as described in

495 “PROEKT: Ustanovlenia territorii gor. Tiflisa i ego raionirovaniaia srokom na 25 let (po 1957 god),” t’c’a, f. 14, op. 4, d. 4, l. 105.
1952. The author of “Orjonikiże District of the City of Tbilisi on the Path of October” detailed his pride at leading an assessment of local development in 1967:

I have worked in this area practically since the beginning of its formation. The district rapidly grew and developed before my eyes. In the place of barren and swampy territories there appeared gardens and parks, the old sheds and cabins were destroyed and unique buildings and structures for cultural, everyday, and special purposes were erected: the sections of the district were transformed into “Vake” and “Saburtalo”. Many wide avenues and streets appeared, decorated with squares and parks. On these wastelands factories and plants were built.

Between 1939 and 1959, the population of the entire Orjonikiże District grew by a factor of 2.5, to 172,800 people, making up 20.5 percent of the entire population of Tbilisi by 1959. While these figures include both Vake and Saburtalo neighborhoods, much of the postwar construction and population influx occurred on the Saburtalo side – a trend that would only intensify in subsequent decades.

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497 “POIASNITEL’NAIA ZAPISKA k proektu planirovki i zastroiki Saburtalinskoi ploshchadi i kvartala ogrаниченнogo ulitsami Voенно-Gruzinskoi, Lisskoi i Saburtalinskoi,” Architects Kalashnikov and Andriaže, t’c’a, f. 14, op. 4, d. 205, l. 3-5.
498 “INFORMATSIIA kak byl sostavlen statisticheskii spravochnik ’Ordzhonikidzevskii raion goroda Tbilisi po puti Oktiabria,’” t’c’a, f. 79, d. 1385, l. 71.
499 Ibid., l. 72.
Figure 8: Map of Tbilisi’s Neighborhoods  
Source: Google Earth/Author Notations

Figure 9: Map of Saburtalo  
Source: Google Earth/Author Notations
By design and in practice, Saburtalo was first and foremost a residential neighborhood. The pace of construction and migration from the 1940s through the 1970s – and shifts in Soviet design and planning – meant that Saburtalo contained in a single neighborhood: residences emblematic of every decade of Soviet architecture; a small number of pre-Soviet single-family homes; barracks to provide temporary housing to new residents; illegal, self-constructed homes that went against Soviet bloc plans; and dark basements and hovels. As was the case throughout the Soviet Union, Khrushchev’s effort to simplify, standardize, and expedite mass, single-family housing starting in 1956 presented a bold set of challenges to Tbilisi architects and planners, eliciting uneven expectations among planners and local residents.500

The Soviet Union faced a serious “housing crisis” in the postwar years, even in locales such as Georgia that saw neither wartime occupation nor physical destruction. Yet as soldiers returned from the front, (some) deportees returned from exile, and rural-to-urban migration began to intensify, the housing stock in Tbilisi failed to meet the technical and practical needs of the capital’s growing population. The “housing crisis” was particularly acute in the older districts of Tbilisi, such as Kala, Isani, and Avlabari, where many residents lived in dark, cramped basements, attics, and warehouses without proper utilities. In Georgian CC Secretary Tadagiže’s estimate, in order to achieve the central norm of 9 square meters of living space for t’biliselebi (residents of Tbilisi) within a decade, they

501 “Pervoe zasedanie republikanskogo soveshchaniia stroitelei, arkhitektorov, robotnikov promyshlennosti stromaterialov, proektnykh i naucho-issledovatel’skih organizatsii GSSR,” 19 September 1956, sśssa (II), f. 14, op. 31, d. 193, l. 12. The intense investment and focus on building new neighborhoods such as Saburtalo left little room for the modernization and renovation of older districts of Tbilisi, such that many residences in older neighborhoods were uninhabitable, Ziegler, “Städtebau in Georgien,” 102.
would need to construct 3.4 million square meters of housing, or each year more than double the amount achieved in the entire previous Five Year Plan.\textsuperscript{502}

The burgeoning neighborhood of Saburtalo provided the site of experimentation, beginning in 1956, for Mingorselstroï to construct residential complexes with four- and five-story buildings from prefabricated materials, along the lines set out by Khrushchev in his housing reforms.\textsuperscript{503} The new residential complexes were viewed as an improvement from the more recent practice of constructing individual buildings, without standard designs, that led to such problems as excess living space for a small number of families as well as architectural “excesses” such as complex cornices, high ceilings, and tower superstructures. The most grievous “offender” cited in this case was also located in Saburtalo, in the residence for Academy of Sciences scholars at 2-3 Pekini Avenue, where a single apartment contained 140 square meters of living space and an additional 70 square meters devoted to corridors, kitchen, and other rooms. Such space could house two or three families, yet was built only for one.\textsuperscript{504}

\textsuperscript{502} Pervoe zasedanie republikanskogo soveshchaniia stroitelei, arkhitektorov, rabotnikov promyshlennosti stromaterialov, proektynkh i nauhno-issledovatel'skikh organizatsii GSSR,” 19 September 1956, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 31, d. 193, ll. 13-14. By 1965, Georgia had managed to achieve only 7.5 square meters of living space per person while determining that, due to Georgia’s warm climate, the sanitary norm should actually be raised to 12 square meters per person, Vice Chairman of CPSU CC and Council of Ministers Committee of Party-State Control I. Shishkin to CPSU CC, 12 November 1965, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 41, d. 351, ll. 2-8. The 1975 Tbilisi general plan expected to reach this level only in the year 2000, “SPRAVKA osnovnye pokazateli General’nogo plana g. Tbilisi,” sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 46, d 474, ll. 50-51.

\textsuperscript{503} Construction on five- and six-story buildings in Saburtalo began in the 1940s, but the 1956 shift introduced prefabricated materials and more consistent design standards characteristic of the khrushchovka.

\textsuperscript{504} Pervoe zasedanie republikanskogo soveshchaniia stroitelei, arkhitektorov, rabotnikov promyshlennosti stromaterialov, proektynkh i nauhno-issledovatel'skikh organizatsii GSSR,” 19 September 1956, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 31, d. 193, ll. 31-33. The standardized experiment in Saburtalo
practices from the late Stalin era displayed some aesthetic and functional value, however: for example, using open stairways and carved balconies not only appealed to national traditions and old Tbilisi building motifs, but also helped keep buildings and their inhabitants cool during the hot summer months.\[505\] Still, the four- and five-story, single-family apartment complex – known colloquially throughout the USSR as the *khrushchevka* -- provided a theoretical solution to the dual problem of the alleged architectural excess and “façadism” of the Stalin era and the postwar “housing crisis.”

And build Saburtalo they did, hoping to adhere to the “quickly, well, and cheaply” mantra set by Khrushchev.\[506\] Coverage in *komunisti* and *Zaria Vostoka* in the late 1950s and 1960s consistently lauded the pace and transformation of the Georgian capital and typically highlighted Saburtalo explicitly as the building program’s modern, Soviet showcase.\[507\] Yet as was the case for Khrushchev-era mass

would likewise provide an improvement over the “chaotic” manner in which the Vake neighborhood had been constructed, as Tbilisi chief architect Tevdaže described, “Nepravilennaia stenogramma 3-go plenuma Tbilisskogo Komiteta KP Gruzii ‘o khode zhilstroitel’stva v gor. Tbilisi,’” 20 July 1954, sšssa (II), f. 17, op. 35, d. 22, ll. 88-95.\[505\] N. Dzhashi, *Arkhitektura sotsialisticheskogo Tbilisi* (Tbilisi: literatura da xelovneba, 1963), 110.

\[506\] A certain Kutatelaże remarked on the inability of Tbilisi builders to embrace this ethos early on, “Stenogramma sobraniia gorodskogo partiino-khoziaistvennogo aktiva ‘o khode vypolneniia gosudarstvennykh planov stroitel’nymi organizatsiami gor. Tbilisi,’” (9 August 1955), sšssa (II), f. 17, op. 35, d. 267, l. 43. In Georgia, this phrase was immortalized by novelist Nodar Dumbaze in his short story “vašenot’ scrap’ad, iap’ad da…,” which tells the humorous story of two Tbilisi boys’ encounter with these new apartments that were already deteriorating.

housing construction Union-wide, the process of constructing Saburtalo may have been quick, but often failed to meet the quality and cost standards set by central planners. For 1957 and 1958 alone, the Tbilisi Executive Committee allotted land for four- and five-story residential buildings in Saburtalo to house workers and their families from fifty-two different workplaces, ranging from the Georgian Academy of Sciences to the Saburtalo Brick Factory to the GSSR Ministry of Communications. By 1966, the larger Orjonikiże District boasted a housing fund of 819,500 square meters, from 217,300 square meters only a decade earlier. As specified by Khrushchev’s housing policy, most of the housing construction in that decade was of four- and five-story buildings, though in Orjonikiże District between 1956 and 1966 they built a few dozen six-, seven- and eight-story buildings as well. In 1961, plans were even announced for what would become the tallest building in the Georgian SSR, a sixteen-story residential building on Važa-Pšavela Avenue in Saburtalo.

Buildings were constructed rapidly, yet attendant utilities and amenities lagged behind the proliferation of khrushchevki proper. In late 1956, access to city electricity and access to city water was at least official registered as universal in the district by 1967, gas, central heating, and private bathrooms were less common. Such problems were not unique to Tbilisi: Steven Harris describes a similarly uneven realization of utilities planning in Leningrad in Harris, Communism on Tomorrow Street, especially chapter 7.


508 “Spisok vydelennykh uchastkov zemli pod stroitel’stvo zhilykh domov v kvartale kompleksnoi zastroiki Saburtalo za 1957 i 1958 g.g.,” A. C’inc’aże, süsssa (II), f. 17, op. 37, d. 246, l. 34.

509 t’bilisis orjonikižis raioni ok’tombris giz’: statistikuri c’nobari (Tbilisi: sak’art’velos ssr c’entraluri statistikuri sammart’velo, 1968), 134-135.

510 “Pervyi shestnadtsiatetazhnyi,” Zaria Vostoka (December 20, 1961).

511 t’bilisis orjonikižis raioni ok’tombris giz’. While electricity and access to city water was at least official registered as universal in the district by 1967, gas, central heating, and private bathrooms were less common. Such problems were not unique to Tbilisi: Steven Harris describes a similarly uneven realization of utilities planning in Leningrad in Harris, Communism on Tomorrow Street, especially chapter 7.
water was delayed further on Doliže Street (one of the first streets in Saburtalo), making much of the area impassable and leading local residents to dispose of household rubbish openly on the remaining land.\(^{512}\) In late 1958, for example, Orjonikiže District Executive Committee chief Qup’araže noted that while paved roads and sidewalks had been created, trees planted, and gas lines installed, serious deficiencies remained, and not only in the sewage system. Saburtalo still lacked stores for books and industrial goods (treated as equally concerning problems!), and access to electricity and repair services remained difficult. Qup’araže cited the lack of recent arrivals’ representation in district administration for new housing allocation and the centralization of services at the city (rather than the district) level as possible reasons for these deficiencies. This suggests an administrative tension between newer residents from rural areas, who would populate Saburtalo, and the already-established vakeli (resident of Vake) character of the Orjonikiže District leadership. Yet even if Saburtalo lacked a proper sewage system and a bookstore, district authorities already made headway in constructing a movie theatre with financing from the Ministry of Culture.\(^{513}\) In this Soviet neighborhood, residents might not be able to rely on plumbing or electricity, but they could soon go see a movie.

Another important feature of the postwar building boom was the parallel “individual construction” of single-family homes, which was legal in the Soviet

\(^{512}\) “sak’art’velos kp t’bilisis organizac’iis orjonikižis saxelobis raionis 32-e partiuli konp’erenciis stenograpiuli angariši,” 29 December 1956, sšssa (II), f. 22, op. 20, d. 126, ll. 139-147.

\(^{513}\) “sak’art’velos kp t’bilisis organizac’iis orjonokizis sax. raionebis 34-e partiuli konp’erenciis stenograpiuli angariši 1958 clis 29 noemberi,” sšssa (II), f. 22, op. 24, d. 2, ll. 89-95.
Union until 1964 and encouraged (to speed relief of the pressure on the housing fund), as long as such construction projects were accordingly registered with authorities.\footnote{This policy was primarily targeted at areas in which the housing stock had been destroyed or damaged during the war, yet individual construction was technically permitted elsewhere as well, such as Tbilisi. As the Khrushchev housing reforms got under way, individual construction was gradually rolled back, first by limiting the size and financial support (1958) and then by locale, making it illegal in cities with more than 100,000 residents (1963). From then on, “cooperative” rather than individual construction was the legal alternative to apartment housing, Mark B. Smith, “Individual Forms of Ownership in the Urban Housing Fund of the USSR, 1944-64,” The Slavonic and East European Review 86, no. 2 (April 2008): 283–305.} The relatively open spaces and close proximity of Saburtalo to developed Tbilisi presented an opportunity for enterprising residents to build their own houses (somewhat) on their own terms and theoretically escape the uncertainties of the housing waitlist. Perhaps not surprisingly, local administrators struggled to regulate and oversee an increasing proliferation of individual construction projects in Saburtalo and were singled out regularly for this problem. Leadership in Georgia attempted to scale back and eventually prohibit individual construction earlier than all-Union counterparts (in 1953 and 1956), yet in mid-1958, illegal individual construction flourished, concentrated in Saburtalo and reportedly enabled by the same local police charged with monitoring the problem.\footnote{Chairman of the Council of Ministers’ Commission of Soviet Control M. Megrelišvili to Mžavanaže and Javaxišvili, sšssa (II), f. 17, op. 37, d. 120, ll. 56-82 and on Iqalt’o, “DOKLADNAIA ZAPISKA,” Orjonikidze District Secretary K. Gardap’xaże to Tbilisi City Committee Secretary G.A. Gegešiże, 21 May 1959, sšssa (II), f. 17, op. 37, d. 246, ll. 64-66. On Italt’o alone, there were 6 houses being constructed at the time of the report’s writing (June 1958), two of which boasted 400 square meters and 550 square meters, respectively, Chairman of the Council of Ministers’ Commission of Soviet Control M. Megrelišvili to Mžavanaže and Javaxišvili, sšssa (II), f. 17, op. 37, d. 120, l. 57. See also “Dokladnaia zapiska ‘o rezul’tatak proverki dokladnoi zapiski prokurora goroda Tbilisi tov. Taksidze A.E.,” and “Dokladnaia zapiska ‘o rezul’tatak proverki zaiavleniia gr. gr. Chinchaladze V.E., Gorgadze T.S. i Sulakvelidze P.L., na gr. gr. Abashidze N. i Chikovani K., prozhivaiushchikh po 2 tup. Arakishvili 6,’ sšssa (II), f. 17, op. 39, d. 124, ll. 2-10, 70-77 and “Dokladnaia zapiska,” V. Siraze to Georgian CC}
individual construction – at which point there were 2,009 individually constructed homes in Tbilisi – another 400 individual construction projects were ongoing.\textsuperscript{516} Moreover, illegal individual construction did not necessarily reduce demand for apartment housing, as it exacerbated the already existing Tbilisi problem of possession and occupancy of multiple residences.\textsuperscript{517} Illegal and individual construction was not limited to Tbilisi and did not end with prohibitions in the late 1950s: by 1974, more than 50,000 homes in Georgia had reportedly been built illegally, by both proactive individual citizens and state institutions to distribute political favors to an expanding network of patrons, clients, and family members.\textsuperscript{518}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure12.png}
\caption{Individual-construction residences on Iqalt’o Gora, overlooking Saburtalo, one of the main sites of individual construction in the neighborhood.}
\end{figure}

\begin{flushright}
Source: Author photograph, 2013.
\end{flushright}

\textsuperscript{516} Secretary Dumbaże, f. 22, op. 26, d. 40, ll. 17-23 regarding city court cases about individual construction in Saburtalo (1960).
\textsuperscript{517} Chairman of the Council of Ministers’ Commission of Soviet Control M. Megrelišvili to Mžavanaže and Javaxišvili, sšsšsla (II), f. 14, op. 37, d. 120, l. 57.
\textsuperscript{518} “O khode vypolneniiia postanovleniiia Biuro TsK KP Gruzii ot 9 iiulia 1960 goda ‘o ser’eznykh nedostatkah v organizatsii kooperativnogo i individual’nogo zhilishchnogo stroite’stva v gorode Tbilisi,’” Chairman of the Tbilisi City Soviet CEC A. Melaže to Mžavanaže, sšsšsla (II), f. 14, op. 35, d. 455, ll. 1-8.

Complaints by local officials, planners, and residents reveal the challenges encountered by those citizens attempting to build and inhabit the growing neighborhood. Some of these challenges resembled complaints voiced elsewhere in the Soviet Union during the Khrushchev-era building boom, such as long wait times on the housing list, insufficient living space for the number of family members in an apartment, insufficient funds to complete planned projects, failure to meet projected construction timelines, and inadequate sewage, water, and electrical access.519 Other complaints suggested problems particular to Georgia and Tbilisi. For example, Georgian architects and planners regularly challenged Moscow’s uniform building plans, which they viewed as inadequate for Georgia’s warm climate, citing the need for higher ceiling norms to improve ventilation and the necessity of spaces such as loggias and balconies for a family’s apartment.520 Moreover, unlike other Union locales, the Georgian construction industry continued to use earlier construction methods alongside those mandated by Khrushchev’s building reforms, perhaps to allow for climactic discrepancies and other local departures from central plans.521 For example, by the 1970s, a surplus of building materials meant that planned two-

519 See, for example, complaints about a neighbor’s dangerous makeshift kitchen due to insufficient living space (sšss (II), f. 14, op. 41, d. 380, ll. 101-102), failure to give up one’s spot in the housing list after acquiring a residence elsewhere (sšss (II), f. 14, op. 41, d. 378, ll. 34-37), request for housing to remain in Tbilisi after graduation from the Technical University for a young husband and wife from the provinces (sšss (II), f. 14, op. 41, d. 378, ll. 116-118), and request for larger living space due to a daughter’s study of musical instruments (sšss (II), f. 14, op. 46, d. 492, ll. 126-127).

520 Levan Asabashvili, “Post war housing in Georgia,” Urban Reactor, 21 April 2012, available http://urbanreactor.blogspot.com/2012/04/post-war-housing-in-georgia.html. Last accessed 16 April 2015. As a part of the Soviet Union’s fourth (IV) climactic zone, some of the peculiarities of Tbilisi residential design were: a system of angular airing for airflow; and household balconies, loggias, or terraces, Dzhashi, Arkhitektura sotsialisticheskogo Tbilisi, 110. For resident complaints from 1966 about loggias and balconies, see sšss (II), f. 14, op. 41, d. 381, ll. 142-148.

521 Asabashvili, “Post war housing in Georgia.”
story buildings in northern Saburtalo and the new Nuc’ubiże Plateau were built with ten and sixteen stories, respectively.522

How did Saburtalo residents voice complaints and grievances to local and republic authorities? What narrative strategies did they employ to provide legitimacy to their complaints? In what collectivity did they claim membership? Residents wrote letters as individuals, on behalf of family members, as a building, or as a block to make specific claims regarding living space, construction, and the housing list to officials at the district and republic level. Writers often established their political and personal credibility through biography, by either noting service during the Great Patriotic War, status as an Old Bolshevik, Party membership, or rehabilitation on the one hand or by describing family achievements, such as having a large number of children. Places of employment – particularly in the neighborhood – and responsibility for dependent family members likewise bolstered claims for Saburtalo living space. Letter writers frequently complained about repeated and unanswered letters to Orjonikiże District-level officials, having turned to a republic-level authority to resolve their housing concerns.

While many letters dealt with interior concerns, some writers sought collectively to improve conditions in the larger neighborhood. For example, in 1971

522 Ziegler, "Städtebau in Georgien," 105. Though it is unclear whether the following occurred in Saburtalo, a similar example from 1974 demonstrates the overzealous implementation of construction plans in Tbilisi and their potential motives: according to Tbilisi Gorkom First Secretary Gilašvili, in the place of what was planned to be a three-building apartment complex (168 apartments), a Tbilisi construction cooperative built sixteen multi-story buildings (1,281 apartments) to distribute not only among themselves and their associates, but also to residents outside of Tbilisi who sought to move to the capital, “Za pis’mom chelovek,” Pravda (19 March 1974), p. 3.
a group of residents on Iosebiže Street expressed their pride at living on a street named in honor of “Georgian female hero” T’ina Iosebiže and celebrated the recent construction of a seven-story building and a high school on the street. Yet “unfortunately, the street’s public amenities proceed at a turtle’s pace. Asphalt is damaged here and there, ponds form, mud. Following a rain shower it is impossible to pass through.” Moreover, “on the street there is neither a garden or a public square,” a “noble cause” that the residents themselves offered to remedy by building a garden on the site of a former garage. They also proposed to construct a centrally-located monument to their Georgian female hero on the street. Though the Tbilisi City Committee denied their offer to self-construct a public garden, the city did resolve to repair the sidewalk and potholes. These Iosebiže Street petitioners wrote proudly as Georgians committed to improving their corner of the developing neighborhood for the benefit of its many residents.

Just as letter writers mobilized positively a variety of collective identities to provide legitimacy to their housing claims (Party membership, veteran status, and so forth), one Kurdish writer blamed discrimination against national minorities as the reason for her housing woes. A resident of Važa-Pšavela Avenue 51, Zade Shakroevna Khudoeva appealed in the following manner to the Presidium of the 24th Congress of the Georgian CC:

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523 T’ina Iosebiže was a hero of the Great Patriotic War.
524 Residents of 60 Iosebiže Street to 24th congress of the Georgian CP CC, sšsša (II), f. 14, op. 46, d. 494, l. 76.
525 Head of Department of Renovation Management Nakaiže to Georgian CC, 5 March 1971, f. 14, op. 46, d. 494, l. 75.
For fifteen years we were on the lists to be assigned a well-maintained apartment, but they did not pay attention to this because we are national minorities, so we are now compelled to reach out to you as our only hope.

By order of the highest party-Soviet organs of the Soviet Union (Moscow), they should have provided a good apartment to us. However the former leadership of Orjonikiže District Committee of the city of Tbilisi in 1961 assigned an apartment to us at the address above, partially underground at twelve steps below ground level, damp and entirely uninhabitable. Due to the dampness and unsuitability of this apartment, all of my six children and I have heart conditions. We have repeatedly appealed to local authorities to change the apartment, however this has not garnered human attention because we are Kurds. We kindly ask for your help and ask that you instruct your superiors to change our apartment. Our workers’ family consists of 8 people. We ask that our legal request is not ignored.526

Orjonikiže District head K.V. C’q’itišvili, meanwhile, claimed that the apartment in question was fit for habitation, with only a partial dampness issue that would be resolved through a new commission’s study of the apartment. Khudoeva’s charges of ethnic discrimination, on the other hand, went unmentioned in C’q’itišvili’s brief report to the Georgian CC on the issue.527 At the same time, the fact that a district official addressed this relatively minor complaint about damp living quarters in consultation with the CC suggests the extent of high-level Party involvement in quotidian affairs in the city. It is difficult to know whether Khudoeva’s perceived slight due to her national minority status, as a Kurd, was exceptional or typical. Among the complaint letters I reviewed from the 1960s and 1970s, hers was the only one to explicitly raise the issue of nationality and status. The vast majority of

527 Orjonikiže District Secretary K.V. C’q’itišvili to Georgian CC, 20 May 1971, sšsa (II), f. 14, op. 46, d. 493, l. 7.
complaints were filed by Georgians, in Georgian, and did not mention the issue of nationality at all. As the entitled nationality in the most Georgian district of Tbilisi, such an absence is perhaps not surprising. Yet this single case raises an important question: who resided in Saburtalo?

While city and district figures do not distinguish between sub-district neighborhoods, certain trends in the larger Orjonikiże District – of which Saburtalo became the largest neighborhood – are suggestive. First, even from the 1930s, Orjonikiże District had a majority Georgian population (unlike Tbilisi writ large), but the percentage of Georgians in the district had grown to nearly three-quarters of the population by 1970. Orjonikiże District and Saburtalo had multinational populations, yet in the three decades of development depicted below, the entitled Georgian nationality gained considerable ground in percentage of the population, particularly against Armenian and Russian corresponding decreases.

*Table 5: Orjonikiże District Population by Nationality (%)\(^ {528}\)*

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<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Moreover, by 1970, Orjonikiże District had the highest Georgian population percentage of all Tbilisi districts. Nearly a quarter of Tbilisi residents lived in

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\(^ {528}\) Kakuria, *k’ t’bilisis mosaxleoba 1803-1970 cc.*, 13, 20, 34. For 1959, see also Orjonikiże District State Statistical Inspector K’. Axobaże to Orjonikiże District Committee, t’c’a, f. 79, d. 1291, l. 1.
Orjonikižē District by 1970, so the city's largest district likewise contained the city's largest Georgian population.

Table 6: Georgian Population of Tbilisi by District (%)\textsuperscript{529}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>1939</th>
<th>1959</th>
<th>1970</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orjonikižē</td>
<td>55.8</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>74.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Commissars</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirov</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lenin</td>
<td>57.9</td>
<td>62.3</td>
<td>69.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 May</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>53.4</td>
<td>64.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalinin</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>61.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>48.2</td>
<td>54.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Population of Tbilisi by District\textsuperscript{530}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>1939</th>
<th>1959</th>
<th>1970</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orjonikižē</td>
<td>106,448</td>
<td>133,269</td>
<td>213,924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Commissars</td>
<td>112,256</td>
<td>147,941</td>
<td>198,131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirov</td>
<td>82,242</td>
<td>59,393</td>
<td>55,891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lenin</td>
<td>113,560</td>
<td>114,386</td>
<td>176,256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 May</td>
<td>104,714</td>
<td>88,645</td>
<td>113,175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalinin</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>60,901</td>
<td>50,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>90,129</td>
<td>80,644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>519,220</td>
<td>694,664</td>
<td>889,020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of Saburtalo’s residents were Georgian by nationality, but this uniformity masks a wide range of individual experiences and other collective identities exhibited by saburt’aloelebi (residents of Saburtalo).\textsuperscript{531} Workers, students, scholars, teachers, doctors, engineers, artists, Party members, and newly-arrived

\textsuperscript{529} Kakuria, k.’bilisis mosaxleoba 1803-1970 cc., 12-13, 19-20, 33-34.
\textsuperscript{530} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{531} This section is based on a series of interviews conducted with residents of Saburtalo in Spring 2013. The interviews were loosely structured and conducted in Georgian, unless interviewees decided to switch to Russian (which happened in only one case). I identified potential interviewees by spending time in Saburtalo parks and green spaces during the day and asking if older individuals would be willing to speak about growing up in the neighborhood. I thank Levan Asabašvili for acquainting me with Saburtalo’s built environment and its history; and for his help in coordinating some of the initial interviews.
citizens from the regions, among others, all called Saburtalo home. Giorgi (b. 1939) was born in Saburtalo and grew up on Iqalt’o Gora, the site of many single-family homes and self-constructed residences. His parents moved to the area early, in 1926, because his father worked in a nearby beer production plant. As one among the earliest native saburt’aloelebi, Giorgi recalled that “Georgians, Armenians, Molokans, Tatars, and Ossetians” lived in the neighborhood and that young people mostly had normal relations with one another. However, he had to go to school in nearby Vera – a neighborhood closer to downtown Tbilisi -- rather than in Saburtalo, most likely because schools were among the many community features that did not arrive in Saburtalo until the 1950s. Giorgi emphasized, “We were all neighbors up to Vežisi Street [on the northernmost end of Saburtalo, CK]. Everyone knew each other.” He spoke fondly of his youth and neighborhood community yet distinguished between these collectivities and “Communists,” who “were very kind people and good people.” This was explained by the fact that “Communists ate well, but they made sure that the workers had enough to eat.” Giorgi did not consider himself to be a Communist, though he was proud of his family’s working-class background.

K’et’evan L. (b. 1936), though the same generation as Giorgi, moved to the neighborhood as a student to study at the Medical Institute (also in Saburtalo). She became a surgeon in Tbilisi Hospital no. 8 and proudly discussed her husband, an
engineer, who led work on three metro stations on the Saburtalo line. However, he died in a metro accident, and K’et’evan was given an apartment by Metrostroi following his death. Born in Borjomi, K’et’evan was deported with her family from Axalci to Shymkent, Kazakhstan in 1951. Explaining her family’s deportation, she simply said, (in Russian) “Beria did it. He was a Mingrelian,” then, switching back to Georgian, noted, “Stalin really loved the Georgian people.” In describing her own life story, K’et’evan frequently relied on the Russian word tiazhelyi yet also conveyed great pride at her family members’ achievements as part of a Soviet collective: her mother, a mat’-geroina (as the mother of twelve children); her father, who fought in the war and was head of a work crew while in Central Asian exile; and her husband, who helped bring the metro to Saburtalo.

K’et’evan and Giorgi arrived in Saburtalo in different ways, yet their stories depict several important dynamics at play in Saburtalo in the 1950s and 1960s, from early settlement of Saburtalo to the dislocation wrought by the war to postwar urban migration for education and work. Their own descriptions likewise depart subtly from those of a younger generation of saburt’aloelebi, born in the 1960s. Zurab B. (b. 1965) and Mamuka G. (b. 1967) grew up in Saburtalo as friends, though Mamuka lived in barracks near the football stadium as a young child until his family moved into a new building in the 1970s, on Iosebiže Street (parallel to Pekini Avenue, a main neighborhood thoroughfare). Zurab B. and Mamuka G. identified as korpuselebi, or people from the “blocks,” referring to the post-khrushchevki

532 We had been speaking in Georgian, but when she starting to discuss her husband, she switched to Russian and continued speaking in Russian for the rest of the conversation.
apartment buildings of the 1970s. Zurab B. recalled that his parents cried (tirodnen) when they moved to Saburtalo because “it was not a prestigious place” in their eyes.\(^{533}\)

Zurab K. (b. 1968), by contrast, was (and is) proud of his status as a native resident of Doliže Street, or a doliželi. In his words, “I am a doliželi. I was born here. The entire city is on Doliže Street, the entire world.” For a world unto itself, Doliže Street lacked restaurants and shops, in Zurab K.’s telling, and he remembered only one store that displayed fruit and other products piled up high, but which were not for sale (to him, at least). He also regularly emphasized that the neighborhood did not have a bazaar. For this self-described “boy of the street,” Doliže was a very Georgian place: he did not recall hearing or using Russian in everyday encounters there. At school in the neighborhood, he noted a distinction in behavior between the “calmer, more urban” korpuselebi children and the “louder and wilder” children from single-family homes.

Elguja T. and Važa X. lived in newer buildings on Nuc’ubiže Street built between 1978 and 1986 while they worked at an institute that manufactured automobile components. Because they had Russian and Armenian colleagues, they spoke Russian at work, but spoke Georgian the rest of the time. Elguja identified not

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\(^{533}\) This reflects the “hierarchy of prestige” among Tbilisi neighborhoods that developed in the postwar period and continues today: “intelligentsia” neighborhoods, such as Vake and old Tbilisi (Mt’acminda and Vera) “outrank” neighborhoods such as Saburtalo and Didube that developed from the 1950s onward. Paul Manning, “The City of Balconies: Elite Politics and the Changing Semiotics of the Post-Socialist Cityscape,” Kristof Van Assche, Jozeph Salukvadze, and Nick Shavishvili, eds., *City Culture and City Planning in Tbilisi: Where Europe and Asia Meet* (Lewinston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2009), 71-102.
as a saburt'aloeli, but as a t'biliseli: “Tbilisi is small. I am a t'biliseli.” The picture he painted of “Communist times,” when life was “better” and “different” focused on interethnic relations, referring to neighborly and friendly relations between nationalities because “we were all Soviet citizens.” Moreover, “Tbilisi was a city shared between peoples,” where “life took place in the courtyard (ezo).”

The different generations of saburt’aloebi conveyed a number of variations in how they understood the developing neighborhood and its communities. Yet certain vocabularies were common to everyone with whom I spoke. Rather than speaking about the “Soviet period” or other markers of time (such as a decade [1960s] or leader [Khrushchev-era, Brezhnev-era, Shevardnadze-era]), respondents simply referred to the period under discussion as “in Communist times” (komunistis dros) or “before” (adre). A flattening out of the Soviet past is not unique to respondents in Saburtalo or Georgia: indeed, social and individual memory does not necessarily adhere to historians’ sense of periodization.534 Further, when talking about housing and construction in the neighborhood, respondents always described a building by its number of stories, unprompted by a specific question in that regard (e.g. orsart’uliani [2-story], xut’sart’uliani [5-story], or c’xrasart’uliani [9-story]). Such descriptions conveyed not only the type of building but also the approximate period when the building was constructed, in a manner that was comprehensible to all involved in the conversion without further explanation. The discursive role of

534 On constructions of “then,” “before,” and the “radiant past” among Russian villagers in the far north, see Margaret Paxson, Solovyovo: The Story of Memory in a Russian Village (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2005), Chapter 4; and on memories of the 1930s as indicative of the Soviet experience, Irina Paperno, Stories of the Soviet Experience: Memoirs, Diaries, Dreams (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).
residential buildings for these Saburtalo inhabitants linked them with their compatriots who resided in any Soviet neighborhood that grew out of the postwar building boom.

While Saburtalo was to serve primarily as a residential area for workers and students, the requisite academic, industrial, cultural, transport, and entertainment institutions developed alongside the growing apartment blocks.\textsuperscript{535} As Lenin Street connected the Vera neighborhood to Saburtalo, the main Pekini Avenue thoroughfare, which showcased the Georgian Technical Institute (1947-1953, arch. M. Šavišvili), Sports Palace (1956-1961, arch. V. Mesxišvili, Iu. Kasraže), Intourist, and Academy of Sciences campus, came into view. Heading north on Pekini Avenue from Orjonikidze Square (1956-1958, arch. M. Neprintsev), the perpendicular Doliže Street and Iqalt’o Gora featured buildings emblematic of various periods of Soviet housing as well as illegal, self-constructed homes overlooking the neighborhood. Heading further down Pekini, at the intersection of Važa-Pšavela Avenue, the Republic’s Central Archival Administration came into view. The four- and five story apartment buildings described above lined the lengthy Važa-P’šavela Avenue, which also featured Tbilisi’s Medical Institute and Hotel Abkhazia. Further down Važa-P’šavela, the newer (1970s) residential developments of Upper and Lower Delisi expanded Saburtalo westward.\textsuperscript{536} An Inter-Union House of Culture of the Georgian Republican Council of Trade Unions was built at the intersection of Važa-P’šavela

\textsuperscript{535} For a contemporary walking tour of Saburtalo and its environs, see Nodar Dzhanberidze, Meri Karbelashvili, and Simon Kintsurashvili, \textit{Arkhektura Tbilisi: Putevoditel’} (Tbilisi: Sabčot’a Sāk’art’velo, 1967), 100-112.

\textsuperscript{536} For plans for the 1976 Upper Delisi project, see “zemo delisis detaluri dagemarebis proek’ti,” (1976), t’c’a, f. 14, op. 9, d 1313, ll. 1-15.
and the Vake-Saburtalo highway in 1965, which combined the educational and performance functions of a House of Culture and athletic facilities for the neighborhood’s many trade union members.\textsuperscript{537}

Shortly thereafter, the House of Culture would sit along the final station on the Tbilisi metro’s “Saburtalo line.” The Tbilisi metro opened in 1966 – the fourth in the Soviet Union -- and as early as 1969 plans were underway to add a second line to serve the growing Saburtalo neighborhood via a transfer at the city’s main train station. \textsuperscript{538} The “Saburtalo line” began operation in 1979, cementing the neighborhood’s symbolic and lived significance for Soviet Tbilisi’s residents, most of whom lived, worked, studied, and/or socialized in the neighborhood.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure13.jpg}
\caption{Inter-Union House of Culture of the Georgian Republican Council of Trade Unions (1965). Source: Author photograph, 2015.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{537} On building plans for the Trade Union House of Culture, see “prop’kavširebis kulturis saxlis mšeneblobis proek’ti važa-p’šavelas prospek’tze,” (1965), t’ć’a, f. 14, op. 6, d. 2662, ll. 12-47.

\textsuperscript{538} On design plans for the Čeret’eli and Technical Institute vestibules, see “k’.t’bilisis metropolitenis vagzlis moedani-delisis monakvet’is proek’ti,” (1970), t’ć’a, f. 14, op. 8, d. 1471, ll. 2-8. On schedule and funding for the metro's first and second lines, see sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 40, d. 322, l. 13 and sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 49, d. 532, l. 6. For a history of the Tbilisi metro, see Alek’sandre Kočlavašvili, Omari Xizanişvili, and Mamia Č’orgolašvili, \textit{t’bilisis metropoliteni} (Tbilisi: Sabčot’a Sak’art’velo, 1978).
In approximately three decades (1940s-1970s), the project of Saburtalo had progressed from idea to practice. As is the case with any neighborhood – even the centrally-planned – Saburtalo’s development was rapid, if uneven, and not always according to plan. Yet by the late 1970s, the sparsely populated farmland that lay across the Varazi ravine had become a bustling residential center for Tbilisi’s increasingly Georgian populace, with its own metro line, universities, parks, and
entertainment facilities. Saburtalo may have lacked the charm and allure of older parts of the city (which were simultaneously idealized and Orientalized by locals and visitors alike), but what it lacked in cobblestones, sulfur baths, and wooden balconies, it made up for in Georgian Sovietness.

Saburtalo continued to expand into the 1980s, but by that time, Tbilisi planners’ attention began to shift in other directions: to continuing construction on outlying microdistricts such as Gldani; and returning to revitalizing the oldest parts of the city. From the mid-1970s, Tbilisi architects and planners began to address structural problems in the old city. Architects were divided between those who sought to replace the many dilapidated buildings in the old city, with its organically formed streets, haphazard construction, and wooden balconies, with modern structures; and those who sought to preserve and revitalize older buildings in the district. Local residents likewise fought in favor of the latter view, which privileged renovation over destruction. In practice, ambitious studies and plans for improvements were limited to the areas of the sulfur baths, the old city wall (along Barat’asvili Street), and along Leseliže Street, the main artery from Lenin Square through the old city toward Metexi church. As Karl Ziegler has argued, the motivation behind the renovation of the old city from the late 1970s emanated not from a particular form or style, but rather that “the goal was for old values and style elements to visibly and consciously re-set the scene.”

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540 Ibid., 116.
Whereas Saburtalo’s development represented the promises of Soviet urban modernity at its apex, such visions failed to extend to older parts of Tbilisi, creating a cohabitation between tradition and modernity as displayed in this increasingly Georgian *dedak’alak’i*. This spatial cohabitation in Tbilisi offers a metaphor for the continued negotiation of “traditional” and “modern” practices – among individuals, families, communities, and the state – in the age of developed socialism.

**The Reinvention of Tradition and Soviet National Modernity**

In 1972, Eduard Shevardnadze, a Guria native who had risen through the ranks of Komsomol and Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs in the 1950s and 1960s, replaced Vasil Mžavanaže as First Secretary of the Georgian Communist Party. Mžavanaže’s ouster is typically cast as part of a broader, Moscow-led effort to clamp down on local corruption, of which Mžavanaže was perhaps the most flagrant example, and to attempt to revitalize a stagnant licit economy.\(^\text{541}\) The same leader who was regarded as an outsider to Georgia in the 1950s, over his nearly two decades at the republic’s helm, had presided over a deepening pyramid scheme of favors, nepotism, and black market activity that was robust enough to warrant intervention from above, in a brief intrusion of the national-social contract.\(^\text{542}\)

\(^{541}\) *A Pravda* exposé about problems in the Tbilisi City Party Committee subtly suggested the motive for the leadership change in advance, though an explicit statement of Shevardnadze’s appointment came only in September 1972, without further details, “Ob organizatorskoi i politicheskoi rabote Tbilisskogo gorkoma Kompartii Gruzii po vypolneniiu reshenii XXIX s”ezda KPSS,” *Pravda* (6 March 1972), pp. 1-2.

\(^{542}\) Two contemporary explanations for the high degree of corruption in Georgia emphasized the dominance of friendship bonds (*megobroba*) and family ties, combined with an erosion of the distinction between personal and professional roles and obligations, J.W.R. Parsons, “National
Corruption in Georgia was not a specifically rural or urban problem: rather, corruption and patronage were likely furthered by the same mechanisms of rural-to-urban migration that facilitated the rise of Saburtalo and other Soviet urban districts, as new urban residents maintained ties to their native villages and networks. Shevardnadze, meanwhile, owed much of his political rise to anti-corruption campaigns waged as a district party leader in Tbilisi and from his posts in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and his anti-corruption credentials made him a suitable replacement in Moscow’s eyes for the entrenched Mžavanaže. It is not surprising, then, that upon becoming first secretary, Shevardnadze launched a series of anti-corruption measures throughout Georgia, which saw varying, if limited, degrees of success: by 1975, 25,000 people had been arrested (including 9,500 Party members) in Georgia as part of Shevardnadze’s anti-corruption campaign, though many were released without trial.543

In theory, the bribery and corruption characteristic of Mžavanaže-era Georgia was incompatible with the project of socialist modernity under construction in Saburtalo and elsewhere. In this sense, theft, bribery, hooliganism, protectionism, bureaucratism, and localism were cast as dangerous, anachronistic practices against which the Georgian Party structure waged its struggle. Concurrent with the anti-corruption campaigns, the Georgian Party also initiated a campaign in 1975 “against harmful traditions, customs, ceremonies, holidays, and the universal introduction of


new – Soviet, socialist ones.” Both efforts captured the broader desire, couched in anthropological terminology that recalled Union-wide anti-religious campaigns of the 1960s, to combat anti-socialist tendencies and “survivals of the past” (perezhitki proshlogo). Whereas the anti-corruption efforts led to purges of institutions and officials, the campaign against harmful traditions consisted of extensive research and public opinion studies and the creation of new, more appropriately Soviet practices and rituals to replace allegedly “harmful” ones. Shevardnadze’s political legitimacy vis-à-vis Moscow lay in his corruption-busting credentials, so the broader fight against corruption and related problems was clearly a Moscow-led initiative. Indeed, in a note on the matter to the CPSU CC, Shevardnadze referenced the CPSU March 1972 castigation of the Tbilisi Party Committee and mistakes of the Mžavanaže leadership as motivations for the campaign. Yet the decision to cast the corruption struggle within a wider campaign against harmful practices, most of which were particular to Georgia, was more likely Shevardnadze’s design. Moreover,

544 Anthropologist Christel Lane argues that the demand for new “rituals” in this period “arose once the struggle for economic survival and the deprivations of the early postwar period had eased up, and more time and money for personal concerns were available,” Christel Lane, The Rites of Rulers: Ritual in Industrial Society -- the Soviet Case (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 34. Malte Rolf, meanwhile, points to a shift in post-Stalin festival culture toward the private sphere and toward local and national collectivities, resulting in a “fragmentation of the festive landscape,” Malte Rolf, Soviet Mass Festivals, 1917-1991, trans. Cynthia Klohr (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013), 189. Rolf does not discuss this process at length, alas, but it seems worthy of further scholarly inquiry.

545 “Protokol #166 zasedanìia biuro TsK KP Gruzii ot 25 noiabria 1975 g., 8g., ‘o merakh po usileniiu borìby s vrednymi tradìtsìami i obìchaiami,’” sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 50, d. 197, ll. 35-48. This campaign has been mentioned selectively by other scholars, but it is typically mentioned only in passing and portrayed as an anti-religious campaign or a campaign to introduce new holidays, that is, considerably more limited in scope than it was in reality, Jones, “Soviet Religious Policy”; Suny, The Making of the Georgian Nation.

546 “Informatsiia,” Shevardnadze to CPSU CC, 8 December 1975, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 50, d. 486, ll. 37-38.
the wider net provided a link between corruption, religion, traditions, and criminality, from the perspective of Georgian propagandists.

As preparation for this campaign, between 1973 and 1975, the Georgian CC tasked its Department of Propaganda and Agitation with researching the spectrum and extent of so-called “harmful traditions, customs” et al. across the republic. By 1976, in addition to the regular reporting from regional leaders about lingering practices in their districts, the Georgian CC decided to enlist a new instrument in the data collection effort: the newly established Study of Public Opinion (*mosaxleobis sazogadoebrivi azris šesascavla*), a public opinion polling institution created by Shevardnadze that was the first of its kind in the Soviet Union.547 Established in 1975, the so-called Public Opinion Council fell under the purview of the Georgian CC’s Department of Propaganda and Agitation. Its mandate was threefold: to study and poll public opinion in Georgia; to use poll results for recommendations to the Georgian CC for policy improvements; and to form public opinion by drawing attention to selected problems.548 Attempts to gather public opinion data supported

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547 See the survey instrument in “anketa: mavne tradic’iebisa da ces’veulebat’a cinaaămdeg brzolis gažlierebis ģoniziebat’a ep’ek’turobaze mosaxleobis sazogadoebrivi azris šesascavlad (1976 celi),” šsssa (II), f. 14, op. 52, d. 339, ll. 38-39. Christel Lane cites the bottom-up nature of ritual creation in the late fifties/early sixties elsewhere in the USSR, as lower political cadres most likely sought to address the suggestions and demands of their citizen constituents and use such measures as a “tool of cultural management,” Lane, *The Rites of Rulers*, 32-34.

the broader effort to pursue Shevardnadze’s reformist program and, especially, wage the campaigns against certain remnants of the past (i.e. corruption and harmful traditions).

Reports to Shevardnadze from the Department of Propaganda and Agitation depicted a wide range of practices witnessed or reported among Georgia’s residents, from the culinary to the religious, which existed in tension with the Soviet Georgian vision of modernity. The report authors classified the practices as pertaining to family life, labor, calendar, folkloric and ethnographic traditions, and traditions that “went against our way of life,” that is, those with a religious component. On the surface, the religious aspects of the campaign resembled Khrushchev-era anti-religious campaigns, which aimed to promote “scientific atheism” through research and propaganda. Shevardnadze’s effort, on the other hand, embedded religion within a much larger spectrum of cultural traditions, rituals, and practices. In other words, this was less about the formal institutions of religion in Georgia than the more quotidian expressions of culture and ritual associated with religion.

sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 117, d. 545, ll. 1-20, 36-50 for studies on private property ownership and opinions of resettled highland residents from T’ušet’i on their living conditions.

549 “Zapiska otdelna propagandy i agitatsii TsK ‘o merakh po usileniu bor’by protiv vrednykh traditsii, obychev, obriadov, prazdnikov i povsemestnom vvedenii novykh – sovetskikh, sotsialisticheskikh,’” sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 49, d. 451, ll. 1-51. For local level reporting to the Department of Propaganda and Agitation from 1975-1979 on this campaign, see sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 50, d. 488; f. 14, op. 52, d. 339, 339a, 339b; f. 14, op. 115, d. 432; f. 14, op. 117, d. 337; and f. 14, op. 117, d. 338. Many of these reports seem overly concerned with the holiday aspects and much less frequently raised issues or denote progress in other spheres, such as marriage ceremonies, funerals, or feasting.

550 “Zapiska otdelna propagandy i agitatsii TsK ‘o merakh po usileniu bor’by protiv vrednykh traditsii, obychev, obriadov, prazdnikov i povsemestnom vvedenii novykh – sovetskikh, sotsialisticheskikh,’” sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 49, d. 451, l. 4.

According to reports, the most widespread religious practice in Georgia was the observance of religious holidays such as saints’ days (Davit’oba, Giorgoba, Marioba, Nanoba); Easter; and local holidays such as Alaverdoba, Teletoba, Zevzaoba, Mc’xet’oba, Varžioba and others.552 These holidays posed a problem not only due to their religious bases, but also because of their “cult origins” and, at times, observance of ritual sacrifice. Reports regularly referred to a particularly concerning practice in the mountainous region of T’ušet‘i: in November of the previous year for the holiday Samvgto, in the presence of children, villagers in Gudani performed a sacrificial killing of animals in which they cut animals’ necks to yield the largest possible “fountain” of blood, which was smeared on the faces of participants. This practice presented a challenge because “As children, the youth were raised in this violence, returning to the savagery of the past.”553

Just as such violence was deemed a relic of the past, so too was the lingering influence of Orthodoxy. Report authors took care to acknowledge the importance of religion in Georgian celebrations and daily life:

We know that no one can impose something on a people, forced into its culture, that even in the slightest degree is foreign to its nature, history and spirit, yet we also know that which is viable and valuable cannot be discarded from a culture. We must not always renounce all traditions, even if the tradition is formed on a religious basis,

552 I attended two of these festivals: Pankisoba (April 2013) and Zevzaoba (May 2015). The saints days – for Saints Davit’, Giorgi, Mari, and Nana – likewise functioned as name days for those Georgians who shared the names of Giorgi, et al. Local holidays such as Zevzaoba or Mc’xet’oba commemorated a local (often historical) event, such as a victory in battle.

553 “Zapiska otdelja propaganda i agitatsii TsK'o merakh po usileniu bor'by protiv vrednykh traditsii, obychaev, obriadov, prazdnikov i povsemestnom vvedenii novykh – sovetskikh, sotsialisticheskikh,” soviet (II), f. 14, op. 49, d. 451, l. 4.
provided that it can be modernized to use it against its "forefathers."\footnote{554}

In this spirit, the Party had introduced several new, annual "traditional" holidays to celebrate the birthdays of important Georgian writers and cultural figures, such as Šot’aoba (Šot’a Rust’aveli), Iliaoba (Ilia Čavčavaże), Važoba (Važa Pšavela), Iakoboba (Iakob Gogebašvili), and Alek’sandreoba (Alek’sandre Čavčavaže), which had already drawn crowds in villages in eastern and central Georgia.\footnote{555} Report authors recognized that local holidays and festivals served an important cultural function and emphasized their genuinely "popular" origins, which allegedly had been hijacked by the church since their beginnings in feudal-era Georgia. The Party's task was therefore to re-appropriate said popular holidays from the church (e.g. Alaverdoba, Mc’xet’oba, Atigenoba, Varžioba), restore their original purposes and "breathe into them a modern spirit and new content."\footnote{556}

The "survivals" of religion were evident not only in holidays, but also in the more ritualized days of celebration and commemoration in citizens’ daily lives: baptisms, weddings, and funerals. For example, in 1974 in the entire republic 14,422 religious ceremonies had been recorded in official statistics, or 4.8 percent

\footnote{554} Ibid., l. 6.
\footnote{555} Ibid., l. 9. On the genesis and post-Soviet transformation of one such festival in the Ajarian border village of Sarpi, Kolxoba, see Mathijs Pelkmans, \textit{Defending the Border: Identity, Religion, and Modernity in the Republic of Georgia} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 61-69. Pelkmans observes that, in its Soviet iteration, from 1979, Kolxoba “referred to the distant past and the unity of ‘Georgian’ people living along the eastern Black Sea coast” while being simultaneously “invested with socialist meaning”. The local reception of this “socialist ritual” ultimately transformed it “into a celebration of ethnic and national identity.”
\footnote{556} “Zapiska otdela propagandy i agitatsii TsK ‘o merakh po usileniu bor’by protiv vrednykh traditsii, obychaev, obriadov, prazdnikov i povsemestnom vvedenii novykh – sovetskih, sotsialisticheskikh,” sšsssa (II), f. 14, op. 40, d. 451, l. 10. Proposed activities ran the gamut from displaying Soviet agricultural technology to celebrating Georgian wine and tea production to holding sporting contests and traditional Georgian tournaments of “leloburt’i,” a ball game.
more than in the previous year. The number of baptisms likewise increased by 6.3 percent (8,609) over the previous year. One thousand people held church wedding ceremonies in 1974, and the number of religious burials and memorials increased by 13.4 percent from 1973. Moreover, these figures reflected only the official figures: according to the head of the Tbilisi Palace of Marriage, the majority of young people (circa 3,000-4,000 people) followed their legal ceremony at the Palace with a visit to the historic Svetic’xoveli cathedral in Mc’xet’a to be married by a priest. Even if, as evaluated by authors of the report, religious baptisms, weddings, and burials had less to do with genuine belief in religious doctrine than observance of cultural rituals, these trends still presented challenges to their goals for the transformative power of propaganda among Georgian residents. In her ethnography of rural Rača province during the 1970s, British-Georgian anthropologist Tamara Dragadze described a similar process of “domestication of religious life”: in the absence of a church or priest, neither of which had been present in the area in decades, village (lay) residents took on the responsibilities of church institutions within the home and family, often concerning fortune and fate more than doctrine and institution. “Religious practice” was not about religion per se, but had more to

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557 Ibid., l. 12. Such a practice not only went against the “Soviet way of life,” but also provided profits to the church, since such a blessing at Mc’xet’a cost 50 rubles. The church received an estimated 1,510,398 rubles in this manner in 1974 alone. More quotidian concerns also brought young people to the church: for example, students and graduate students would pray and light candles in churches in advance of their exams for good luck.
do with “Georgian traditions” and “Georgian folklore” and served to preserve stability and morality within and among families.558

Existing state institutions for marriage and funeral ceremonies fell far below the demand of the populace for their services. Palaces of Marriage (the Soviet Dom brakosochitaniia) existed only in Tbilisi and Rustavi, and these organs served merely to “stamp” the marriage certificate rather than provide traditional spaces for banquets and guests. Institutions for burial and memorial ceremonies, on the other hand, were nonexistent in the republic.559 Not only would local registry offices (ZAGS) need to be more diligent about actually registering marriages – particularly in rural regions – other state buildings, such as Houses of Culture, theatres, and sports facilities would need to serve as makeshift venues for proper wedding and funeral banquets before new structures could be constructed.560

The proposals for Sovietizing the traditional Georgian marriage ceremony included replacing the newlyweds’ passing under a cross with passing under the “national” flag and state seal and encouraging them to wear national costumes.561 More importantly, report authors suggested reserving 10-15 percent of the new housing fund to distribute to newlyweds. The Ministry of Culture was to print a special edition of Rust’aveli’s epic vep’xistqaosani (The Knight in the Panther Skin) to

559 “Zapiska otchela propagandy i agitatsii TsK ‘o merakh po usileniu bor’by protiv vrednykh traditsii, obychaev, obriadov, prazdnikov i povsemestnom vvedenii novykh – sovetskih, sotsialisticheskikh,” sšsxa (II), f. 14, op. 49, d. 451, l. 13.
560 Ibid., ll. 13, 17.
561 Ibid., ll. 17-18.
give as a gift from “Soviet power” to newlyweds at ZAGS or wedding palaces, along with the keys to their new apartment. Rust’aveli’s twelfth-century epic acts as a quasi-sacred text among Georgians, as it contains guidelines for chivalry, honor, hospitality, familial relations, and femininity, effectively canonized from the 1930s by Soviet nation-building policies. Bestowing a copy of this work with a set of apartment keys to a newlywed couple epitomizes the fusion of tradition and modernity sought by Soviet Georgian leadership in the 1960s and 1970s. In the view of the Department of Agitation and Propaganda, the new solemn, public wedding ceremony should “completely destroy the church’s plans to attract the youth to its traditional ritual fuss.”

For burials, one of the greatest challenges was to combat the trend of elaborate and large tombstones and burial plots, which not only reflected a kind of “bourgeois provincialism,” but also departed from the more humble burial markers in Georgian tradition, “ignoring national tact” in the process. According to reports, “In Georgia, for centuries a simple but expressive headstone adorned the burial place of king and plowman, commander and shepherd alike.” Instead, some Georgians constructed lavish burial complexes, complete with benches, tables, and electrical wiring, so that people could visit at any time of day and open a bottle of wine in memory of the departed. This trend allegedly went against both the Georgian tradition of equality in death and Soviet egalitarian values and presented a

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562 Ibid., l. 18.
563 Ibid., l. 20.
practical challenge to the limited cemetery land in a growing Tbilisi. While honoring the deceased with a visit to his or her grave, perhaps with a bottle of wine, was not a new – or problematic practice, the growing expanse of individual grave plots and their attendant adornments posed physical and ideological challenges.

Commemorating the deceased over a bottle of wine was but a small part of the feasting and drinking practices still exhibited in Georgia in the mid-1970s. While celebratory feasting and drinking coincided with the aforementioned holidays and life milestones, Georgians likewise held a *sup’ra* (feast) “just because.” Feasts with hundreds of guests lasted until dawn, with “rivers of wine,” and threatened the sanctity of weekends spent in more cultured pursuits, such as reading, visiting the cinema or theatre, or participating in a *subbotnik*. This was not “tradition” but rather “drunkenness nestled behind the screen of tradition.” The practice also reportedly encouraged a false notion of masculinity in that to be a true *važ-kac’i* (courageous man) one had to be able to drink excessively. The link between “mass feasts” and violence was particularly problematic, as fights and even killings were not uncommon at such occasions, fueled by alcohol and notions of machismo and

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564 Ibid., ll. 21-22. This trend was reportedly particularly acute in Tbilisi’s Vake, Saburtalo, Diğomi neighborhoods (with Saburtalo being the most egregious case), where in a very short amount of time most of the land in neighborhood cemeteries had been “claimed” in advance by residents. Whereas the state norm for living space was nine square meters, people had reserved burial plots of 40-50 square meters. Compared to the U.S.’s Arlington Cemetery, “where the Kennedy brothers are buried,” the standard space was only 50x20x20 centimeters.

važkac’oba (bravery, valor). Party members were not immune to the lure of drunkenness: in the past year (1974) over two hundred Party members had been registered at sobering-up stations.

Yet wine held an important place in Georgian social practice and in the Georgian viticulture “exported” for consumption throughout other parts of the Soviet Union (and beyond). Wine was closely related to notions of Georgian hospitality, akin to the Ukrainian and Russian khleb-sol’, yet wine served a greater purpose than merely adorning the feast table and providing ritual comfort: it was the means of existence and product of labor of the old peasant, a meaning supposedly lost on many in the younger generations. The grapevine enjoyed a cult-like status among Georgian peasants and adorned tombstones and state emblems and institutions. Report authors proposed not to ban the sup’ra altogether, but to “liberate it” from unnecessary excess, especially that which conveyed a poor image of Georgian culture to outsiders and visitors. They sought for:

...guests to simply order a tea or coffee with pirozhki, just xinkali or xaši, xačapuri (Ajarian, Gurian on a cast iron pan or Ossetian khabizgina), as educated people did at the end of the nineteenth century, when Georgian cuisine and Georgian hospitality were influenced by several European culinary practices via Russia. Yet what often happens with us? They invite you at dawn for xaši, serve it according to custom and, together with it, fish with vodka and čanaxi with wine for the entire day.

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567 Ibid., l. 28.
568 Ibid., l. 31. Pirozhki are (typically) Russian savory pastries filled with meat, mushrooms, or cabbage; xinkali – large dumplings filled with meat; xaši – a chicken broth-based soup often used as a hangover cure; xačapuri -- a cheese bread made with very salty cheese with regional variations in
The Georgian *sup’ra* was a unique traditional practice that had served as a site of early Georgian justice and diplomacy. The institution of the *t’amada* in particular had a rich history, as the person who presided over the *sup’ra*, maintained order, and led toasting. Yet when a drunken *t’amada* himself caused disorder and even drew weapons on occasion, such behavior flagrantly contradicted the modernity and norms of Communist morality and the principles of socialist community.

Feasting and concomitant expressions of masculinity (via drinking or fighting) were not the only spheres of concern regarding gender roles and relations. From the perspective of the Department of Propaganda and Agitation, as modern, Soviet citizens, Georgian women held the responsibility for instilling proper attitudes toward socialist traditions and rituals in the younger generations and fostering “civic, national, and human values” in their children. Yet such a responsibility did not extend to certain minority groups in the republic. The issue of gender inequality reportedly persisted in Ajaria, Marneuli, Axalk’alak’i, Calka, and Dmanisi districts, exhibited by such “survivals” as forced marriage, overwhelmingly male representation in local leadership (while women were consigned only to physically demanding work), continued observance of “religious” rituals and concomitant expressions of masculinity (via drinking or fighting) were not the only spheres of concern regarding gender roles and relations. From the perspective of the Department of Propaganda and Agitation, as modern, Soviet citizens, Georgian women held the responsibility for instilling proper attitudes toward socialist traditions and rituals in the younger generations and fostering “civic, national, and human values” in their children. Yet such a responsibility did not extend to certain minority groups in the republic. The issue of gender inequality reportedly persisted in Ajaria, Marneuli, Axalk’alak’i, Calka, and Dmanisi districts, exhibited by such “survivals” as forced marriage, overwhelmingly male representation in local leadership (while women were consigned only to physically demanding work), continued observance of “religious” rituals and concomitant expressions of masculinity (via drinking or fighting).

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570 “Записка отдела пропаганды и агитации ЦК о усиленном борьбе против вредных традиций, обычаев, обрядов, праздников в повсеместном введении новыkh – советских, сotsialisticheskikh,” sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 49, d. 451, ll. 32-33.

571 Ibid., l. 11.
holidays, and the persistence of the practice of high bride-prices during marriage negotiations. Though not explicitly attributed to Islam in the lengthy report submitted to Shevardnadze, these districts had large Georgian Muslim (Ajarian) and Azerbaijani populations. Subsequent reporting discussed more directly the continued resonance of Islam among these populations, but the comparative lack of attention to religious and ethnic minorities illustrates that the broader campaign was really concerned with reforming practices among the entitled, Georgian nationality.

572 “Zapiska ot dela propagandy i agitatsii TsK ’o merakh po usileniu bor’by protiv vrednykh traditsii, obychaev, obriadov, prazdnikov i povsemestnom vvedenii novykh – sovetskikh, sotsialisticheskikh,’” ššsša (II), f. 14, op. 49, d. 451, l. 14.

573 Minorities – religious and ethnic – were approached separately, as part of explicitly anti-religious campaigns and campaigns to improve the situation of Kurds in the republic. On Shevardnadze’s “measures to strengthen ideological-educational work among the Kurdish population of the Georgian SSR,” see ššsša (II), f. 17, op. 51, d. 107, ll. 7-8; f. 17, op. 52, d. 695, ll. 1-6, 8; and f. 14, op. 115, d. 343, ll. 2-5. For letters regarding the situation of Azerbaijans in Georgia, see ššsša (II), f. 14, op. 43, d. 302, ll. 6-33; f. 14, op. 46, d. 426, ll. 33-34; and f. 14, op. 50, d. 488, ll. 11-14; and from Armenians in Georgia, ššsša (II), f. 14, op. 47, d. 393, ll. 41-46, 58-63. On explicitly anti-religious propaganda work in 1979 (among Orthodox, Muslim, and Jewish communities as well as the “sects”), see ššsša (II), f. 14, op. 117, d. 174, ll. 10-17.
Figure 16. Survey Form: Measures to strengthen the effectiveness of the struggle against harmful traditions and ceremonies by the Study of Public Opinion

1. Do you think it is necessary to celebrate your birthday every year?
2. Do you think it is proper when invitees bring expensive gifts or money to a birthday celebration?
3. Do you think it is correct when a birthday party is given to school-age or younger children and adults are invited to the party?
4. What new holidays would you propose in addition to the known traditional holidays?
   a. What is your opinion of crowded wedding celebrations:
      i. Is it necessary to fight against this?
      ii. What measures do you propose to prevent large-scale wedding celebrations?
      iii. What number of invitees do you consider a moderate amount, which does not exceed: 60 persons, 100 persons, 150 persons, 200 persons, or more
5. Do you think it is proper to arrange parties for:
   a. Completing construction of a new house [“putting a roof on a house,” CK]
   b. Moving into a new apartment?
   c. Being called to the ranks of the Soviet army?
6. In the conditions of modern scientific-technical progress, how do you explain the existence in one part of the population of a belief in God?
   a. Low level of awareness
   b. Weak mass-political work
   c. Low level of effectiveness of atheistic propaganda
   d. Other reasons (specify)
7. If you have heard of fate, what is your opinion toward this? Is there someone in your village who believes in it? Do you personally believe in it?
8. Do you believe in dreams?
9. Regarding cemetery facilities, what is your opinion:
   a. Do you think it is proper to richly and excessively arrange cemeteries?
   b. Does a careless, neglected, and unattended gravesite cause you ire?
   c. Do you think it is normal to prepare a burial place and its enclosure for a living person in advance?
10. Do you believe in the treatments of a fortuneteller, sorcerer, or by charms?
11. Do you believe in miracles?
12. What do you think is your duty in the fight for the elimination of antiquated customs?
13. What is your opinion about new traditions?
   a. Is it advisable to hold harvest or labor holidays every year?
   b. Do you consider it appropriate to celebrate middle- and high school graduates with periodic meetings?
   c. In your memory, how many people retired from your place of work and received a retirement party? What were their names?
   d. Does education level impact the younger generation in whether high school graduation diploma and passport issuance justifies having a party?
   e. Would it be justified in our district’s condition to hold flower and song holidays?
   f. Do you think it is necessary to mark a child’s birthday with festivities?

574 ssssa (II), f. 14, op. 52, d. 339, ll. 38-39. All questions ask for yes or no answers, unless otherwise indicated.
In spite of the plethora of examples of the persistence of “harmful traditions and rituals” and “survivals of the past,” anonymous polling conducted by the Council of Public Opinion claimed that the majority of the population viewed as negative such practices as the funeral feast (k’elexi), lavish wedding gifts, and underage marriage (admittedly, a diverse spectrum in its own right). Among 5,529 residents polled in Abkhazia, Ajaria, K’ut’aisi, and the K’art’li region, more than 70 percent viewed as “abnormal the current state of affairs in this sphere” and called for making “significant changes to the content and interpretation of many traditions of the past.” A similar survey of 559 residents in South Ossetia AO found that more than 73 percent of those polled were against “outmoded, harmful rituals, customs, and holidays.”

While it seems that these figures were for internal use only – that is, within the confines of the Georgian CC and its departments – it remains difficult to evaluate the representativeness of such public opinion polling. The purpose behind the polling, reporting, and research was to illustrate an accurate picture of the current state of affairs in the republic with regard to “harmful traditions and rituals” and “survivals of the past” so that the CC could develop its policies and propaganda efforts accordingly. At the same time, throughout reporting and in the polling figures above, authors suggested that the acceptance of flagrant “survivals” was an exception rather than a rule among Georgia’s citizenry. Such a tack likely contained more propaganda value than a perhaps honest admission that “harmful traditions”

575 “Zapiska otdela propagandy i agitatsii TsK ‘o merakh po usileniu bor’by protiv vrednykh traditsii, obychaev, obriadov, prazdnikov i povsemestnom vvedenii novykh – sovetskikh, sotsialisticheskikh,” ssssa (II), f. 14, op. 49, d. 451, l. 27.
were so widespread as to be nearly impossible to overcome. Moreover, even if public opinion researchers endeavored to provide a true snapshot of public opinion, their intentions did not guarantee that anonymous survey respondents would answer truthfully.

In a 1983 interview in Izvestiia, head of the Study of Public Opinion Teimuraz M. Jafarli highlighted the impact of research conducted by the institute pertaining to the campaign against harmful traditions. Appropriating and revising “national” traditions required policymakers and ideological workers to more fully understand:

frank judgments of those who still did everything by following the bandwagon, sometimes painfully clashing with conscience and undermining the family budget. And so? 74 percent of respondents recognized the developing situation as intolerable. It suggests the conclusion that evil persists through the efforts of a few. However, additional details, polling, revealed that many of those who condemned harmful practices in these surveys (sincerely condemned, as the surveys were anonymous), continue to abide by them in practice...576

Jafarli’s assessment touched upon the aforementioned caveats and challenges faced by public opinion researchers as they attempted to translate their data into policy. Some of the results of the Council’s work with the campaign, as noted by Jafarli, included the replacement of the religious holiday “Šuamt’oba” (celebrated among highlanders) with non-religious rituals for children’s name days, and celebration of gold and silver wedding anniversaries. He also lauded the creation of Tbilisi’s city “name day” celebration, t’bisoba (discussed below) and establishment of new rituals at the soldiers’ home in Axmet’a, both which served to increase and unify the

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“spiritual life of the republic.” The results of the campaign soon bore a more physical manifestation: a huge, brutalist “Palace of Rituals” on the banks of the Mtkvari River (east of old Tbilisi) that incorporated elements of Georgian ecclesiastical architecture in a modernist guise and was opened during t’bilisoba in 1984. The new venue addressed the need expressed during the campaign for larger and better facilities for weddings and other ceremonies in Tbilisi. In spite of these achievements, even Jafarli acknowledged that the campaign against harmful traditions required a long-term effort by the Party and its propagandists.

Figure 17: Tbilisi Palace of Rituals (ritualebis sasaxle), Architect Viktor Jorbenaze (1983-4)  
Source: Vladimer Shioshvili, 2006

The Party-led effort to take public opinion into account in the negotiation of national traditions and Soviet modernity reflected the peculiar condition of the republic by the late 1970s, when the national-social contract reached its peak, as Chapter 6 will

577 Ibid.
show. Georgian Sovietness continued to be a process of negotiation and compromise between the practices of the republic's citizens, the intentions of Georgian leadership, and Moscow-led policies. This process of negotiation, the urban modernity of the Saburtalo project, and their contradictions contributed to the variety of national experience on display in Georgia during developed socialism.

* * *

On 28 October 1979, Shevardnadze and Tbilisi City Committee First Secretary T’. N. Menteššvili opened festivities at the inaugural t'bilisoba, a harvest festival celebrating the dedak’alak’i, its history, and its denizens. Like its precursor two decades prior, the 1,500-year anniversary of Tbilisi’s founding in 1958, t'bilisoba emphasized the city’s longevity and showcased a series of performances and construction projects for the occasion. Speeches by Party and cultural figures alternated with Georgian choral, dance, and theatre performances, and the bounty of the fall harvest was on full display for attendees. Yet unlike the festivities in 1958, which presented a fusion of Tbilisi's resilient past and Soviet future, t'bilisoba marked a return to an idealized and rural past, somewhat suspended in time. t'bilisoba celebrated “old Tbilisi” (rather than its Saburtalo modernity) and coincided with its revitalization campaign, from renovating the old city walls along Barat’ašvili Street to equipping individual residences with new facades and utilities. t'bilisoba was inaugurated as a city holiday in the spirit of the “campaign against harmful traditions, customs, ceremonies, holidays, and the

578 t'bilisoba: ok’tombris dauvcqari d게 (Tbilisi: Sabčota Sak’art’velo, 1981). The t'bilisoba holiday is still celebrated annually in September or October, though its late Soviet origins and links to Shevardnadze are deemphasized. I attended the festival in 2012.
universal introduction of new – Soviet, socialist ones,” an effort to provide a healthy and instructive expression of local and national pride. If the 1958 anniversary represented the aspirational Georgification of urban Tbilisi’s past, t’bilisoba projected a rural Georgian ideal on an urban landscape. Such a reinvention of tradition reflected the lessons learned in the ongoing campaign against harmful traditions; the expanding migration of rural residents to the city; and the mode of national imaginings of Georgian political and intellectual elites in the age of developed socialism.\(^{579}\)

Moscow was the international capital of the communist movement, Magnitogorsk the paradigm of building Soviet culture through industrialization, and Tashkent the “Moscow of the East” (and model for the third world), so what can we make of Tbilisi as a Soviet urban project and paradigm?\(^{580}\) Unlike nearby Yerevan, whose symbolic geography (facing Mount Ararat) coalesced in the postwar period, and Tashkent, whose transformation was as much about altering the practices and identities of its residents as it was about built environment, Soviet Tbilisi’s urban scheme sought to make the republic’s capital truly national in theory (via narrative and showcase) and in practice (via migration and demographic change).\(^{581}\) Further, unlike the view of some Uzbek residents, who viewed the “modernization” of

\(^{580}\) On these respective roles of Moscow, Magnitogorsk, and Tashkent, see Michael David-Fox, Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Katerina Clark, Moscow, the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931-1941 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011); Kotkin, Magnetic Mountain; and Stronski, Tashkent.
\(^{581}\) Lehmann, “Apricot Socialism,” 14-17; Stronski, Tashkent.
Tashkent as merely transforming an Uzbek capital into a city for Russians, the “modernization” of Tbilisi entailed constructing new neighborhoods, preserving old ones, and increasing the number of Georgians inhabiting the capital. Only in the late 1970s did attention turn to revitalizing the façades of Old Tbilisi after several decades of intensive residential construction, and even this effort proved shallow: Old Tbilisi may have been the symbolic center of a Georgian nation, as presented since 1958, yet the lived national capital of Soviet Georgia resided in Saburtalo, Vake, and its environs.

In Tbilisi, the second- and third-generation Soviet citizens who built and inhabited Saburtalo participated in a larger process of urbanization and movement to modern, efficient forms of mass housing that transcended Soviet borders, as Steven Harris has shown. The Soviet khrushchevka solution to mass housing fit within a broader trajectory that had roots in late nineteenth century European social engineering aspirations, interwar international architectural collaboration, and the needs of the modern welfare state in postwar Europe. The Soviet empire of design and planning likewise exported its methods throughout the socialist world; and entered the new realm of Cold War competition in design and consumer culture. Yet even with the ubiquitousness of the khrushchevka-inspired solution

582 Stronski, Tashkent, 225.
583 Harris, Communism on Tomorrow Street, Chapters 1-2.
to mass housing throughout the Soviet empire, planners, architects, and officials still found ways to address specifically local agendas through urban planning, whether in Belgrade, Tbilisi, Tirana, Tashkent, Yerevan, or Prague.\textsuperscript{585} Moreover, the story of Tbilisi’s nationalization fits within a larger story of postwar ethnic consolidation seen in the republics of the USSR and elsewhere in the Soviet empire. Nationalized capitals and polities may have been an aspiration in the interwar period, whether in Poland, the Baltic states, Ukraine, Hungary, Romania, or the Republic of Georgia, but states and republics alike only realized such nationalization projects through Soviet/socialist population politics, urbanization, and responses to the postwar housing crisis.\textsuperscript{586} The modern Lithuanian Vilnius, Ukrainian Lviv, and Georgian Tbilisi that emerged by the 1970s from what had been multiethnic outposts of empire took a great deal of excision, construction, and national imagination to obtain (if paradoxically) through Soviet nationalizing institutions.\textsuperscript{587} That this occurred in Tbilisi without the violence of war and


occupation that transformed the western Soviet Union makes its nationalization even more striking.

The burgeoning hegemony of the entitled nationality in its urban, developed socialist variant becomes apparent when looking at the experiences of Saburtalo's inhabitants. At least in the field of housing, Georgian residents of Tbilisi did not appeal to their nationality for legitimacy because they did not need to – a marked contrast to other arenas of discourse (such as language rights, territory, and memory of Stalin) and in other locales (whether Abkhazia, minority-dominant regions of Georgia, or elsewhere in the USSR).\footnote{Erik R. Scott’s work on the USSR as an “empire of diasporas” emphasizes this latter example of Georgian political, culture, and trade networks outside Georgia, forthcoming as \textit{Familiar Strangers: The Georgian Diaspora in the Soviet Union}. He introduces some of these themes in Scott, “Edible Ethnicity.”} Instead, a combination of Soviet citizenship (and its attendant promises) and local or family ties provided the means to secure, upgrade, or expand housing opportunities in the republican capital.

Advancing on the housing list, securing funding and materials for individual construction, keeping a series of apartments within an extended family unit, and using housing as political capital took advantage of working by Georgian norms within the Soviet institutional infrastructure. In her work among Georgian villagers in 1970s Rača, Dragadze observed the central role of the family for villagers’ interaction with and promotion within Soviet institutions. This occurred not only because “to a certain extent, the family has retained its autonomy and, given the political conditions in Georgia, it can promote national culture,” but also because:

\begin{quote}
It is the interaction between the domestic unit, kinship network, and marriage patterns, from which villagers are able to derive the greatest
\end{quote}
benefits from the Soviet Georgian state, in their opinion. Kinship relations provide the recruiting principle for establishing a network of dependable allies...[T]hese factors enable villagers to obtain favors, the most important of which are information, hospitality, loans, recommendations, and help with residence permits.589

While one should not uncritically transpose conclusions from a rural fieldwork site onto an urban landscape, the migration of rural residents to Tbilisi meant that rural communities likewise became more closely linked to urban counterparts and continued to rely upon local networks for social and economic advantage.590

Georgian hegemony in developed socialist Tbilisi revealed the contours of Sovietness and debates about urban and rural belonging and behavior. In this sense, postwar Tbilisi resembles the Moscow “peasant metropolis” of the 1930s depicted by David Hoffman, in which new urban denizens constructed their own social identities and worldviews somewhere between their peasant pasts, the designs of Soviet leaders, and the customs of native Muscovites.591 In his work on post-Soviet Tbilisi, Paul Manning has noted the “inherited cultural division between tbiliseli and provincial Georgian villagers” in political fault lines of the late 1980s and early 1990s.592 These distinctions came to the fore most dramatically from the 1950s through the 1970s, as Saburtalo grew and villagers became Tbilisians. This transition was not without its tensions, as “The status distinction and corresponding behavioral distinctions between villagers and city-dwellers under socialism was, for

590 Parsons, “National Integration in Soviet Georgia”; and Mars and Altman, “The Cultural Bases of Soviet Georgia’s Second Economy” suggest a similar association between local and familial networks and socioeconomic capital.
592 Manning, “City of Balconies.”
such cyclically urban-rural Georgians, converted into a stylistic distinction, with behaviors acceptable in the village strongly sanctioned in the city." Yet such urban-rural behavioral distinctions were not always so clear, as the detailed reporting from the campaign against harmful traditions showed. Indeed, Mžavanaže and his clients were viewed as the most flagrant exhibitors of such outmoded practices which, in spite of the political value of such an attack, also demonstrates the extent of Mžavanaže's own successful transition from Georgian social and political outsider in the early 1950s to patron-in-chief by the early 1970s. Shevardnadze’s political credibility with Moscow lay in his ability to purge Georgia of Mžavanaže’s allegedly corrupting influence. In practice, however, Shevardnadze found himself in a constant state of negotiation and compromise between the interests and practices of his entitled national citizenry and central Soviet political agendas. The breadth of the national-social contract in the 1970s meant that, even in the realm of politics (as Chapter 6 will show) Shevardnadze was able to emphasize the interests of the former.

As Tbilisi inhabitants reshaped the contours of Soviet Georgian modernity, they fused elements of Soviet mass housing and urban development; urban and rural behaviors and networks; and narratives of tradition and modernity. The “Tbilisi myth” was the aspiration of an eternally Georgian city that was also the cradle of a timeless, unified Georgian nation. Yet Georgian Tbilisi became a reality

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593 Ibid.
only through development of new districts in the postwar Soviet era and migration of Georgian villagers to the growing capital.
Chapter 5: What Makes a (Soviet) Georgian?  
The Campaigns for Fereydan and Saingilo

In February 1963, a group of prominent Georgian officials and academics appealed to Georgian CP CC First Secretary Vasil Mžavanaže on behalf of Georgian-speaking communities in the Fereydan region of Iran, arguing “The only hope of Fereydanis torn by force from the homeland is that a ‘great Georgia’ exists, the Georgian people, who pay attention to them and will save them from the suffering they experience in a foreign land.”594 Urging Mžavanaže to take up this cause, the signatories emphasized the “great historical significance” of a repatriation campaign and noted that it would simultaneously “increase our people’s love and respect toward the native (mšobliuri) Communist party.”595

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Georgian authorities and citizens mobilized a variety of state institutions to more fully nationalize the republic in the postwar era, whether in the physical landscape of Tbilisi; the nationality of citizens who inhabited it; or the negotiation of national cultural practices. This process was not limited to the republic itself. Parallel efforts to define Georgianness beyond the borders of the republic similarly employed such Soviet institutions to pursue nation-building goals and, in essence, attempt to promote and protect the interests of Georgians elsewhere in the USSR and abroad. Georgians were the least diasporic

594 I. Mi’elaže, G. Jabua, T’. Davit’aia, G. Gvelasiani, and A. Aslanikašvili, to Mžavanaže, 1 February 1963, (ssessa (II)), f. 14, op. 38, d. 329, l. 2.
595 Ibid., l. 4.
nationality within the Soviet Union, in stark contrast to their Armenian neighbors. Still, Georgian officials and citizens pursued a spectrum of contact with their diaspora that ranged from support for Georgian-language education to repatriation. These projects more broadly illustrate the negotiation of national and state identities through the connective mechanisms of Soviet empire.

Two trajectories in particular delineate the bounds of official Georgianness as articulated in the postwar period. The first was a Party-led effort to aid and eventually repatriate ethnic Georgians in the Fereydan region of Iran. The second emerged as a call for minority rights by local activists on behalf of Georgians living in northwest Azerbaijan, an area known to Georgians as Saingilo. These efforts shared a similar chronology but also contained important asymmetries: one was a campaign within the USSR, stimulated by a local diaspora, and the other an effort to reach a diaspora population abroad, motivated by Party leaders in Tbilisi. The realities of Soviet federalism and Cold War geopolitics complicated the realization of campaign proponents’ main goals. Furthermore, they represent two postwar applications of Terry Martin’s so-called “Piedmont Principle,” or the “Soviet attempt to exploit cross-border ethnic ties to project political influence into neighboring states.”

While Martin restricts this concept to the korenizatsiia era, Georgian

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596 By 1970, 97 percent of Georgians in the USSR lived in Georgia, with another two percent in the RSFSR. Armenians, on the other hand, had the lowest percentage of entitled nationality living in its home republic (60 percent in 1970). See Suny, The Making of the Georgian Nation, 299. While Georgians themselves largely remained in Georgia, Georgian culture enjoyed greater, pan-Union proliferation through Soviet sponsorship. On this process and Georgian cuisine, see Scott, "Edible Ethnicity."

597 Terry Martin refers in particular to attempts in the 1920s to lure Ukrainians in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Romania to Soviet Ukraine by example. Martin underscores that the foreign
policies toward Fereydan and Saingilo demonstrate a revival of this approach in the postwar period.

The Georgian SSR was an ethnoterritorial polity within the broader federal structure of the USSR. The legal fictions of Soviet federalism, including the extent of national autonomy, permitted in some cases the pursuit of extraterritorial projects motivated more by national than by solely socialist internationalist goals. At the same time, the structures of nationality constrained, by design, what nationalizers could achieve within the borders of the USSR, vis-à-vis other republics. Therefore, turning “peasants into Georgians,” to paraphrase Eugen Weber, proved a decidedly Soviet project, albeit one limited in the USSR to the territory of Georgia. Once outside the Soviet Union, this process even aspired to turn Iranian peasants into (Soviet) Georgians.

Over time the indigenous vocabulary of nationality in some instances blurred and in others reified distinctions between “us” and “them,” homeland and diaspora, Soviet and national. Soviet officials charged with investigating and managing both efforts unsurprisingly portrayed the Fereydan Georgians and the Ingilo according to Stalin’s highly objective definition of a nation as “an historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture.”

Policy aims of the Piedmont Principle were an “exploitable benefit” of Soviet nationalities policy in border regions rather than the content of the policy itself. In Martin’s account, Soviet authorities abandoned the Piedmont Principle once cross-border ethnic ties became viewed as a potential threat (leading up to World War Two) rather than an advantage, Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 8-9.


Soviet “nation-building” in the 1920s privileged territoriality and language, with the latter often guiding where and how planners drew borders for the former.\textsuperscript{600} The Fereydan and Saingilo cases illustrate an attempted application of nation-building tools \textit{beyond} the confines of the republic, refining the meaning of Georgia and Georgians in the process. Furthermore, as the method of campaigns and petitions developed over three decades, so too did the terms in which individuals and groups articulated their grievances in a national idiom. Even if these campaigns bore minimal results at best, the intention and pursuit of the campaigns for Fereydan Georgians and Ingilo by Party leaders, Georgian citizens, and affected groups in Iran and Azerbaijan show the bounds of Georgianness in the postwar USSR as well as the range and limits of a national agenda within the structures of Soviet federalism.

\textit{Fereydan}

In the early seventeenth century, as a result of the conquest of Georgian lands by the Safavid Empire’s Shah Abbas I, as many as one hundred thousand people were resettled from Georgia to Iran. These populations settled in several provinces, including Gillian, Mazandaran, Fars, Khorasan, Isfahan, and Fereydan, a rural region approximately 150 kilometers west of the imperial capital at Isfahan. Unlike in other locales, the Georgian population in Fereydan preserved their language in the face of neighboring Bakhtiari and Turkic populations, conversion to Islam, and increasing centralization and Persianization of the Safavid and, then, Iranian state. The Georgian “colonies” in Fereydan allegedly served, in Shah Abbas’s intention, not only to weaken the conquered lands in Kaxet’i, but also to

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601 While the typical Georgian narrative holds that these populations were forcibly resettled Christian peasants from Kaxet’i, in eastern Georgia, Babak Rezvani presents an alternative scenario in which the Georgians were actually mountain nobility (from the T’ianet’i region) who converted to Islam while still in Georgia and were brought to Iran for their military prowess. Babak Rezvani, “The Islamization and Ethnogenesis of the Fereydani Georgians,” *Nationalities Papers* 36, no. 4 (2008): 593–623. My purpose in this chapter is not to debate the actual origins of this group but rather to analyze the case in the Soviet-era imagination of Georgians in the Georgian SSR. The lived experiences of Fereydan Georgians in Iran may indeed depart from Soviet protagonists’ portrayals of them, as Rezvani shows through extensive interviews in Iran and Georgia, but I focus my attention on the Soviet Georgian perspective. See also Rezvani, “Iranian Georgians: Prerequisites for a Research,” *Iran and the Caucasus* 13 (2009): 197–204; and *Ethno-Territorial Conflict and Coexistence in the Caucasus, Central Asia and Fereydan* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013).

602 I refer to this community as “Fereydan Georgians” (p’ereidneli k’art’velebi) in this chapter, though Imperial- and Soviet-era sources invoked a variety of terms for this group, including Iranian Georgians and Fereydani. The Fereydan Georgians have received little scholarly attention, particularly in English-language works. For Soviet-era Georgian-language works on Fereydan, see Giorgi Čipašvili, *p’ereidneli k’art’velebi* (Tbilisi: Sabčota Sak’art’velo, 1963); Zurab Šarašenižე, *p’ereidneli “gurjetbi”* (Tbilisi: Mec’niereba, 1979); and Zurab Šarašenižе, *axali masalebi p’ereidneli k’art’velebis sesaxeb* (Tbilisi: Mec’niereba, 1969). Produced under the auspices of the Georgian SSR Academy of Sciences, these works comprise ethnographic studies of Georgian communities in Fereydan in the Soviet ethnographic tradition. The re-emergence (after the 1920s and 1930s) of scholarly output on Fereydan Georgians in the 1960s and 1970s reflects both the Georgian Party impetus and increasing popular awareness of and interest in these communities among Soviet Georgians.
manage and mollify local disputes and threats among Bakhtiaris and “Turks” already residing in Fereydan.603

According to a 1974 report prepared by the Georgian Central CC’s Department of Foreign Relations, when the Pahlavi dynasty took power in 1926, the new leaders sought to create an ethno-national state according to the principle “One nation, one government.” For ethnic Georgians and other non-Persian Muslim populations, this meant a policy of assimilation. For Georgians in Iran, from the perspective of Soviet Georgian officials, these policies allegedly generated feelings of tribal and linguistic unity and strengthened ties to and interest in Georgia proper.604 On the other hand, Georgian interest in the Fereydan Georgians had a slightly earlier manifestation. Multiple Soviet reports from various decades regularly cited writer and activist Lado Agniašvili’s trips to Fereydan in 1896 as the earliest Georgian activity in the region. Broader Georgian interest in the Fereydan Georgians (p’ereidneli k’art’velebi) coincided with the development of the Georgian national movement in the late nineteenth century. The developing Georgian national intelligentsia began to think about populations with Georgian origins primarily in Turkey but also in Iran.605

603 “Dokladnaia zapiska otdela zarubezhnykh sviazii TsK KP Gruzii ‘o problem fereidanskikh gruzin (repatriatsiia i prozhivanie),’ 21 May 1974,” ssssa (II), f. 17, op. 52, d. 678, l. 2. Written to capture the entire scope of the Fereydan campaign, including its pre-Soviet roots, this report reveals much about how Soviet Georgian institutional actors understood this long-term effort and how they reflected upon its successes and failures.
604 Ibid., l. 3.
605 Fereydan immigrants to Tbilisi such as Iotam Onikašvili (1871), Kolam Reza Xuc’išvili and Kolam Xossein Onikašvili (1896), I. Čeišvili (1900), and Seifola Ioseliani (1921) shed further light on the Fereydan link to Georgia, Ibid., l. 12.
Known in Iran as “gurji,” Fereydan Georgians purportedly comprised a population of around twenty thousand, spread across twelve to thirteen villages in the region. Officials, all Georgian villages in Fereydan had Iranian names, but the local residents reportedly referred to their villages by Georgian names – many of which were named after villages in Kaxet‘i. Georgian officials and scholars regularly cited the Fereydan Georgians' preservation of their native language as a key marker of nationality, yet the level of language preservation varied between residents and villages in Fereydan. The Iranian state allegedly forbade speaking in Georgian and confiscated Georgian books. In spite of this, in Axora Bala (Zemo Martqop‘i in Georgian) nearly the entire population (especially women and children) spoke Georgian; in Dombei Kamar (T‘oreli/T‘elavi in Georgian) not only Georgians, but also non-Georgian residents communicated in Georgian. At the same time, in other villages, residents had forgotten their “native language” and instead communicated in Farsi, Turkish, or Kurdish. Most Fereydan Georgians were illiterate (only an estimated 20-30 per cent of the male population was literate), and literacy in Georgian was even more rare. Schools in general, and particularly Georgian-language schools, were exceedingly rare, as were medical facilities in the region.

Unlike language, religion proved a more malleable national marker. The “gurji” population converted en masse to Islam beginning in the mid-seventeenth century, not long after their arrival in Iran, when Georgian churches were destroyed.

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606 This number is considerably smaller than the approximately 100,000 Georgians initially resettled to Iran because that number included those who settled in locales other than Fereydan.
and church property confiscated by the state. Other than language and village names, Soviet Georgian advocates believed that Fereydan Georgians maintained Georgian and Christian qualities in daily life and customs. Only in Fereydan could one reportedly find Georgian-style houses with flat roofs and carved columns in the rooms, which differed from Iranian homes with domed roofs. Living spaces were sparsely furnished, and not all villages had a bathhouse. Furthermore, a Georgian man would not marry an Iranian woman and vice versa. According to a 1963 report, even those who had forgotten their native language understood and knew that their ancestors were Georgian, "gurji", and were proud of this.

Interest in the Fereydan Georgians began during the tsarist and independent periods, though Soviet Georgian officials used newly-created institutions to most actively pursue the Fereydan project. As early as 1923, the new Georgian Central Extraordinary Committee requested the People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs (PCFA) Chicherin to install a Georgian consul or secretary in Isfahan explicitly for work among “Persian Georgians” in Fereydan, whose “heroism” had preserved their “language, customs, and national outlook” to that point. The PCFA did not grant this request, however, due to “serious considerations of an organizational

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608 “SPRAVKA o gruzinakh isfanskoi provintsii Irana,” USSR Vice Consul to Iran Ashurov, 9 June 1943, ššssa (II), f. 14, op. 20, d. 253, ll. 46-47.
609 “Iranske gruziny (kratkaia spravka),” A.F. Aslanikašvili, 18 February 1963,” ššssa (II), f. 14, op. 38, d. 329, ll. 12-18. Rezvani refutes such assessments of living conditions and practices among Fereydan Georgians, but I argue that this departure makes the narrative shaped by Soviet Georgian officials even more significant in articulating their aims and intentions with this campaign, Rezvani, “The Islamization and Ethnogenesis of the Fereydani Georgians.”
610 In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, trade, economic migration, travel, and intellectual exchange between the Caucasus and Iran were common and frequent, Cronin, ed., *Iranian-Russian Encounters*.
611 RSFSR PCFA to All-Georgian Central Executive Committee (CEC) Chairman Ttsakaia, 4 May 1923; All-Georgian CEC to PCFA RSFSR Chicherin, April 1923, ššssa (II), f. 14, op. 1, d. 163, ll. 175-178.
character."\(^{612}\) Georgian officials tried a different tack thereafter by requesting assistance funds for schools and medical services in Fereydan.\(^{613}\) In 1926, Ambako Č'eliže, a representative at the Soviet trade ministry in Iran, travelled among the Fereydan Georgians and published *p'ereidneli k'art'velebi* upon his return to Tbilisi, where he also lectured frequently about his experiences in Fereydan.\(^{614}\) At this time, among Georgians, “The popularity of Fereydan heated up, but even then signaled that the real Fereydani were not those idealized faces that existed in representations of a significant part of the Georgian public.”\(^{615}\) Following the mixed success of attempts to aid Georgians in Fereydan in the 1920s, however, outreach efforts halted for the next two decades. The cause for the diminished priority of Fereydan among Georgian officials in the late 1920s to the 1940s remains unclear (beyond failure to achieve sanction for these activities from Moscow and nation-building priorities at home), though the new geopolitical climate of the early postwar era provided an opportunity to revive this effort in a more concerted way.

As discussed in Chapter 1, as World War Two drew to a close, the Soviet Union established republic-level ministries of foreign affairs (MFA) in an effort to obtain as many seats as possible (even if this goal was not achieved) at the new

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612 RSFSR PCFA to All-Georgian CEC Chairman Tttsakaia, 4 May 1923, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 1, d. 163, l. 176.
613 Georgian SSR People’s Commissar of Enlightenment to Georgian CEC, 6 July 1923, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 1, d. 163, ll. 180-181.
615 “Dokladnaia zapiska otdela zarubezhnykh sviazi TsK KP Gruzii ‘o problem fereidanskich gruzin (repatriatsiia i prozhivanie),’ 21 May 1974,” sšssa (II), f. 17, op. 52, d. 678, l. 13. Linguists Arnold Čikobava and Nikolai Marr of the Russian, Soviet, and then Georgian SSR Academy of Sciences likewise studied this issue in the 1920s, in particular the Fereydan dialect of Georgian.
United Nations. From 1944, when the Georgian MFA was formed, this institution provided the main avenue through which to pursue projects in Fereydan, largely due to the proactive efforts of Foreign Minister Giorgi Kiknaże (in office 1944-1953).616 Indeed, one of the first issues addressed by the Georgian MFA was the so-called “Fereydan question,” which, at that point, primarily involved research and information gathering.617

Kiknaže’s effort took advantage of the peculiar environment created by the Allied (Soviet, British, and US) occupation of Iran from 1941-1946. For the Soviets, the occupation included the support for the 1945-1946 People’s Republic of Azerbaijan as well as support for the Iranian communist Tudeh party (established in 1941).618 In its initial iteration, it is necessary to view the Georgian interest in Fereydan as part of a multi-pronged Soviet effort to exploit ethnic and class fissures in Iran in a burgeoning Cold War atmosphere. The Cold War lens has dominated much of twentieth-century historiography about Iran, which views British, American, and Russian/Soviet interests in Iran as part of a revived “Great Game.” This standard narrative portrays the Gilan Republic (1920-1), the 1945-6 Soviet occupation of Iranian Azerbaijan, and Soviet-Tudeh relations in the 1950s through

616 In this role, Kiknaże was also a key figure in the irredentist campaigns in Turkey discussed in chapter one. It is interesting, however, that while the Georgian MFA participated in the territorial irredentist claims in northeastern Turkey, I have found no mention of a repatriation effort of the Turkish Laz minority akin to that of the Fereydan Georgians.
617 For an early assessment of the situation, see “SPRAVKA o gruzinakh Isfaganskoj provintsii Irana,” 26 March 1944, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 25, d. 229, ll. 14-32.
1970s as attempts to subjugate parts of Iran to Soviet interests.\textsuperscript{619} Iranian scholars such as Touraj Atabaki and Afshin Matin-asgari have argued, more recently, that the People’s Republic of Azerbaijan was not simply an empty imposition by a great power but, rather, had some basis in local, popular grievances regarding Azerbaijani language and cultural rights and social reforms.\textsuperscript{620} Nevertheless, the Georgian advocates engaged in the Fereydan project seemed genuinely committed to this effort, not merely as a Soviet power play but as a project of national development for Georgians.

In October 1945, Kiknaže raised the Fereydan issue in a letter to Soviet Foreign Minister V.M. Molotov, which highlighted the material difficulties endured in Fereydan and called for a Georgian government research expedition to better facilitate “brotherly aid” and further cultural relations between Georgia and Fereydan to benefit those 20,000 Fereydan Georgians who “to this point had not assimilated with the Iranian population and still maintained their native language and national particularity.”\textsuperscript{621} Kiknaže also emphasized the need for a Georgian representative in the Soviet consulate in Isfahan to work among the Fereydan


\textsuperscript{621} Kiknaže to Molotov, 1945, sšsssa (II), f. 14, op. 19, d. 209, ll. 44-45.
population. In February 1946, Molotov authorized Kiknaże to establish a Georgian Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (GOKS), modeled on the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (VOKS) established in 1925. GOKS would provide a further institution to promote relations with Fereydan Georgians through radio, literature, and music. This period (1945-46) marked the high point of Soviet-Iranian cultural relations, though scholars have emphasized the ethnicized nature of the effort, promoting Russian (or Azeri, Tajik, etc.) historical links to Iranian culture rather than a more appropriately proletarian internationalist form. For this reason, Georgian cultural overtures to Iran could emphasize the national over the Soviet, or at the very least muddle the distinction as was the case with Georgian-language editions of Stalin’s works and biographies of Stalin sent to Fereydan.

In Kiknaže’s telling, the 20,000 Georgians in Fereydan “preserved their native language and customs and continue to consider themselves Georgian, though the majority adopted the Muslim religion.” During the Great Patriotic War, Fereydan Georgians reportedly expressed a great interest in and sympathy toward the “homeland of their ancestors – Soviet Georgia” and the idea of resettlement to the “homeland” began to circulate among them along the lines of their “neighbor”

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622 Kiknaże to Ćarkviani, 18 February 1946, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 20, d. 253, l. 1. On the early history of VOKS as a means of cultural diplomacy, see David-Fox, Showcasing the Great Experiment, Chapter 2.
623 Lisa Yountchi has made this point regarding Tajikistan in “Beyond Mere Translation: Abulqasim Lahuti, Soviet Tajik Translators, and 1940s Iran,” presented at the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies Annual Convention, 22 November 2013. In 1946, the Iran-Soviet Cultural Relations Society organized the first national congress of Iranian writers, argued to be the peak of Soviet-Tudeh influence. See Afshin Matin-asgari, “Marxism, Historiography and Historical Consciousness in Modern Iran: A Preliminary Study,” 220.
Iranian Armenians, who had recently been resettled to Soviet Armenia, discussed further below. Though Kiknaże had pressed Molotov for a Georgian research expedition to Fereydan the previous year, this request was denied, allegedly due to the potential conflict it posed for Soviet-Iranian relations. Kiknaże continued to push for an expedition, however, emphasizing instead the “humane goals” (access to medical care, Georgian language schools) and cultural ties to Iranian authorities. In reality, as he detailed to Č’arkviani, the expedition would permit the further exploration of “resettling” willing Fereydan Georgians to Soviet Georgia. Kiknaže also noted to Č’arkviani that he had received a report from the Soviet vice-consul in Isfahan, Ashurov, from 1943 that described the Iranian approach to Fereydan Georgians:

One of the political aims of the Iranian powers in the relationship with the Georgian population was the ambition to completely eradicate from its consciousness the idea about Georgia and infeasibility of links with Georgia, in whatever form it materialized. Residents of Georgian villages tell about many memorable cases of zealous and brutal persecution of all Georgians that fell upon Fereydan by accident or otherwise. In addition to the arrest and expulsion of those persons from Fereydan, the peasants themselves were warned against ties with Turkey or individual Georgians by all sorts of repressive measures.

For his early appeals to Molotov and Č’arkviani, Kiknaže relied largely upon an account from Fereydan delivered to the Soviet embassy in Tehran in May 1946 by two Georgian émigrés who, while looking for work, spent ten months in 1945 living in the Fereydani village of T’oreli. From August 1945, Kote P’ruże and Mose

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625 “SPRAVKA o gruzinakh isfaganskoi provintsii Irana,” USSR Vice Consul to Iran Ashurov, 9 June 1943, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 20, d. 253, l. 50.
Natrošvili lived among T’oreli villagers who, while initially suspicious of their intentions, came to reveal their plight to the visitors. Though P’ruże and Natrošvili estimated that there were twelve Georgian villages in Fereydan with a population of around 23,000 people, “Residents say that besides their district, there are an even greater number of locales with Georgian populations on the Iranian territory. But in most cases they have forgotten the language and were forcibly Islamicized, Christian names became Muslim and only national memory preserves memories about their Georgian origin.”626 The residents of T’oreli, on the other hand, had a combination of Persian and Georgian names. The population largely conversed in an old eastern Georgian language, with some Persian loan words. The villagers were Muslim, wore “Persian clothes,” and women moved about freely, though they did cover their faces and heads when in the presence of strangers.627 In T’oreli, there were no official institutions, schools, or medical clinics, and the villagers lived under the rule of landlords. As a result, “Without an escape from the land, people find their happiness in religion.”628 Yet remnants of a traditional Georgian culture survived, including Georgian national holidays. Moreover, “Each knows that he is a Georgian and is proud of it, tries to avoid mixing with the local population, tries to preserve language and customs, but under pressure of local powers forfeited religion.”629 According to P’ružė and Natrošvili, “Upon leaving, peasants saw us off, with tears in their eyes, and they asked us to find the General Consulate in Tehran and tell about

626 “Fereydan,” Kote P’ružė and Mose Natrošvili, 15 May 1946, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 20, d. 253, l. 37.
627 Ibid., l. 38.
628 Ibid., l. 41.
629 Ibid.
their life in this hell...finally they asked to transmit to the great and older brother Stalin how they live and suffer in captivity, ‘Georgians forgotten by God and forcibly torn from their homeland.’”

At this time, Soviet authorities sought to repatriate Georgians who had immigrated to Iran in the Tsarist and early Soviet periods. To address these tasks, in 1946 the Georgian MFA dispatched two agents from its political department to Iran: A. Aslanikašvili, who was charged with handling repatriation of Tsarist and Soviet Georgian émigrés, and V. Grželiže, who worked among the Fereydan Georgians from the Soviet consulate in Isfahan. Grželiže remained in Iran for only a brief time because the Isfahan consulate was closed shortly after his arrival, so he was not even able to deliver to Fereydan the educational literature he brought from Georgia. Aslanikašvili, however, expanded his mandate from the embassy in Tehran to include investigating the “Fereydan question,” in particular the possibility of repatriating Fereydan Georgians to the Georgian SSR. This information would aid the “government of Georgia” in determining how to repatriate or further aid Fereydan Georgians. Though in June 1947 the USSR MFA advised against Aslanikašvili’s efforts on the ground in Fereydan due to the current political

630 Ibid., l. 36.
631 This was part of a broader phenomenon of postwar repatriation to the Soviet Union and, in some cases, population exchange. This included not only those Soviet citizens who served in the Red Army in Europe, those imprisoned in camps or deported to Germany and its environs, or those otherwise displaced by the war, but also attempts at outreach and repatriation to émigrés from the Imperial and early Soviet periods. For example, the Georgian Party also approached Menshevik émigrés in Paris around this time, “k’art’velebi sap’ranget’ši,” 24 February 1948, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 22, d. 412, ll. 3-4.
632 “Dokładnaia zapiska,” A.F. Aslanikašvili to Kiknaže, 13 January 1948, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 22, d. 412, l. 36.
situations, he continued to work among Fereydan Georgians living in Tehran for the rest of the year.633

Based on his experiences, Aslanikaşvili concluded that Fereydan Georgians had a “genuine desire” to return to “mother Georgia” (deda sak’art’velo). Reza Onikaşvili, one of the Fereydan Georgians Aslanikaşvili met in Tehran, said that even if not all Georgians could leave Fereydan at that moment, they should at least send twenty young people “so that they would grow up on the native soil, so that their eyes would be opened and they would see the homeland.”634 Even if residents of Fereydan proved willing to emigrate, a position that Aslanikaşvili advocated, he likewise anticipated difficulties in implementing such a policy. First, the Armenian precedent to which Soviet officials and Fereydan residents appealed could not be applied precisely to the Georgian case. After 1946, nearly 90,000 Armenians (or, about ten percent of all Armenians outside the USSR) “repatriated” to the Soviet Union to help build the homeland alongside their Soviet brethren. However, the ancestors of those repatriated had in most cases never lived on the territory of Soviet Armenia. Most of the Armenian repatriates emigrated from Syria and Lebanon (32,000), Iran (20,000), and Greece (18,000) between 1946 and 1948.635

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633 Kiknaže to Čarkviani, 25 May 1948, sşssa (II), f. 14, op. 22, d. 412, l. 33.
634 “Dokladnaia zapiska,” A.F. Aslanikaşvili to Kiknaže, 13 January 1948, sşssa (II), f. 14, op. 22, d. 412, l. 46.
635 Lehmann, “A Different Kind of Brothers.” On the repatriation campaign, see also Joanne Laycock, “The Repatriation of Armenians to Soviet Armenia, 1945-59,” in Peter Gatrell and Nick Baron, eds., Warlands: Population, Resettlement, and State Reconstruction in the Soviet-East European Borderlands, 1945-1950, 2009: 140-161. As Lehmann notes, shortly following their “return” to Armenia, nearly half of the repatriates were subsequently deported to Siberia and Central Asia as potentially disloyal nationals. I examined a similar process in Georgia in 1949 in Chapter 2 that affected not only Armenians, but also Greeks and Turks.
Though many of the “repatriated” Armenians’ families had lived in the Ottoman Empire and fell victim to the 1915 genocide, Iranian Armenians had been resettled to Iran, like the Georgians, in the context of Iranian conquest of the Caucasus in the early seventeenth century.

In Aslanikašvili’s opinion, the issue of Armenian repatriation had a wider, more international resonance than the Georgian case, so the Iranian government was more likely to comply with the former effort than the latter.\textsuperscript{636} Iranian state structures and the current Soviet-Iran relationship posed further challenges. Repatriating Georgians from Fereydan would be more difficult than the Armenian project had been because, according to Iran, the Fereydan residents were not Georgians, but Muslim “Persians of Georgian origin.” According to the 1923 Iranian state census, for example, the Fereydan region contained Persian, Turkish, and Armenian populations, but no Georgians. As a result, both religious and state authorities would likely oppose Georgian emigration from Fereydan. Unlike Iranian Armenians, who remained Christian and therefore comprised a compact entity distinct from the Muslim majority, Muslim Georgians represented a population to be further assimilated into the majority by expunging their Georgian language and national identity over time. Furthermore, Aslanikašvili argued that the Georgians provided valuable roles in Fereydan as high-quality laborers, builders, and agricultural workers; as soldiers in the Iranian military; and mediators and

\textsuperscript{636} Ibid., l. 48.
protectors in the province against banditry.” For these reasons, repatriating Georgians to the Georgian SSR presented a greater challenge than the Armenian precedent.

In spite of these challenges, Aslanikašvili urged Kiknaże and, therefore, Č’arkviani, to pursue the repatriation project immediately by further cultivating ties to Fereydani villages, spreading Georgian cultural knowledge and products via GOKS in Tehran and Isfahan, combatting Iranian efforts to curb Georgian language use, installing Georgian agents in the Soviet embassy in Tehran and consulate in Isfahan, and, finally, by including 10-20 young Fereydan Georgians among the group of Armenians to be repatriated in 1948 so that they may study in Georgia.

According to Natrošvili and P’ruiże, knowledge about the recent resettlement of Armenians to Soviet Armenia awakened the dormant dream of Georgian-peasants about the possibility of a better life. Simple people with tears in their eyes asked: why did Armenia remember its Armenians living in Iran, whose ancestors were driven into slavery in the same way, why does Georgia not remember them and will not also accept them as Armenia accepts its sons.

Unfolding geopolitical alignments between Iran, Turkey, and western powers in the early years of the Cold War most likely prevented the Georgian repatriation alongside that of the Armenians. Though a Fereydan Georgian repatriation did not come to fruition in the late 1940s, the propaganda efforts initiated at that time

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637 Ibid., l. 49.
638 Ibid., ll. 49-52.
639 Ibid., l. 42.
640 On the Caucasus as an early Cold War sites of contestation between Iran and Turkey, see Gasanly, *SSSR-Turtsiia*; Hasanli, *At the Dawn of the Cold War*. 

found greater resonance and advocates by the 1960s, when the Fereydan project re-emerged, this time from below, as a Georgian policy goal.

The lapse in focus on Fereydan by Georgian authorities could be due to several factors, including not only Moscow’s reluctance to pursue repatriation to Georgia, but also major shifts in leadership in both Tbilisi and Moscow following the Mingrelian affair and Stalin’s death. Kiknaže and Č'arkviani appeared to have a close working relationship and, as one of Stalin’s childhood confidants, Č'arkviani’s personal links to Stalin (and Beria) certainly colored postwar national projects in Georgia, such as the territorial irredentism attempts discussed in Chapter 1 and national deportations in Chapter 2. Vasil Mžavanaže, Č'arkviani’s replacement as First Secretary, though Georgian, was a Khrushchev protégé who had built his career outside Georgia and was regarded by many Georgians early in his tenure as republic and national “outsider,” unfamiliar with the interests of Georgians. The more hands-off policy pursued by Moscow toward Georgia in the aftermath of the March 1956 events perhaps also permitted the Fereydan issue to come to the fore once again, albeit only after more immediate grievances against de-Stalinization had been addressed. Finally, a subsequent wave of Armenian repatriation in the mid-1960s likewise could have inspired Georgians to reinvigorate their own repatriation efforts.⁶⁴¹

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⁶⁴¹ See “Vozvrashchenie na rodinu,” Pravda (11 February 1963), p. 4, included in sšśsa (II), f. 14, op. 38, d. 329, l. 9. Even with this smaller, later wave of Armenian “repatriation” in the 1960s, Soviet authorities as high as V. Semichastnyi, head of the KGB, acknowledged the challenges of incorporating Armenians from abroad into Soviet society due not only to language issues and continued ties to relatives in capitalist countries, but also to ideological work and housing
The break in effort similarly conforms to the highs and lows in Soviet-Iranian relations in the 1950s and 1960s: after Stalin’s death, the removal of Mossadeq, and the signing of the British-aligned Baghdad Pact between 1953-1955, Soviet-Iran relations reached a nadir. Not only the political, but also the cultural realm suffered as a result, limiting what VOKS, GOKS, and other organs could accomplish in Iran. With the 1963 Iranian “White Revolution” reforms, relations with the USSR improved considerably on a number of fronts, from trade and political-military affairs to resumption of cultural relations.642

Whereas the earlier effort appears to have been largely Kiknaže’s own initiative, with little impetus “from below,” by the mid-1960s, letter writing and petitioning campaigns inspired further support for aid to Fereydan Georgians. In 1963, Georgian First Secretary Mžavanaže and Council of Ministers Chairman Javaxišvili appealed to Khrushchev for repatriation, noting that the groundwork had been laid in the 1940s, and cited not only the Armenian repatriation, but also that of Ukrainians and Cossacks as comparative successful policies. According to Mžavanaže and Javaxišvili, Fereydan Georgians wished to “return to the motherland and join in the building of Communism.”643 This letter, based on the one written in Georgian to Mžavanaže (in the chapter’s opening paragraph), conveyed a similar

642 Afshin Matin-asgari, ”The Impact of Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union on Qajar and Pahlavi Iran.”
643 Mžavanaže and Javaxišvili to Khrushchev, February 1963, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 38, d. 329, ll. 6-8.
agenda stripped of its passionate appeals to the nation and historical injustices. This break – from what was conveyed in Russian and Georgian – appeared regularly in other letters as well. This was not simply an issue of translation, but of audience and persuasion.

Even if Kiknaże no longer commanded the Fereydan project, officials still turned to Aslanikašvili as an expert on the issue in the 1960s. Indeed, Mžavanaže noted to Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko that numerous Georgian institutions had received letters from citizens about the “Fereydan question” and that Fereydanis had also penned a letter requesting aid and the right to “return to the motherland” to the Soviet embassy in Tehran. Soviet Georgians likewise appealed to republic authorities for aid to “the centuries-old dream of Georgia’s native land’s (mica-cqali) children, who are tortured and suffering on the Turkish and Iranian territory, about the immigration to their homeland (samšoblo).” An anonymous letter from Tbilisi to Mžavanaže from “your people” similarly urged resettlement or, if that proved too “difficult” a task, aid for education among Georgians in Iran. This would remove this people from the “path of extermination” and Mžavanaže will have done a “glorious

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646 “Dokladnaia zapiska otdela zarubezhnykh sviazi TsK KP Gruzii ‘o problem fereidanskikh gruzin (repatriatsiia i prozhivanie),’” 21 May 1974,”sšssa (II), f. 17, op. 52, d. 678, l. 18 and Mžavanaže to Gromyko, June 1965 (secret), f. 14, op. 40, d. 280, ll. 18-20.
647 Group petition to Mžavanaže, 1965 (115 signatories), sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 40, d. 288, ll. 24-29.
(sašvilišvilo) deed for the people, and [his] name will be indelible in Georgians’ hearts."648

The new Georgian Minister of Foreign Affairs, A. Gigošvili, obtained permission from the Soviet MFA to re-examine the Fereydan question. He reported that the Shah did not oppose repatriation of individual Georgians in principle, but that he required authorization from the Majlis (parliament) to permit mass repatriation. Furthermore, the Iranian position maintained that the Georgian population in Iran was Muslim and, therefore, was Iranian by nationality.649 At the same time, GOKS work among Georgians in Iran continued apace, ostensibly toward goals other than repatriation. As part of this effort to foster cultural exchange, in 1969 filmmaker G. Pataraia brought a film crew to Iran to study the “Georgian question” and was permitted to shoot in Fereydan, where he agitated for resettlement in Georgia and, upon his return, appealed to Mžavanaże in favor of repatriation. His film, “šoria gurjistanamde,” was released in Tbilisi in 1970.650 Finally, as Pataaraia’s film was released, the Georgian MFA received approval from the USSR MFA, in consultation with the Iranian MFA, to repatriate the first of a small number of Fereydan Georgians (17 families, consisting of 109 people) who wished

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648 Anonymous petition from “Georgians” in Tbilisi to Mžavanaže, 29 January 1965, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 40, d. 218, l. 175.
649 "Dokladnaia zapiska otdela zarubezhnykh sviazi TsK KP Gruzii ‘o problem fereidanskikh gruzin (repatriatsiia i prozhivanie),” 21 May 1974, sšssa (II), f. 17, op. 52, d. 678, l. 18.
650 “Šoria gurjistanamde” film, G. Pataaraia, dir., (1970). The short film includes footage of Georgian villages in Fereydan and their mountainous environs as well as conversations with local residents, conducted in Georgian.
to immigrate to Georgia.\textsuperscript{651} Their arrival was scheduled to coincide with the fiftieth anniversary of Soviet power in Georgia to achieve an expected “sensational effect” among Soviet Georgians, according to Kikvaže and Šošitašvili’s 1974 summary report.\textsuperscript{652}

After a nearly thirty-year campaign, seventeen families would finally be repatriated to Georgia. Though this group was dramatically smaller than both its Armenian counterpart and the ambitions of republican leaders (by the 1970s, they were citing as many as 50,000 Georgians in Fereydan), the achievement seemed a victory, if small, for its proponents in Georgian institutions and society. However, in spite of the long-term campaign for repatriation, little to no planning occurred for actually relocating and integrating the immigrants into Soviet Georgia. The Georgian MFA to this point had managed repatriation advocacy as well as the diplomatic and operational side of moving these individuals from Iran to Georgia. Once within the USSR, the Georgian Party decided to settle most of the families in Kaxet’i because their ancestors had purportedly been resettled to Iran from that region.\textsuperscript{653} An additional three families lived in Tbilisi but were given dachas in Gurjaani and Sagarejo. Once in Kaxet’i and Tbilisi, the repatriates became the responsibility of local Party organs, which oversaw housing, work assignments, and political

\textsuperscript{651} Mžavažaże to Gromyko, 5 June 1970; Mžavažaże to Brezhnev, 20 May 1970, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 45, d. 388, li. 5-6.

\textsuperscript{652} “Dokldnaia zapiska otdela zarubezhnyh sviazi TsK KP Gruzii ‘o problem fereidansikh gruzin (repatriatsia i prozhivanie),’” 21 May 1974, sšssa (II), f. 17, op. 52, d. 678, l. 21.

\textsuperscript{653} Fereydan Georgian families lived in the following villages: In Gurjaani district -- Šašiani (2 families), Važisubani (3 families), Axašeni (3 families), Čušlaqi (3 families), Čandari (3 families); in Sagarejo district -- Sagarejo (3 families), sšssa (II), f. 17, op. 52, d. 678, l. 23.
education activities among the Fereydan Georgians.\textsuperscript{654} In Kaxet’i, the repatriated families were provided two-story, six room houses with a kitchen, a garden planted with fruit trees, a cow and five sheep, and a small personal plot with a vineyard. The houses included furniture, radios, refrigerators, and televisions. Each family received a one-time payment of 500-600 rubles. Children were immediately enrolled in kindergartens and schools, and older students enrolled in the Tbilisi Medical Institute and the Tbilisi State University faculty of oriental studies. Repatriates could work in their desired specialty, though most had been farmers in Iran.\textsuperscript{655}

As part of local efforts to integrate Fereydan communities into life in Kaxet’i, the GSSR Academy of Sciences initiated research projects, led by the Iv. Javaxišvili Institute of History, Archeology and Ethnography, to work among the newly-repatriated Georgians in the 1970s.\textsuperscript{656} Conversations between researchers and repatriates reveal some of the complexities and difficulties encountered once in Georgia. For example, Rezo Xuc’išvili from Čandari distinguished between “...Your family, your ancestral place (\textit{mamapapuri}) [in Fereydan, \textit{CK}]” and the homeland, “because \textit{samšoblo} is here [in Georgia, \textit{CK}].” For Xucšvili,

\begin{quote}
It is a bitter fate, in Iran we were ‘Gurji,’ in Georgia ‘Tatars.’ Still, it seems we are already others (\textit{sxvebi})...and this really hurts our
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{654} “\textit{Dokladnaia zapiska otdela zarubezhnykh sviazii TsK KP Gruzii ‘o problem fereidanskih gruzin (repatriatsiia i prozhivanie)},” 21 May 1974,” sšssa (II), f. 17, op. 54, d. 95.
\textsuperscript{655} Ibid., ll. 23-24.
\textsuperscript{656} See, for example, “\textit{iv. javaxišvils saxelobis istoriis, ark’eologisa da et’nograp’iis institutis sak’art’velos et’nograp’iis ganqop’ilebis 1973 clis mušaobis angariši},” 12 September 1973, smeaa, f. 9, op. 1, d. 1372, l. 5.
children, grandchildren, even in Iran we were Georgians. It would be better to be ‘Gurji’ in Iran than Tatars in Georgia.

Xuc'išvili later noted, “There was also such an incident when they asked the newly-arrived directly, ‘Why do you not eat pork (ģoris xorci) if you are a Georgian’ or ‘What kind of Georgian are you that does not drink wine.’” A letter to First Secretary Shevardnadze expressed a similar sentiment: “It is difficult to live there (ik’), where you cannot feel like a neighbor and cannot feel the people’s warmth and support, where in your mind you have concluded you are guilty and do not know how to correct the situation.”

Other repatriates had more positive impressions of Georgian life. P’arviz Mik’elani emphasized material improvements, noting, “I’m very satisfied, believe me, I am very well, the children are well...I have a vineyard. There we did not have a courtyard (ezo). For my children I did a great thing.” Reza Mik’elaże in Sagarejo, meanwhile, highlighted the broader meaning of Georgia in Fereydan: “In Fereydan the children were completely interested in the Georgians (k’artveloba), who we were, what our history was like, how we got here, what Georgia was like, we all dreamed that in the end it would be possible for us to end up in Georgia...” Party officials likewise noted local residents’ interest in their new neighbors as well as

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657 T’amila C’agareišvili, p’ereidnelebi sak’art’veloši (Tbilisi: mec’niereba, 1981), 34. In this usage, “Gurji” as a sign of status and prestige in Iran, contrasts with the derogatory “Tatar.” Though Tatars comprised an ethnic group in the Soviet Union, here it more likely refers to the fact that, as Muslims, Fereydan Georgians were regarded as – or felt themselves to be -- non-Georgian once actually living in Kaxeti.
658 Ibid., 38.
659 Deputy Georgian Foreign Minister T’, Gordelaže to Georgian CC member V.M. Siraže, 24 November 1977, šsssa (II), f. 14, op. 115, d. 437, l. 10.
660 C’agareišvili, p’ereidnelebi sak’art’veloši, 34.
661 Ibid., 35.
initial points of conflict that centered on Georgian hospitality practices. In Gurjaani district,

Local residents paid much attention to them, their immediate neighbors, but mostly either in the form of lavish gifts of food or invitations to their traditional Georgian dinners and suppers with consumption of incredible amounts of Kaxet’ian wine. Local residents evidently were genuinely convinced that for the repatriates wine drinking was the shortest and most proven path to their assimilation. When the Muslim repatriates refused this pursuit, Kaxet’ians found themselves offended...and at times changed their good attitude toward them.662

The challenges of incorporation into Soviet Georgian life led many of the repatriates to request re-repatriation to Fereydan as early as 1974. In addition to acknowledging mistakes and poor planning by the Party with regard to life after repatriation, N. Kikvaže and Z. Šoštaišvili admitted that Georgians had idealized the Fereydan Georgians and, as a result, underestimated the cleavages created by 350 years of differing economic, political, cultural, and social development. 663 Furthermore, they underestimated as well the religious devotion of the repatriates and its impact on their philosophy and way of life.664 In total, of the twenty-three families that repatriated from Fereydan to Georgia, by 1978 nine of them sought to return to Iran.665 Though the families stayed in Kaxet’i through the 1970s, according

662 "Dokladnaia zapiska otdela zarubezhnykh sviazii TsK KP Gruzii ‘o problem fereidanskikh gruzin (repatriatsii i prozhivanie),” 21 May 1974, “sšssa (II), f. 17, op. 52, d. 678, l. 25.
663 Ibid., l. 28.
664 Ibid., l. 31.
to a Tbilisi-based advocate for Georgian-Fereydani ties, in 2013 only two Fereydani families remain in Georgia from the repatriation campaign, in Sagarejo.666

**Saingilo**

![Location of Qax, Zaqatala, and Balakan Districts in Azerbaijan SSR](image)

*Figure 19: Location of Qax, Zaqatala, and Balakan Districts in Azerbaijan SSR*  
*Source: Azerbaijan map from Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, The University of Texas at Austin*

Whereas the presence of Georgians in Fereydan presented an opportunity to entice co-ethnics back to “mother Georgia” from abroad, the plight of Georgians in Saingilo posed a challenge to the meaning of Soviet federalism, national rights, and the sincerity of the “friendship of the peoples” trope that dominated Soviet nationality discourse. Located in the Qax, Zaqatala, and Balakan districts of northwest Azerbaijan, communities in Saingilo (or “land of the Ingilo”) were part of the larger eastern Kaxet’i region, centered around the Alazani river valley. While

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666 Author personal communication with Giorgi Alaverdašvili, editor of www.fereidan.ge, Tbilisi, 5 February 2013. Since the mid-2000s, Georgian-Iranian trade and travel relations have increased considerably, and some Georgians have eagerly taken up the cause of the Fereydan Georgians as a way to foster such links, including former president Mikheil Saakashvili.
Georgians regarded Saingilo as a “significant part of the Georgian land,” following the Red Army’s victory over independent Georgia in 1921, the Zaqatala region (as these three districts were called from 1860, when it was part of the Tiflis Guberniia) was moved from Georgia to the Azerbaijan SSR as part of the Soviet re-drawing of borders across the Caucasus.

The term “Ingilo” (Georgian “ingiloeli”) is a self-designation for these Georgian-speakers, derived from the Old Turkish word for “newly converted” (yangili). Though Georgian Orthodox churches dotted the landscape of Saingilo, beginning in the seventeenth century, Persian and, subsequently, Dagestani rulers Islamicized most of the region, as the remaining Georgian population not resettled to Iran was forcibly converted to Islam. Some villages in Qax remained Christian, while Sunni Muslim Ingilo villages existed in Qax, Zaqatala, and Balakan districts into the twentieth century. In the words of Soviet Georgian historian Nikoloz Berženišvili, “In short, only in one part of Saingilo has the historical evil, sown in the seventeenth century by the bloody enemy of the Georgian people Shah Abbas, been

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667 “Istoricheskaia spravka o Saingilo,” N. Berženišvili, 28 February 1951, šsšsia (II), f. 14, op. 24, d. 296, l. 118.


669 Nugzar Mgeladze, “Ingilos” in David Levinson, ed., Encyclopedia of World Cultures, vol. VI: Russia and Eurasia/China (New York: G.K. Hall, 1994), 149. I use the terms “Ingilo” and “Saingilo”, except when citing direct quotes, in this chapter to more easily distinguish between the non-entitled population in Azerbaijan and the entitled population in Georgia, though many of the Georgian officials and petitioners examined in this chapter used the terms interchangeably.

670 Ingilo advocates connected these two histories in their letters, e.g. Gamxarašvili to Stalin, 10 January 1947, RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 896, l. 20.
eradicated.”671 Like the Fereydan Georgians, the Ingilo reportedly “waged the strong struggle for the preservation of their national traditions, Georgian language, Georgian culture, in which they really had significant success” against Russification in the nineteenth century.672 However, the local realities of the Soviet multinational state presented perceived threats of “becoming Lezgin” or “becoming Tatar” among the Ingilo and their advocates.673

As early as the 1930s, Georgian-speakers in Saingilo complained about the lack of educational opportunities in local schools, which catered to Azeri speakers. By 1937, seven Georgian language schools operated among Ingilo Christian communities in Qax district, but equivalent opportunities did not exist for Muslim Ingilo children in Zaqatala and Balakan districts. The first Georgian-language schools opened in these districts in 1937, but local authorities closed them after a year.674 According to A. Janašvili, who reported on conditions in Saingilo to the People’s Commissariat for Enlightenment (PCE, later Ministry of Enlightenment, ME) in 1944, a local educational commission justified closing Georgian-language schools in some “Ingilo-Muslim” villages because, when asked “Who are you?” locals answered “We are Azerbaijani.” However, Janašvili observed an important situational distinction in how locals self-identified to outsiders. When questioned in a group of several “Ingilo-Muslims” about their “tribal belonging,” they said, looking

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671 “Istoricheskaia spravka o Saingilo,” N. Berženišvili, 28 February 1951, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 24, d. 296, l. 134. I examined Berženišvili’s career and influence in greater detail in Chapters 1 and 3.
672 Ibid.
674 This was blamed on the fact that the only Georgian-speaking teachers were mobilized into army, Bagirov and Č’arkviani to Stalin, May 1944, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 18, d. 180, l. 6.
at each other, that they were Azerbaijani. When questioned individually, however, each said he was Ingilo, regardless of whether the individual had a command of Georgian or spoke only Azeri.\footnote{675} This encounter reveals that those individuals who, in private, categorized themselves as Ingilo were at times compelled by fear of local authorities to identify as Azerbaijani in official settings.

For the 1944-1945 school year, a joint Georgian-Azerbaijani Party commission explored the possibility of opening more Georgian-language schools in the three districts. Headed by First Secretaries Čarkviani and Bagirov, who reported their findings to Beria and Stalin, most of the on-the-ground investigative duties lay with each republic’s PCE. The commission recommended opening Georgian-language schools in all three districts, improving existing school facilities in Qax district, and recruiting and training qualified Georgian speakers to teach, especially in Zaqatala and Balakan districts.\footnote{676} Access to titular-language education was, indeed, a tangible issue that officials in both Tbilisi and Baku could remedy, even if it required devoting time and resources to the effort during the Great Patriotic War. However, this issue was only one of many grievances expressed by Ingilos in the mid- to late 1940s. The question of education provided an opening for the expression of a wider spectrum of grievance, even if at this time Party officials addressed only the former. As the PCE took up the schools issue in earnest, Ingilo advocates appealed to officials in Tbilisi and Moscow for help with problems as

\footnote{675} “Saingilo,” A. Janašvili, 6 April 1944, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 18, d. 180, ll. 49-50.

\footnote{676} Bagirov and Čarkviani to Stalin, May 1944, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 18, d. 180, ll. 6-7 and Ibragimov, Aliev, Obolaże, and Kvačaże to Bagirov and Čarkviani, ll. 13-20. See also uic’a, f. 600, op. 1, d. 7243, l. 92-94, 117-121.
diverse as access to Georgian print media, poor clinic and medical facilities, lack of Georgian cadre representation, poor quality of Georgian-speaking teachers, lack of employment possibilities, destruction of Georgian historical monuments, and discouragement of speaking Georgian, even at home.

In this early period, one man emerged as the primary voice of Ingilo grievance: Giorgi Semenovich Gamxarašvili, a native of Qax who was educated in Moscow and spent his career working as an agronomist in Tbilisi. Though he had lived in Tbilisi for over three decades, he maintained relationships with relatives and friends in Qax. A non-Party member, between 1943 and 1950, Gamxarašvili wrote regular, lengthy letters to Tbilisi- and Moscow-based officials, including First Secretary Ćarkanviani, Bak‘raże, Baramia, Stalin, and Poskrebshev. Gamxarašvili also twice met with relevant officials about this issue in Moscow, though at this time Gamxarašvili was convinced that Stalin alone could resolve this problem.677 As an individual, Gamxarašvili achieved a remarkable level of access to republic-level figures, such that First Secretary Ćarkanviani discussed the encounters in his memoirs.678

Gamxarašvili’s letters combined reporting on the history and current condition of Ingilo communities with specific grievances against local powers in Azerbaijan. Unlike the Fereydan Georgians, whose existence and plight were widely publicized in Georgia, Gamxarašvili acknowledged that “Georgian society knows

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677 Gamxarašvili to Poskrebshev, 12 January 1947, RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 896, l. 17.
678 Ćarkanviani, ganc‘dili da naazrevi, 500. I thank Krista Goff for this reference.
very little about this region and population.”⁶⁷⁹ Appealing to Č’arkviani and Bak’raże as “leading the life of Georgian tribes” in 1943, Gamxarašvili complained specifically regarding Georgian school closures in the three districts but put forth a broader complaint that the region “breaks” and “Turkifies” the Georgian population.⁶⁸⁰ He referred to this population as Georgians (or Georgian-Christians, Georgian-Muslims) rather than as Ingilo. For him, Zaqatala, Balakan, and Qax districts were historically Georgian regions, economically and culturally more tied to Tbilisi than Baku. In spite of the fact that the arrival of Soviet power moved these districts from Georgia to Azerbaijan,⁶⁸¹ Gamxarašvili appealed to abstract Soviet values to rectify the problem. The issue lay with the fact that “local Azerbaijani powers carry out un-Soviet policies, a policy of Turkification of the Georgian Muslim and Christian population.”⁶⁸² Furthermore,

among Georgians, faith in the elementary justice of Azerbaijani authorities has absolutely atrophied. Literally 100 per cent of the Georgian population complains of endless injustice (nespravedlivost’)...Where, finally, is the socialist nationality policy, proclaimed by the works of Lenin and Stalin?⁶⁸³

Gamxarašvili raised his concerns in an abstractly Soviet fashion, invoking Stalin’s decision-making authority and Stalinist-Leninist nationality policy, and drawing

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⁶⁷⁹ Gamxarašvili to Č’arkviani and Bak’raże, 18 December 1943, sšss (II), f. 14, op. 18, d. 180, l. 30.
⁶⁸⁰ Ibid., l. 31.
⁶⁸¹ See agreement signed by F. Maxaraže and N. Narimanov in sšss (II), f. 14, op. 18, d. 180, l. 28. The three districts were part of independent Georgia from 1918-1921, but following the Bolshevik takeover of the Caucasus by 1921, the area was re-districted to the new Azerbaijan S.S.R. This was one of many complicated Caucasus border-making efforts in this period, which some scholars argue was motivated by efforts to limit “great power chauvinism” among Georgians and Armenians in the region. On this debate, see Smith, The Bolsheviks and the National Question, 1917-23.
⁶⁸² Gamxarašvili to Stalin, 10 January 1947, RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 896, l. 21.
⁶⁸³ Ibid., l. 28.
upon the familiar practice of heavily biographical expressions of grievance. More often, Gamxarašvili embedded his depictions of Georgians in Azerbaijan within a longer-term trajectory of historical injustice and violation of Georgian culture and tradition rather than citing violation of specific Soviet laws or constitutional rights.

Though Gamxarašvili wrote most frequently in support of the Ingilo, other Tbilisi-based citizens took up the Ingilo cause in the late Stalin era. Like Gamxarašvili, their complaints extended beyond the issue of Georgian-language schools. They included not only citizen activists, but also government functionaries such as a certain Isašvili, a native of Qax who was a lieutenant colonel in the Georgian MGB. In 1950, he returned to his birthplace to report on conditions there on behalf of the MGB to Č'arkviani. The “derogation of civil rights and systematic insult of the Georgian population’s national feeling” in Saingilo encompassed such disparate efforts as attempts to limit spoken Georgian, resettlement of Azerbaijanis to Saingilo, and destruction of vineyards and fruit and nut gardens in Georgian villages. Furthermore, local Party organs limited the membership possibilities for such candidates as Alat’emuri Tartarašvili, because he


685 For other letters, see also Janašvili to Č’arkviani, 20 October 1950 and Kutubiže to Č’arkviani, 22 November 1950, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 18, d. 180, ll. 143-165 and f. 14, op. 24, d. 296, ll. 35-42, 68-85.

686 Kutubiže to Č’arkviani, 22 November 1950, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 24, d. 296, l. 38.

687 Georgian MGB officer Isašvili to Č’arkviani, 4 December 1950, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 24, d. 296, ll. 41, 49. Authorities allegedly blamed the vineyard destruction on the need to eradicate phylloxera, though there had been no recorded cases of this grapevine disease in the region, l. 43. See also sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 18, d. 180, l. 148. While resettlement campaigns and language rights are familiar causes for complaint, the vineyard issue struck a special chord with Ingilo and Georgian advocates. Wine cultivation and winemaking are indigenous to Georgia (ca. eight to ten millennia old) and a source of great national and cultural pride. Family vineyards (venaxi), even if very small, were highly valued, particularly in Kax’et’i, the main wine-producing region of Georgia.
“considers himself Georgian, often goes to Georgia and tries to put the Ingilo population on a path of Ingiloization. As of 1950, local powers in Azerbaijan not only facilitated the “derogation of the national interests of Georgians and their rebirth as Azerbaijanis,” but violated “the rights of Soviet citizens, provided by the Stalin Constitution, in particular, the section about the inviolability of the person (neprikosnovennosti lichnosti) of the Soviet citizen.”

Like the Fereydan question, the issue of rights for Georgians in Saingilo was closely tied to the initiative of Georgian First Secretary Č’arkviani, as he revealed in his lengthy memoir. According to Č’arkviani, when he discussed the possibility of transferring the territory of Saingilo to Georgia, Stalin replied, “Let us consider how to resolve the issue. If we annexed southern Azerbaijan [referring to northern Iran, CK], we would also solve your Saingilo problem.” Stalin’s cartographic ambitions reveal an understanding that territorial adjustments between Union republics, in this instance required mutually beneficial terms, whereby Azerbaijan would not merely cede territory to Georgia. Yet as Č’arkviani lamented in his memoir, “We could not annex southern Azerbaijan. Saingilo’s fate likewise remained unchanged.” During a tour of Saingilo with Azerbaijan First Secretary Bagirov related to the education project, Bagirov allegedly told Č’arkviani that he would only give up these territories in exchange for Borč’alo and “northern Azerbaijan” districts

688 Ibid., l. 42.
689 Ibid., ll. 43, 47.
690 Č’arkviani, ganc’dili da naazrevi, 500.
in Georgia.\textsuperscript{691} As had been the case with Fereydan, Č’arkviani’s removal from power in 1951 and Stalin’s death led to a similarly quiet period in the 1950s with regard to Ingilo activism, at least toward officials (and letter recipients) in Tbilisi. Though geopolitical considerations did not hinder Ingilo activists’ pursuits in the same manner as Fereydan Georgians’ advocates, major shifts in Soviet politics and society affected how and when Ingilo issues could come to light. In particular, the discourse shift and de-Stalinization processes made possible by Khrushchev’s secret speech at the CPSU Twentieth Party Congress in 1956 and de-centralization of control vis-à-vis the republics led to greater autonomy for Georgia and Azerbaijan and, further, a period of more concerted Azerbaijani nationalization in the 1950s.\textsuperscript{692} This process peaked in 1959, when Azerbaijan First Secretary I.D. Mustafaev and I.A. Ibragimov were removed from power in an effort to temper official nationalism linked to language policy and education reforms.\textsuperscript{693}

In this atmosphere, the Ingilo issue reemerged as citizens in Azerbaijan and Georgia protested the manner in which Ingilos were categorized in the 1959 all-Union census. “Ingilo” did not appear as a category in any Soviet census, so the issue

\textsuperscript{691} Ibid., 502. “Northern Azerbaijan” most likely refers to the K'vemo K'art'li district of Georgia, which had a large Azerbaijani population. The region’s historical name was Borč’alo.


\textsuperscript{693} The purges in Azerbaijan were part of a broader replacement of republican leadership in 1958-59 that affected Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Latvia and (in 1961) Moldova and Tajikistan. The Georgian Party avoided such a purge, perhaps due to Mžavanaže’s close relationship with Khrushchev and other “Ukrainians” in Moscow. See Simon, Nationalism and Policy, 251-254 and Smith, Red Nations, 200-215.
was whether these populations were categorized as Georgian, “Tiurk” (1926, 1937), or “Azerbaijani” (1939, 1959). According to Gamxarašvili, in the 1939 all-Union census, Qax, Balakan, and Zaqatala districts contained a total population of 105,538, comprised of the following nationalities: Lezgin-Avar (55,000); Georgian-Muslims (20,000) and Georgian-Orthodox (12,000); Turks and Mugals (12,000); and 6,538 others (Russians, Armenians, etc.). In his earlier appeals to Stalin and Čarkviani, Gamxarašvili used these figures to demonstrate that the large Georgian populations were, in fact, Georgian and not Azerbaijani. This correction applied especially to Georgian-Muslims. According to the 1959 census, Balakan, Zaqatala, and Qax districts had a combined population of 108,832, of which 5,077 (4.7 per cent) were Georgians by nationality. A group of Georgian Ingilo petitioners insisted, however, that the number of Georgians in these three districts was really between 27,000 and 33,000 people, or 25-30 per cent of the population (and a number comparable to that of the 1939 census). These petitioners in particular highlighted the primarily Georgian villages of Aliabad and Mosul (Zaqatala district), where of 2,584 total residents, 1,947 claimed to be Azerbaijani and only 318 Georgian.

694 On the evolution of Soviet national categorization and nomenclature see Hirsch, *Empire of Nations* and, with regard to categories in Georgia, Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

695 It is unclear how Gamxarašvili arrived at these figures, as they differ from the figures published by the Central Statistical Administration (CSA). According to the CSA figures, in 1939 there were 10,196 Georgians in Azerbaijan, and in 1959 only 9,526 Georgians in Azerbaijan. See *Vsesoiuznaia perepis’ naseleniiia 1939 goda*, 71, and Tsentral’noe Statisticheskoe Upravlenie pri Sovete Ministrov SSSR, *Itogi Vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia: Azerbaidzhanskaia SSR* (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1963), 134-135.

696 “SPRAVKA o Belakanskom, Zakatal’skom i Kakhskom raionakh,” G.S. Gamxarašvili, 15 January 1944, ššsa (II), f. 14, op. 18, d. 180, l. 41. In the 1926 census, for example, it seems that only Georgian-Christians in the village of Qax were counted as Georgian.

697 Head of USSR Central Statistical Administrations Starovskii to Mžavanaże, 11 December 1959, ššsa (II), f. 14, op. 34, d. 242g, ll. 1-3.
Ildrim Musaev, a Georgian Ingilo student at Tbilisi State University, Georgians were registered as Azerbaijani “under pressure” and did not fill out the census forms individually or according to their own wishes.\textsuperscript{698} M. Shabanov, a census worker and resident of Aliabad, similarly noted, “We are afraid and cannot speak the truth.”\textsuperscript{699} A colleague elaborated that “We are afraid of the local powers, we cannot speak the whole truth, but if we say everything, then they will remove us from our posts and expel us from the district.”\textsuperscript{700} Later that year, as Musaev and others continued to write petitions, Gamxarašvili likewise joined the cause.

The petitioners addressed their letters to the USSR and Azerbaijani Central Statistical Administrations (CSA), as this organ managed the census-taking process. Thus, the appeals focused on violation of census-taking procedure rather than the nationally motivated rights-talk that underscored previous letter campaigns. Furthermore, though local authorities in the three Saingilo districts received most of the blame for these “mistakes,” Gamxarašvili likewise implicated the recently ousted Azerbaijani First Secretary Mustafaev in the affair.\textsuperscript{701} In spite of Musaev, Gamxarašvili, and others’ efforts, V. Starovskii, the director of the of the USSR CSA, concluded that no such mistakes had occurred, citing the five thousand Georgians in the three districts who had self-identified in the census as Georgian by nationality.

\\textsuperscript{698} Ildrim Musaev to Pod’iachikh, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 34, d. 242g, l. 11.
\textsuperscript{699} “Poiasnenie na pis’mo Zamestitelia Nachal’nika Glavnogo SU tov. P. Pod”iachikh ot 21 avgusta 1959 goda,” Emeedina Dzhaifarovich Shabanov, census-taker and resident of the village of Aliabad, 29 September 1959, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 34, d. 242g, l. 10.
\textsuperscript{700} Ildrim Musaev to Pod’iachikh, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 34, d. 242g, l. 11.
\textsuperscript{701} Gamxarašvili to Starovskii and Kozlov, 10 October 1959, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 34, d. 242g, ll. 4-9.
challenging the assertion that others failed to do so out of fear of local authorities.\footnote{Starovskii to Mžavanaže, 11 December 1959, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 34, d. 242g, l. 3.} Only at this point (December 1959) did the CSA involve Georgian First Secretary Mžavanaže in this issue, most likely due both to the Georgian nationality in question and the fact that some of the petitioners wrote from Tbilisi.

The issue resurfaced at the time of the 1970 all-Union census, when G. Č'angašvili, a geographer, alleged that the census forms of Georgian-Muslims who refused to write “Azerbaijani” as their nationality were destroyed and rewritten. This “forced assimilation” also applied to “Dagestanis” (primarily Lezgins) of the district, in addition to Georgian-Muslims.\footnote{“DANNYE o polozhenii gruzinskogo naselenia Belokanskogo, Zakatal’skogo i Kakhskogo raionov AzSSR,” G. Č’angašvili, 6 March 1972, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 47, d. 379, l. 6.} Č’angašvili used the census episodes as an example of crimes and violations of the Soviet Constitution and Party policies by Azerbaijani authorities. A lengthy, signed petition from a group of residents from Zaqatala and Balakan districts in 1972 elaborated on the census complaints. This petition is worth examining in greater detail for several reasons. Not only was it written and signed by several current residents of Saingilo, it was also written in Georgian and addressed to a Georgian official (G. Jiblaże, of the Ministry of Education), unlike the largely Russian-language complaints issued to Moscow or Baku or, during the Stalin era, to Tbilisi. As had been the case in the 1940s, the petitioners' primary complaint remained rights to language and education, yet they embedded these issues within a broader grievance about national and cultural
rights for minorities (including their Lezgin neighbors) in Soviet Azerbaijan. For instance, the petitioners argued,

We do not have the right (*up’leba*) to say we are Ingilo or Georgian, we do not have the right to bear a Georgian surname, call our children by Georgian names, educate our kindergarten-aged children in Georgian kindergartens; Georgian-educated Ingilos do not have the right to work in the District Committee, Executive Committee, in education, the police, the procuracy, and so forth.\(^{704}\)

Their complaints regarding the 1959 and 1970 censuses likewise fit into this framework. According to the petition, at the time of the 1970 census, in lieu of writing “Georgian” for native language (*mšobliuri ena*), census takers entered “Azerbaijani”; and rather than entering “Georgian” or “Ingilo” for nationality (*erovneba*), they wrote “Azerbaijani.” This caused “outrage” among the population and caused the census to be suspended for several days. A group from Zaqatala tried to send telegrams about this to Moscow from Lagodexi (across the border in Georgia) without success, and they accused district leaders of falsifying census cards not only for Ingilos, but also for Lezgins.\(^{705}\)

On the one hand, conditions by the 1970s for Georgians in Saingilo appear to have deteriorated to such an extent to generate appeals from Ingilo citizens themselves (rather than urban interlocutors in Georgia) for help to officials in Tbilisi, albeit without much success. Alternatively, this shift could also be attributed to a growing culture of participatory citizenship cultivated in the Khrushchev era, as Krista Goff has shown, that compelled a more literate, active populace to hold the

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\(^{704}\) “*mokled ingilot’a mdgomareobaze saingiloši,*” to G. Jiblaže, 10 April 1072, *sšssa* (II), f. 14, op. 47, d. 383, l. 11.

\(^{705}\) Ibid., l. 16.
state accountable for defense of their rights, both national and Soviet. As the group petition from Zaqatala and Balakan claimed, “In the past 12-15 years the Tatar more grossly violates our national rights (erovnuli up’lebi). Some bold and activist Ingilos, who resisted their policies of assimilation, were also physically assaulted.”

Aside from offering modest support for Georgian-language schools in the region, Georgian institutions and individuals could effect little change for their Ingilo counterparts. Even a 1970 Georgian Academy of Sciences ethnographic expedition to study life and culture in Saingilo encountered problems from authorities once in Azerbaijan and was recalled to carry out the project from Lagodexi instead.

Whereas supporting the rights of co-nationals across republic borders through official channels grew more difficult as republican autonomy increased, these issues provided potential fodder for nationalist dissidents in the late Soviet era. As late as 1988, the Georgian KGB acknowledged the similarity between the “Ingilo question” and events unfolding in Nagorny Karabakh. Georgian nationalist dissidents such as Merab Kostava and Zviad Gamsaxurdia argued, echoing Gamxarašvili’s earliest appeals, that “Saingilo, a genuinely Georgian land that is now located as part of Azerbaijan, should belong to Georgia. This territory was [like

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707 “mokled ingilot’a mdgomareobaze saingiloši,” signed group petition “in the name of Zaqatala-Balakan districts Ingilos” to G. Jiblaże, 10 April 1072, ssssa (II), f. 14, op. 47, d. 383, l. 11. In addition to education and language rights and census practices, protection of Georgian cultural monuments in Saingilo provided a further complaint around which petitioners built broader claims. See, for example, ssssa (II), f. 14, op. 44, d. 341, ll. 3-14.
708 “Otchet raboty Otdela etnografi Gruzii sektora etnografi Instituta istorii, arkeologii i etnografi im. I.A. Dzhabakhishvili za 1970 g.,” smeaa, f. 9, op. 1, d. 820 and smeaa f. 9, op. 1, d. 803. This expedition was a project of the Ivane Javaxišvili Institute of History, Archeology, and Ethnography.
Karabakh, CK] also transferred immediately after Sovietization.” Conflict over Saingilo did not materialize as it did in Nagornyi Karabakh, Abkhazia, or South Ossetia as the Soviet Union unraveled. Yet the structures of grievance, desire to remedy historical injustice, and space between rights of entitled and non-entitled populations in many ways resemble the mobilization of an Abkhaz national movement, examined in the next chapter.

Peasants into Georgians?

For all their efforts, the campaigns for Fereydan and Ingilo Georgians fell far short of their proponents’ intentions. In the case of Fereydan, the international political situation and Soviet foreign policy priorities delayed the realization of the repatriation effort and perhaps also limited the total number eligible for “return” to Georgia. However, the realities of life in Kaxet’i for the repatriates would likely have been just as jarring in the late 1940s as they found it in the 1970s. The tenacity of Georgian officials and bureaucrats in pursuing the “Fereydan question” nevertheless reveals the bounds of Georgian nationality as conceived and promoted by republic officials as well as the possibilities for engaging in nation-state-like foreign policy practices under the umbrella of Soviet federalism. In the case of Saingilo, the concurrent postwar nationalization projects of neighboring Soviet republics muddled the reach of Tbilisi-based assistance for the Georgian minority in

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709 Chairman of Georgian KGB A.I. Inauri to Georgian CC, 14 March 1988, sissa (II), f. 14, op. 129, d. 169, l. 40.

710 Repatriated Armenians faced similar challenges and disillusionment with their “return” to Soviet Armenia, albeit in far greater numbers. See Lehmann, “A Different Kind of Brothers.”
Azerbaijan. Unlike the Fereydan campaign, however, it seems that the decisive factor in limiting Georgian activity toward the Ingilo lay with authorities in Baku rather than in Moscow. The tangible republican limits of Soviet federalism come to light in this instance.

The idea of the “Piedmont Principle,” coined to describe Soviet outreach toward non-Soviet Ukrainians in the 1920s, helps to illustrate postwar Georgian aims in Fereydan and Saingilo. The repatriation campaign for Fereydan Georgians appears as the clearest example of this, though, as was also the case in Ukraine, the Piedmont approach likewise inspired territorial claims against other Soviet republics. 711 Č’arkvianî’s and Gamxarašvili’s appeals to Stalin to re-join Qax, Zaqatala, and Balakan districts to Georgia from Azerbaijan reflect a similar intent to Ukrainian territorial ambitions in the 1920s. 712 An important distinction remains, however. While Martin depicts a progression (or de-evolution, depending on how one views it) from the Piedmont Principle in the 1920s to “Soviet xenophobia” in the 1930s, postwar Georgian policies present a more multifaceted picture. In the 1940s and early 1950s, Georgian officials and citizens adopted a “Piedmont” ethos toward co-ethnics in Iran and adjacent territory in Azerbaijan. Meanwhile, new perceived threats in the early Cold War environment precipitated a revised “Soviet xenophobia” that caused further nationally-based deportations in the postwar

711 Territorial claims were only one of many tools available for pursuing the “Piedmont Principle,” including also population transfers and sustained outreach to diasporic communities.
712 For example, Martin notes the (ultimately unsuccessful) attempt advocated by Ukrainian First Secretary Skrypnyk in 1924 to eventually annex not only “Polish Ukraine,” but also neighboring territories in the RSFSR with majority Ukrainian populations. See Martin, The Affirmative Action Empire, 278-291.
period, described in detail in Chapter 2. Expanding on Francine Hirsch’s point, I argue that dual pursuit of these aims in the postwar period affirms rather than retreats from Soviet long-term goals, whereby smaller ethnic groups were to be amalgamated into a more limited number of developed “Soviet” nationalities over time. In the post-Stalin period, when the Party-state abandoned the tools of terror, such as nationally-based deportations, that had operationalized xenophobia in the Stalin era, a participatory, more popular form of nation-building encouraged Soviet Georgians to engage with and on behalf of their “Piedmonts” in more productive ways as the territory of Georgian underwent its own form of nationalization. Concurrent nationalization processes in Azerbaijan from the 1950s onward limited the possibilities of access to the Saingilo “Piedmont,” whereas the Fereydan Georgians provided a tempting potential not only to inject Soviet cultural and economic resources and expertise into this rural region of Iran, but also to eventually incorporate these brethren from abroad into Soviet Georgian society.

The question of nationality drove efforts in both Fereydan and Saingilo. The Georgian nation toward which Tbilisi officials, local advocates, and petitioners worked adhered to an increasingly primordial conception of nationhood propagated from the mid-1930s, with an emphasis on a shared language and community of culture. This is especially relevant in the Georgian case considering the high

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714 As noted above, scholars of Soviet nationality policies disagree regarding the extent to which increasing primordialism and the reduction in numbers of nationalities constituted a “retreat” from the “ethnophilia” of the 1920s. See in particular Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*; Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*; Suny, “Constructing Primordialism”; and Smith, *Red Nations*. 
geographic concentration of Georgians in the Soviet Union. Descriptions of the populations in Fereydan and Qax, Zaqatala, and Balakan districts by Soviet officials highlighted cultural practices that would convincingly link these communities to “homeland” Georgians, from music and dance, viticulture, and cuisine to architecture. But in both cases, language provided the primary source of legitimacy for inclusion in the Georgian nation and justification for intervention by Tbilisi. Religion, on the other hand, as theoretically a remnant of pre-socialist society, was a distinction to be overcome through contact with Soviet Georgia. Like Georgian Muslims in Ajaria, Georgian Muslims in Fereydan could, in theory, be incorporated into Soviet Georgian society due to more privileged, shared markers of nationality such as language and historical territory. In Saingilo, the ascribed national cleavages imposed by local authorities, whereby Georgian Muslims “became” Azerbaijani yet Georgian Christians remained Georgian (even if both groups comprised Georgian-speakers), inspired action from Tbilisi and by local petitioners. These markers evoked a pre-modern Georgian cultural community, when ancestors of Georgians, Fereydan Georgians, and Ingilo purportedly lived together in a shared Kaxet’ian territory. Soviet Georgian nation-builders endeavored not only to identify such linkages, but also awaken these communities to consciousness as Georgians outside their “homeland.” In their intentions, Georgian officials and advocates recalled the nation-building ethos of the korenizatsiia era. Extraterritorial Georgian nation-

715 In this sense, the approach of Azerbaijani officials resembles that of Iran, which considered any Muslim citizen Iranian yet distinguished between other ethno-religious communities, such as Armenians.

716 The idea of self-consciousness (samosoznanie) as a Georgian was particularly important in the case of Fereydan, according to reporting from Soviet Georgian officials.
building, therefore, privileged language as a marker of nationality that justified protection and propagation through Soviet Georgian institutions.

The categories used to describe these populations reflect the centrality of nationality as a category in inspiring the campaigns. Fereydan Georgians described themselves simply as “Georgians.” In Soviet official correspondence with Tbilisi or Moscow, they were either “Iranian Georgians,” “Fereydan Georgians,” or “Fereydanis,” but the question of their authentic “Georgianness” during the campaign did not arise. This issue emerged only once repatriates struggled to integrate into Kaxet’ian society due to their Iranian and Muslim cultural practices (including abstaining from alcohol and pork, sitting on the ground, and veiling women), causing some to feel (derogatively) like “Tatars” in the Soviet Union, yet like the venerable “Gurji” in Iran.717 Still, Fereydan Georgians and their Soviet advocates unambiguously viewed the territory of Georgia as samšoblo, or the homeland, and the Fereydan region as a place of exile.

This common theme in Georgian national discourse did not appear in appeals from Saingilo because, for Ingilo advocates, Qax, Zaqatala, and Balakan districts were already culturally and historically a part of Georgia, if a victim of Soviet border-making. Calls to move these districts to Georgia decreased over time as petitioners turned their attention to demanding their rights as Soviet citizens.718 Ingilo categorization and self-categorization proved more complicated than for the Fereydan Georgians. Tbilisi-based advocates described this population as Georgian,

717 C’agareišvili, p’ereidnelebi sak’art’veloši, 34.
Muslim-Georgian, Christian-Georgian, or Ingilo; petitioners in Qax, Zaqatala, and Balakan districts called themselves either Georgian or Ingilo. The “Georgian-speaking Azerbaijani” category provided a means for local authorities in Azerbaijan to count Muslim Georgians among the entitled Azerbaijani population and justify the closure of non-Azerbaijani schools in the region. Letter writers and petitioners contrasted Georgians and Ingilos with the “Turks,” “Tatars,” and “Mullahs” allegedly attempting to forcibly assimilate them into an “Azerbaijani” nationality category.

In a Soviet state where nationality remained a – if not the – most important societal marker, endowed with certain rights and privileges depending on entitled status, Georgian officials, bureaucrats, and petitioners sought to mobilize the institutional tools of their republic to expand the breadth of “Georgianness” as a category and defend those communities included in this purview. Again, intent reveals more than results in this case. New, postwar institutions such as the Georgian MFA pursued the Fereydan question on a strategic level, negotiating among Moscow’s imperatives, relations with Iran, and explicitly Georgian goals. As the primary institutional advocate for repatriation, the Georgian MFA tested the parameters of its mandate and achieved a limited degree of operational success in doing so. A Georgian foreign policy that embraced Soviet structures yet operated somewhat independently contrasts with the assumed fictive capacity of the republican MFAs to pursue a national agenda. GOKS and the Georgian ME contributed to the Fereydan campaign through supportive, sustained roles in Iran. The Georgian ME played a considerably greater role with regard to the “Ingilo
question,” as access to Georgian-language education remained a primary source of complaint among Ingilo advocates and residents of Qax, Zaqatala, and Balakan districts. The Georgian ME provided teachers, training, and Georgian-language materials; facilitated study in Georgian institutes of higher education for Ingilo students; and served as a logical addressee for petitioners.

Engagement with these institutions, whether as a proactive official (Č’arkviani, Kiknaże, and Aslanikašvili), concerned citizen (Gamxarašvili), or anonymous petitioner strengthened the legitimacy of these republic-level organs for national purposes. Patron-client networks and personal interests in and knowledge of Georgian affairs permitted the activist approach toward co-nationals in the late Stalin era. With the subsequent loss of clear advocates in Moscow and Tbilisi, in the Thaw era and beyond, citizens themselves had to become the leading advocates for Fereydan and Ingilo Georgian issues. Pursuing local agendas through official channels further rooted Soviet power in the only prewar republic that had truly been conquered from without by the Red Army (in 1921). At the same time, the limited success of the campaigns for Fereydan and Saingilo strengthened the territorial borders as institutions between Georgia and Azerbaijan. Compared to protests over borders and sovereignty in Abkhazia and Nagornyi Karabakh, for example, the border between Georgia and Azerbaijan achieved a certain fixity through institutional interactions such as those elaborated above.

Over time, Ingilo activists and petitioners embraced the discourse of Soviet rights as a way to protest encroachments by local authorities in Azerbaijan. As
rights-speak evolved, so too did the specificity of their claims. Fereydan Georgian advocates, meanwhile, turned to Soviet ideology to justify their nation-building efforts. Lingering "feudal" social structures, lack of educational opportunities, illiteracy, repression of women, poor sanitary and medical facilities, and the prevalence of Islam among Fereydan Georgians presented problems to be resolved by bringing these co-nationals into the Soviet orbit, whether by local activism in Fereydan or repatriation. Admittedly, Ingilo activists described similar conditions in Qax, Balakan, and Zaqatala districts, but for them the solution lay in corrective rights claims rather than appeals to building socialism. As the entitled nationality, Georgians in the postwar period sought to remedy perceived historic injustices through newly available (or newly endowed) polity-level institutions. Whether these perceived injustices stemmed from centuries-old deportations, policies of a modernizing Iranian state, early Soviet border-making, or discrimination by local authorities, advocates for Fereydan and Ingilo Georgians looked toward Soviet frameworks and Soviet ideology for compensatory solutions.  

Nationalizing efforts within the territory of Georgia proved considerably more successful than these attempts at extraterritorial nation-building. Yet for their lack of results outside the republic, pursuit of the Fereydan and Saingilo “questions” contributed to the development of a meaningful symbiosis of the national and the Soviet in postwar Georgia.

719 Here, I am adapting Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, 83-84.
Chapter 6: Entangled Nationalisms:

In a letter to the 1978 Constitutional Commission of the Georgian SSR, a body charged with drafting and adopting a document to replace the 1937 constitution, citizen M. Čanturia argued,

The Georgian language belongs to the whole Georgian people (k’art’veli xalxi), is its blood and flesh, and is the glory of the nation (eri), therefore the people itself should decide its fate and not individual members...Long live the Georgian people! Long live the new, exceptionally real and democratic constitution of the Georgian SSR!\textsuperscript{720}

Citing the Georgian language as the “blood and flesh” of the Georgian people evokes a certain völkisch sentiment reminiscent of nineteenth-century nationalists in the Herderian tradition. Yet Čanturia’s passionate appeal to retain Georgian as the state language of the republic employed a key Soviet practice – citizen petitioning – for policy changes within a hallmark institution of Soviet life – the all-Union and corresponding union republic constitutions. In a Soviet state that was avowedly anti-nationalist by design, Čanturia’s remarks at first might seem brazen and ill-equipped to persuade republic and Union leaders to accede to his request. However, similar appeals in hundreds of petitions and from thousands of demonstrators convinced republic and, ultimately, Union authorities to do just that.

CPSU General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev already proclaimed the existence of a single sovetskii narod (Soviet people) at the twenty-fourth Congress of the CPSU in 1971. Yet by the late 1970s, the (unintended) success of “affirmative action” and

\textsuperscript{720} M. Čanturia to GSSR Constitutional Commission, ssssa (II), f. 14, op. 115, d. 361, ll. 158-160.
ethnic amalgamation policies had created relatively wide spheres of national autonomy, provided republic authorities kept purported anti-Soviet nationalism in check. Officially, the goal of sblizhenie (drawing together) remained in effect, and linguistic Russification policies did indeed occur in some republics. In practice, however, the national-social contract in developed socialism allowed for the pursuit of national cultural and political interests as long as it took place through Soviet institutions.²²¹ In Chapter 4, I examined aspirations and experiences in the fields of housing, urban development, and cultural practices made possible by the broadened space for discourse and practice after 1956. That discussion focused on the cultural and the everyday, but the same developments facilitated by the national-social contract in Georgia likewise made possible mass, national mobilizations toward political interests. As Rogers Brubaker argues,

Institutional definitions of nationhood did not so much constrain action as constitute basic categories of political understanding, central parameters of political rhetoric, specific types of political interest, and fundamental forms of political identity. As political space expanded, they made specific types of political action conceivable, plausible, even compelling...²²²

Though Brubaker uses this description in the context of the dissolution of the USSR along ethnoterritorial lines, I argue throughout the dissertation that such an expansion of political space occurred earlier in Georgia as a result of the March 1956 events. Moreover, the expanded cultural-political space of the developed socialism

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²²¹ This argument goes against earlier, binary portrayals of this period as one of Russification from above and resistance from below, such as Nahaylo and Swoboda, Soviet Disunion: A History of the Nationalities Problem in the USSR. While Russification policies and national dissent did occur in some cases, the example of Georgia does not adhere to this paradigm for the 1970s.

²²² Brubaker, Nationalism Reframed, 24.
national-social contract meant that national mobilization could occur within and toward Soviet bounds because, by the late 1970s, Georgian Sovietness had developed its own self-perpetuating set of norms and practices.\(^{723}\)

In Georgia, the increasing consolidation of the entitled national populace on the republic’s territory took place over the course of the postwar period, reaching its peak by the late 1970s. As the entitled nationality, Georgians increased in number and in percentage of the republic’s population over time due to outmigration of prominent minorities such as Armenians and Russians.

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<th>1959</th>
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Yet demographic data tell only part of the story: the meaning of nationality and expression of national identities among Soviet citizens in Georgia was as – if not more – important to the making of the modern Georgian nation in its Soviet form.

This chapter shows the political implications of negotiations over what it meant to be Soviet and Georgian in the Georgian SSR by focusing on two movements related to discussions of the draft 1977 All-Union and 1978 Georgian SSR

\(^{723}\) This presents a much different picture of national, political mobilization than that chronicled most notably by Mark Beissinger regarding the 1989-1991 period, Mark R. Beissinger, Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Constitutions. The first section examines the public reaction to a perceived policy change regarding the status of Georgian as the republic’s official language in early 1978. The second section explores a concurrent mobilization movement among Abkhaz intellectuals and activists that expressed a plethora of grievances regarding entitled nationality rights in the Abkhaz ASSR. I argue that the concessions made in favor of Georgian petitioners and demonstrators in 1978 show the Brezhnev national-social contract at its apogee – a contract that created official “controlled spheres for the expression of non-Russian national identities” yet at the same time cultivated deep, largely autonomous national republic-level polities. At the same time, the realization of this national-social contract in Georgia entailed privileging the Union republic-level entitled nationality (Georgians) over sub-republic entitled groups, such as the Abkhaz, who likewise used discussions surrounding the constitution to mobilize their own national agenda and, unsuccessfully, call for territorial transfer to the RSFSR.

The attitudes expressed and actions undertaken in Georgia and Abkhazia in 1978 around the draft constitution contrast sharply with the “stagnation” caricature of the late Brezhnev era. While most recent scholarship on the Brezhnev era

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726 Mikhail Gorbachev applied the “stagnation” (zastoi) term to the Brezhnev era in order to more effectively contrast it with his own envisioned reforms. While contemporary Sovietologists largely
refutes – or at least complicates – Gorbachev's characterization, the politically engaged citizens highlighted in this chapter depart from the dissidents and black marketeers typically shown to demonstrate the movement and vitality of the Brezhnev years. Rather than operating (or seeking to operate) outside Soviet structures, policies, and identities, citizens in Georgia actively appealed to such institutions to defend their entitled national rights as enshrined in Soviet and republic constitutions. The cases examined below therefore complicate assumptions that national expressions and interests necessarily implied resistance to Soviet structures. Rather, Georgian political mobilization and the republic leadership's management of the situation reveal the extent to which the space of discourse and practice of the Soviet among Georgians had enlarged by the late 1970s. This broadened sense of the Soviet was one iteration of the varieties of national experience facilitated by the national-social contract.


I use letters and petitions alongside an examination of mass demonstrations to explore by what means Soviet citizens in Georgia sought to effect policy changes in the period of developed socialism. Whether writers wrote candidly or merely demonstrated their fluency in “speaking Soviet,” these letters provide a cross-section of interpretations and critiques of proposed policy changes assumed to be acceptable in Soviet Georgian society. This allows one to trace the boundaries of what citizens deemed acceptable discourse as well as what constituted accepted practices for expressing said discourse. The ways in which expressed beliefs and interpretations adhered to or departed from “official” scripts show the peak of coexisting national and Soviet identities since 1956 yet simultaneously reveal the distinctiveness of experienced Georgian Sovietness.

Reform without Change: Tbilisi

With its unique alphabet and distinct linguistic roots, the Georgian language (k’art’uli ena) served as a key marker of official nationality and lived national identity among Georgians throughout the Soviet period. Though Russian served as the lingua franca in the Soviet Union, by the late 1970s professed proficiency in Russian as a second language among entitled nationals in Georgia remained rather low, in spite of Union-wide attempts to bolster Russian language knowledge in that decade. By 1979, entitled Georgians trailed only Turkmens and Estonians among all

728 On the practice of “speaking Bolshevik,” see Kotkin, Magnetic Mountain.
729 On the routinization and internalization of such scripts in the late Soviet period, see Yurchak, Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More.
the Union republics’ entitled nationalities in their lack of professed Russian proficiency. According to the 1979 All-Union Census, 25.5 percent of Georgians in Georgia claimed Russian as a second language, compared to, for example, 34.2 percent of entitled Armenians, 52.2 percent of Lithuanians, and 52.9 percent of Uzbeks.

With the ratification of the “Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics” in the USSR Supreme Soviet in October 1977, republic-level leadership initiated the subsequent process to draft and ratify corresponding constitutions in their respective territories. Though the constitution of the USSR provided the structures, principles, and rights governing the Union as a whole, each non-Russian republic likewise had had its own discrete foundational document following the prior iterations of the Soviet constitution in 1924 and 1936 (the so-called “Stalin constitution”). Republic constitutions resembled the all-Union constitution yet also outlined territorial arrangements and language rights specific to that particular republic. This arrangement reflected the federative relationship between the republics and the Union, enshrined most notably in Article 72 (Article 17 of the 1936 constitution) granting republics the right to secede from the Union.

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730 This figure is even more remarkable considering the very high levels of education in Georgia. By contrast, in 1979 74.7 percent of entitled Abkhaz and 49.5 percent of entitled Ossetians claimed knowledge of Russian as a second language, Robert John Kaiser, The Geography of Nationalism in Russia and the USSR (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 290-292. These census figures perhaps say as much about the sociopolitical significance of self-identifying as a Russian speaker as actual language proficiency.

One of the distinguishing features of the Georgian SSR’s constitution (in its 1922, 1927 and 1937 versions) was a clause (Article 156) explicitly declaring Georgian as the official language of the republic. The contemporary Armenian and Azerbaijani constitutions contained a similar provision, but this feature was unique to the Caucasian republics within the Soviet Union. When the draft of the proposed 1978 Georgian SSR constitution was published in republican newspapers on 24 March 1978, careful readers noticed that the provision about the official language no longer appeared. Instead, the draft language explained, in Section 7, Article 75:

The Georgian SSR guarantees the use of the Georgian language in state and societal organs, in cultural and other institutions and exercises state concern for its all-around development. In the Georgian SSR, the free use in all these organs and institutions of Russian and also of other languages of the population that are used by it is guaranteed on the basis of equality. Any sort of privilege or limitation in the use of one or another language is not permitted.

While the proposed version maintained a privileged status for the Georgian language within the republic, the mention of Russian and “other languages of the


732 Though it is unclear precisely why drafters included this language clause in the first place, it is possible that it was a concession to the three formerly (if briefly) independent republics at the time of their incorporation. Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan were independent countries in the period between the Bolshevik Revolution (November 1917) and Bolshevik takeovers – from within and without – of the southern Caucasus in 1920-1921.

733 In his memoir, Shevardnadze claimed that citizens were uninterested in earlier publication of the draft in republican press, Eduard Ševardnaže, *p’ik’ri carsulsa da momavalze: memuarebi* (Tbilisi: Palitra, 2006), 90.

734 “proek’ti: sak’art’velos sabčot’a socialisturi respublikis konstituc’ia (zirit’adi kanoni),” *komunisti* (March 24, 1978), pp. 1-4. The 1977 Soviet Constitution contained similar wording in Article 36 about the opportunity “to use their mother tongue and languages of other nations of the USSR.” The Soviet version did not explicitly name the Russian language, unlike the Georgian draft version.
population” (such as those spoken by prominent minorities with entitled nationality status in their respective territories, such as Abkhaz and Ossetians) overshadowed the formerly singular status of Georgian as the functional, official, and intellectual language in the republic. The draft therefore replaced an explicit and exclusive statement about Georgian’s official status in the republic with a diluted and more ambiguous statement promising protections not only for Georgian, but also – crucially – Russian. On paper, this change would bring the constitution of Georgia (and Armenia and Azerbaijan) in line with the rest of the Union republic constitutions in the name of consistency, even if Georgian retained its prevalence in practice.

The publication of the draft constitution coincided with republic-wide public Party meetings to discuss the “project of the new constitution.” 735 These discussions took place between 24 and 27 March, and meeting attendees expressed a variety of critiques about the draft. Among the more consistent suggestions was the addition in Article 75 of a statement that the state (saxelmcip’o, used to mean both “state” and “official”) language of the Georgian SSR was Georgian. 736

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735 Such meetings were a common feature of Soviet reform efforts, including for the 1936 constitution and in the aftermath of the Twentieth Party Congress of the CPSU in 1956. On reactions in meetings to the 1936 constitution, see J. Arch Getty, “State and Society Under Stalin: Constitutions and Elections in the 1930s,” Slavic Review 50, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 18–35; and Fitzpatrick, Everyday Stalinism. On closed Party meetings to discuss the “cult of personality” in 1956, see Jones, Myth, Memory, Trauma and, on this process in Georgia, Chapter 3 of this dissertation. An important distinction between the 1936 and 1956 discussions was that those held in 1936 encompassed the entire citizenry, whereas discussions in 1956 included only Party members.

Party meetings were not the first sites of dissatisfaction with the proposed draft, however. First Secretary Shevardnadze wrote in a 12 March 1978 report to the CPSU CC that he anticipated problems regarding the language issue. First, he suggested revising the related Article 73, which detailed Georgian membership in the USSR federal structure, to read, “Displaying state concern for the development of the native language and the study of the Russian language, as a means of international communication, the Georgian SSR does not permit any language privileges or restrictions.” In his opinion, because the prior three republican constitutions declared Georgian the official language of the republic, “the discrepancy between the new constitution and the[se older versions, CK] in this section can cause unwanted gossip and misunderstandings among certain sectors of the population.” Shevardnadze’s revision would serve to “help all citizens of the republic in the correct understanding of why a state language is no longer necessary.”

While Shevardnadze correctly predicted public dissatisfaction regarding the language issue, Article 75 proved a more provocative point of concern than the related Article 73. Shevardnadze also recalled a conversation with Mikhail Suslov, the CPSU’s chief ideologue, in which Shevardnadze further explained the sensitivity of the language issue:

I explained that language is a special phenomenon for a Georgian man (kac’i). Recall how speeches followed the “treatment” of Stalin in 1956. Then only a clear part of the youth was so inclined, whereas today all are united because indifference toward the Georgian

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737 Shevardnadze to TsK KPSS, 12 March 1978, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 115, d. 303, ll. 33-35.
language is impossible. No Georgian family exists which will give this up.\textsuperscript{738}

The potential for mass grievance identified by Shevardnadze was soon realized through two practices: citizen petitions and mass demonstrations.

In late March and early April 1978, hundreds of Georgians wrote letters and signed petitions addressed to First Secretary Shevardnadze and the GSSR Constitutional Commission regarding the proposed draft of the republic's constitution.\textsuperscript{739} Among 155 letters (some which had dozens of signatories), only fourteen letters dealt with issues completely separate from the language question, such as housing or veterans' pensions. A handful of other letters focused on the republic's flag, seal, and the relationship between autonomous entities and republican structures. The vast majority, however, explicitly criticized the proposed Article 75 (and related Article 171, which dealt with the language of court and legal proceedings) and recommended re-inserting a statement from the existing constitution declaring, “the state language of the Georgian SSR is Georgian (\textit{saxelmcip'o ena aris k'art'uli ena}).” Writers signed their full names on the letters and in many cases included a mailing address, telephone number, Party

\textsuperscript{738} Ševardnaže, \textit{p’ik’ri carsulsa da momavalze}, 90. In Shevardnadze’s account, discussions with Moscow authorities on this matter typically occurred via Suslov rather than with Brezhnev.

\textsuperscript{739} Most of these letters are held in a single archival file from the Georgian CC’s Organizational and Party Work Section, titled simply “\textit{Pis’ma grazhdan o vnesenii izmenenii i proekte novoi Konstitutsii GSSR},” \textit{sšssa} (II), f. 14, op. 115, d. 361. It is possible that these are but a small sample of all letters received on this issue, and the file does not indicate whether the letters chosen were comprehensive, representative, exceptional, or random. In my close examination of this file alongside other material about the constitution discussions in Georgia and letters about other issues (explored elsewhere in the dissertation), I posit that these letters reflect a criticism widely-held among Georgia’s citizenry due to their consistency, the prominence of mass demonstrations in Tbilisi about this precise issue, and the conciliatory response of Union and republican authorities to this policy criticism. In addition to d. 361, see also letters in \textit{sšssa} (II), f. 14, op. 115, d. 355, d. 355, ll. 1-4; d. 356, ll. 1-2; and d. 362, ll. 1-5.
membership status, occupation, or military service details. They ranged in age from teenager to pensioner. Most letters came from Tbilisi, but the Georgian CC also received letters from Abkhazia, Ajaria, and eastern and central districts of Georgia. All but twelve letters were written in the Georgian language, a reflection not only of the issue at hand but also of the lived currency of the language among Georgian citizenry in this period.

The concentrated dates of the letters suggest a link to the Party discussions about the draft constitution held in late March. In addition to retroactively acknowledging his own foresight about the language issue, which should be taken with a grain of salt, Shevardnadze cited the public statements made by members of the Georgian Writers’ Union – a government cultural body – as the impetus for action from the broader citizenry during an early public forum held by the Georgian CC.740 It is possible that, in this and other meetings, leaders encouraged attendees to convey their thoughts about the draft to the Georgian CC via letter. Furthermore, whether Party meeting leaders emphasized Article 75 or attendees raised this issue themselves, among the letters the language issue dominates writers’ attention. The rather formulaic structure of many shorter letters signals that it may have been an assignment (from local or employer Party organs) or that a template was available to letter writers. Yet the coexistence of these form letters with lengthier, more personal explications suggests that while a sort of “script” was available to some, others sought more elaborate and potentially persuasive forms of argumentation in

740 Ševardnaže, p’ik’ri carsulsa da momavalze, 92.
their letters. It is worth noting that, even if Writers’ Union advocates did spark the petition (and eventual demonstration) movement, petitioners themselves did not mention the Writers’ Union or individual Georgian writers in their appeals. Instead, those who penned more elaborate arguments turned to a combination of lived experiences, national pride, and Marxist-Leninist ideology to explain their stances.

Most letters lauded the great achievement of the new constitution yet qualified their praise with one or more suggestions regarding the draft text. Many writers asked to replace the draft Articles 75 and 171 with existing Articles 156 and 124, which preserved the provision that “the state language of the Georgian SSR is Georgian.” Some writers pointed out a logical incongruity between articles that articulated aspects of republican sovereignty (such as those detailed in Articles 68 and 110) and Article 75. Elene Gelovani, a self-described housewife, asked,

If Georgia is indeed an independent republic: it has its own flag, seal, why should it not declare the Georgian language as the official language in Georgia? Maybe they were a generation of wolves and were only fighting for food?! Respect for their memory requires the abolition of Article 75 and that Article 10 is amended in the following way: “The Georgian SSR’s language, seal, flag, anthem, and capital city is the same as in the Georgian SSR’s 1937 constitution’s Articles 156 and 157.”741

Gelovani took promises of Soviet federalism at face value and used the constitutionally mandated structure of the Union-to-republic relationship to question the validity of Article 75. As insinuated in her allusion, earlier defenders of the Georgian language did not merely do so out of desperation or self-interest, but

741 Elene Gelovani to Constitutional Commission, sscca (II), f. 14, op. 115, d. 361, l. 20.
to preserve the language for future generations of Georgians.\textsuperscript{742} The significance of that achievement went beyond the technicalities of Soviet constitutionalism, yet was dependent upon its protections. Professor T’inat’in P’arnaozis asuli Pič’xaia, a Party member from Tbilisi, similarly struggled to understand the motivation behind eliminating the official language provision, especially because “Soviet Georgia's great and important historical achievement was the proclamation of the Georgian language as the state language,” a feat for which “the Georgian nation struggled for centuries...and was granted by this happy Soviet state.”\textsuperscript{743} Language had a national significance that predated Soviet power, yet Soviet structures institutionalized the Georgian language in its preeminent position in the republic. In other words, language moved from a cultural to a civic issue: it had evolved from an elite concern to a broadly-based, popular concern by the late 1970s.

In their defenses of retaining Georgian as the republic’s state language, other writers looked toward Marxist-Leninist ideology for explanations. One Tbilisi household placed Georgians along a national development trajectory and concluded that the proposed constitutional changes were “premature” for most of the republic's population and would likely cause an “arousal of national feeling” if

\textsuperscript{742} Gelovani’s reference to “wolves...fighting for food” seems to allude to earlier struggles to protect Georgian interests. Unfortunately, she does not elaborate further on this point, but her reference to “generations” could refer to the “pirveli, meore, mesame dasi” (first, second, and third groups) of the Georgian national intelligentsia cultivated from the mid-nineteenth century through the Georgian independence period (1918-1921). See Jones, \textit{Socialism in Georgian Colors}; and Suny, \textit{The Making of the Georgian Nation}.

\textsuperscript{743} T’inat’in P’arnaozis asuli Pič’xaia to Constitutional Commission, sşssa (II), f. 14, op. 115, d. 361, l. 115.
implemented. According to the Mik'elaže family, the republic’s population was “not quite ready” to relinquish such key trappings of entitled rights as a state language. A certain N. Sabašvili proposed a compromise in which Georgian would be the “national” (erovnuli, rather than “official” or “state”) language and Russian the “interethnic language” of the republic (saerovnebat’a šoriso ena, literally language between nationalities), recalling lectures that insisted, “language under socialism had no political significance and only national significance remained.” While such lectures likely emphasized the national significance of language in the realm of culture, the practical application of these ideas blended the cultural and the political.

A group letter with 28 signatories concluded,

knowledge of the Georgian language is necessary for all residents of the republic due to the fact that the Georgian nation demonstrated internationalism when its homeland (mica-cqali) in a brotherly way and with full trust adopted people of other nations, from whom the Georgian nation also expects the manifestation of internationalism in the form of respect for the Georgian nation and its language.

The internationalist logic of deleting the official language clause proved a double-edged sword in these instances: removing the Georgian language’s official status in the name of internationalism would allegedly inspire unhealthy national feeling, so better to retain Georgian as the republic’s sole state language. On the other hand, Georgians had been good internationalists in the past and deserved the same

744 L. Mik'elaže and T'ina't'in Šalvas asuli Mik'elaže to Constitutional Commission, 3 April 1978, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 115, d. 361, l. 87, 99.
745 N. Sabašvili to Constitutional Commission, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 115, d. 361, l. 122. This seems to be an updated version of the “national in form, socialist in content” dictum of the korenizatsiia era.
746 “sak’. ss respublikis mok'ala'kebis ganc’xadeba,” sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 115, d. 361, l. 195.
respect from others. In these ways, Georgian petitioners reinterpreted the Soviet goal of internationalism to justify protection of their entitled language rights.

While some writers saw the proposed changes through the lens of internationalism, others viewed the proposal as a move toward Russification. Such a shift encountered practical challenges, as explained by Dimitri Alesis že Jidališvili, a resident of Šilda village in Qvareli district (in the Kaxet‘i region). Jidališvili noted, “State institutions and societal organs in Georgia chiefly serve the Georgian people in life. Here there are many who do not now the Russian language.” Jidališvili suggested the term “mother tongue (deda ena)” should be replaced by “Georgian language” in Article 75 to more effectively serve the entitled nationality. The polite explications of this villager contrast with the imperatives of E.S. Melia in his letter written on behalf of the Georgian people. After “categorically demanding” that “batono eduard” change Article 75, Melia argued, “The attempt of the Russification (garuseba) of the Georgian nation does not bring any good to anyone...consider...They dug up the Russians‘ savior, Stalin.” If, for Melia, Russification entailed desecrating heroes, M. Čanturia saw the defense of the Georgian language as key to “the formation and national-state sovereignty for the development of the nation of Ioseb Besarionis že Stalin.” Both writers mobilized

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747 Dimitri Alesis že Jidališvili to Constitutional Commission, 1 April 1978, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 115, d. 361, l. 37.
748 Addressing the letter to “batono eduard” is similar to writing “Mr. Eduard” or “Eduard Amrosievich” in Russian, rather than to “Comrade Shevardnadze” (amxanago Shevardnadze). The reference to “digging up Stalin” most likely refers to the clandestine removal of Stalin’s body from the Lenin Mausoleum on Red Square in 1961. The reference to Stalin as “the Russians’ savior” probably alludes to the Soviet victory in World War Two, 31 March 1978, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 115, d. 361, l. 88.
749 sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 115, d. 361, l. 160.
the figure of Stalin in their appeals to the Georgian constitutional commission and suggested the extent to which Stalin's meaning as a Soviet and/or national figure remained muddled over twenty years after the March 1956 events. Evoking Stalin in discussions of Russification and nation was not only an acceptable argumentative ploy for a Georgian audience in 1978, but a comprehensible one as well.\footnote{Shevardnadze described this effort in a similar manner in his memoir: “In short, it was a path toward the loss of nationality, toward Russification.” He also noted that he “was from Ioseb Stalin’s Georgia, as was Lavrenti Beria,” Ševardnaže, p’ik’ri carsulsa da momavalze, 88-90.}

Meanwhile, a group of students at Tbilisi State University began to discuss the draft constitution and started planning a student demonstration to coincide with the scheduled Constitutional Commission meeting on 14 April, at which time the commission would ratify the constitution. The student organizers also participated in the letter writing campaign, and a petition from the philological faculty of TSU alone (believed to be the genesis of the demonstration movement) collected nearly 500 signatures.\footnote{f. 14, op. 115, d. 355, ll. 3-4.} Student organizers quickly attracted colleagues from the Technical University and other educational institutions. Yet the initial impetus for the letter campaign and student mobilization remains mysterious: the draft had indeed been printed in komunisti, and presumably a constitutional scholar could have identified the changes with some effort. The ability of most citizens – even if avid readers of komunisti – to pick up on the nuance of the proposed changes (and quickly!), however, seems suspect without the influence of rumor to explicitly seek out Article 75. Even one of the professed organizers of the student demonstration,
Tamar M., struggled to remember how she first learned of the language article other than a student friend pointing it out to her in the newspaper.752

So who planted this seed of mobilization, and toward what end? Among historians and contemporary observers this event has been treated as more of a spontaneous protest, with little discussion regarding precursors.753 Two theories come to mind after reviewing archival documents, memoir accounts, and speaking with event participants and contemporaries. A member of the Writers’ Union or professor at TSU could have initiated the rumor covertly in order to bring awareness to the issue without attracting attention to an instigator. A public meeting of the Writers’ Union in late March revealed little in terms of specifics or motive, however, as most of the speakers maintained the Party line, and the group failed to issue a resolution or statement on the Article 75 debate.754 While this theory is certainly possible, it seems more likely that the instigator behind the mobilization campaign was Shevardnadze himself. Not only did Shevardnadze foreshadow public dissatisfaction with the language issue in a missive to Moscow (demonstrating his own “foresight” in the process), he also was able to pivot rapidly – and without consultation – to meet citizen demands at the dramatic climax of the unfolding events. This theory regarding Shevardnadze’s role will be developed further below.

752 Author interview with T’amar M., 8 June 2015.
753 Nahaylo and Swoboda, Soviet Disunion; Suny, The Making of the Georgian Nation; Gerber, Georgien; Smith, Red Nations.
754 Writer Ak’ak’i Bak’raže recounts these scenes in detail in his memoir, ak’ak’i bak’raže, tomi IV (Tbilisi: Merani, 2005), 453-471.
Unfortunately, Georgian archival documents and Soviet press do not recount the details of what transpired on 14 April, so I have constructed my brief narrative from memoir accounts, contemporary Western reporting, and conversations with participants. On the afternoon of 14 April, a student-led group of citizens gathered at Tbilisi State University to march to the House of Government, where the ratification meeting was taking place. By this time, the grievance expressed by demonstrators – a solitary demand to revise Article 75 -- came as little surprise to Party and security officials in Tbilisi.\textsuperscript{755} According to T’amar M., a student organizer, members of the Georgian KGB repeatedly encouraged her to call off the demonstration in the 36 hours leading up to its start, yet as they saw participants gathered in the main courtyard of the university following a night of questioning T’amar M., the KGB officials relented and let the demonstrators proceed.\textsuperscript{756}

As the demonstration slowly proceeded from Tbilisi State University down Rust'aveli Avenue and acquired more participants, Shevardnadze delivered his report to the Central Committee. During the two-hour address, Georgian KGB chief Alek'si Inauri updated Shevardnadze on developments on the streets. The first note Shevardnadze received informed him that “the youth” had moved from the university; the second, that “they approached the opera theatre.” The third note


\textsuperscript{756} Author interview with T’amar M., 8 June 2015.
“was not necessary” because they could already hear cries of “deda-ena! sa-k’art’-velol!” (mother tongue! Georgia!) coming from the street. Per the organizers’ instructions, the demonstrators proceeded toward the House of Government in a peaceful and orderly manner, citing only a single demand for increased effect and legitimacy: to include a statement claiming Georgian as the republic’s state language in Article 75. This demand was – by design – fully within the bounds of Soviet grievance and boasted a constitutional precedent. Early in the demonstration, militia patrol cars along the route refused to hinder the demonstrators and, in one case, even reportedly handed a leader a megaphone to guide the crowd. Demonstrators held signs and recited slogans, yet neither formal nor spontaneous speeches (such as those witnessed in 1956) took place among the participants. Toward the end of his address, Shevardnadze announced to the CC that the official language clause would be retained in the final version of the constitution. In Shevardnadze’s account, upon hearing this news, “the entire hall (which fit 750 men) rose and began to applaud, not only applause, also crying...I did not see one face that did not have eyes filled with tears.”

Following the conclusion of Shevardnadze’s address to the CC, the news regarding the language article was broadcast via radio to the crowd outside. To reinforce the message, Shevardnadze, along with CC secretaries Soliko Xubeišvili

757 Ševardnaž, p’ik’ri carsulsa da momavalze, 96.
758 Author interview with T’amar M., 8 June 2015.
759 Shevardnadze noted in his memoir that in the address he claimed that the members of the bureau of the Georgian CC discussed the issue and reached a decision, yet in reality there had been no such meeting, Ševardnaž, p’ik’ri carsulsa da momavalze, 96.
760 Ibid.
and Jumber Patiašvili came to the balcony overlooking the crowd, at which point Shevardnadze announced:

Children (švilebo), don’t worry, everything is fine, we took responsibility for ourselves. This article of the constitution will be the same as it was. The mother tongue (deda-ena) is saved! It will have official status!761

In spite of this announcement, the crowd did not disperse and proceeded to the Dynamo Tbilisi football stadium, where Shevardnadze again addressed the demonstrators. He reaffirmed: “I declare that no one touched the mother tongue, the mother tongue is preserved, it has official status.” 762 The demonstrators re-traced their steps down Rust'aveli Avenue and dispersed, going home to hold sup’rebi (feasts) in celebration.763

In his address, which was published in republic newspapers on 15 April, Shevardnadze balanced an adherence to the preexisting Soviet Georgian constitutions vis-à-vis official language with an appeal for “our” youth in particular to learn the language of “the great Russian people, the Russian language” due to its status as the language of “modern world civilization.” He also stressed the importance of exercising care toward the Abkhaz and Ossetian languages as well as Armenian and Azerbaijani languages in the republic. He subsequently summarized

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761 Ševardnaže, p’ik’ri carsulsda da momavalze, 97. The “children” reference supports the assertion that the demonstrators consisted primarily of university students from Tbilisi State University and other institutes. An American lawyer who happened to be in Tbilisi at the time reported to The New York Times that some in the crowd “cursed” Shevardnadze following his address to the demonstrators, Whitney, “Soviet Georgians Win on Language.”
762 Ševardnaže, p’ik’ri carsulsda da momavalze, 97.
763 Author interview with T’amari M., 8 June 2015.
the revised language that would be approved by the Georgian Council of Ministers later that day.764

On 16 April, republic newspapers published the revised and final version of the constitution. The text of the new Article 75 read:

The Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic's state language is the Georgian language.

The Georgian SSR exercises state concern for the all-round development of the Georgian language and guarantees its use in state and societal organs, institutions of culture, education, and others.

In the Georgian SSR the free use of Russian and other languages used by the population is guaranteed in these bodies and institutions.

Any kinds of privileges or restrictions in the use of these or other languages are not permitted.765

Therefore, the final version contained both an explicit statement about the official – and exclusive -- status of the Georgian language in the republic and space for the further development of Russian and other non-Georgian languages. In meeting petitioners' and demonstrators' demands regarding Article 75, Shevardnadze and the Constitutional Commission likewise created a space – albeit subtly – for promoting linguistic diversity and a Russian lingua franca toward the goal of constitutional consistency between Union republics – that is, the original goal of the draft article. Shortly following the concession to Georgian demonstrators and petitioners, Soviet authorities authorized a similar reversion in the constitutions of

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764 "Doklad pervogo sekretaria TsK KP Gruzii tov. Shevardnadze E.A. 'O proekte konstitutsii (osnovnogo zakona) Gruzinskoi Sovetskoi Sotsialisticheskoi Respubliki i itogakh ego vsenarodnogo obsuzhdenii,'" 14 April 1978, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 115, d. 16, ll. 4-14, also printed in Zaria Vostoka and komunisti, 15 April 1978, p. 3.

765 "sak'art'velos sabčot'a soc'ialisturi respublikis konstituc'ia (žirit'adi kanoni)," komunisti (16 April 1978), pp. 2-5; "Konstitutsiiia (Osnovnoi Zakon) Gruzinskoi Sovetskoi Sotsialisticheskoi Respubliki," Zaria Vostoka, 16 April 1978, p. 3. See also Shevardnadze’s subsequent speech on the constitution, "sak'art'velos mšromelt’a c’xovrebis didmišvenelovani nišansveti," komunisti (16 April 1978), p. 6.
the Armenian and Azerbaijani SSRs. The south Caucasian republics would preserve this unique feature in their constitutions for the duration of the Soviet experiment.

His memoir account, published over thirty years after the events discussed, attributes perhaps an overly singular role to Shevardnadze in the 14 April 1978 events, but as the republic’s first secretary who ultimately decided to re-insert the language article, his role was central to managing the response. For as sentimentally as he recalled his actions toward the “children” and their “mother tongue” in his memoir, Shevardnadze’s explanation to the CPSU CC sounded remarkably like that of his predecessor, Vasil Mžavanaže account following the demonstrations in Georgia in March 1956: the Georgian CP had not sufficiently carried out ideological work among “members of the intelligentsia and certain sectors of the youth,” particularly with regard to Marxist-Leninist understandings of the “national question.” Whereas in 1956 the deficiency in ideological work purportedly dealt with expunging Stalin’s “cult of personality” in the republic, in 1978, the weakness

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lay with effectively promoting the merits of consistency across republican constitutions (since the Caucasian republics were the outliers in this case).\textsuperscript{767}

Yet other distinctions suggest that Shevardnadze’s role may have been even more decisive not only in managing the events, but perhaps even in facilitating them. Unlike the March 1956 events, which left a huge archival trail (by far the largest reviewed for this dissertation) in both Tbilisi and Moscow, the 14 April 1978 events themselves barely make an appearance. The extensive intelligence reporting, photographs, real-time correspondence with Moscow, and eyewitness testimony from 1956, and post-event ideological campaign had no archival counterpart in 1978. Moreover, while 300 people were arrested and 39 convicted in the immediate aftermath of the March 1956 events, there were no arrests or even questioning of participants and organizers following the demonstration.\textsuperscript{768} The behavior of KGB and militia officials to initially try to prevent the demonstration yet relent in the event, combined with Shevardnadze’s seemingly about-face in his speech to the commission itself suggests that he may have orchestrated the entire affair. But what benefit could Shevardnadze derive from such a scheme? From the perspective of Georgian citizens, Shevardnadze’s effort could garner greater favorability and legitimacy as a national leader, as the narrative constructed from this event was one

\textsuperscript{767} “Informatsiia ‘o plenume TsK KP Gruzii,” E. Shevardnadze to TsK KPSS, 27 June 1978, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 115, d. 303,l. 29.

\textsuperscript{768} This corresponds not only with my findings (or lack thereof) in the Party and KGB archives on this issue, but also with Shevardnadze’s and T’amar M.’s accounts of the events. While an archival trail for the constitution discussions was significant, the narrative of the 14 April events themselves were absent. Internal reporting on the aftermath of the events largely confines itself to euphemism and allusion (rather than detail and action) and is much more concerned with events in Abkhazia than Tbilisi.
of Shevardnadze siding with a popular movement against a Moscow policy. With regard to Moscow, Shevardnadze demonstrated an ability to effectively manage a situation of disorder without violence or bloodshed, and with little political damage. He “knew” his constituents well enough to both anticipate and negotiate a policy solution in their favor through Soviet institutions. A concurrent development in autonomous Abkhazia posed a decidedly greater challenge not only to Shevardnadze’s abilities as Georgian-in-chief and crisis manager, but also to the Soviet ethnoterritorial landscape writ large.

**Autonomy and its Discontents: Abkhazia**

The reinstatement of Georgian as the republic’s state language in the constitution presented additional challenges for the republic’s leadership and multiethnic citizenry. Namely, while Georgian demonstrators and petitioners triumphantly greeted this concession, the move further antagonized citizens with perceived grievances in Abkhazia.

![Figure 20: Map of Abkhaz ASSR](Source: Wikimedia Commons)
An autonomous republic within the Georgian SSR, the Abkhaz ASSR and its entitled nationality, the Abkhaz, were by design afforded the same rights, protections, and benefits within the autonomous republic as entitled Georgians were elsewhere in the republic. This arrangement dated from 1931, when Abkhazia was downgraded from union republic to the short-lived category of treaty republic to, finally, autonomous republic within Georgia. While changes in levels of autonomy occurred throughout the USSR between the 1920s and 1950s as Moscow implemented its ethnoterritorial schema and incorporated new territories, the Abkhaz case remained peculiar due to the very small population of the entitled nationality. Georgians, Russians, Armenians, and (prior to their deportation in 1949) Greeks all comprised large populations in Abkhazia, which complicated the implementation of “affirmative action” politics for entitled Abkhaz, relations between nationalities, and the relationship between Tbilisi, Sukhumi (Abkhazia’s capital), and Moscow.

Table 9: Population by nationality in the Abkhaz ASSR according to the All-Union Census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>1939 (%)</th>
<th>1959 (%)</th>
<th>1970 (%)</th>
<th>1979 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>311,885</td>
<td>404,738</td>
<td>486,959</td>
<td>486,082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abkhaz</td>
<td>56,197 (18)</td>
<td>61,193 (15.1)</td>
<td>77,276 (15.9)</td>
<td>83,097 (17.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgian</td>
<td>91,967 (29.5)</td>
<td>158,221 (39.1)</td>
<td>199,595 (41)</td>
<td>213,322 (43.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>60,201 (19.3)</td>
<td>86,715 (21.4)</td>
<td>92,889 (19.1)</td>
<td>79,730 (16.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenian</td>
<td>49,705 (15.9)</td>
<td>64,425 (15.9)</td>
<td>74,850 (15.4)</td>
<td>73,350 (15.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>34,621 (11.1)</td>
<td>9,101 (2.2)</td>
<td>13,114 (2.7)</td>
<td>13,642 (2.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
<td>8,593 (2.8)</td>
<td>11,474 (2.8)</td>
<td>11,955 (2.5)</td>
<td>10,257 (2.1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

769 Compiled from Vsesoiuznaia perepis’ naseleniia 1939 goda; Itogi Vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1959 goda; Gruzinskaia SSR; Itogi Vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1970 goda; and Chislennost’ i sostav naseleniia SSSR: Po dannym Vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1979 goda.
At least once per decade since 1937 (1937, 1947, 1956-7, 1967), as described in previous chapters, Abkhaz intellectuals and activists appealed to Moscow for protection of their entitled rights within the Abkhaz ASSR against a spectrum of perceived “Georgification” policies originating in the 1930s.770

As was the case for Georgian petitioners described earlier in the chapter, the discussions surrounding the 1977 All-Union Constitution and its republican variants provided an institutional forum through which a group of Abkhaz intellectuals once again made a lengthy case articulating the violation of Abkhaz rights in the republic. The so-called “Letter of the 130,” dated 10 December 1977, described to Brezhnev, the CPSU CC Politburo, and M. Ia. Iasnov a decades-long process of Georgification of Abkhazia and called for the transfer of the Abkhaz ASSR from Georgia to the RSFSR – an appeal that had first been made in 1957.771 The letter’s signatories included Party members, veterans, artists, writers, academics, engineers, teachers, kolkhoz and sovkhoz workers, and workers in tourism and tea production.

The petition cited five broad areas of complaint: first, appeals to the 1921 precedent, when Abkhazia was established as a Union republic; second, the allegedly anti-Abkhaz policies during the so-called Beriashchina (1936-1953), including the closing of Abkhaz-language schools, introduction of the Georgian alphabet for the Abkhaz language, replacement of Abkhaz with Georgian place names, and resettlement of ethnic Georgians to the republic; third, the

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770 On the role of intellectuals and historiography in Georgian-Abkhaz relations, see Shnirelman, The Value of the Past; and Coppieters, “In Defence of the Homeland.”
771 10 December 1977, ssssa (II), f. 14, op. 115, d. 342, ll. 2-43.
historiographical Georgification of Abkhazia; fourth, demographic changes and resettlement policies; and fifth, disappointment with Shevardnadze’s approach toward Abkhaz issues.

Many of the details of these complaints had likewise appeared in earlier petitions, particularly with regard to the Beria period and historiographical debates. Petitioners criticized the new Georgian leadership for attempting to equate the Abkhaz and Ajarian ASSRs, which had the same autonomous status in spite of the fact that “Ajarians never constituted and today still do not constitute a separate nation or nationality. Therefore Ajarian autonomy is not national autonomy and to identify it with the Abkhaz ASSR is politically mistaken.” Finally, the petitioners appealed to the timely issue of constitutional reform in their request to transfer Abkhazia to the RSFSR, a power not granted to autonomous republics in earlier iterations of the constitution. In their account, “Although the constitutions of Union and autonomous republics do not specifically stipulate the right of autonomous republics to freely secede from one or another Union republic, this does not mean that such a possibility is excluded,” implying that such a right could (and should) be granted to autonomous republics in the new constitutions.

CPSU CC head of Organizational and Party Work V. Brovikov forwarded the petition to Shevardnadze in January 1978. Because the signatories had reportedly not yet received any acknowledgement of their missive from CPSU authorities, six of

772 Ibid., ll. 18-19.
773 Ibid., l. 21.
774 Brovikov to Shevardnadze, 12 January 1978, ssssa (Il), f. 14, op. 115, d. 342, l. 1.
the original signatories reiterated their demands in February and called for an exploratory commission in the CPSU CC to investigate their grievances. Instead, this task was delegated to Abkhaz Obkom Chairman L.V. Marshaniaia, who discussed the commission’s findings at a 22 February 1978 session of the Abkhaz Obkom of the Georgian CP in Sukhumi.

The “130” presciently predicted that their letter would be interpreted as “nationalistic” by Georgian and Abkhazian authorities and its signatories derided as so-called “Abkhaz nationalists.” With the participation of the letter’s key signatories at the 22 February Abkhaz Obkom meeting, discussion about the letter revealed important tensions not only between the autonomous republic’s Party leadership and intelligentsia, but also among Abkhaz representatives in both groups. Several Abkhaz participants challenged the signatories’ claim to speak on behalf of the Abkhaz people, and other participants disputed a perceived claim that current Abkhaz-Georgian relations were worse than those during the Beriashchina. Participants agreed, however, that the “national question” in Abkhazia remained problematic and required further efforts to improve the situation. B.G. Kekhiripa, one of the “130” representatives, continued to press the secession issue with the following rationale:

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775 Tsvinariaia V.L., Damentia O.N., Aishba A.A., Agrba V.B., Tsvinaria I.I. Markholia I.R., “Pis’mo ‘shesterykh,’ chlenam Politbiuro TsK KPSS, g. Moskva, Kreml’,” printed in Abkhazskie pis’ma (1947-1989), 187-189. This particular collection was gathered and edited by I.R. Markholia, one of the signatories of the “Letter of 130” and main actors in the Abkhaz national movement from the 1960s through the 1990s.

776 “Ob intsidentakh, imevshikh mesto v Abkhaizskoi ASSR v marte-aprele 1978 goda,” Shevardenadze to TsK KPSS, 6 April 1978, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 115, d. 304, l. 5.

777 10 December 1977, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 115, d. 342, l. 21.
Yes, prior to this letter I wrote a letter to the Constitutional Commission in which my comrades and I proposed to supplement the 71st Article of the Constitution of the USSR. For example, in this article it is stated that the right to freely secede from the USSR is preserved for every union republic, but autonomous republics do not have this right. I remember the events in Georgia in 1956. I personally was in Tbilisi. So what, it was good then? Do you remember why that began? So now, if Georgia wants to leave the USSR, then the result is that they do not ask the Abkhaz whether they want to leave with them? So that is why we suggest amending Article 71 to give the right to autonomous republics to transfer from one union republic to another.778

In spite of Kekhiripa’s appeal, more diligent Party and ideological work – not territorial transfer – would provide the preferred course of action for the time being, and Party aktivs throughout Abkhazia were informed of the commission’s findings in local Party meetings beginning on 18 March.

Shortly thereafter, however, Abkhaz citizens began to convene their own unsanctioned, reportedly spontaneous “gatherings” (skhody) to discuss the contents of the “Letter of the 130”. The timeline of these gatherings unfolded as follows:

27 March – Zvandripsh (Gudauta district) – 100 people
28 March – Bzyb’ (Gagra district) – 50 people
29 March – Bzyb’ (Gagra district) – 400 people
1 April – Abgarkhuk (Gudauta district) – 1000 people
2 April – Lykhny (Gudauta district) – 2000 people
4 April – Reports of an unhealthy mood among student sphere at Sukhumi Pedagogical Institute; Possible gathering in Ochamchire district (number of participants unknown)
5 April – Ochamchire – 1500 people779

Traditional Abkhaz skhody had a longer genealogy and dynamic quality, as calls for gatherings spread from town to town. Moreover, the location of the largest of the

779 As reported in “Ob intsidentakh, imevshikh mesto v Abkhazskoi ASSR v marte-aprele 1978 goda,” Shevardnadze to TsK KPSS, 6 April 1978, sšsa (II), f. 14, op. 115, d. 304, ll. 6-8.
gatherings in 1978, in Lykhny, Gudauta district, was likely not coincidental, as this had been the traditional center of Abkhaz national identity and served as the focal point of earlier (and subsequent) mobilization movements. Shevardnadze and Brovиков first met to deal with the spread of the gatherings on 3 April, and by 6 April, Georgian and Abkhaz Party leaders dispersed throughout Abkhazia to gauge the population’s mood and speak to Party meetings in effort to curb further gatherings. Republic and local officials were aided in this effort by the arrival of V.P. Pirozhkov, the vice-chairman of the USSR KGB. Local Party leadership bore the brunt of the blame at this stage, as evidenced by the replacement of Abkhaz Obkom First Secretary Khintba by V.B. Adleiba on 20 April.

Tbilisi authorities responded to the growing number of gatherings through the 25 April 1978 Georgian CC resolution “On measures for the further development of the economy and culture of the Abkhaz ASSR, strengthening of organized ideological development work among laborers of the autonomous republic.” This resolution evaluated many of the claims made by the “130” signatories and established a fifteen-point plan to foster improvements in a variety of spheres in Abkhazia and in relations between Tbilisi and Sukhumi. These measures ranged from greater economic investment to television and radio programming in the Abkhaz and other languages to improving development of local cadres to revisiting the question of place names. The plan also made note of deficiencies in cooperation

780 On one such earlier iteration of Abkhaz *skhody* in 1931, during the collectivization drive, see Timothy K. Blauvelt, “Resistance and Accommodation in the Stalinist Periphery.”
781 Khintba was transferred to the Georgian CP CC in Tbilisi, which, while a promotion from periphery to republican center, also got him out of Abkhazia, “Plenum Abkhazskogo obkoma KP Gruzii,” *Zaria Vostoka* (20 April 1978), p. 2.
between Georgian and Abkhazian intellectual and cultural institutions and aimed to improve coordination in the realms of textbooks, education, and publishing. One of the most important points was the stated transformation of the Sukhumi Pedagogical Institute into a state university (Sukhumi State University), as prior to this Abkhazia had been the only autonomous republic in the USSR without its own university. The areas for improvement specifically addressed many of the grievances cited by Abkhaz petitioners and demonstrators, yet overall the language of the resolution itself deemphasized the singularity of ethnic Abkhaz complaints, even if they were made from the perspective of an entitled nationality, in favor of highlighting the multinational population of Abkhazia. Moreover, the 25 April resolution did not address – or even acknowledge – the issue of territorial transfer from the Georgian SSR to the RSFSR.

The timing of the gatherings and Party response in Abkhazia closely mirrored the petition campaign, public discussions, and demonstrations in April in Tbilisi. It was not a stretch, then, for republican leaders to view these developments as closely linked. In both cases, Party leadership diagnosed the problem as a failure of sufficient ideological work regarding the new constitution and the

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782 Protokol #91 zasedania biuro TsK KPG "o merakh po dal'neishemu razvitiyi ekonomiki i kul'tury Abkhazskoi ASSR, usileniiu organizatorskoi ideino-vospitatel'noi raboty sredi trudiashchihisia avtonomnoi respubliki," 25 April 1978, ssssa (II), f. 14, op. 115, d. 110, ll. 32-36. Also printed in Abkhazskie pis'ma, 279-286.

relationship between nationalities in the republic. Intellectuals and students first brought Georgian and Abkhaz grievances to the fore, yet these movements gained traction among broader sectors of the population with great speed. However, Party leaders in Tbilisi and Moscow were far less willing to accede to Abkhaz protesters' demands for transfer of the republic to the RSFSR.

The involvement of both Moscow and Tbilisi authorities in responding to the “Abkhaz events” suggests that there was more at stake than complaints about uneven economic development or cultural rights. Rather, shifting republic borders per Abkhaz demands would alter an otherwise static ethnoterritorial schema throughout the USSR and perhaps set a precedent for other territorial claims. In his memoir, Shevardnadze recalled a summons to Moscow in the aftermath of the 14 April events to discuss the implications of the official language clause in the Georgian constitution. At Moscow's insistence, according to Shevardnadze, forthcoming versions of the Abkhaz and Ajarian ASSR constitutions would likewise need to correspond to the change in Tbilisi. Upon arriving in Abkhazia to discuss said changes regarding the language clause, Shevardnadze reportedly encountered a demonstration of Georgians and Abkhaz, “all, who had a patriotic feeling.” He relayed the incident to CPSU CC secretary I.V. Kapitonov, who was familiar with Abkhazia, and ultimately three languages were enshrined in the Abkhaz SSR constitution: Georgian, Abkhaz, and Russian. Yet Shevardnadze’s memoir account

784 In Abkhazia in particular, Siraże attributed the lack of an Abkhaz Obkom head of ideology for the past three years as an important component of this failure, ibid., l. 17.
785 Ševardnaže, p’ikri da c’arsula momavalze, 97-98.
– like the 25 April Georgian CC resolution -- elided the larger, more controversial issue of Abkhaz grievances and secession.

The involvement of Kapitonov illustrates the way Moscow attempted to navigate between the plethora of Abkhaz grievances and demands as articulated in the “Letter of the 130” and in the various gatherings. Kapitonov was dispatched to Georgia in May not only to meet with Shevardnadze and other republic leaders, but also to speak to various audiences in Abkhazia. His main address, delivered on 25 May 1978 to the Abkhaz district Party active, announced that the CPSU CC, following the fifteen-point plan of the Georgian CC, would carefully evaluate the economic and cultural situation in Abkhazia and work to improve these conditions. The territorial transfer would not be permitted, according to the following logic:

> In our country we have twenty autonomous republics. Currently in each of them the project of the new constitutions are published and widely discussed...I should tell you, comrades, that not a single autonomous republic advocated for such demands or other such issues going against the Constitution of the USSR, the constitutions of the union republics...We believe that all comrades who advocate or support the idea and transfer of Abkhazia from one union republic to another will understand the illegality of their position and will not insist on this. It will benefit neither the Abkhaz, nor the people of other nationalities residing in your republic...Everything related to the national-state structure of the Union of SSRs is explicitly and unequivocally decided in the new Soviet Constitution. And it would be wrong if the constitutions of autonomous republics contained provisions that did not correspond to the Basic Law of the country.

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786 Protokol #91 zasedania biuro TsK KPG "o merakh po dal'neishemu razvitiu ekonomiki i kul'tury Abkhazskoi ASSR," 25 April 1978, sëssa (II), f. 14, op. 115, d. 110, ll. 32-36. The CPSU CC passed a resolution by the same name on 1 June. On the progress of the resolution’s measures a year later, see sëssa (II), f. 14, op. 117, d. 324.

Following Kapitonov’s speech and subsequent CPSU CC resolution, Shevardnadze resumed the process of accounting for mistakes made in Party and ideological work that resulted in both the “Abkhaz events” and movement for language rights in Tbilisi. In his 27 June report to the CPSU CC, he subsumed both developments under a rubric of interethnic relations (*mezhnatsional’nie otnosheniiia*) in Georgia, again somewhat overstepping explicit Abkhaz-Georgian tensions to speak to a broader phenomenon.⁷⁸⁸

Yet Kapitonov’s intervention failed to abate unrest in Abkhazia, as the gatherings across the republic in the spring and summer turned into a strike movement in September that stopped work in certain factories and led shops to close. According to Abkhaz Obkom First Secretary Adleiba, this not only affected individual factory outputs, but also threatened the “normal functioning” of tourist areas in Gagra and Gudauta districts, the main locales for strike activity.⁷⁸⁹ Sh.N. Lakoba, secretary of the Abkhaz ASSR Council of Trade Unions, noted that while in previous calls of the *skhody*, leaders day and night went to talk to people to ally them with their cause, placing discussion at the center of the practice, the current state of protest in Abkhazia had devolved into unclear demands and ineffective means of expressing grievance, such as taxi and worker strikes.⁷⁹⁰

Yet even if Abkhazia was in a “state of emergency” by October, as L.V. Marshaniaia, secretary of the Abkhaz Obkom, claimed, this incident of unrest fizzled

⁷⁸⁸ “Informatsiia ‘o plenume TsK KP Gruzii,” Shevardnadze to TsK KPSS, sëssa (II), f. 14, op. 115, d. 303, ll. 24-32.
⁷⁹⁰ Ibid., 312-313.
shortly thereafter, as the 25 April/1 June resolution began to be implemented in earnest. Nearly a year later, in August 1979, Shevardnadze reported to the CPSU CC on the numerous activities undertaken in recent months to improve “all spheres of life in the autonomous republic,” particularly in improvement of the “moral-psychological atmosphere” and economic development. Alongside increased cultural programs, discussions between Georgian and Abkhaz historians, Party sessions dedicated to kritika and samokritika, and increased Abkhaz cadre representation, however, Shevardnadze also described the continued pursuit of the organizers of the “events” and concerning occurrences of Georgian “gatherings” in response to earlier Abkhaz gatherings. Georgian leadership also remained reluctant to accede to one consistent demand made by Abkhaz petitioners and demonstrators regarding place names in the autonomous republic. Again, while Abkhaz petitioners sought to rename many population centers, streets, and so forth with Abkhaz names, Shevardnadze questioned the legitimacy of such an effort when affected populations would include “Russians, Georgians, Armenians, Estonians, Greeks, and representatives of other nationalities.” He anticipated “serious disturbances” among those populations in conjunction with renaming per Abkhaz requests, and therefore passed the issue to Georgian KGB chairman Inauri for further investigation.791

As noted above, the scope and course of the “Abkhaz events” held implications not only for Abkhaz actors and republic leadership, but also for the majority of Abkhazia’s non-entitled populace. Shevardnadze reported in an early

791 Shevardnadze to TsK KPSS, “Informatsiiia o rabote, provodimoi po vypolneniiu postanovleniia TsK KPSS i Soveta Ministrov SSSR po Abkhazskoi ASSR i merakh po okonchatel’noi stabilizatsii obstanovki v avtonomnoi republike,” 14 August 1979, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 117, d. 324, ll. 4-10.
letter to the CPSU CC that “the absolute majority of the 500,000-person population of Abkhazia reacts negatively to these events.” Considering that members of the Abkhaz nationality comprised only 17.1 percent of the republic’s population, Shevardnadze’s assessment likely reflects a widely held concern not only among Abkhazia’s Georgian population, but also Armenians, Russians, and other prominent minority nationalities.

Letters written by Georgians in Abkhazia over the course of 1978 reflected these concerns, which were related to yet distinct from their co-nationals’ movement regarding the language issue. A group letter to the Georgian CC in June explicitly viewed the speeches and developments in Abkhazia in recent months as “anti-Georgian,” threatening both national interests and “internationalist aspirations.” They expressed their concern,

not only about the fates of the 80,000 Abkhaz residents in Abkhazia, but also the fate of the 200,000 Georgian residents. We care not only about whether feelings are triggered at present by the Abkhaz people, but also whether feelings is (sic) born today in the heart of the Georgian people and what these feelings impulsively turn into actions in the future.

Written in Georgian, this letter clearly identifies Georgian signatories and Georgian interests at stake in the autonomous republic. Yet not all Georgian petitioners felt comfortable signing such letters: another petition in Georgian “from Sokhumi” in

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792 “Ob intsidentakh, imevshikh mesto v Abkhazskoi ASSR v marte-aprele 1978 goda,” Shevardnadze to TsK KPSS, 6 April 1978, ššssa (II), f. 14, op. 115, d. 304, l. 8.
793 This perspective is typically absent from narratives of the “Abkhaz events,” which tend to focus exclusively on the Abkhaz point of view and the Sukhumi-Tbilisi-Moscow relationship, with little to no attention paid to the majority of Abkhazia’s residents.
September 1978 explicitly states that the writers withheld their names out of fear.\textsuperscript{795}

A complementary letter written in October to the Georgian CC took a different approach. Rather than highlighting specifically Georgian interests, the Georgian writers wrote instead as Communists (and in Russian).\textsuperscript{796} In their account, the “gatherings and excesses” during the “Abkhaz events” took on an “openly anti-Georgian and anti-Soviet character” that differed from earlier demonstrations (in 1957, 1963, and 1967) in its mass nature and in their demands to break entirely with Georgia, disregarding the Georgian population of Abkhazia.\textsuperscript{797} For these petitioners, anti-Soviet and anti-Georgian charges were intimately linked. In their definition:

\begin{quote}
We call them anti-Soviet as they were directed against the administrative-territorial division of the USSR as enshrined in the Constitution of the USSR, against the legal right of citizens of the Georgian SSR to freely live in the entire territory of the Georgian SSR in a community of equal nationalities, against the socialist principle of democratic centralism when a privileged minority attempts to dictate its will to the majority. In the autonomous republic the basest sentiments of Abkhaz chauvinism prevailed, national exceptionalism and enmity between peoples, that are absolutely incompatible with the spirit and letter of the Constitution of the USSR, with the Soviet, socialist way of life.\textsuperscript{798}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{795} Anonymous letter “From Sukhumi” to Georgian CC, 8 September 1978, sžssa (II), f. 14, op. 115, d. 342, ll. 56-57.

\textsuperscript{796} The authors went so far as to scribble out the “Georgian” in their self-identification at the beginning of the letter, such that it read “We, Georgian Communists, living and working in Abkhazia...” to Georgian CC, September 1978, sžssa (II), f. 14, op. 115, d. 342, ll. 107-118.

\textsuperscript{797} Ibid., l. 107.

\textsuperscript{798} Ibid., ll. 113-114. For other examples such letters, see sžssa (II), f. 14, op. 115, d. 464, ll. 11-16, 67-93.
Elsewhere in the letter, the petitioners emphasized that Abkhaz actions affected not only the republic’s Georgians, but also other non-entitled nationalities such as Russians and Armenians.

However, this attempt to unite a wider cast of ostensible victims of “Abkhaz chauvinism” conflicted with the list of offenses they cited that were allegedly committed by Abkhaz, which took on an “anti-Georgian” stance. Such incidents included: defacing or eliminating the word “Georgian” in public spaces and writing “death to Georgians!” nearby; productions by Abkhaz theatre troupes denigrating the Georgian language and culture; the attempted destruction of museum artifacts with the Georgian script on them; and the phrasing of Article 28 of the Abkhaz ASSR Constitution to read “Citizens of the Georgian SSR and other union republics enjoy the same rights in the territory of the Abkhaz ASSR as citizens of the Abkhaz ASSR.” Petitioners read this wording “as if the Abkhaz ASSR were not a part of the Georgian SSR and these rights were not written in a higher authority – the Constitution of the Georgian SSR.”

Writing not as nationalists but as committed Soviet citizen-Communists, the argument articulated by these petitioners revealed the persuasive compatibility of Soviet and Georgian interests by 1978.

A final example serves to test some of the autonomous and national strictures claimed by residents of Abkhazia. While Ajaria enjoyed the same level of autonomy within the Georgian SSR as did Abkhazia, from 1939 “Ajarians” did not

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799 Ibid., II. 114-115.
constitute a distinct nationality. Instead, Ajarians – like Mingrelians, Laz, and Svans – were categorized as Georgians from the 1939 census onward, as explained in Chapter 1. Therefore, Georgians comprised the entitled nationality of the Ajarian ASSR – an anomaly in the Soviet structure of ethnoterritorial autonomy. For these reasons, residents of Ajaria had vested interests both in the movement to preserve the Georgian language’s status in the republic’s constitution as well as in any changes to the structures of autonomy within the republic.

Table 10: Population by nationality in the Ajarian ASSR according to the All-Union Census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>1939 (%)</th>
<th>1959 (%)</th>
<th>1970 (%)</th>
<th>1979 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>200,106</td>
<td>245,286</td>
<td>309,768</td>
<td>354,224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgian</td>
<td>127,542 (63.7)</td>
<td>178,661 (72.8)</td>
<td>236,928 (76.5)</td>
<td>283,872 (80.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>30,535 (15.3)</td>
<td>32,794 (13.4)</td>
<td>35,774 (11.5)</td>
<td>34,544 (9.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenian</td>
<td>14,085 (7.0)</td>
<td>15,830 (6.5)</td>
<td>15,614 (5.0)</td>
<td>16,101 (4.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>7,959 (4.0)</td>
<td>5,737 (2.3)</td>
<td>6,867 (2.2)</td>
<td>7,072 (2.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
<td>6,866 (3.4)</td>
<td>5,844 (2.4)</td>
<td>7,181 (2.3)</td>
<td>5,402 (1.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Like their counterparts in Abkhazia and Tbilisi, citizens in Ajaria also held demonstrations and wrote petitions articulating their policy views surrounding the events of 1978. Indeed, in reporting to Moscow about the unfolding events in Tbilisi and Abkhazia, Shevardnadze mentioned, almost in passing, that the project of the

800 However, unlike Mingrelian, Laz, and Svan, Ajarian remained a religious rather than ethnic distinction in spite of the ethnoterritorial autonomy granted the Ajarian ASSR. Due to its incorporation into the Ottoman Empire until 1878, most “Ajarians” were Muslims, thus distinguishing them from Orthodox Georgians. I explain these categories and their amalgamations in Chapter 1. On the fluidity of Ajarian identifications across the twentieth century, see Pelkmans, *Defending the Border*.

constitution inspired “events in Tbilisi and Batumi,” the capital of Ajaria. In his memoir, he noted briefly that following a Moscow-directed visit to Abkhazia, he went to Ajaria, where in conjunction with the constitution ratification session, “the streets were overcrowded with students and workers, factories did not work.” Yet these demonstrations, which took place on 26 May 1978 in Batumi, are otherwise unmentioned in official reporting on the Tbilisi and Abkhaz events and by historians covering these episodes.

Letters from citizens in Ajaria provide a more detailed picture of what transpired during the Batumi demonstrations and the scope of national sentiment and belonging among Ajarians in this period. According to Mamia Varšaniže, a Batumi poet who wrote to Shevardnadze on 29 May, a large group of students convened outside the building of the Ajarian Obkom building on 26 May, where the ratification meeting of the Ajarian constitution was taking place, holding signs that said “deda-ena.” Moreover, “the word deda-ena was often heard. Portraits of Važa, Ilia, Ak’ak’i, and Gogebašvili were held in the air.” The demonstrators were reportedly concerned that, while Georgian was declared the official language in the Georgian SSR constitution, this provision had not yet appeared in the draft Ajarian ASSR constitution. According to Varšaniže, it was necessary to state explicitly that

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802 “Informatsiia ‘o plenume TsK KP Gruzii,” Shevardnadze to TsK KPSS, sëssa (II), f. 14, op. 115, d. 303,II. 24-32.
803 Ševardnäze, 98.
805 These names refer to poets and writers in the Georgian national literary canon from the mid- to late nineteenth century: Važa Pšavela, Ilia Cavčavžae, Ak’ak’i Ceret’eli, and Iakob Gogebašvili. It is a common practice for Georgians to refer to other prominent Georgian cultural, intellectual, or political figures by their first names only.
the official language provision in the Georgian SSR constitution applied to the entire territory of the republic, i.e. in its autonomous areas as well. Such an issue concerned not only the student demonstrators, but also the middle-aged and elderly populations, with whom Varšaniże identified himself. He went on to lavishly thank Shevardnadze for his support and presence in Batumi and note “Ajaria should not be reproached for loving the mother tongue.” Rather, Varšaniże used the parallel national sentiments and aspirations expressed by students in Tbilisi and Batumi to make the case for ridding Ajaria of its autonomous status to create a truly united (ert’iani) – rather than fragmented – Georgia. He concluded his missive by saying, “We are grateful, enormously grateful, dear Eduard! The youth and the people love you and believe in you. I also believe in you, the father of the Georgian nation...May the Georgian nation and the Georgian language, the language of Rust’aveli, survive for eternity!” Though he established his internationalist credentials by mentioning his service in the Great Patriotic War and Stalin-era youth, he wrote to advocate for a “great national-patriotic movement that merges mother Georgia’s national interests (dedasak’art’velos erovnul intereseb).”

Though in a far less jubilant tone than in Varšaniże’s letter, Arčil Xuseinis že Stambolišvili, a Party member from K’obuleti, penned an earlier letter to Shevardnadze that addressed the issues of language and autonomy. For Stambolišvili, these issues were linked because the Georgian language – as the

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mother tongue of Ajarians – linked Ajarians with co-nationalts elsewhere in the republic. He asked, moreover:

Is autonomy necessary or not? It is known that autonomy can be given to the nationalities in order to govern and ensure the further development of their own language and culture. But Ajaria does not constitute a separate nationality. I don’t think that this question is in doubt for anyone. Ajaria is an indivisible part of Georgia by territory, language, culture, and united economy.  

Stambolišvili wrote his letter in February 1978, prior to the events in Tbilisi, Abkhazia, and Batumi. Yet he marshals a similar – if less ebullient – argument to that of Varšaniže about the relationship between Ajarians and Georgians as exemplified by language and the corresponding lack of utility for Ajarian autonomy in a Georgian republic. The differences between the arguments of these two petitioners and those made in the Abkhaz “Letter of 130” are therefore striking, but not surprising. Whereas Varšaniže and Stambolišvili would prefer to do away with Ajarian autonomy altogether and strengthen the position of the Georgian language throughout the republic’s entire territory, Abkhaz petitioners and demonstrators aimed to elevate their autonomy to the extent that Abkhazia would be granted the right to transfer its territory to the RSFSR. The arguments made by Varšaniže and Stambolišvili about language and territory directly contradicted Abkhaz claims. Yet even though these Ajarians’ letters aligned with Soviet Georgian goals vis-à-vis language and a unified Georgian identity, abolishing Ajarian autonomy remained perhaps as remote a possibility as elevating Abkhaz autonomy from the perspective...

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807 “ganćxadeba,” Arčil Xuseinis że Stambolišvili to Shevardnadze, 25 February 1978, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 115, d. 361, ll. 128-132
of Union leadership. While the stakes were considerably lower in the Ajarian case, revising the Soviet ethnoterritorial map in 1978 remained out of the question, even for an atypical autonomous republic without its “own” entitled nationality such as Ajaria.

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No other republic saw as much mass disruption in the late Brezhnev era as did Georgia, yet in his study of “mass uprisings” (massovye besporiadki) in the post-Stalin Soviet Union, V.A. Kozlov does not mention the events in Tbilisi, Abkhazia, and Ajaria in 1977-1978.808 On the other hand, earlier chroniclers of the state of the national question in the post-Stalin USSR include the Georgian of 1978 in a narrative about local responses to central Russification policies and inter-ethnic conflict, aligning this case with the mobilization of Crimean Tatars, Germans, Jews, and Meskhetians; the crackdown on republic Helsinki Watch groups; growing tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagornyi Karabakh; and dissident-led protests against Russification in Ukraine, Lithuania, and Estonia.809 Yet as this chapter has shown, political mobilization around the constitution among Georgians and Abkhaz does not neatly adhere to a paradigm of disruption and dissent. Rather, this case demonstrates two crucial components of the national-social contract as realized under developed socialism. First, by the late 1970s, the political space of developed socialism had expanded to such an extent that members of an entitled

808 Kozlov, *Mass Uprisings in the USSR*. On the other hand, Kozlov devotes an entire chapter in this volume to the March 1956 events in Georgia.
nationality could openly protest a central reform in the name of a national interest and succeed. Second, concurrent and related developments in Abkhazia reveal the institutionalized hegemony of the Union republic-level entitled nationality by the late 1970s.

From a distance, popular responses in Georgia to central policy changes in 1956 and 1978 appear similar: a central directive was met with popular protest in written and physical form, and Georgian actors read the proposed policy changes through a national lens. From this perspective, the 1978 events and their peaceful resolution proved decidedly more successful than the violent fate of demonstrations in March 1956, yet the content of demonstrators’ demands and center-periphery tensions still resembled one another in both cases. This narrative ignores the enormous changes that occurred in Georgia in the interim two decades, instead flattening out purported demonstrations of resistance to central policy. The differences between the 1956 and 1978 events reveal important developments and subtleties in the post-Stalin national social contract. While the immediate results of the March 1956 demonstrations were dozens of deaths and injuries in Tbilisi, the rift ushered in the more conciliatory and hands-off approach between Moscow and Tbilisi discussed in Chapter 4. The 1978 events could not have occurred without this broadened cultural-political space. On the other hand, while the 1978 concession to Georgian demonstrators looked like a victory in the short term, continued efforts to curb Georgian language use and suppress a growing national dissident movement in

810 These comparisons draw from my conclusions in Chapter 3.
the 1980s (increasing most dramatically after Shevardnadze’s departure for Moscow in 1985) showed this victory to be somewhat ephemeral. Viewed in the longer term, then, the twenty-two years between these events emerge as a discrete period in modern Georgian history in which the Soviet and Georgian could coexist productively without the Stalin link that had previously blended these identities and practices.

The discourses mobilized by Georgian citizens in 1956 and 1978 depict this shift in Georgian identities. In 1956, citizens in Georgia – like their counterparts throughout the Union – put the issue of Stalin at the forefront of discussions about the “cult of personality.” Yet particular interpretations of the denigration of Stalin as a Georgian led some Georgians to question the anti-Stalin campaign’s impact on “the people” and “national feeling.” Furthermore, others attempted comprehend the fate of the 5-9 March demonstrations as a tension between proletarian internationalism and love of the (Georgian) motherland (samšoblos siqvaruli). By 1956, the image of Stalin as cultivated in the republic had become an integral component of Soviet Georgian national identity for many of its citizens. Over the subsequent two decades, a process of disentangling the figure of Stalin from Georgian conceptions of national identity coincided with the greater autonomy in practice afforded to Georgia during developed socialism. In 1978, petitioners wrote much more openly and directly about the “Georgian people” and the “Georgian nation” and, rather than situating these collectivities in opposition to Marxism-Leninist concepts, instead sought ideological explanations and specific policy solutions to justify their rights and
practices as entitled nationals in the republic. Stalin and the Georgian language existed as components of national identity in both cases: the Writers’ Union took the opportunities created in 1956 to advocate for greater support for Georgian in the republic, for example, whereas some petitioners in 1978 still mobilized the image of Stalin as a source of national legitimacy and pride. Yet in the two-decade interim, language (already an important national marker) largely supplanted the image of Stalin among these markers and became the fundamental component of Georgianness as lived and propagated in the post-Stalin era.

The cultivation of a particular understanding of Georgian Sovietness tells the story of the possibilities afforded to a Union republic-level entitled nationality in the post-Stalin era. In 1978, employing widespread Soviet practices (petitioning and Party meetings) and institutions (the Party and Constitutional Commission) to advocate for a policy change in the republic’s draft constitution in the name of a Georgian national interest proved to be effective means for preserving the status of the Georgian language in the republic. The 14 April demonstration, as an unsanctioned mass meeting, certainly took place outside the bounds of acceptable Soviet practices elsewhere. Yet because demonstrators’ demands were still limited to specific rights as inscribed in the existing constitution, it is possible that participants and leaders alike could interpret these actions as taking place within the bounds of Georgian Sovietness, or in other words, within the enlarged mental and lived space of the Soviet in 1970s Georgia. So while the 14 April demonstration was a Georgian variant of Soviet in practice, that did not mean it was anti-Soviet, the
charge levied against demonstrators in 1956 and against Abkhaz gatherings. Even if the ultimate concession to Georgian citizen-petitioners and demonstrators did not change much in the daily lives of these actors (after all, they sought to retain a preexisting provision rather than introduce a new one), the process and results of their advocacy retained much symbolic currency. For nation-builders – even in their Soviet variant -- the symbol (of national language preservation, in this instance) could prove more meaningful than policy realities.

Entitled status did not extend such possibilities for policy demands to sub-republic units in practice by the late 1970s, in spite of formal privileges for ethnic Abkhaz citizens in the Abkhaz ASSR. The initial appeal, via the “Letter of 130,” employed a similar discourse of constitutional rights and entitled status as many of the letters written by Georgians about Article 75. Indeed, most of the letter’s 130 signatories were Party members. However, while Georgian petitioners consistently suggested re-inserting the language provision in Article 75, the Abkhaz signatories elaborated a much wider spectrum of grievances and demands. Leadership in Tbilisi, Moscow, and Sukhumi at least attempted to address most of the economic, cultural, and cadre complaints through the 25 April/1 June resolutions “On measures for the further development of the economy and culture of the Abkhaz ASSR, strengthening of organized ideological development work among toilers of the autonomous republic.” Yet the demand most closely connected to the issue of the Constitution – territorial transfer between Union republics – proved too extreme to be considered seriously by Union and republic leadership. The Abkhaz petitioners
grounded this demand in precedent dating from 1921, when Abkhazia initially held the status of Union republic. Acceding to such a demand would not only endow autonomous republics with greater rights than before, simultaneously decreasing the relative power of Union republics, but also, in the Abkhaz case, privilege the demands of a small minority over the majority of the autonomous republic's population and that of the Union republic. The tensions inherent in these changes would have conflicted with the longer-term trajectory of the Soviet approach toward nationality and the thriving national social contract achieved in the 1970s.

For all their appeals to constitutionalism and Soviet rights, Abkhaz citizens ultimately resorted to a more traditional mechanism for expressing grievance, the gathering. Combined with the later strike wave, these means existed well outside Soviet structures and accepted practices. At the same time, citizens resorted to these measures only after petitions and Party meetings failed to produce desired results between December 1977 and March 1978. So while the burgeoning wave of gatherings likely compelled authorities in Tbilisi and Moscow to address Abkhaz grievances in greater detail, the turn away from Soviet institutional solutions to lobby for policy changes undercut the legitimacy of claims adhering to Soviet structures and constitutional precedent vis-à-vis territorial transfer to the RSFSR.

Since 1937, Abkhaz intellectuals and advocates petitioned and mobilized in increasing numbers every ten years (1937, 1947, 1957, 1967, 1977-8, and 1988-9). Abkhaz calls for cultural rights and charges of “Georgification” evolved into political demands to change the status of the territory. Shevardnadze repeatedly
acknowledged the timing and dynamism of Abkhaz mobilization that had led to the most recent impasse and admitted that, in spite of this dynamic, Tbilisi leadership did not treat such expressions of Abkhaz grievance with the attention and dutiful study they warranted.\textsuperscript{811} Though authorities in Tbilisi were responsible for addressing demands for access to education, Abkhaz cultural institutions, and economic distribution, Abkhaz petitioners consistently directed their letters to Moscow. Moscow authorities subsequently forwarded such letters to counterparts in Tbilisi. This triangular relationship further reinforced the solidifying Union republic hegemony and foreshadowed the geopolitical alignments and significance of Abkhazia in the post-Soviet environment, as Abkhaz-Georgian relations have become intricately tied to Russian-Georgian relations.

Both Abkhaz and Georgian mobilizations in 1978 illustrate nation-ness as event, or how particular moments can refine and invigorate what it meant to be a participant in the national collective. Following Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, viewing the nation as “a category of practice” rather than a “category of analysis” permits us to understand how the idea of the nation “can crystallize, at certain moments, as a powerful, compelling reality”\textsuperscript{812} and “come to structure perception, to

\textsuperscript{811} He made this particular observation in a June 1978 address, “Protokol 11 zasedaniia plenuma TsK KP Gruzii ot 27 iunia 1978 goda: ‘o khode vypolneniia iun’skogo (1976 g.) postanovleniia TsK KPSS po partiinoi organizatsii Gruzii i zadachakh po uluchsheniu partiino-politicheskoi i ideino-vospitatel’noi raboty,’” sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 115, d. 18, ll. 4-21. Shevardnadze’s explanation broadens an earlier (1976) accusation levied against the “former leadership (i.e. Mžavanaže) for mishandling tensions and demonstrations surrounding the 1967 historiographical debate on Georgian-Abkhaz history, “Protokol 25 s’eza KP Gruzii, 22-24 ianvaria 1976 g.),” sšsa (II), f. 14, op. 51, d. 2, l. 178.

\textsuperscript{812} Brubaker and Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity,’” 5.
inform thought and experience, to organize discourse and political action.”  

Petition and demonstration campaigns in 1978 permitted Georgians and Abkhaz to exercise nation-ness toward specific political ends amid the broader discourse surrounding the constitution, a particular moment of such “crystallization.”  

Whereas March 1956 remained the transformative “event” for nationhood in postwar Soviet Georgia and continued to serve as a meaningful point of reference for citizens in the late 1970s, the mobilizations of 1978 gave political form to the longer-term changes in national experience that had developed in the interim two decades.

The eventedness of nationhood took different forms among Georgians and Abkhaz, but both groups mobilized nationally toward these agendas. Beneath the veneer of the Soviet “friendship of the peoples,” nationality acquired real meaning for citizens in Georgia in the postwar period and revealed the tension between concurrent and responsive national mobilizations in the same territorial space. The hegemony of union republic-level entitled nationalities over autonomous republic-level entitled nationalities – and the myriad minority groups within Georgia – by the late 1970s illustrates the results of longer-term Soviet nationality policies initiated in the 1920s and edited in the broader World War Two period, when the Union moved from a “chronic ethnophilia” to pursuing policies of ethnic consolidation that privileged a smaller number of “developed” nationalities.  

The same structures

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813 Brubaker, Nationalism Reframed, 7.
814 On “ethnophilia,” see Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment”; on ethnic consolidation through “state-sponsored evolutionism,” see Hirsch, Empire of Nations.
that facilitated the primacy and possibility for Georgians as entitled nationals limited what Abkhaz could do in their autonomous republic. A specifically Soviet Georgian form of political interest and political identity had emerged that was cultivated and defended through Soviet institutional definitions of nationhood.\textsuperscript{815} Or, in the succinct words of V.N. Merkvilaże (deputy director of the Institute of Party History) in 1978, “Georgia has never before been as Georgian as Georgia is today.”\textsuperscript{816}

\textsuperscript{815} Adapted from Brubaker, \textit{Nationalism Reframed}, 24.
\textsuperscript{816} “Protokol 11 plenuma TsK KP Gruzii,” sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 115, d. 19, l. 33.
Conclusion

The national-social contract that reached its apex with the events of 1978 in the Georgian SSR did not endure through the 1980s. A decade later, Georgian demonstrators would be killed on the steps of the House of Government in Tbilisi on 9 April 1989 – in precisely the same spot that their counterparts learned of the language issue victory the decade prior, and less than a block from where their parents had witnessed the violent suppression of the March 1956 demonstrations. Meanwhile, decennial mobilization among Abkhaz citizens continued with more fatal outcomes for the territory of the Georgian SSR, as calls for territorial transfer turned to calls for independence.\textsuperscript{817} Such demands necessarily conflicted with Georgian visions of an independent Georgia, even if, for new president Zviad Gamsaxurdia, that vision was increasingly one of a Georgia for (ethnic) Georgians.\textsuperscript{818}

The Georgia that declared independence on 26 May 1991, on the anniversary of the founding of the Republic of Georgia in 1918, was embroiled in wars not only to keep formerly autonomous Abkhazia and South Ossetia as parts of the Georgian polity, but also in a civil war that reached downtown Tbilisi in 1992-1993.\textsuperscript{819}

\textsuperscript{817} On growing tensions between populations in Abkhazia, see “REZOLIUTSIIA sobraniiia v g. Sukhumi 24 marta 1989 goda,” sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 130, d. 143a, ll. 1-2; Materialy o rezul’tatakh proverki zaiaelenii po national’nomu voprosu v Abkhazii i dr.,” sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 130, d. 162”; and “Zaiavlenia po national’nomu voprosu v Abkhazii i dr.,” sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 130, d. 163; and Abkhazskie Pis’ma (1947-1989): Sbornik dokumentov.
\textsuperscript{818} For an example of this rhetoric, see “sak’art’velos saxalxo p’rontis gamgeobis deklaraci’a,” 6 July 1989, sšssa (II), f. 14, op. 130, d. 165, ll. 25-28.
Perhaps Shevardnadze alone could restore order among this chaos, as he attempted from his re-entry into Georgian politics in 1992 (Speaker of Georgian Parliament from 1992-95, President from 1995-2003). The independent Georgia that emerged over the next decade did so with conflicts unresolved in Abkhazia and South Ossetia; and with Ajaria as a *de facto* separate sub-state. That the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia are even further from resolution today, in 2015, continues to color Georgian domestic and foreign policies, particularly vis-à-vis Russia. Ajaria, meanwhile, was successfully re-incorporated into the larger Georgian polity in 2004 (where it retains autonomous status), earning a significant amount of investment as one of President Mikheil Saakashvili’s (in office 2003-2013) pet projects.

Georgia’s hopeful and turbulent 1990s had a pre-history long before 1985: the post-Soviet experience was neither spontaneous nor an outgrowth of some sort of ancient ethnic animosity endemic to the Caucasus region – two tropes that journalists and politicians alike somehow mobilized simultaneously to explain current events in the area (much like parallel coverage of the Balkans). Moreover, the official narratives of Georgian history propagated since the 2000s likewise obscure the nation-building work and experience of the Soviet project, consigning the seven decades of the Georgian SSR to mere “Soviet occupation.”

A visit to the “Museum of Soviet Occupation,” housed inside the Simon Janašia Georgian National Museum in Tbilisi, illustrates clearly this narrative and

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820 For an ethnography of post-Soviet Ajaria, see Pelkmans, *Defending the Border*.

showcases post-Soviet preoccupations with museums as Andersonian instruments of governance. The occupation museum, which opened in 2006 and was inspired by similar museums in the Baltic states, tells an uncomplicated narrative of seventy years of Soviet oppression: from the February 1921 violent Bolshevik takeover of the Republic of Georgia to the brutal suppression of an elite uprising in 1924 to the terror and purges of 1937-1938; and from the March 1956 events to 9 April 1989. This uneven and condensed timeline elides precisely the period (after 1956) so formative for Georgian nation-making described in this dissertation. Following the five-day war with Russia in August 2008, the museum was expanded to include Russian occupation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and related wars within a longer narrative of Russian occupation of Georgian people and territory. In this version of twentieth-century history, prominently displayed in a newly outfitted building on Rustaveli Avenue, there were no productive or redeeming aspects of membership in a Soviet community.

Yet as this dissertation has shown, the peculiar Soviet approach toward managing ethnic difference gave institutional form to nationality as an ascribed as well as lived category among Georgia’s citizenry. Through this process, territorial boundaries and personal nationality categories came to have new meaning. This was true both among members of the entitled nationality, who gained the most from the Soviet nationality scheme, and non-entitled minorities, who increasingly struggled to compete in a homogenizing, nationalizing polity. These developments

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were not unique to the Georgian SSR: indeed, by design, such processes occurred to varying degrees in each of the republics of the USSR. But the realities of the national-social contract after 1956 meant that the lived experience of nationality in Georgia would differ from that in Armenia, Kazakhstan, Estonia, or elsewhere. The more hands-off approach toward national republics in the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras allowed republican leaders to pursue nationalizing policies with the help of local Soviet structures rather than in spite of them, employing the greater space for discourse and practice made possible through de-Stalinization and the developed socialism national-social contract.

The variety of national experience exhibited by the Georgian SSR did not mean its citizens were any less “Soviet” than counterparts elsewhere in the USSR. And contrary to some current national re-imaginings of Georgia’s Soviet past, to be anti-Soviet was the exception rather than the rule for these beneficiaries of Soviet nationality entitlements. What Maike Lehmann has termed the “very Soviet hybrid of national and socialist elements” on display in Armenia during demonstrations in 1965 (to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the 1915 genocide) I have described in this dissertation as the enlargement of “the Soviet” as a discourse and in practice among Georgia’s citizenry beginning with the March 1956 demonstrations.\(^{823}\) This was not a hybrid, but rather a different understanding of what it meant to be Soviet in the Georgian SSR (and what it meant to be Georgian in the USSR). Succinctly, this was Georgian Sovietness.

Rogers Brubaker invokes the idea of the “nationalizing state” to link processes that occurred in the aftermaths of empire in east-central Europe during the interwar period and in the former USSR and Yugoslavia after the collapse of communism. Yet in practice, the Soviet institutionalization of nationality equipped national republics and their entitled citizenries with the tools of nationalizing states through the mechanisms of empire. These tools included: special rights and privileges for members of the entitled nationality; a clearly defined ethnoterritorial unit; and state-endowed institutions to promote the language, culture, and history of the entitled nationality. More specifically, census, historiography, and map projects; efforts to project a republican foreign policy; the nationalization of the republican capital; and popular mobilization toward national causes among citizens in the Georgian SSR gave content over time to the Soviet imperial form. In this process, these projects and practices facilitated ethnoterritorial consolidation and recast imperial centers and peripheries, such that Tbilisi emerged as an imperial center in its own right, from the vantage points of Abkhazia, Saingilo, or Fereydan. Unlike the polity-seeking nationalisms of the nineteenth century described by Ernest Gellner or Miroslav Hroch, entitled Georgians had to undertake a considerable amount of nationalizing work to actually

824 Brubaker, Nationalism Reframed, Chapter 4.
825 This builds upon arguments that the Soviet empire (and its application in Central Asia) in the interwar period looked less like a colonial relationship than one with the aims of a “modernizing state,” Khalid, “Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization”; Edgar, Tribal Nation; Beissinger, “Soviet Empire as 'Family Resemblance.'“
make the polity they were given by the Soviet project sufficiently Georgian. While the groundwork for this nationalizing project was laid in the interwar period, achieving traction among the citizenry remained a postwar endeavor.

In spite of its anti-imperial and anti-nationalist ambitions, the Soviet empire proved to be a remarkably successful maker of nations. Yet nation-building is not only a process of construction and categorization: it requires an acceptance over time by individuals to inhabit nationality and national identity. For inhabitants of Georgia, this process crystallized in the postwar era, most fully between 1956 and 1978. The “Georgian” Georgia achieved in the 1970s was a Soviet Georgia, intricately bound to the Soviet experiment yet increasingly experiencing Sovietness in a distinct way.

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