WHAT MAKES A PEOPLE? SOVIET NATIONALITY POLITICS AND MINORITY EXPERIENCE AFTER WORLD WAR TWO

by

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For my parents

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LIST OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ArmSSR – Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic

ASSR – Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (located within SSRs and RSFSR)

AzKP – Azerbaijan Communist Party

AzSSR – Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic

AzTsIK – Azerbaijan Central Executive Committee

GSSR – Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic

guberniia – large administrative territory of the Russian Empire, province

kolkhoz – collective farm

korenizatsiia – "indigenization" policy in non-Russian areas of Soviet Union

KPSS – Communist Party of the Soviet Union

krai – large administrative territories in RSFSR

Minpros – Ministry of Enlightenment (or Education)

Narkompros – People's Commissariat of Enlightenment (or Education)

Natsmen – national minority

oblast' – large district or province in Soviet republics

okrug – administrative territorial subdivision smaller than an oblast'

raion – low-level administrative territorial district smaller than an *okrug*

Sovmin – Council of Ministers

Sovnarkom – Council of People's Commissars

titular nationality – nationality after which a territory (such as a republic) was named

TsK – Central Committee (of the Communist Party)

TsIK – Central Executive Committee (of the Communist Party)

TsSU – Central Statistical Administration

uezd – regional administrative territorial unit of the Russian Empire

ZKK/Zakkraikom – Transcaucasian Regional Committee

ZSFSR – Transcaucasian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic

INTRODUCTION

In 1962, anonymous petitioners from the northwestern corner of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic sent a letter to First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Nikita Khrushchev. After acquainting Khrushchev with the circumstances of their small minority community, the Georgian-Ingilo, they implored, "We love the languages of all republics of our Soviet Union and their culture, why not love our language and our culture"?[1] It was a valid question. For decades, Soviet politicians, scientists, artists, and others had invoked the diversity of the Soviet Union—and of the Caucasus in particular—to celebrate the people, government, and symbolism of the world's first socialist society. Take, for example, the preface of the *Atlas of the Peoples of the World*, published by the Soviet Academy of Sciences in 1964:

> In the Soviet Union, the nationality question has been solved on the basis of Leninist nationalities policy, which proclaims the principle of full equality for all peoples and their right to self-determination. In the big family of Soviet republics, representatives of all nations, large and small, together live, work, and successfully develop their own culture. They are united by shared fundamental interests and by a common goal—communism.

[1] Archive of Political Documents of the Administrative Department of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan [Azərbaycan Respublikası Prezidentinin İşlər İdarəsinin Siyasi Sənədlər Arxivi], or ARPIISSA, 1.48.405.90. There is no uniform agreement about the definition and usage of the terms Ingilo and Georgian in this community (and in Georgia and Azerbaijan in general). I choose to use "Georgian-Ingilo" in this dissertation in order to be inclusive of the different combinations of ways in which people from these communities in the Qax, Balakan, and Zaqatala regions of Azerbaijan have identified themselves to me and categorized themselves in archived complaint letters—as Ingilo, Georgian, or Georgian-Ingilo. Indeed, it is not unusual for state authorities or people from these communities to switch among these ethnonyms in the same document or conversation.

> In contrast to the socialist countries, most capitalist countries have no national equality.[2]

Keeping in mind that this type of rhetoric was widespread in the Soviet Union, it is perhaps not difficult to understand why these petitioners felt compelled to notify Khrushchev about their compromised experiences with Leninist nationality policy.

Indeed, not all peoples were treated equally in the Soviet Union. The national federal structure of the state developed from early theoretical and political debates about Soviet nationality policy, but eventually hindered rather than facilitated the reconciliation of national differences in the Soviet Union.[3] The titular nationalities that had Soviet republics named after them, such as the Azeris in Azerbaijan and the Uzbeks in Uzbekistan, benefitted from a policy called *korenizatsiia*, which was comprised of various measures to promote the political, social, and cultural indigenization of the Soviet republics in the name of those titular communities. Non-titular peoples, such as the Georgian-Ingilo, Talysh, and others, experienced no, or extremely limited, access to comparable national "rights" such as national cultural support, native language development, and recognition in the "big family of Soviet republics." In between these two broad categories of titular and non-titular—in terms of access to national cultural support and recognition—were the principal nationalities that inhabited lower level ethnoterritorial units embedded in union republics, such as the Abkhaz in the Abkhaz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic in Georgia.

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[2] S.I. Bruk and V.C. Apenchenko, eds. *Atlas Narodov Mira* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1964), preface.

[3] Jeremy Smith, *Red Nations: The Nationalities Experience in and after the USSR* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), ix.

Leninist nationality policies generated expectations, but also grievances when those expectations went unfulfilled. Although titular populations were comparatively privileged within the boundaries of "their" republics, members of these communities often chafed at Moscow's control over republican affairs and at the all-Union prestige and hegemony of the Russian language and culture. Meanwhile, peoples from the principal nationalities in lower level autonomous regions and from non-titular communities not infrequently complained about titular nationalism and petitioned for greater access to national cultural support. In this way, key components of Leninist nationality policy—ethnoterritorialism and *korenizatsiia*—produced a recursive relationship between majority-minority nationalisms in the Soviet Union.

It is for these reasons that Soviet nationality policy frequently has been invoked to explain the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the attendant emergence of ethnically framed violence in the Caucasus and elsewhere. Until now, however, historians have largely overlooked non-titular communities, regardless of whether or not they were at the center of post-Soviet conflicts. One reason why we know so little about non-titular experiences in the Soviet Union is that many of these communities were not bureaucratically recognized after the 1930s and thus are extremely difficult to trace in Soviet archives. Lacking robust narratives of post-World War Two nationality politics and non-titular histories, Soviet historiography currently "leapfrogs" over several midcentury decades of evolving politics, theories, and

experiences. This includes formative post-World War Two decades that gave rise to significant and long-lasting non-titular cultural movements.[4]

This dissertation revolves around Azerbaijan because of the diversity of non-titular populations in the republic, and because of the many ethnic conflicts that emerged during its transition to independence in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It also moves, however, across different spatial scales—from Caucasian villages, republican capitals, and imperial halls of governance and academia in Moscow to international arenas of diplomacy and dispute—to argue that non-titular histories help us better understand (post-) Soviet ethnic conflicts, but also have broader implications for regional, Soviet, and even global histories. I connect local narratives to global events such as World War Two and the Cold War to describe a regional world that transcended the political borders dividing the Soviet Caucasus from Iran and Turkey. Kinship networks are at the heart of this story. A range of political actors in Communist Party structures, national movements, and minority communities sought to extend their cultural spheres of influence and make contingent use of kin minorities in order to advance national claims to neighboring republics and international states. For instance, Stalin's attempt to spread his sphere of influence to Iran and Turkey during World War Two was intimately intertwined with ethnic and border disputes within the Caucasus.

Moving forward into the postwar and post-Stalin eras I show how wartime experiences generated different ways of imagining and policing non-titular

[4] The concept of "leapfrogging" is borrowed from Frederick Cooper, who criticizes a similar tendency in colonial and postcolonial histories. Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, Calif.: University of California Press, 2005, 17

communities in the USSR. Although the Soviet nationality question was reportedly "solved" in the 1930s, local residents, activists, academics, and politicians continuously contested national rights in the post-World War Two period. Ethnographers making propagandistic appeals to the Third World depicted non-titular minorities as disappearing in the face of Soviet modernity, and republican officials pursued assimilatory politics in these communities, but non-titular identifications obtained nonetheless. The oral histories that I collected illuminate the otherwise-obscured lived experience of non-titular minorities and the mechanisms of cultural and identity regeneration among peoples who generally lacked state support and recognition.

Using oral histories, I foreground wide-ranging experiences and identifications as much as possible, and argue that people in non-titular communities harbored conflicting interpretations of their personal and collective identifications and futures. While some sought to assimilate into titular nationalities, others defined themselves and their communities in opposition to assimilationist policies that encouraged the national consolidation of republican populations. The relatively bold discourses and strategies that these national activists employed in grassroots campaigns for their rights speak to a new type of Soviet citizenship after Stalin's death.

Case studies

This dissertation develops three case studies from Azerbaijan—the Talysh, Lezgin, and Georgian-Ingilo—but travels from Azerbaijan to Moscow, Dagestan, Georgia,

Turkey, and Iran in pursuit of the politics, cultures, and communities that were layered across internal and international Soviet borders. The Georgian-Ingilo, Lezgin, and Talysh case studies were chosen to illustrate the range of non-titular trajectories in the Soviet Union. Further, two out of three of these communities gave rise to autonomy movements in the early 1990s—the Sadval movement among Lezgins and the Talysh-Mugan Autonomous Republic among the Talysh. This dissertation does not engage explicitly with these enormously understudied separatist phenomena, but it does aim to demystify the environments from which they emerged.

Although the Armenian population in Azerbaijan was caught up in the violent conflict over the Karabakh region, Azerbaijan's Armenian population is not a focus of this dissertation for two primary reasons. First, due to the special status of the Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Oblast' in Soviet Azerbaijan, Armenians in Azerbaijan had a qualitatively different experience from most other minorities in the republic. Their national-cultural support and development was far from perfect, but the Armenian community was always a recognized nationality in Azerbaijan. Many of Azerbaijan's Armenians also experienced relatively stable access to native-language educational materials, schools, newspapers, radio broadcasts, and other forms of cultural development.

Second, the ongoing Nagorno Karabakh conflict has made the study of national minorities in Azerbaijan an extremely sensitive topic. Azerbaijani archive workers, government officials, academics, and others not infrequently accused me of being an Armenian spy because of my interest in Soviet nationality politics and

minority communities. In this environment, it was neither feasible nor productive to study the history of the Armenian experience in Soviet Azerbaijan.

Who are the Georgian-Ingilo, Talysh, and Lezgins? The Georgian-Ingilo reside mainly in three northwestern regions of Azerbaijan—Qax, Balakan, and Zaqatala. There are both Muslim and Georgian Orthodox Georgian-Ingilo communities. Their "native language" is a dialect of Georgian, and when they were provided access to native language support in the Soviet Union they studied in Georgian-language schools with Georgian-language textbooks. Because the Russian imperial, Soviet, and post-Soviet governments have treated and categorized Muslim and Christian Georgian-Ingilo differently, it is difficult to say how many Georgian-Ingilo lived in the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic (AzSSR). A loose estimate is in the low tens of thousands.[5] Of these three populations, the Georgian-Ingilo experienced the strongest kin state interventionism in the USSR because of their proximity to a titular population in a neighboring Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR)—the Georgians of Georgia.

Lezgins, meanwhile, live compactly in many of the Azerbaijani regions that bordered Dagestan, such as Qusar, but long-standing and significant Lezgin

[5] Soviet censuses put the number of Georgians in Azerbaijan at 10,196 in 1939 (*Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleniia 1939 goda: Osnovnye itogi* [Moscow: Nauka, 1992], 71) and 9,526 in 1959 (Tsentral'noe statisticheskoe upravlenie SSSR, *Itogi Vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1959 goda: Azerbaidzhanskaia SSR* (Moscow: Gosstatizdat, 1963), 134-135). This likely accounts only for Christian Georgian-Ingilos and other Georgians in the AzSSR, as Muslim Georgian-Ingilo were usually identified as Azerbaijani in Soviet passports and censuses. In 1924, A.F. Liaister and G.F. Chursin wrote that there were 15,000 Ingilos in Azerbaijan (A.F. Liaister and G.F. Chursin, *Geografiia Kavkaza: priroda i naselenie* [Tiflis: Izdanie Zakavk. Kommunist. Universitet. Imeni 26, 1924], 282). An undated spravka written for the Azerbaijan Communist Party Central Committee sometime in the 1950s or early 1960s claimed there were 6000 "Ingilos" in Azerbaijan (ARPIISSA 1.48.405.38), but it is unclear who is included in this estimate. Similarly, a 1977 ethnographic report by N.G. Volkova reported 5000 Georgians in the "Qaxingilo soviet," but did not provide population figures for large (and mostly Muslim) Georgian-Ingilo settlements outside of this administrative unit. N.G. Volkova, "Ingilo," *Polevye issledovaniia Instituta etnografii* (1977), 88.

communities are found in Baku and other regions of Azerbaijan as well. There is also a significant Lezgin population in neighboring Dagestan, where Lezgins are considered one of several "principal" nationalities and thus have experienced national cultural support somewhat similar to that of titular populations in SSRs. Soviet-era Lezgin co-ethnic relationships between Dagestan and Azerbaijan, were not as well developed as those between the Georgians and Georgian-Ingilo. Soviet Azerbaijan censuses are also unreliable for measuring this population, but there were significantly more Lezgins than Georgian-Ingilo in Azerbaijan. Official Azerbaijani Lezgin figures ranged from 111,666 in the 1939 census to 98,211 in 1959 and 137,250 in 1970.[6]

The Talysh live primarily in the Lankaran, Lerik, Astara, and Masalli regions in the south of Azerbaijan on the border with Iran. The Talysh language is classified in the Iranian language family, and many Talysh also live in Iran. It is difficult to say how many Talysh are in Iran as they are not disaggregated in census reporting. In 1966, the Soviet Academy of Sciences study *Iazyki narodov SSSR* reported that there were 84,000 Talysh in Iran.[7] For a variety of reasons discussed in chapter five, the Talysh in the USSR were assimilated into the Azerbaijani population in the 1959 census. That year, the number of persons categorized as Talysh in the Soviet Union fell from nearly 90,000 persons in 1939 to 85 individuals.[8]

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[6] *Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleniia 1939 goda*, 71; Tsentral'noe statisticheskoe upravlenie SSSR (1963), 134-135; and Tsentral'noe statisticheskoe upravelnie SSSR, *Itogi Vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1970 goda.* Tom 4 (Moscow: Statistika, 1973), 263.

[7] V.V. Vinogradov, ed. *Iazyki narodov SSSR,* vol. 1, Moscow: Nauka, 1966, 302, cited in Liia Pireiko, *Talyshsko-Russkii Slovar'* (Moscow: Russkii iazyk, 1976), 5.

[8] Russian State Archive of the Economy [Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv ekonomiki], or RGAE, 1562.336.1565.226.

"The less you say, the longer you live": working in the margins

Between 2007 and 2013, I spent almost three years conducting research throughout Azerbaijan, as well as in Georgia, Yerevan, Makhachkala, and Moscow. I worked in central state and party archives in Moscow, Makhachkala, Tbilisi, and Yerevan, as well as in central and regional state archives in Azerbaijan. I draw on these resources in this dissertation, but oral histories, ethnographic texts and photographs, and private photograph and document collections are also central to my research and writing. Working across these different sources allows me to bring to life remarkably rich histories of non-titular peoples who rarely appear in official registers and who, in many cases, were effectively written out of existence amidst the fervor of Soviet nation-building.

As Peter Blitstein found while researching nationality policies from the mid-1930s to the early 1950s, most of the Soviet organs that at one time or another were dedicated to developing and implementing nationality policies and affairs were abolished by 1938, including the People's Commissariat of Nationalities' Affairs (Narkomnats); national soviets and committees dedicated to various nationalities; and nationality sectors, departments and committees of state and party organizations at the central, republican, and local levels.[9] Further, the presidium of the Soviet of Nationalities was not formally abolished, but "ceased all noticeable work" in 1937.[10] This reflects a significant modification of central nationality policy bureaucracy and

[9] Peter Blitstein, "Researching Nationality Policy in the Archives," *Cahiers du Monde russe* 40, no. 1-2 (January-June 1999), 126-128. I explore the closure of these institutions in depth in the following chapter.

[10] Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 412.

priorities, but it is still possible to find certain national categories and priorities delineated in republican archives after the 1930s.

In Azerbaijan, for example, one can reliably trace the trajectory of language, schooling, and cultural policies for the titular Azeri population (and others categorized as Azerbaijani), Russians and Russian-speakers, and, to a lesser extent, co-ethnics of neighboring titular populations—the Armenians and Georgians—in finding aids from the mid-1940s to mid-1960s.[11] This is particularly true for the records of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic's Ministry of Education (Minpros);[12] Council of Ministers (Sovmin);[13] Sovmin department of culture; Union of Writers; and various departments and sectors of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan, including the department of propaganda and agitation, the department of science and schools, the "special sector" (*osobyi sektor*), and the general department (*obshchii otdel*). Most of these documents address measures to improve Russian and/or Azerbaijani language instruction in republican schools; statistics enumerating the number of students by nationality and/or language of instruction (i.e. Russian, Azerbaijani, Georgian, or Armenian); cultural and educational affairs among Armenians and Azeris in the autonomous areas of Nagorno Karabakh and Nakhchivan; changes in the status and orthography of the Azerbaijani language in the 1950s; educational and cultural resources for Azeris in Georgia; and cultural markers such as national historical monuments, theaters, and performance ensembles.

[11] In the Republic of Azerbaijan State Archive [Azərbaycan Respublikası Dövlət Arxivi], or ARDA, many of the available document collections end in the early- to mid-1960s.
[12] MinPros was the People's Commissariat of Education (*Narodnyi komissariat prosveshcheniia*, or Narkompros) until 1946.
[13] SovMin was the Council of People's Commissars (*Sovet narodnykh komissarov*, or Sovnarkom) until 1946.

It is important to take into consideration how archives function as a type of state politics and, as such, proffer insight into the epistemologies of the time in which they were created. As Ann Laura Stoler argues, "Colonial archives were both sites of the imaginary and institutions that fashioned histories as they concealed, revealed, and reproduced the power of the state."[14] While titular nationalities regularly appear in postwar archival files, non-titular nationalities become increasingly difficult to trace after the 1930s. Many non-titular populations drop out of state archives at this time because they no longer fit into both reorganizing institutions of governance and evolving imaginings of the Soviet present. As the Soviet leadership consolidated population categories around key nationalities in the 1930s, non-titular identifications were pushed to the margins. These populations subsequently lost access to consistent institutional support for national cultural development (and to the correlated bureaucratic processes that continued to generate bureaucratic knowledge about titular populations).

Yet, the bureaucracy and archival record concerning non-titular communities withered away more completely than the communities themselves. My search for archival information about postwar non-titular populations was rarely—but richly—rewarded despite various archive and reading room directors telling me that studying minorities was anachronistic for the post-World War Two years; determining that my project was "not authorized" (*ne razresheno*) because of the ongoing Karabakh conflict; and editing archival collections by claiming that "open" files were now

[14] Ann Laura Stoler, "Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance: On the Content in the Form," in *Archives, Documentation, and Institutions of Social Memory*, eds. Francis X. Blouin Jr. and William G. Rosenberg (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2006), 271

closed or had been destroyed.[15] I ultimately found documentary fragments scattered across state libraries and archives, as well as stashed in (and, in at least one case, hidden under) private homes.

Nonetheless, I use the term "fragments" here for a reason. Documents about non-titular communities after the 1930s are both small in number and buried in large collections, unless they detail an exceptional event such as a mass deportation. Less extreme non-titular issues, events, and policy changes are rarely delineated in state archive finding aids so tracking these sources requires a strong orientation in the archive and a systematic approach to ordering and reading files. Oral history interviews can also help guide archival work by providing information about significant dates and events that may be documented, but not outlined in file guides.

There are two types of archives where non-titular populations are most likely to appear at this time—republican Communist Party archives and the archives of Institutes of Ethnography.[16] In Communist Party archives, it is possible to find files devoted to non-titular populations when disturbances develop in those communities. Parts of chapters two and four, for example, are based on Georgian and Azerbaijani Communist Party records about national rights agitation among Georgian-Ingilo and Lezgins in Azerbaijan. Archival records of the Academy of Sciences, meanwhile, document "assimilated" or "assimilating" non-titular populations, such as the Talysh,

[15] When I spoke with one regional archive director, for example, he told me that the files that I was looking for had been burned in a bonfire several years prior.

[16] Relevant documents are also likely to be found in archives and files that typically are closed to historians, including those of various security organs, republican statistical agencies, and restricted parts of the CPSU central apparatus at the Russian State Archive of Contemporary History [Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv noveishei istorii, or RGANI].

who proved valuable to scientists studying Soviet ethnohistorical advancements. These records play an important role in the fifth chapter of this dissertation.

Knowing from the start that I would experience a variety of conceptual and practical archival constraints, I started the oral history portion of my project during my first research trip to Azerbaijan in 2007. My hope was that these interviews would help me to explore both minority subjectivity and the lived experiences of formal and informal state policies and practices. I also anticipated that interviews would help me to gain a better sense of where to look for information in the archives, and that living in Talysh, Lezgin, and Georgian-Ingilo communities while collecting oral histories would help me to better understand what I was reading in published and archival sources, as well as hearing in interviews. To this end, I conducted over 120 interviews in Moscow, Makhachkala, and various parts of Georgia and Azerbaijan. I interviewed some people multiple times across the years and others only once.[17] In most interviews, I spoke with people from the three populations that figure most prominently in my dissertation—the Talysh, Lezgin, and Georgian-Ingilo. I also interviewed Azeris, Russians, Laks, Avars, and Tsakhurs from Azerbaijan in Azerbaijan, Dagestan, and Moscow.[18]

[17] I try to ask some of the same questions in all of my interviews for comparative value and to establish a sense of communal knowledge, but I generally adopt an open interview approach that allows both for flexibility and for informants to lead the discussion if they so choose. I conducted the majority of the interviews in Russian. I conducted a few interviews in Azerbaijani and less than a dozen interviews in Georgian or Talysh. I was the sole interviewer in Russian-language interviews. A research assistant sometimes assisted with Azerbaijani-language interviews. In Talysh- and Georgian-language interviews, a research assistant translated for me from Talysh or Georgian to Russian.

[18] I kept oral history interviews anonymous during the collection process. Here, I provide loose information about an informant's background only when those particularities are important for the point being made in the interview. The two exceptions are Russian linguist Liia Pireiko and Azerbaijani historian Shirinbay Aliev.

Oral histories bring their own methodological challenges to this project. As historians we have to evaluate the historical context and subjectivity of the oral narrator just as we would that of a written source catalogued and made available in an archive. Archived documents are produced, filed, and preserved by individuals whose biases, perspectives, and motives are shaped by the historical moment in which they are acting. Oral sources are similarly created in the environment of the interview, and molded by a host of social and political influences.

Historians have analyzed how the Soviet legacy mediates oral history interviews. Irina Sherbakova, for example, argues that it is challenging to conduct oral histories in the shadow of the USSR because Soviet officials perceived memory to be a threat and treated it as such.[19] Daria Khubova, Andrei Ivankiev, and Tonia Sharova, meanwhile, identify two crises of memory in the former USSR. First, they find that former Soviet citizens were unmoored by the breakdown of hegemonic narratives and the sudden changes before, during, and after the transition from Soviet to post-Soviet life and thus "find it very difficult to make sense of their own memories without an accepted overall public historical story to relate them to."[20] Second, Khubova and her co-authors identify fear as a complicating factor in oral histories. They cite in particular a "cumulative effect of fear of public remembering" due to historical experiences of repression.[21]

[19] Irina Sherbakova, "The Gulag in Memory," in *Memory and Totalitarianism*, ed. Luisa Passerini (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2009), 103.
[20] Daria Khubova, Andrei Ivankiev, and Tonia Sharova, "After Glasnost: Oral History in the Soviet Union," in *Memory and Totalitarianism*, 96.
[21] Khubova, 89.

Both of these points require further exploration. In interviews, I sometimes found myself confronting what has been described as the "drone" or "other side" of silence, the times when people were visibly or admittedly preoccupied with the sensitivity of my research and could not or did not want to speak.[22] There were different ways in which people signified their discomfort, including shielded answers, purposeful misremembering, selective amnesia, pointed silences, refusals to speak with me, and requests to interview in remote outdoor locations because of fears that neighbors report on one another to security agencies. These examples pushed me to keep sight of the difference between memory and remembering, and to confront both what it means for informants to be asked to remember and the historical significance of contemporary remembrances.[23]

Although it is generally recognized that these sorts of responses signify the agency and subjectivity of individuals in oral histories, deep debates about the crisis of memory, its meaning and subjectivity, and the purpose of oral history research have

[22] In his anthropography of violence, E. Valentine Daniel discusses the "drone of silence" in interviews with survivors of torture. He describes it as "a silence that does not settle for the anthropologist whether it is a silence of not-being-able-to-speak or of an ought-not-to-speak," in Daniel, *Charred Lullabies: Chapters in an Anthropology of Violence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 150. Vazira Zamindar also cites Daniel to write about the "drone of silence" in *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia: Refugees, Boundaries, Histories* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007). Urvashi Butalia, meanwhile, writes about the "other side of silence" in her study of the violence embedded in the Partition of India, and violence against women in particular. She brings attention to the nuances, half-said things, ambiguous phrasings, and hidden histories that are masked by oral and textual silences. Butalia also pushes researchers to take responsibility for what it means for informants to speak and to break a silence in an interview, and to recognize those times when silences are more important—and less invasive—than speech. Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

[23] Alessandro Portelli differentiates between "remembering" and "memory." Remembering calls to mind an active and on-going process, whereas memory implies that something is stabilized and known (Portelli, "Response to commentaries," *The Oral History Review* 32, no. 1 (Winter-Spring 2005), 30). Luisa Passerini, meanwhile, argues that "silences, oblivions, and memories are aspects of the same process, and the art of memory cannot but be also an art of forgetting, through the mediation of silence and the alteration of silence and sound." Luisa Passerini, "Memories between silence and oblivion," in *Memory, History, Nation: Contested Pasts*, eds. Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2006), 250.

only hinted at the importance of the here and now in interviews. When informants raised examples of repression as explanatory factors for being guarded in an interview, they showed that both past and contemporary experiences continue to shape collective memory and the interview environment in the post-Soviet space. Some people, for example, argued that few Talysh had agitated for cultural rights in the Soviet period, or wanted to talk about them now, because the Talysh had been collectively silenced by the harsh repression of Talysh cultural leaders in the 1930s.[24] In 2007 and 2008, several Talysh informants also cited the recent arrest (and then conviction) of Talysh newspaper editor Novruzali Mamedov on charges of treason and incitement to ethnic hatred to explain their discomfort with discussing Talysh history and their personal experiences.[25]

Lezgins voiced similar explanations for their silences in oral history interviews. One person, for example, connected a popular hesitancy to speak about a Soviet-era Lezgin rights movement, Serdechnoe Slovo, to both historical and contemporary experiences:[26]

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[24] This is similar to a point about collective fear in Azerbaijan that Irada Ismail kyzy Kasumova makes in her dissertation. She argues that the 1936-1937 repression of social scientists who published on national minorities in Azerbaijan suppressed further work in that sphere. She cites the arrest of historian A. Bukshpan, who published a study of the Kurds in the early 1930s, as one example. Talysh national actors, such as Zulfugar Ahmadzada, who are recalled in oral history interviews, were suppressed as a part of this broader repression mechanism unfolding throughout the Soviet Union. Irada Ismail kyzy Kasumova, "Kul'turnoe stroitel'stvo v Azerbaidzhane v 20-30-ye gody/na primere natsional'nykh men'shinstv i malochislennykh narodov," (Dissertation, Baku State University im. M.E. Rasulzade, 1996), 7.

[25] Sometimes when informants brought up Mamedov they would lower their voices to a whisper, instinctively reinforcing the discomfort they were verbally articulating. A curtain seemed to fall around Mamedov's name in interviews after his untimely death in prison in 2009. Some people also mentioned an autonomy movement that emerged in the Talysh region of Azerbaijan in the 1990s and culminated in the short-lived Talysh-Mughan Autonomous Republic in 1993. The leader of the Republic, Alikram Gumbatov, was sentenced to death. This sentence was eventually commuted to a life sentence before he was stripped of his citizenship and exiled to the Netherlands in 2004.

[26] I use the Russian-language term Serdechnoe Slovo in this dissertation, but Serdechnoe Slovo was known as RikIin Gaf (РикIин гаф) in Lezgin. The informal name was KIvatIal [КIватIал], which can roughly be translated as circle, meeting, or association. Zabit Rizvanov, *Kniga pravdy: sbornik statei*

> Author: Do you think that the majority of the population in Qusar knew about Serdechnoe Slovo?
>
> Informant: They knew. Everyone knew, but they [local officials] slandered them, in the sense of "they agitate against the state, against the Party, against Azerbaijan, against the Soviet Union." They promoted such an understanding…
>
> Author: In the Soviet period?
>
> Informant: Yes, even then. And everyone, when they saw them, they were afraid to be connected to them…afterward several of them were arrested and harassed—people like Bagishev [member of Serdechnoe Slovo]—and the nation, in general, was frightened. Well, who wants to be taken to jail for nothing? No one wants that…
>
> Author: But why are people still afraid to talk about Serdechnoe Slovo?
>
> Informant: They think that Sadvalist members are all like Kvatal [Serdechnoe Slovo] members. Because Kvatal members in the 1960s were dispersed, well, I would say, were liquidated…They are afraid of this. Sadval developed in 1990 in Dagestan, not here, but [Azerbaijani officials] began to make it seem as if the two movements were one and the same. That's why people are still afraid to speak about Serdechnoe Slovo.[27]

Another Lezgin individual, who sought me out after hearing that I was in Qusar, was nonetheless extremely cautious when we were talking. I asked why and this was the response:

> Informant: It's hard here, it's hard. We're not even allowed to speak openly. Someone will sit with you, have a nice conversation, and afterward he gets up and someone sells him out: he said this and that. Therefore, it's dangerous here. It's so dangerous with them, I saw and I know these types of situations, I've seen a lot. A friend could come to me, I could welcome him with an open heart, sit with him, and afterward he could pass onto them…he's doing this, he's writing these sorts of things.

1980-90 gg., Qusar: samizdat, undated, 115. Sadval was a Lezgin movement established in Dagestan in 1990. Sadval members called for the unification of Lezgins in Azerbaijan and Dagestan, arguing that this would foster their cultural, poitical, and socio-economic development. In 1994, the Azerbaijani government blamed Sadval for a bomb attack on the Baku metro that killed 14 people. The government subsequently arrested a number of Lezgins accused of being members of Sadval, labeled them terrorists who received support from the Armenian secret service, and sentenced them to lengthy prison terms.

[27] Interview, March 2011.

> Friend of informant: If right now the KGB or local government knew that I hosted this type of person and I spoke with him, Oooh this would be a big deal.
>
> Informant: Oooh, why did you sit there? She's an American, she lives there, why did you go over there?[28] Why did you sit there? What's your connection?
>
> Friend of informant: "Why" they ask and peck at you: "why, why, why?"
>
> Informant: Why, what did he want? What do you want? Do you also want…to be in jail?
>
> Author: How would they find out?
>
> Friend of informant: Well, it happens that walls also have ears.
>
> Informant: Yes, yes, the walls…Yes, there is that type of saying. Look, for example, one person had to have said something. But I say that I didn't say anything, and he says that he didn't say anything. That means that the walls also have ears, it's not really clear who…

The informant concluded this conversation with the phrase "the less you say, the longer you live."[29] This person experienced low-level repression when agitating for national rights in the Khrushchev era, but it became clear in the interview that post-Soviet experiences have also been sobering. In a similar interview with a Georgian-Ingilo individual, I mentioned an Azerbaijan Communist Party (AzKP) document that described how Georgian-Ingilo in a particular village requested that their Georgian-language school be replaced with an Azerbaijani one. This informant instinctively and loudly denounced this claim and then muttered, "Man, if they hear me, they will arrest me."[30]

[28] In some cases, people in minority zones reported that local police or government officials questioned them simply because they invited a "foreigner" into their home.
[29] Interview, April 2011.
[30] Interview, November 2010.

Khubova and her co-authors may go too far in describing a Soviet state that assumed near totalizing control over the memories of its inhabitants, but the restrictive political culture of the Soviet Union and many of its successor states increases the likelihood that individuals will be familiar with both canonized histories and the politics of "remembering" experiences that oppose those politicized narratives.[31] This is no less the case for this project. In Azerbaijan, national historical narratives and memories have been politicized to produce a charged, affected, and nationalized "us versus them" culture wherein minority public figures such as Talysh newspaper editor Novruzali Mamedov and his successor Hilal Mamedov face being called separatists and traitors or conflated with an Armenian other, who is the enemy of the "Azerbaijani nation."[32]

In early 2011, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev neatly summarized the official Azerbaijani position at the Baku-hosted World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue—Azerbaijan is and always has been a model of tolerance: "everyone lives like one family in Azerbaijan. No national or religious confrontations or misunderstandings have existed here."[33] To be sure, as Rogers Brubaker, Margit Feischmidt, Jon Fox, and Liana Grancea found in their study of nationalist politics and ethnicity in Cluj, Romania, nationality is more of an "*intermittent* phenomenon,"

[31] Nergis Canefe, "Communal Memory and Turkish Cypriot National History: Missing Links," in *Balkan Identities: Nation and Memory*, ed. Maria Todorova (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 79.

[32] Hilal Mamedov revived the Talysh newspaper, *Tolishi Sado*, after the arrest and untimely death of *Tolishi Sado* editor and linguistics professor Novruzali Mamedov. Hilal Mamedov was arrested in June 2012 and charged with drug possession. After a short period, the charges were extended to include treason and inciting ethnic, religious, and racial hatred. In September 2013, Hilal Mamedov was sentenced to five years imprisonment. RFE/RL, "Azeri Court Jails Ethnic Minority Newspaper Editor for Five Years," *RFERL*, September 27, 2013, accessed October 2013, http://www.rferl.org/content/azerbaijan-journalist-sentence-mamedov/25120028.html.

[33] RFE/RL, "Azerbaijan a Model of Tolerance—Aliyev," *Eurasianet*, April 7, 2011, accessed August 23, 2011, http://www.eurasianet.org/node/63245.

which "*happens* in particular moments, and in particular contexts" than an "everyday preoccupation" for most people in Azerbaijan.[34] Nonetheless, it does "happen" that Azerbaijanis (and minorities in particular) interpret everyday experiences, and channel identifications and self-understandings, through the lens of nationality. There is also a risk in Azerbaijan of remembering or recounting narratives that run counter to the state's master narrative of eternal brotherly love and peace.[35]

Some scholars argue that "external" and "subjective" factors such as these can compromise the integrity, validity, or usefulness of an interview. Khubova and her colleagues, for example, portray fear as a complicating factor that negatively affects oral history collection. Marianne Kamp, meanwhile, in *The New Woman in Uzbekistan* argues in favor of relying on the authenticity of memory in former Soviet republics rather than focusing attention on the myriad factors that mediate oral history accounts.[36] The subjectivity of oral sources—like that of written ones in archives—

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[34] Rogers Brubaker, et al., *Nationalist politics and everyday ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 207-208.

[35] Anthropologist Jennifer Wistrand argues that an "inflexible script" of belonging extends to non-minorities in Azerbaijan as well. According to Wistrand, all Azerbaijanis need to routinely and publicly express an "inflexible script" in order to belong in Azerbaijani society and perform their citizenship. This script says that there is "only one way to think about Azerbaijan's past and future: Karabakh was once and will again be a part of Azerbaijan, and Armenians are 'bad' and 'wrong.'" Further, the Armenians are responsible for *all* of Azerbaijan's problems. To state otherwise would be "un-Azerbaijani" and perceived as a threat to the status of Azerbaijan because the script reinforces a sense of emotional stability and security among many Azerbaijanis. This script is transmitted through television news reports, classroom discussions and films, political speeches and other mediums, and attempts to modify it are not permitted. Jennifer Solveig Wistrand, "Becoming Azerbaijani: Uncertainty, Belonging, and Getting By in a Post-Soviet Society," (Ph.D. diss., Washington University, 2011, 46, 94, and 390).

[36] Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 15. Kamp here relies on Trevor Lummis's book, *Listening to History: The Authenticity of Oral Evidence*. Lummis argues that "the individual oral history accounts from the memories of those who actually lived that experience are very different from 'popular' presentations" and contrasts this interpretation with that of the "popular memory school," which he summarizes as believing that "memory cannot simply be a memory of life as it was…anyone's memory must be selectively distorted by the class power behind the projection of these images." Trevor Lummis, *Listening to History: The Authenticity of Oral Evidence*, (Totowa, New Jersey: Barnes & Noble, 1988), 123 and 126. Elsewhere, Kamp draws attention to the way in which

should not be downplayed or overlooked, nor is it possible to control for external influences or anxieties that provoke silences, amnesias, or purposeful misremembering in interviews. Further, it would be misleading to dismiss interviews marked by silences as invalid or unproductive because they fail to provide necessary "historical information." Rather, these interviews also have analytical value and methodological significance.

In this regard, I look toward Alessandro Portelli's approach to oral history subjectivity:

> The importance of oral testimony may lie not in its adherence to fact, but rather in its departure from it, as imagination, symbolism, and desire emerge. Therefore, there are no "false" oral sources. Once we have checked their factual credibility with all the established criteria of philological criticism and factual verification which are required by all types of sources anyway, the diversity of oral history consists in the fact that "wrong" statements are still psychologically "true" and that this truth may be equally as important as factually reliable accounts.[37]

Portelli reminds us that remembering is an active process, there is a historical context to the interview itself, and changes are wrought not only by faulty or misguided popular memories, but also sometimes consciously or subconsciously because of the meditation of other variables. Instead of focusing only on whether or not a memory is "true" or "authentic," we can ask whether the narrator thinks it is, and what that does

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politics intrude on personal remembrances, but describes a narrative trajectory in which the collapse of the Soviet Union allows for both spontaneous individual release from ideological narratives and the emergence of an interviewee's agency rather than turning an equally critical eye to external influences that filled the vacuum left by the Soviet system. Marianne Kamp, "Three Lives of Saodat: Communist, Uzbek, Survivor," *The Oral History Review* 28, no. 2 (Summer-Autumn 2001), 21-58.

[37] Alessandro Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different," in *The Oral History Reader*, eds., Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 1998), 68. Liisa Malkki makes a similar point in *Purity and Exile*. Here, she argues that, "the more challenging approach to [refugee] narratives, in my view, is not to sort out 'true facts' from 'distortions' but to examine what is taken to be the truth by different social groups, and why. Different regimes of truth exist for different historical actors, and particular historical events support any number of different narrative elaborations. Such regimes of truth operate at a mythico-historical level which is concerned with the constitution of an ontological, poliltical, and moral order of the world." Malkki, *Purty and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 104.

or does not signify. Further, the subjectivity of the narrator exposes ways in which the past becomes a part of the present, how the past is used to interpret the present, and how people understand, assess, contextualize, and represent their own life experiences.

Although only a minority of informants openly expressed amnesias, misrememberings, or silences, these interviews produced some of the most useful research insights. They provide the clearest view into the ways in which past and present experiences are negotiated in oral histories conducted in Azerbaijan's minority communities, and draw attention to events and individuals of particular sensitivity or significance. These interviews should be kept in mind as a backdrop to all of the interviews that are cited in this dissertation, including those where informants did not share, or better-concealed, their collective concerns.

Historiography

Contentious debates about nationalism, the historical trajectory of nations, and the right of nations to self-determination marked Marxist politics long before the Bolsheviks began the Soviet experiment. For Lenin, the national question gained particular importance in 1912 when the Mensheviks and other anti-Bolshevik factions of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party (RSDRP), as well as a majority of the Social Democrat (SD) duma caucus, chose to support cultural autonomy for Russia's non-Russian peoples.[38] It was in response to these events that Lenin pushed

[38] Ronald Grigor Suny, *Stalin: From Koba to Commissar* (unpublished manuscript), 542. Leon Trotsky initiated the conference among Mensheviks and others in August, eight months after Lenin organized a meeting in Prague that expelled the Mensheviks from the RSDRP. The SD duma caucus followed suit months after Trotsky's August conference.

the Bolsheviks to declare their position on the matter and Stalin began to cultivate both his expertise on this critical issue and his stature among his fellow revolutionaries. Ultimately, however, the national question which united Lenin and Stalin in the years of revolutionary struggle, precipitated bitter battles over self-determination and federalism toward the end of Lenin's life.[39]

It is perhaps appropriate then that the national question assumed an equally contentious role in Soviet historiography. In Alexander Park's 1957 study of Turkestan, for example, he situated his work in the field and tried to establish a middle ground between two diametrically opposed interpretive frameworks: a pre-World War Two tendency to acknowledge Soviet successes in using national policies to build equality and progress, and an ascendant postwar narrative that emphasized the negative, artificial, and divisive characteristics of this politics.[40] As the influential Sovietologist Philip Mosely argued in the forward to Park's monograph, Park had ended up highlighting the "seamy side of Moscow's claims to be the sole 'liberator' of weaker peoples," but he had arrived at this conclusion with a supposedly open mind after having cut through "the billowing clouds of variously tinted propagandas."[41]

The line that Park tries to draw between his work and the orientation of many of his contemporaries becomes clearer if we compare his monograph with Richard

[39] Suny, *Stalin*, 535-563. Moshe Lewin argues that the outcome of this decisive intra-Party battle determined the fate of the Soviet Union by starting it down the path toward Stalinism. Lewin, *Lenin's Last Struggle* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005). Jeremy Smith's detailed exploration of debates about the national question among the Bolshevik elite, meanwhile, portrays a more ambivalent trajectory after Lenin's death. Jeremy Smith, *The Bolsheviks and the National Question, 1917-23* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).

[40] Alexander G. Park, *Bolshevism in Turkestan: 1917-1927* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), xi. See David Engerman's monograph, *Know Your Enemy*, for a thorough analysis of Soviet Studies during the Cold War. Engerman, *Know Your Enemy: The Rise and Fall of America's Soviet Experts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[41] Park, ix-x.

Pipes's *The Formation of the Soviet Union*, which was published three years prior. Pipes's work is an extensive study of nationality policies in the early years of the Soviet Union, but his interpretive framework advances the impression that the Bolshevik leadership cynically exploited and manipulated developing nationalisms in order to seize and consolidate power. Park, meanwhile, proffers a more situational reading of Bolshevik failures on the national front in Turkestan, and concludes that a mix of theoretical and practical shortcomings inadvertently cultivated colonial divisions and inequalities between Moscow and the "national" periphery. In Park's reading of early Soviet nationality policies, the Bolsheviks failed to achieve national equality, but were at least often sincere in their efforts.[42]

Examples such as Park's highlight some variance among Cold War-era nationality policy studies, but Moscow/Russian repression versus minority subjugation or resistance narratives ultimately proved more significant in historiographical terms.[43] Two overlapping and prevalent lines of argumentation illustrate this point. The first approach portrayed the Soviet Union as a "breaker" of nations, and documented the tragic fate of impressively resilient minorities in the face of Russian hegemony and Soviet-bred misfortunes.[44] Pipes's conviction that Soviet nationality practices had

[42] For example, Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954); Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, *Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia: The Case of Tadzhikistan* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970); Park, 201.

[43] See also Yaroslav Bilinsky, "The Soviet Education Laws of 1958-9 and Soviet Nationality Policy," *Soviet Studies* 14:2 (October 1962), 138-157.

[44] For example, Robert Conquest, *The Last Empire* (London: Ampersand Books, 1962); Robert Conquest, *Stalin: Breaker of Nations* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992); Walter Kolarz, *The Peoples of the Soviet Far East* (New York: Praeger, 1954); Walter Kolarz, *Russia and her Colonies* (New York: Praeger, 1952); and George Gretton, ed., *Communism and Colonialism: Essays by Walter Kolarz* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1964). Variations of this theme also appeared in several late Soviet monographs that approached the study of Soviet nationality policies from a decentered perspective. For example, Alan Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1978).

spawned an "explosive force" poised to derail the communist experiment was also shared broadly in the field at this time.[45] Several scholars studying Muslim republics and populations in the Soviet Union, for example, interpreted some published Soviet sources as evidence of an Islamic revival in Central Asia and the Caucasus.[46] They claimed this finding signified the remarkable persistence or power of "Muslim" or "national" cultures and identities in the face of Russian-defined national politics, and identified a looming and credible Muslim threat to the Soviet system.[47] In 1970, for example, Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone asserted that opposition to Russian control over republican affairs was developing among the Tajik elite, while a decade later Hélène Carrère d'Encausse argued that the Soviet Union was cleaved by national imbalances and threatened by a rival system and ideology that she termed Homo Islamicus (and contrasted with the doomed Homo Sovieticus).[48]

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[45] Engerman, 266.

[46] Michael Kemper, "Introduction: Integrating Soviet Oriental Studies," in *The heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies,* eds. Michael Kemper and Stephan Conermann (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2011), 15.

[47] This interpretation is also found in contemporaneous reviews of monographs that reviewers determined did not make this point explicitly enough. For example, in a 1975 review of Gregory Massell's *Surrogate Proletariat*, Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone wrote that Massell "misse[d] an attempt to project the impact of the "Khudzhum" on subsequent developments…especially in view of the remarkable survival of the heritage and social relevance of Islam, which has withstood modernization and provides roots for the increasingly visible growth of nationalism in the five republics of Central Asia. It may well be that the "assault" tactics served to consolidate and to rejuvenate the values of an otherwise moribund society which, if left to absorb new values gradually, might have been assimilated." Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, review of *The Surrogate Proletariat: Moslem Women and Revolutionary Strategies in Soviet Central Asia, 1919-1929*, by Gregory Massell, *Russian Review* 34, no. 4 (October 1975), 500-502.

[48] Rakowska-Harmstone, and Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, *Decline of an empire: the Soviet Socialist Republics in revolt* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 188 and 263. Other works in this genre include, Alexandre Bennigsen and Marie Broxup, *The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State* (London and Canberra: Croom Helm Ltd., 1983); Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay, "Sufi Brotherhoods in the USSR: A historical survey," *Central Asian Survey* 2, no. 4 (1983); Alexandre Bennigsen, "Muslim Conservative Opposition to the Soviet Regime: The Sufi Brotherhoods in the North Caucasus," in *Soviet Nationality Politics and Practice*, ed. Jeremy R. Azrael (New York: Praeger, 1978), 334-348; and Alexandre Bennigsen, "Modernization and Conservatism in Soviet Islam," in *Religion and Modernization in the Soviet Union*, ed. Dennis J. Dunn (Boulder: Westview Press, 1977), 258.

Ronald Suny's 1993 publication, *The Revenge of the Past*, led a historiographical turn toward a less cynical constructivist interpretation that described the Soviet Union as more of a maker, rather than a breaker, of nations.[49] The rush to newly open archives from the late 1980s onward further shaped this literature as scholars channeled this constructivist model through the Soviet bureaucratic structures that were reproduced in Soviet archives. Rather than dismiss Soviet national republics and nations as artificial and national policies as disingenuous, these scholars understood all nations to be constructed and took seriously Bolshevik nation-building efforts. Starting with the late imperial period or opening decades of the Soviet Union, they explored the nationality question from a variety of angles before stopping with the closure of national minority organs at the end of the 1930s or, in a few cases, with the deportation of condemned nationalities during and after World War Two.[50]

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[49] Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993). Suny's thesis that the Soviet system was responsible for building, and not breaking, nations built upon several key theoretical works, including Ernst Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); Geoff Eley, "Nationalism and Social History," *Social History* 6 (1981): 83-107; Miroslav Hroch, for example, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe*, trans. Ben Fowkes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983); and Edward Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1963). Another early publication in this genre was Yuri Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," in *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (Summer 1994).

[50] For instance, Francine Hirsch and Terry Martin debate the trajectory and creation of national policies from the perspective of Moscow prior to World War Two, while Adrienne Edgar explores how the Soviet state fostered the development of a titular Turkmen nationality in the same prewar decades. Martin; Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); and Adrienne Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004). See also, Jeremy Smith (1999); Kate Brown, *A Biography of No Place: From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005); Ronald Grigor Suny, and Terry Martin, eds., *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). Douglas Northrop and Shoshana Keller both illuminate in different ways the interconnectedness of religious and national identities and politics in Muslim Central Asia at this time. Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004) and Keller, *To Moscow, Not Mecca: The Soviet Campaign Against Islam in Central Asia, 1917-*

Largely due to the previously discussed archival limitations, studies of non-titular peoples have been both few in number and focused on narratives about the formative pre-World War Two decades or War-related national deportations.[51] The historiographical dominance of the constructivist approach also likely contributed to this bias by generating research questions that focused on the ways in which the Soviet system fostered or shaped national identities and nationhoods. Since non-titular nationalities became largely external to the system of state-driven national programming in the late 1930s, they fit poorly into these narratives.

The exception to this rule was a handful of monographs, which were written mainly by anthropologists and blended archival or published source research with ethnographic fieldwork. This allowed the authors to extend the timeline of their narratives and to ask questions that were unresolvable in archivally constrained projects, including about the diversity of minority subjectivity, identification, and experience throughout the Soviet period, as well as the construction of categories and the internalization of and engagement with state efforts at cultural construction.[52]

1941 (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001). Several scholars analyzed "new" archival sources to revisit old debates about the degree, intent, and character of Soviet Russifying policies. See, for example, Hirsch; Martin; David Brandenberger, "…It is Imperative to Advance Russian Nationalism as the First Priority:" Debates within the Stalinist Ideological Establishment, 1941-1945," in *A State of Nations,* 275-299; and Blitstein (2001). Two chronological exceptions were David Brandenberger and Peter Blitstein, who extended their timelines to 1956 and 1953, respectively. Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931-1956* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), and Blitstein, "Stalin's Nations: Soviet Nationality Policy Between Planning and Primordialism, 1936-1953" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1999).

[51] For example, Brown and Brigid O'Keeffe, "Becoming Gypsy, Sovietizing the Self, 1917-1939" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2008).

[52] An example from an historian is Yuri Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994). Slezkine drew heavily on both archival sources and published Soviet scholarship about the peoples of the North. See also, Bruce Grant, *In the Soviet House of Culture: A Century of Perestroikas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Alaina Lemon, *Between Two Fires: Gypsy Performance and Romani Memory from Pushkin to*

In recent years, the Soviet field has started to turn toward more robust studies of the late- and post-Stalin years, but has yet to develop new frameworks for understanding these later decades. Anna Krylova argues that Soviet scholars must move beyond the language and logic of Bolshevism in order to recognize that there were multiple forms of Soviet modernity and socialist cultural forms in the Soviet century.[53] The emerging field of post-World War Two nationality studies reflects Krylova's criticisms in that scholars have shifted their chronologies to later years of Soviet history, but have yet to develop new frameworks of analysis.[54]

Turning briefly toward the treatment of the nationality question and minorities within the bounds of Azerbaijani historiography, we find a field that has yet to critically examine the development and history of nationhoods and nationalisms in Azerbaijan.[55] Ideological and political restrictions limited the academic production of work on the nationality question in the AzSSR. This was particularly the case from the late 1930s to the 1950s because of the repression of several scholars who researched and published on national communities in Azerbaijan.[56] Afterward, Azerbaijani scholars who studied national relations in Azerbaijan excluded national minorities

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Postsocialism (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000); and Mathijs Pelkmans, *Defending the Border: Identity, Religion, and Modernity in the Republic of Georgia* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006).

[53] Anna Krylova, "Soviet Modernity: Stephen Kotkin and The Bolshevik Predicament," *Contemporary European History* (forthcoming in May 2014), 5.

[54] For example, Jeremy Smith recently published a new monograph exploring the "Soviet nationalities experience" in the post-Stalin decades. In keeping with the emphasis on institutionalized nationhood in early Soviet historiography, Smith focused this account on the titular nationalities in Soviet Socialist Republics and "dealt with [the numerous smaller nationalities] only when their experience was of particular importance in the overall picture of the Soviet Union, as for example with the mass deportations of the 1940s." Smith (2013), x-xi.

[55] Aleksei Lund makes a similar point in his dissertation, arguing that, "For most Azeri historians, 'Azerbaijan' appears to be coterminous with 'Azeris.'" Aleksei Lund, "At the Center of the Periphery: Oil, Land, and Power in Baku, 1905-1017," [Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 2013], 3.

[56] Kasumova, 7-8. On the repression of Azerbaijani historians who wrote about the titular nationality, see Harun Yilmaz, "The Soviet Union and the Construction of Azerbaijani National Identity in the 1930s," *Iranian Studies* 46, no. 4 (2013).

from their narratives and avoided using the term "national minority" (*natsional'noe men'shinstvo*) in their analysis.[57]

National studies were somewhat revitalized in the 1950s. The Party's ideological shift toward "building communism" (*stroitel'stvo kommunizma*) spurred new publications about cultural development (*kul'turnoe stroitel'stvo*). This essentially was the study of how the Soviet people had reaped the benefits of the socialist cultural revolution through the liquidation of illiteracy, the construction of an extensive educational network (in the Azerbaijani, Armenian, Georgian, and Russian languages in the AzSSR), the creation of titular political cadres and intellectuals, and the development of titularly defined republican national economies, cultures, and historical narratives.[58] These studies were generally framed in the language of the cultural development of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic or the "Azerbaijani socialist nation."

This "Azerbaijani socialist nation" correlated with a model of national progress that was under development throughout the Soviet Union. Socialist nations

[57] Kasumova, 9.

[58] As I discuss in chapter three, this literature emerged alongside the correlated rise of a cohort of scholars who helped to cement the Azerbaijani national idea by developing Azeri ethnogenesis theories and master narratives. In chapter five, I show that there was also a contemporaneous development of literature about the merging and assimilation of minorities and titular populations. Some sample publications about *kul'turnoe stroitel'stvo* in Azerbaijan include, A.G. Agaev, "Rol' gorodskikh Sovetov Azerbaidzhana v kul'turnom stroitel'stve v period rekonstruktsii narodnogo khoziaistva/1926-1932 gg./" (Kandidat nauk diss. referat, Baku, 1969); N. Pashaev, "Razvitie sotsialisticheskoi kul'tury Sovetskogo Azerbaidzhana" (Doktor nauk diss. referat, Baku, 1964); M.M. Mexti-zade, *Ocherki po istorii sovetskoi shkoly v Azerbaidzhane* (Baku: 1962); N.A. Pashaev, *Ocherki istorii kul'turnogo stroitel'stva Sovetskogo Azerbaidzhana* (Baku: 1965); M. Niftaliev, *Kul'turnoe stroitel'stvo v Nakhichevanskoi avtonomnoi Sovetskoi Sotsialisticheskoi Respublike/1921-1922 gg./* (Giandzha: 1958); T.A. Musaeva, *Bor'ba za razvitie narodnogo obrazovaniia Azerbaidzhane v gody 1-i piatiletki* (Baku: 1964); and Adil' Nadzhafov, "Formirovanie i razvitie azerbaidzhanskoi sotsialisticheskoi natsii" (Kandidat nauk diss. referat, Baku: Institut filosofii Akademii nauk SSSR, 1953). A correlating source collection compiled by ARDA archivists (titled *kultur'noe stroitel'stvo*) documents state efforts in these spheres.

represented the consolidation or assimilation of myriad national populations living in a republic into one socialist nation that was represented culturally, discursively, and linguistically by the titular nationality of that republic. That is, the Azerbaijani socialist nation included Azeris, Talysh, Lezgins, Tats, Avars, Ingilo, and others from Azerbaijan, but was also represented by fluency in the Turkic Azeri language, identification as "Azerbaijani" in the nationality line of passports and census, and acceptance of titular historical narratives and correlated cultural forms.[59] As I discuss in chapter five, ethnographers and politicians upheld these socialist nations as symbols of Soviet modernity and achievement because national assimilation and consolidation represented ethnohistorical advancement and progress toward communism in Soviet theorizing.

In this literature, minority cultural advancement—when it was addressed—became a celebration of minority assimilation into or similarity with the Azeri population. The exceptions to this rule were the Armenians, Georgians, and Russians in Azerbaijan. These groups continued to occupy a special role in Azerbaijani national cultural programming and academic studies because of the specificities of the Armenian situation in Nagorno Karabakh, the existence of Armenian and Georgian titular co-ethnics in neighboring republics, and the preeminence of Russians and Russian culture in the USSR.

Post-Soviet Azerbaijani historiography has not traveled far from these Soviet-era conceptual constraints. While new ethnographies of non-titular populations were

[59] In the English language, the word "Azeri" carries an ethnic connotation, while "Azerbaijani" has a more civic significance. In the Russian and Azerbaijani languages, however, there is only one word for "Azeri/Azerbaijani." This elides differentiations between ethnic and civic identifications in Azerbaijan.

published in the past two decades, Azerbaijani academics continue to focus on the history of the Azeris, the Azeri-defined Azerbaijani nation, or historical conflicts with Armenians.[60] When non-Azeris appear in these narratives, they often are filtered through Soviet-inspired teleologies of assimilation or portrayed as nationalist threats to Azerbaijani sovereignty and security.[61] One explanation for this latter discourse is the nestedness of Soviet national territories and hierarchies. Although Azeris received preferential treatment over other non-Russian national populations in Azerbaijan, they were—and perceived themselves to be—minorities in the Soviet Union. This was particularly the case in comparison with the Soviet-wide prioritization of and preference for Russian cultural and linguistic influences. This understanding repeatedly plays out in scholarly portrayals of the titular Azeri nationality (and Azerbaijani territory) as vulnerable to Russification and other competing claims for sovereignty in Azerbaijan.

Chapter outline

This dissertation is a study of the politics and practices of suppressing non-titular identifications in the Soviet Union, and the consequences of such efforts. As such, the title—"What makes a people"—has dual significance. First, what constituted "a

[60] For example, Qəmərşah Cavadov, *Talişlar (tarixi-etnoqrafik tədqiqat)* (Baku: Elm, 2004), and Gəmərshah Cavadov, *Azərbajcanyn azsajly xalglary və milli azlyglary* (Baku: Elm, 2000).

[61] Aidyn Balaev, *Etnoiazykovye protsessy v Azerbaidzhane v XIX-XX vv.* (Baku: Nurlar, 2005), 124; Dzhamil' Gasanly, *Khrushchevskaia "ottepel'" i natsional'nyi vopros v Azerbaidzhane, 1954-1959* (Moscow: Flinta, 2009), 445; and Dzhamil' Gasanly, *SSSR-Turtsiia: ot neitraliteta k kholodnoi voine (1939-1953)* (Moscow: Tsentr Propagandy, 2008). I cite Camil Hasanli's Russian-language texts in this dissertation so for citation purposes I transliterate his name from the Russian spelling: Dzhamil' Gasanly. In the body of the dissertation, however, or when I am discussing his arguments, I transliterate his name from the Azerbaijani spelling, Camil Hasanli.

people" in the eyes of the state as the Soviet Union matured and transitioned from its revolutionary origins? Shifting my focus from the highest levels of bureaucracy in Moscow and Baku to villages scattered throughout Azerbaijan and back again, I take into account differences in opinion among state and scientific officials in the metropole and the periphery. Second, what constituted "a people" from the perspective of various non-titular, non-state actors? Far from being comprehensive, this dissertation offers some insight into the range of experiences and perspectives that drove some people to negotiate with the state for national recognition and rights, and inspired others to eschew or be indifferent toward minority identifications and classifications.

The chronology spans from late Russian imperial ethnographic reports to contemporary minority experiences in Azerbaijan, but I focus on the midcentury decades from the 1940s to the 1960s. Chapter one traces the evolution of Soviet nationality policy in the first two decades of the Soviet Union, and highlights early attempts to layer *korenizatsiia* across titular and non-titular communities in Azerbaijan. Although this dissertation is framed as an exploration of non-titular national rights and experiences amidst Soviet nation-building politics, this first chapter clarifies that the coherence of the non-titular category should not be taken for granted. Various factors including location, size, and kin republic relationships influenced national categorizations and experiences in the Soviet Union. An informal hierarchy among non-titular nationalities began to form in these early decades, and continued to shift in subsequent years.

Chapter two asks how global events such as World War Two were experienced domestically in the Soviet Union and, in particular, how these geopolitical conflicts altered national discourses, consciousnesses, relations, and politics in the Caucasus. Toward the end of the war and in the immediate postwar period, the Soviet leadership tested the boundaries of its power (and its influence over neighboring countries) by fostering national liberation movements among Kurds and Azeris in Iran and making territorial pretensions toward Turkey. National actors in Soviet republics, meanwhile, repurposed the discourses of national extraterritoriality that accompanied these geopolitical maneuvers and reignited dormant national disputes in the Caucasus.

Chapter three begins a multi-chapter exploration of the afterlife of early Soviet nationality policies and wartime territorial disputes. In these chapters I engage with historiographical debates about the domestic experience of the Cold War, Soviet citizenship, the depth and social meaning of Khrushchev's Thaw, and post-Stalin Soviet society and governance, as well as conceptual questions about identity, minority subjectivity, and post-Stalin nationality theories. After Stalin's death in 1953, a new leadership lead by Mirza Ibragimov and Imam Mustafaev took charge of Azerbaijan and pursued a nationalizing course that contributed to their respective dismissals in 1958 and 1959. Despite the ignominious way in which both men left office, in their brief time in power they oversaw a series of ideological, demographic, and linguistic policy changes that helped Azerbaijan to become "Azerbaijani" after decades of irregular nativization practices.

This chapter aims to bridge the narrative divide between the late Stalin years and the Khrushchev period by linking Azerbaijan's nationalizing politics of the 1950s

to the national contests that erupted in the Caucasus and neighboring regions during World War Two. It also incorporates non-titular minorities into the history of Azerbaijani nation-building in the 1950s. Non-titular populations are key to this story because republican elites strengthened Azerbaijan's Azerbaijani identity in part by weakening competing identifications and claims to the republic.

In the next two chapters, I turn my attention more directly to the non-titular experience, to the different ways in which minorities responded to their circumstances, and to the mechanisms of cultural and identity reproduction in communities that generally lacked state national cultural support. In chapter four, I show that republican leaders were not the only national actors who took advantage of de-Stalinization to advance national claims and interests. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, some Georgian-Ingilo and Lezgin national activists built grassroots movements that challenged Azerbaijani nationalizing practices in their communities. Illustrating the evolving political atmosphere in the Soviet Union after Stalin's death, these minority actors engaged in a rights negotiation with the state and gained new access to state support for their national development.

In the last chapter, I focus on the trajectory of Talysh national identifications and classifications in the post-World War Two years. At the same time that some Georgian-Ingilo and Lezgin national activists were agitating for—and realizing—the expansion of their national rights in Azerbaijan, the Talysh nationality category was being erased from the public sphere in the Soviet Union. This chapter explores why the Talysh were vulnerable to this assimilatory politics, but also the architecture of myths of non-titular assimilation. It argues that theories of Soviet modernity, as well

as Talysh ethnonational ties to Iran, are key variables that differentiate Talysh experiences from that of the Lezgin and Georgian-Ingilo.

CHAPTER ONE

THE FORMATION OF SOVIET NATIONAL HIERARCHIES

The trajectory of non-titular politics in pre-World War Two Soviet Azerbaijan largely followed an all-Union course. In order to create the necessary conditions for the Soviet Union to achieve communism, the Bolsheviks crafted national policies that aimed simultaneously to resolve political imperatives and to shepherd all Soviet peoples through Marxist stages of ethnohistorical development. Central authorities prioritized *korenizatsiia* as a means of realizing Bolshevik national principles, building support for the Soviet regime, and undercutting competing social and political influences.[1] Measures for developing national minority populations were delineated in the early 1920s, but struggled to reach fulfillment before eventually being curtailed at the close of the 1930s.

The first Soviet national minority policies in Azerbaijan were drafted nearly concurrent with the establishment of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic (AzSSR) in 1920, and continued to develop after the AzSSR was incorporated into the Transcaucasian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (ZSFSR) with Armenia and

[1] Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 220, and Martin, 10-12.

Georgia in 1922.[2] In these early years, minorities in Azerbaijan were defined as non-Russian and non-"Tiurk" speaking nationalities (*natsional'nosti* and *narodnosti*), including Armenians, Persians, Jews, Georgians, Lezgins, Greeks, Poles, Germans, and others.[3] At an August 1920 meeting of the department of education of national minorities at Narkompros, for example, participants discussed native-language education measures for several populations, including the Mountain Jews, Georgians, Persians, Germans, and Lezgins. As an early harbinger of problems that would plague the system for the next two decades, however, they immediately confronted material shortages in native-language educational materials, students whose language competencies either did not match with the "Tiurk" schools available or with the "native language" schools that they were supposed to attend, parents dissatisfied with local educational options, and practical problems related to teaching in native languages that lacked accepted written forms and materials.[4]

Since the "Tiurks" were considered the principal nationality of Azerbaijan and the national identity of the republic was consequently defined by this nationality, they were not categorized as a minority within the republic. Nonetheless, they were

[2] Sabina Rafik kyzy Gadzhieva, "Razvitie shkoly natsional'nykh men'shinstv i malochislennykh narodov Azerbaidzhana (1920-1940 gody)," (Kandidat nauk diss, Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University, 2005), 12-19. The ZSFSR joined the newly created Union of Soviet Socialist Republics later in 1922. Notably, one of the arguments supporting the creation of the ZSFSR was that it would ameliorate "ultranationalism" among high party and state officials in Azerbaijan. The ZSFSR soviet was delegated control of military decisions, finances, foreign affairs and trade matters, communication and transportation policies, the struggle against counterrevolutionaries, and republican economic affairs, but most power rested with the central executive committee and presidium. Audrey Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks: Power and identity under Russian rule* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1992), 119-121.

[3] ARDA 57.1.151.11. Azeris are often referred to as "Tiurk" in state documents in the 1920s and early 1930s. "Azerbaijani" gained traction in official and popular use in the latter half of the 1930s. I follow the same practice here to stay true to the language used in primary sources, but also to highlight how ethnonyms and the identity of the AzSSR changed over time.

[4] ARDA 57.1.153.11, 11ob.

considered minorities in comparison with Russians and thus also were targeted by the decolonizing aspects of Bolshevik ideology that sought to undo inequalities and sociocultural "backwardness" fostered by Russian imperial great power chauvinism. For example, a 1925 report that the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party filed with the Transcaucasian Regional Committee of the Communist Party (Zakkraikom, or ZKK) juxtaposes the "native" Tiurk population with local Russians in class terms and clarifies the minority claims of Azerbaijan's principal nationality. That is, the Tiurk and Persian populations of Baku combined amounted to only 29 percent of all workers in the city, while Russians accounted for 44 percent of the urban workforce. There were also sharp inequalities between rural Tiurk settlements and urban Baku. The report authors argued that significant work needed to be done in Azerbaijan to bridge this divide and build a Tiurk proletariat.[5] Tiurk women were also singled out for their backward lifestyle and "slavish dependence" on men.[6] In part to combat these issues, a decision was made to order a Tiurk linotype machine from the United States and increase the number of Tiurk-language printed materials in the republic.[7] These printed resources—journals, newspapers, textbooks, and other materials—would help to develop Tiurk literacy and culture, but would also assist in spreading the Bolshevik message and values among the population.

[5] The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia Archive II [sak'art'velos šinagan sak'met'a saministros ark'ivi, or sšssa (II)], 13.3.103.10
[6] sšssa (II) 13.3.103.13
[7] sšssa (II) 13.3.103.17.

Photo 1: The Party organized women's clubs to educate Azerbaijan's women and expose them to a vision of economic independence from men. These women are pictured at a school for the elimination of illiteracy.[8]

Photo 2: This 1932 photo illustrates the scope of Soviet literacy efforts. Here, shepherds are taught how to read and write in Ganca.[9]

[8] Azerbaijan Republic State Archive of Film and Photo Documents [Azərbaycan Respublikası Dövlət Kino-Foto Sənədləri Arxivi], or ARDKFSA, unknown year, photo number 1554. Based on the photo collection this is likely from the late 1920s or early 1930s. The women are labeled "Azerbaijani" in the archive description of the photo.

Despite these critical and ongoing inequalities in the republic, the report's authors also noted that they had conquered obstacles to the *korenizatsiia* of Azerbaijan's apparatus outside of Baku. Reportedly, the process of "nationalization" was proceeding naturally, government paperwork was shifting from Russian to the Tiurk language, and Tiurks comprised the majority of government workers. Excluding Baku and the Baku *uezd*, Tiurks accounted for approximately 85 percent of the individuals working in Azerbaijan's executive committees, school organizations (*uchispolkom*), and village soviets. Russians (just over three percent) and Armenians (just over 11 percent) comprised the rest of the workers, and were located in communities where Russians and Armenians were demographically dominant. More than half of these Armenian government workers, for example, were in Nagorno Karabakh.[10] According to the report, these figures more or less matched the 1921 population census of rural Azerbaijan, which put Russians at three percent of the population and Armenians at just over thirteen percent. Tiurks and "other eastern *narodnosti*" comprised the rest of the population.[11] In other words, Azerbaijan had been indigenized outside of Baku.

Archival records show that others disputed this portrayal. They argued that "Tiurkification" (*tiurkizatsiia*) had not proceeded far enough in Azerbaijan, and that the situation in Baku discredited claims about the successful *korenizatsiia* of Azerbaijan's apparatus.[12] Indeed, if we contrast all-republican figures from 1925 with the optimistic picture portrayed in the above report, then we see that the Azerbaijan

[9] ARDKFSA, 1928, photo inventory number 6684. No nationality is specified for the individuals in the photo.
[10] sšssa (II) 13.3.103.18 and 19. The exact wording on page 19 was "gdye vse rabotniki armiane."
[11] sšssa (II) 13.3.103.19.
[12] sšssa (II) 14.4.131.18-23.

Communist Party (AzKP) apparatus was comprised of a more even mixture of Tiurks (43 percent), Russians (38 percent), and Armenians (18 percent). More specifically, several prominent non-Tiurks held leadership positions in the AzKP and less than one-half of one percent of all Tiurks were party members.[13]

Korenizatsiia of "national minority regions"

Despite evidence that Tiurk indigenization was very much an ongoing process, records from the late 1920s show that the cultural revolution sparked deep criticism of Azerbaijani national politics in "national minority regions" (*natsmenraiony*) that were populated by compact minority communities. These minority regions extended beyond those areas of Azerbaijan that had recognized forms of autonomy—Nagorno Karabakh and Nakhchivan—and Kurdistan, a lower level territorial administrative unit in western Azerbaijan.[14] In a 1931 memorandum, for example, Alimadatov from the Zakkraikom criticized Azerbaijan's Central Committee [AzTsK], Executive Committee [TsIK], and other government organs for successive failures in national minority affairs, noting that, "to this day, the TsK and AzTsIK have not specifically

[13] Altstadt, 122-123. In Georgia and Armenia, the titular populations respectively comprised 71 percent and 93 percent of party apparatuses.

[14] sšssa (II) 14.4.131.18-23. After contention between Azerbaijan and Armenia, and within the Nagorno Karabakh region itself, the Autonomous Oblast' of Nagorno Karabakh and its significant Armenian population were officially incorporated into the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic in November 1924. The name was changed to the Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Oblast' in 1937. Although technically there was no "titular" population of Nagorno Karabakh, Armenians living in Nagorno Karabakh experienced more developed and consistent cultural support and political representation than other minorities who lived in Azerbaijan. The Nakhchivan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was formed in Azerbaijan in March 1924. The Kurdistan *uezd* was created in 1923. The *uezd* was located in between Nagorno Karabakh and Armenia. In May 1930, the *uezd* was reorganized into the Kurdistan okrug and expanded to include both the Zangelan region and part of the Dzhebrail region of Karabakh. The capital of the Kurdistan okrug was Lachin. ARDA 379.1.3247.1. The okrug was dissolved shortly after being established.

discussed the question about the work of national minorities [*natsmen*], the *korenizatsiia* of the apparatus, and the training and retraining of cadres from the backward minorities (courses, etc.)."[15] He pointed out that non-Tiurks comprised nearly 40% of Azerbaijan's population, but the AzTsIK and other government organs were unable to identify national minority regions in Azerbaijan, the national breakdown of village soviets and collective farms, and the number of party members from Talysh, Kurdish, Lezgin, and other minority communities.[16]

Alimadatov was particularly concerned with the fact that Azerbaijan's Union of Agricultural Collectives (Azkolkhoztsentr) as yet had not documented the number of households and rate of collectivization in national areas, and that village soviets were underdeveloped in these regions.[17] Alimadatov's criticism of Azkolkhoztsentr came at a time when central authorities in Moscow were beginning to attack Zakkraikom for mistakes made during collectivization. For example, a few months after Alimadatov's report, a Communist Party of the Soviet Union (KPSS) Central Committee resolution harshly evaluated economic work in Transcaucasia and attacked Zakkraikom for "failing to prepare the peasant masses for collectivization and for [putting] inadequate pressure on the kulaks."[18]

Criticism of local nationalism among Transcaucasia's "principal nationalities"—that is, the Tiurks in Azerbaijan, Georgians in Georgia, and Armenians in Armenia—was another popular theme in Zakkraikom reports at this time.[19]

[15] sšssa (II) 13.9.195.47.
[16] sšssa (II) 13.9.195.47.
[17] sšssa (II) 13.9.195.49-50.
[18] Suny (1994), 254.
[19] sšssa (II) 13.9.195.121, and Suny (1994), 253.

According to these reports, republican organs manifested their own "great-power" tendencies by ignoring the interests of both autonomous and national minority regions.[20] Illustrating that *korenizatsiia* was supposed to be carried out on multiple levels within the Soviet republics, the presidium of the Transcaucasian TsIK passed a decree in 1932 ordering the *korenizatsiia* of national minority regions. The decree called for government affairs and records (legal provisions, protocols, decrees, court proceedings, village soviet records, etc.) to be written in native languages in national minority areas; for the improvement and expansion of the school networks in these communities; for regional executive and technical personnel to know local languages; for central authorities to restructure their apparatuses in order to better serve national minority regions; for the liquidation of illiteracy among "culturally backward" *narodnosti* such as the Lezgins, Kurds, Assyrians, Tats, Talysh, and Ingush; for the creation of native teaching cadres; for expanded publications in native minority languages; for investigations into which language to use where minorities had "lost" their native language (namely some Greeks and Armenians in Georgia and Kurds and Tats in Azerbaijan); for an increase in the number of national minority workers in Narkompros; and, finally, for the completion of *korenizatsiia* in village soviets and regional executive committees in national minority regions by January 1, 1933.[21]

[20] sšssa (II) 13.9.195.122.

[21] ARDA 57.1.873.6-9. The cultural revolution accelerated the *korenizatsiia* of schools and government apparatuses, but also aimed to reshape the republics—and Moscow's control over them—by replacing long-standing intellectuals and elites with members of the rising working class and checking the ambitions and autonomy of these regional authorities. In Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, and elsewhere, educational, cultural, and political elites were labeled nationalists and dismissed from their university and government positions. Further, in 1932, the Soviet higher education infrastructure was centralized and placed under the supervision of Narkompros in Moscow (Suny (1994), 257-259). In Azerbaijan, as with elsewhere, purges of "nationalists" and political opponents had been underway for several years already. Starting in 1927-1928, however, these attacks escalated and took on the character of purges developing in other Soviet Muslim republics. In these sites, former political elites and Communists

The trajectory of national minority programming for the Georgian-Ingilo, Talysh, and Lezgin in the 1920s and 1930s, illustrates that the reach of national minority support expanded in the 1930s but nonetheless fell far short of the ambitious goal to layer *korenizatsiia* across titular and non-titular communities. In 1931, a government official determined in a report that there were about 16 native nationalities in Azerbaijan.[22] He further divided these national minorities into three different groups according to degrees of national cultural development. Although ethnographers technically classified the "Ingilo" as an ethnographic group instead of as a nationality, the Georgian-Ingilo in northwest Azerbaijan were discussed as part of the Georgian nationality, which was categorized as one of the more culturally and historically advanced peoples in Azerbaijan.[23] The Talysh and Lezgins were categorized as part of the middle grouping.

The first group included Armenians, Germans, Georgians, Greeks, and Volga Tatars. The investigator separated this group from the other two because these five nationalities had literary native languages, native-language school networks, and qualified native-language teachers. The quality of these characteristics ranged widely across the group, however, from Armenians who had fairly widespread access to native-language instruction in schools and technical schools to, for instance, Georgians who reportedly were not well served and whose "cultural level was very

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alike were charged with "Sultangalievism," "national communism," or just plain nationalism and folded into this all-Union cleansing process (Altstadt, 132-139).

[22] ARDA 57.1.864.110.

[23] Census workers categorized Muslim Georgian-Ingilo as Azerbaijani in Soviet censuses because Ingilo was considered an ethnographic grouping and thus did not qualify as a national categorization. Christian Georgian-Ingilo were labeled Georgian in passports and censuses, however, and this offered more traction for debates about Georgian cultural resources in both Muslim and Christian Georgian-Ingilo villages. It also meant that the Muslim Georgian-Ingilo often were included in discussions and reports about "Georgians" in Azerbaijan, whether or not they identified themselves as such.

low."[24] Indeed, throughout the 1920s, AzNarkompros meetings documented that Georgian language and cultural programming was insufficient to meet the needs of Azerbaijan's Georgian-Ingilo population in northwest Azerbaijan.[25]

A 1929 report on educational conditions for national minorities in the Zaqatala *uezd*, for example, explicated ongoing shortcomings in area communities. For example, the author noted that "Muslim Ingilos" and other national minorities in Zaqatala attended Tiurk-language schools and "Christian Ingilos" attended Georgian schools, but some Muslim students spoke Georgian and thus had difficulty understanding their Tiurk-speaking teachers. The investigator proposed transferring such schools to the "native language" of these students, but his proposals were thrown in doubt by numerous problems that he outlined in the region.[26] Namely, the local population was actively undermining the Soviet educational system (several mullahs, for instance, were still running madrassas and teaching sharia), non-local teachers lacked authority to make changes, local teachers were beholden to social pressures and thus similarly unwilling or unable to implement change (some were even known to pray and attend local mosques), and local government organs paid little attention to the school network.[27]

Although the *korenizatsiia* of national minority regions was decreed in 1932, the Azerbaijan TsIK determined many years later that this task was still far from complete in Georgian-Ingilo communities. When A. Isazanian, the head of the AzTsIK's department of nationalities, reported on the region in May 1937, he

[24] ARDA 57.1.864.111-112.
[25] For example, ARDA 57.1.395.2ob.
[26] ARDA 57.1.560.25.
[27] ARDA 57.1.560.13-26.

documented both successes and failures in this sphere. First, he noted a number of "economic-cultural" achievements. The AzTsIK still needed to help the Qax region of the former Zaqatala uezd and neighboring regions train Tsakhur, Avar, Lezgin, and Qax Ingilo cadres, but Georgian schools had qualified teachers and Georgian-language textbooks, collectivization was going well in minority villages, village apparatuses had been indigenized (*korenizirovany*), and the chairmen and secretaries of village soviets and chairmen of kolkhozes represented the appropriate national minority populations.

There remained, however, a linguistic gap between indigenized villages and the regional executive committee, which was comprised of Azerbaijani-speakers. This meant that Georgian-Ingilo village soviets had to write their reports (*protokoly*) in the Azerbaijani language. While this served the interests of the regional executive committee, Azerbaijani-language *protokoly* were unintelligible to many members of the village soviets drafting them. Isazanian blamed the regional executive committee for this situation, arguing that its members were uninterested in national minority affairs. He proposed adding Georgian-speakers to the executive committee so that the Georgian-Ingilo soviets could write their reports in their native language.[28]

Later that year, Baku officials intervened to try and force compliance with indigenization expectations in this region. First, in July 1937, the AzTsIK decreed that record-keeping in the Georgian-Ingilo Alibeyli and Qax "Ingilo" soviets would be conducted in the Georgian language.[29] Then, in November 1937, the AzTsIK issued an extended decree that ordered the regional executive committees of all three regions of

[28] ARDA 379.1.6907.9-12.
[29] ARDA 379.1.6907.1-2.

the now-former Zaqatala *uezd*—Qax, Balakan, and Zaqatala—to ensure that Georgian-Ingilo villages in their areas were conducting business in the "native language of the Ingilo" by January 1, 1938.[30] This was accompanied a month later by an order to introduce Georgian language classes to Georgian-Ingilo villages throughout Balakan, Zaqatala, and Qax.[31] While available sources do not attest to the depth of Georgian-language governmental affairs in this area after the decree, school records from Georgian-Ingilo villages document the existence of Georgian-language sectors in both Muslim and Christian Georgian-Ingilo villages into the early 1940s.[32]

These measures are significant for several reasons. First, as I show later in the dissertation, these decrees created long-lasting expectations about national language support and resources in this region. Second, the latter two decrees fail to differentiate between the Muslim and Christian Georgian-Ingilo communities in the region. This was a significant change. After all, the affected villages in Balakan, Zaqatala, and northwestern Qax were comprised mainly of Muslims, who were categorized as Tiurk in censuses and previously had been served by Tiurk language schools. Further, while it is not clear to what extent elites from the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic (GSSR) were involved in Georgian-Ingilo affairs in the 1930s, the politicization of Georgian-Ingilo religious distinctions, as well as Georgian kin state interference in Georgian-Ingilo communities, are themes that reverberate throughout this dissertation and complicate conceptualizations of the Georgian-Ingilo as a coherent national community.

[30] ARDA 379.1.7047.1.
[31] ARDA Shaki Filial (ARDASF) 216.1.217.61.
[32] For example, ARDA 57.11.332.

Talysh, Lezgins, Mountain Jews, Assyrians, and Uzbeks comprised the second group of minorities disaggregated in this report.[33] The authors grouped these populations together because they reportedly had a lower level of cultural development when compared to the previous grouping, and because local educational authorities and Narkompros had done a particularly poor job fostering their national advancement.[34] I will briefly explore the Talysh and Lezgin examples to tease out some of the trajectories of the populations in this purported group.

Government officials expressed a significant amount of anxiety about the Talysh population at this time. Some of this unease can be traced directly to concerns about Talysh illiteracy and "backwardness." Contemporaneous reports, for example, go so far as to characterize the Talysh as the "most backward people."[35] According to the investigator, the Talysh lacked their own alphabet, had been illiterate prior to the revolution, and still had unacceptably high rates of illiteracy after more than a decade of Soviet rule.[36] In 1930, there were almost 80,000 Talysh in Azerbaijan, but only three percent of them were considered literate.[37] Further, only 26 percent of school-aged Talysh children were enrolled in the available Tiurk schools.[38]

While signs of Talysh backwardness were often framed in national terms, the story of one Talysh woman born in 1928 offers insight into some of the other reasons for low school attendance in these early decades. In her case, she attended school for

[33] The language in the original document combined the Lezgins and Mountain Jews—"Lezgins/Mountain Jews."
[34] ARDA 57.1.864.112.
[35] sšssa (II) 13.9.195.58.
[36] ARDA 57.1.864.112-113.
[37] ARDA 57.1.864.9.
[38] ARDA 57.11.7.48.

one year when she was seven and studied in the Talysh language, which had been introduced to first grade classrooms a few years prior. Her father did not allow her to enroll for a second year because he was uncomfortable with his daughter attending a school with male students and teachers. After she was pulled out of school, she went to work in a tea field and worked there until she married at the age of seventeen and her mother-in-law forbade her from working outside the home. Her younger sister attended school for three years, but her younger brother also left school after one year to begin working.[39] While local dynamics certainly were at play in Talysh communities, the social mores that cut short her educational experience can hardly be confined to the Talysh population in Azerbaijan.

Soviet authorities worried about illiteracy because they considered it an impediment to building unity and drawing the population into the Soviet system. It was doubly important in this case, however, because the Talysh populated the unstable Soviet-Persian border. Several government reports from 1930 and 1931 document the porousness of the border and the need to counter influences from Persia with economic development and a stronger state presence on the Soviet side.[40] In his 1931 memorandum about work among Azerbaijani national minorities, for example, Alimadatov devotes significant attention to border issues with the Talysh. He notes that the Lankaran lifestyle was more similar to Persia than to the rest of Azerbaijan, and that Soviet Talysh had close kinship ties with Talysh persons in Persia, including with the "khans and beks" who emigrated to Persia after the April 1920 revolution in Azerbaijan, reestablished themselves along the border, and maintained contact with

[39] Interview conducted in Lankaran region, 2008.
[40] For example, ARDA 411.20.61.

relatives in Soviet villages. Further, banditry along the border and rising anxiety among the population was precipitating additional emigration, which resulted in the loss of the resources that migrants took with them to Persia.[41] According to Alimadatov, the sensitivity of these key border regions, which were populated by culturally backward "little ones" (*malyshi*), demanded prompt attention to the cultural and economic development of the Talysh *narodnost'*.[42]

Archival records document steady attention among Baku officials to the Talysh situation for several years prior to and after Alimadatov's somber warning. Up until 1928, the Soviet Talysh who attended school studied in the Tiurk language because there was no accepted Talysh language script to use in the schools.[43] In 1928, however, a Talysh language Latin alphabet was developed along with a first-year Talysh textbook. A second-year textbook followed for the 1930-1931 school year and plans were made for the publication of a scientific Talysh dictionary by 1931-1932.[44] Native language schools, newspapers, and alphabets were developed in these years to spread literacy, but also because it was believed that they would be effective tools in the Sovietization of the population.[45]

Implementation of these centrally directed nativization initiatives was far from perfect in the Talysh regions.[46] For example, a report from the early 1930s claimed

[41] sšssa (II) 13.9.195.58.
[42] sšssa (II) 13.9.195.61.
[43] Although populations such as the Talysh and Lezgin were frequently characterized as having "no written language," attempts had been made to adapt both languages to the Arabic script prior to the Revolution. Today, three scripts are in use—the Arabic script in Iran, the Latin script in Azerbaijan, and the Cyrillic script in Russia.
[44] ARDA 57l.11.7.30-31, 57.1.571.21-22, and ARDA 57.1.864.9-11.
[45] ARDA 57.11.7.60.
[46] ARDA 57.1.864.9.

that local government representatives were blocking the distribution of Talysh language texts in order to delay the development of the Talysh language and to protect their own privileges and power.[47] Another reported that the first and second grades had not been transferred to the Talysh language on time because of negligent local authorities.[48] Alimadatov weighed in with other criticisms, noting in particular that the indigenization of the government apparatus in the Talysh regions was sorely underdeveloped as of 1931. Of the 46 members of the Lankaran regional committee, for instance, only nine were Talysh. Further, its presidium had 11 members and three candidates, but only two were from the demographically dominant Talysh community.[49]

Table 1: Coverage of Azerbaijan's native-language schools at the primary level in the 1933-1934 school year[50]

Narody and *Narodnosti*	Number of students classified in this nationality category	Students studying in the language of this nationality
Tiurk	249,251	265,337
Russian	41,267	54,437
Armenian	47,330	39,547
Lezgin	10,821	9,186
Talysh	15,095	13,635
Tat	7,317	5,491
German	2,354	1,687
Kurd	1,125	890
Assyrian	206	204
Greek	83	53
Georgian	1,062	893
Volga Tatar	1,533	988
Uzbek	42	40
Avar	2,269	1,133

[47] ARDA 57.1.864.112-113.
[48] ARDA 57.11.7.49.
[49] sšssa (II) 13.9.195.61.
[50] Gadzhieva, 115. The chart is copied from Gadzhieva's dissertation. She uses "Azerbaijani," but I use "Tiurk" as that was the term more in use at this time.

Despite these shortcomings, the table above illustrates the remarkable expansion and complexity of Azerbaijan's native-language school network (including Talysh schools) in 1933-1934. By the next school year, 137 schools, with more than 17,000 students in grades one through seven, used Talysh as an instructional language.[51] The Talysh teaching cadre also increased from 64 in the 1930-1931 school year to 370 five years later.[52]

Talysh print culture also started to come into its own in the 1930s with the production of Talysh-language novels, poetry, and newspaper sections in addition to the aforementioned textbooks. Zulfugar Ahmadzada was both instrumental to this effort and, arguably, the most prominent Talysh public figure in pre-World War Two Azerbaijan. Originally from Pensar village in the Astara region, he headed various regional state organs in the 1920s and early 1930s, led the department of national minorities at the Azerneshr publishing house in Baku from 1934 to 1938, and built a reputation as an admired and influential poet. He published in both Talysh and Azerbaijani, co-authored the Talysh-language textbook that was used in Talysh schools in the 1930s, and translated classic literary works into the Talysh language. Oral histories and archival documents attest to his involvement in and dedication to Talysh cultural development, and to his lasting influence in Talysh communities. As I discuss later in the dissertation, stories about Ahmadzada, as well as his poems and stories, functioned as a mechanism of Talysh cultural reproduction long after the 1930s.

[51] Gadzhieva, 109. Talysh was taught in Lankaran region until sixth grade, and in other regions until fourth grade. Gadzhieva, 110.
[52] Gadzhieva, 110.

Photo 3: Ahmadzada at a political meeting, seated second from the left at the table (unknown date).[53]

The Lezgin situation was similarly complicated, but nonetheless quite distinct from that of the Talysh. Azerbaijan was able to obtain Lezgin language resources, including teachers, textbooks, and political materials, from neighboring Dagestan after a Lezgin Latin script was developed in the 1920s.[54] Lezgin-language materials were produced in Dagestan because, in contrast with most other ethnoterritorial units in the Soviet Union, there was no one titular nationality in the Dagestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, which was a constituent part of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR). Rather, several of the Dagestani *narodnosti* categorized

[53] Photo from anonymous private archive.
[54] In 1930, there were 90,500 Lezgins in Dagestan. This was the fourth largest national population in Dagestan after the Avars, Dargins, and Russians and amounted to just over eleven percent of the population. Former Archival Depository for Party Records [Byvshee Arkhivokhranilishche partdokumentov] of the Central State Archive of the Republic of Dagestan [Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Respubliki Dagestan], or TsGARD AP, 645p.2.18.22.

as the "principal" *narodnosti* in the territory, including the Avar, Lezgin, Dargin, and others, enjoyed political representation and national cultural support comparable to that of titular populations in other republics.

As the Azerbaijani officials found, however, domestic borders could be just as problematic as international ones. In the mid-1920s, for example, Dagestani representatives tried (and failed) to work their way into the Central Commission of National Minority Affairs at the AzTsIK as representatives of Dagestani peoples in Azerbaijan.[55] Further, as I explore in chapter four, the contrasting example of national politics and Lezgin cultural resources in Dagestan later inspired dissatisfied Lezgins to agitate for increased national cultural support and recognition in Azerbaijan.

Despite experiencing many of the same setbacks found in other minority communities, including retarded implementation of both indigenization efforts and the distribution of native-language materials, Lezgin schools also started to thrive in the 1930s.[56] For instance, if, in the 1929/30 school year 80 percent of Lezgin children of school age studied in the "Tiurk" language, by the 1931-1932 school year 4,967 of 9,464 Lezgin children (52 percent) between the ages of eight and eleven attended Lezgin-language schools. This number increased to 8,478 in the following year and to 9,186 of 10,821 primary school students (85 percent) in 1933-1934.[57] By the 1938-

[55] ARDA 379.7.16.7 and Central State Archive of the Republic of Dagestan [Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Respubliki Dagestan], or TsGARD, 37r.22.38.17-25.
[56] ARDA 57.1.864.11, ARDA 57.11.7.24/24a, and sšssa (II) 13.9.195.56.
[57] Gadzhieva, 96-115.

1939 school year, there were 48 schools where 11,980 students studied in the Lezgin language through grade four.[58]

Although this second category of national minority populations in Azerbaijan was characterized by poor experiences with state officials, other minorities—notably the peoples this investigator termed *melkie narodnosti* (small peoples)—were even more disadvantaged in national terms. According to the report author, by the turn of the 1930s, no effort had been made to work with the Tsakhurs/Kaltakhtsy, Dzheks, Khansutlintsy, Krystsy, Budukhtsy, Khinalukhtsy, Udin, and others in Azerbaijan. For this reason, a contemporaneous government report recommended developing the spoken and written forms of these languages, publishing native language texts, and training native language teachers to conduct enlightenment work among the above populations.

There was a large linguistic gap between these communities and the Tiurk schools and literacy campaigns that they had access to at the time. Reportedly, all pre-school aged children, half of the women, and some of the men in these communities only knew their native language.[59] A 1937 study of the Qax Tsakhur communities clarified the consequence of failing to provide native-language services: after finishing the fourth grade in Tiurk schools, some Tsakhur children were still illiterate and thus unable to continue their studies.[60] Despite these developmental conflicts, proposed policies for national advancement in these communities—including the development of language alphabets—remained largely unrealized. As the table below illustrates,

[58] There were also some mixed schools where both Azeri and Lezgin sectors were offered. Gadzhieva, 124.
[59] ARDA 57.11.7.21.
[60] ARDA 379.1.6907.10.

only Udins, who studied in the Armenian and Russian languages, and Assyrians experienced non-Tiurk educational accommodations before 1935.[61] Tsakhurs in the Qax region also had a brief flirtation with *korenizatsiia* and native-language schools in 1937.[62]

Table 2: Language of education in Department of Social Education (Sotsvos) schools in Azerbaijan

	1914-1915[63]	1919-1920	1928-1929	1929-1930	1933-1934[64]
1.	Russian-Tatar	Tiurk	Tiurk	Tiurk	Tiurk
2.	Russian	Russian	Russian	Russian	Russian
3.	Armenian	Armenian	Armenian	Armenian	Armenian
4.	Russian-German	German	German	German	German
5.		Georgian	Georgian	Georgian	Georgian
6.			Volga Tatar	Volta Tatar	Volga Tatar
7.			Greek	Greek	Greek
8.			Mountain Jew	Mountain Jew	Tat
9.			Assyrian	Assyrian	Assyrian
10.			Persian	Persian	----
11.				Talysh	Talysh
12.				Lezgin	Lezgin
13.				Avar	Avar
14.					Kurdish
15.					Uzbek

The rise of Russian and the titular category

Despite the effort expended in the late 1920s and early 1930s to indigenize national minority regions and develop native-language cultures in Azerbaijan (and the Soviet Union more generally), the system was dismantled in the latter half of the 1930s for ideological, geopolitical, and practical reasons. In 1936, the new Stalin Constitution was adopted. With it came the announcement that the Soviet Union had achieved

[61] ARDA 379.1.6907.1-12.
[62] ARDA 379.1.6907.1-1ob.
[63] For data on 1914-1930, see ARDA 57.11.7.40.
[64] Gadzhieva, 115. Gadzhieva does not qualify that she draws this information from Sotsvos schools, but that is the comparable list of languages. Gadzhieva uses "Azerbaijani," but I use "Tiurk" as that was the term more regularly used in official documents such as censuses at this time.

socialism and the nationality problem had been solved. In line with this historical advancement, the number of national oblasts was reduced and the Transcaucasian Soviet Socialist Federated Republic dissolved. This latter move eliminated the middleman between the Transcaucasian SSRs and Moscow. They were now on equal footing with other SSRs, but republican governance still remained largely subordinated to all-Union government structures centered in Moscow.[65] These measures were part of a massive government reorganization that eliminated nationality departments on the central, regional, and local level, as well as national cultural programming for almost all non-titular populations.[66]

Nationalities were also categorized differently after the Soviet Union purportedly achieved socialism. Late in 1936, Stalin announced that there were approximately sixty nations, national groups, and *narodnosti* in the USSR. This announcement prompted "an all-out effort to further accelerate the revolution and its program of state-sponsored evolutionism…[by bringing about] the rapid *completion* of the consolidation of clans, tribes, and nationalities into Soviet socialist nations."[67] Soviet ethnographers preparing for a new all-Union census set about meeting Stalin's proclaimed benchmark of development and reduced the number of recognized nationalities from 109 to 60.[68] As the below chart shows, in 1939, several national populations (including the Kurds, Tsakhurs, Laks, Tats, and Mountain Jews) were assimilated into the "Azerbaijani" population in the census. Around the time that the TSFSR was dissolved in 1936, the term Azerbaijani as a form of categorization and

[65] Altstadt, 128-129.
[66] Martin, 412.
[67] Hirsch 274.
[68] Hirsch 286.

identification started to gain popular and official resonance and displace older labels for Azeris such as Tiurk, Tatar, and Muslim.[69]

Table 3:Azerbaijani nationality categories delineated in the 1926 and 1939 censuses.

	Azerbaijani Populations Enumerated in 1928[70]	1939 Census in Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic[71]
1.	Russians	Russians
2.	Tatars	Tatars
3.	Jews	Jews
4.	Georgians	Georgians
5.	Tiurks	Azerbaijanis
6.	Armenians	Armenians
7.	Germans	Germans
8.	Avar	Avar
9.	Lezgins	Lezgins
10.	Talysh	Talysh
11.	Kurds	Ukrainian
12.	Laks	Others
13.	Tats	
14.	Mountain Jews	
15.	Tsakhurs	
16.	Others	

Stalin believed that declarations of Soviet ethnohistorical progress could help to counter the Nazi ideological challenge to the Soviet state, but he also sought to undercut potentially traitorous nationalities on the eve of global war. Accordingly, in early 1938, the KPSS Central Committee labeled Finnish, Estonian, Latvian, German, English, Greek, and other so-called diaspora nationality schools "harmful," and subsequently suggested that national republics convert these schools to conventional

[69] The genesis of the Azerbaijani national concept was earlier and the term Azerbaijani [*Azərbaycanlı*] appeared in the press as early as the turn of the twentieth century, but it was only between the 1920s and the 1930s that the term Azerbaijani began to be used in official documents (Leah Feldman, "On the threshold of Eurasia: Intersecting Discourses of Empire and Identity in the Literature of the Russian Empire," [Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2013], 5).
[70] *Statisticheskii spravochnik SSSR za 1928* (Moscow: Statisticheskoe Izdatel'stvo TsSU SSSR, 1929), 36-39.
[71] *Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleniia 1939 goda*, 71.

"Soviet schools" and abolish national soviets in diaspora nationality communities.[72] Purportedly after consultation with teachers, students, and parents, German schools in Azerbaijan were swiftly reorganized into Russian-language schools.[73] The Politbiuro later extended its punishment of diaspora nationalities by ordering the forced relocation of several of these populations away from the Soviet borderlands.[74]

The impending war wreaked havoc on the nationalities system in other ways. In March 1938, Azerbaijan's Sovnarkom and Communist Party Central Committee again followed Moscow's lead and adopted a decree mandating the introduction of Russian language classes to all of Azerbaijan's non-Russian schools.[75] The rehabilitation of the Russian nation had started a few years prior, and Stalin believed that increasing linguistic unity in the Soviet Union would help to bolster both patriotism and army-readiness.[76]

After Azerbaijani officials adopted the Russian language decree, school inspectors were sent to evaluate schools in national minority regions. Whereas school reviews in the early 1930s lamented the failures of local officials to implement indigenization efforts, these new reports drew critical attention to the consequences rather than to the causes of ongoing insufficiencies. Deep educational problems in minority communities reportedly were perpetuated by the insufficient supply of

[72] RGANI 89.62.5, and Martin 412.
[73] ARDA 57.1.1928.85-86. Martin argues that the decree was later expanded to include all "non-Russian schools in Russian regions," meaning that all 4598 national minority schools in the Russian regions of the RSFSR were also closed by mid-1938. This decree doesn't appear to have been implemented in such a totalizing manner in Azerbaijan. Martin, 410.
[74] Hirsch 275, and Martin 411.
[75] The KPSS decree was dated February 13, 1938, while Azerbaijan's was dated March 23, 1938. ARDA 411.35.39.146-147.
[76] Peter Blitstein, "Nation-Building or Russification? Obligatory Russian Instruction in the Soviet Non-Russian School, 1938-1953," in *A State of Nations*, 253-274. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, 255.

native-language written materials, by Dagestani-provided Lezgin and Avar textbooks that were unintelligible to Azerbaijani Avars and Lezgins, by untrained native-language teachers, and by the lack of native-language inspectors who could monitor and assist in the improvement of these schools. Further, "enemies of the people" had managed to negatively influence the trajectory of these communities by forcing some national minority (i.e. Kurdish) children to study in their "native language" when they were actually native speakers of Azerbaijani. They had also played a part in perverting national cultural development. For example, enemies of the people (namely Chobanzade, Efendiev, and Shaxbazov) were blamed for deliberately sabotaging the new Kurdish alphabet by giving it 38 letters when "the alphabet of the richest language—Russian—only had 32 letters."[77]

In the conclusion of an extensive Narkompros report, the author stated that communal meetings with teachers, parents, students, kolkhoz members, and others resulted in unanimous requests for native-language schools to be transferred to the Azerbaijani language in the 1938-1939 school year, except in Vartashen, where Assyrians preferred Russian schools.[78] As with German schools in Azerbaijan, these native-language school closures were portrayed as a response to popular demand rather than to Moscow. If, at the start of the decade, inspectors blamed Tiurk language schools for failing to liquidate illiteracy and prepare minority students for post-primary school studies, by the end of the decade, the opposite had been proven true:

[77] ARDA 57.1.1292.96.

[78] ARDA 57.1.1292.94-99. In the state archive in Shaki, Azerbaijan, which serves as a regional archive for the territories of the former Zaqatala *uezd*, it is possible to find *protokoly* from Avar and Tsakhur village councils that employ formulaic language to request that native-language schools be converted to the Azerbaijani language because of a lack of native-language materials, the failure of these schools to improve literacy, and disjunctures between Dagestani-provided resources and local vernaculars. ARDA SF 197.1.84.3-22.

native language schools were incapable of providing minority students with the requisite skills to enroll in Russian- and Azerbaijani-language classes and secondary schools. Further, the discourse on nationalism in the republic began to shift away from critiques of Russian and Azerbaijani chauvinism to condemnations of minority nationalisms.

Available archival documents make clear that the complicated school network was untenable after the introduction of mandatory Russian language learning in 1938. Not only did the Russian language decree require extensive financial and technical support and attention, but also students studying in national minority languages faced greater difficulty than other students when switching to a more intensive Russian language educational system. Until the later years of primary school when they transitioned to Russian or Azerbaijani as an instructional language, minority students studied Russian or Azerbaijani for only a few hours per week and often used their native language outside of school.

The consequence of this complicated linguistic program was that national minority students were unprepared for the inevitable transition to Russian or Azerbaijani language learning and sometimes had to start their studies over again.[79] In the face of these challenges, it was deemed more practical to reduce the number of languages that these students were juggling and to linguistically assimilate them in the first year of school rather than waiting to do so in the fourth or fifth grade. No longer

[79] ARDA 57.1.1292.165-167.

would enemies of the people and bourgeois nationalists isolate Azerbaijan's children from the cultural riches of the language of the October Revolution, Lenin, and Stalin.[80]

By the early- to mid-1940s, only Russian, Azerbaijani, Armenian, and Georgian (in Christian Georgian-Ingilo communities)—the language of internationalism and the titular languages of Azerbaijan and its neighbors—were regularly offered as languages of instruction in Azerbaijani schools. Whether or not students in Armenian, Russian, and Georgian schools would have to learn Azerbaijani remained up for debate, but every student in the Soviet Union spent at least a few hours every week studying the great Russian language. As I show in subsequent chapters, the restoration of some national rights in a few of these non-titular communities, including that of the Muslim Georgian-Ingilo and Lezgins, came only after years of concentrated minority agitation and top-level interference in local politics.

The re-conceptualization of nationality politics prior to World War Two was inspired by a mix of overlapping imperatives, including geopolitical tensions, Stalin's 1936 proclamation that the Soviet Union had achieved socialism, and a host of practical and conceptual issues with the extensive web of Soviet minority cultural institutions. The contemporaneous purges also played an insidious role in this transition by sweeping national cultural and political leaders into the fray. The "liquidation" of these elites destroyed not only lives, but also the intellectual and cultural capital of several small minority communities, including the Talysh.

[80] ARDA 57.1.1292.171-172.

Photo 4: Zulfugar Ahmadzada in Crimea in late 1937, shortly before his arrest.[81]

Indeed, the intellectuals who had earlier helped to define, develop, and defend Soviet Talysh culture were among those victimized by arbitrary arrest and extreme punishment during the purges. The most prominent—Ahmadzada—was arrested on

[81] Photo from anonymous private archive.

March 15, 1938. A member of the Communist Party since 1919, Ahmadzada passed through a few camps, including Suslovo, before dying in Mariinsk on June 9, 1942.[82] Rumored to have fallen into conflict with Azerbaijan's first secretary Mir Cafar Bagirov, the alleged reason given for his arrest was a poem that he wrote about Lenin: he wrote, "Lenin is our leader/He belongs to all the world," but it was translated as, "Lenin is our leader/He is equal to (or the property of) the other world."[83]

Conclusion

In the Soviet Union, nationalities were neither categorized nor treated equally. As we can see from this brief sketch of national policy development in Azerbaijan over the course of the 1920s and 1930s, national communities in the republic experienced a range of state-sponsored national cultural development prior to the overhaul of the system of nationality governance in the late 1930s. The turn away from national minority *korenizatsiia* in the late 1930s cemented the titular idea in the Soviet Union, but this chapter also begins to hint at the many ways in which the non-titular categorization is and is not a flawed concept.

Myriad variables, including location and coethnic relationships, differentiated non-titular experiences and communities. At the same time, after the 1930s in Azerbaijan, only Azeris, Armenians to a lesser degree, and Christian Georgian-Ingilo in Qax to an almost negligible degree, remained integrated in the system that rewarded

[82] The information about his path through prison camps is culled from letters that Ahmadzade wrote while in Siberia. Ahmadzade was rehabilitated by the Supreme Court and Communist Party in 1956 and 1957, respectively. Sources from anonymous private archive.
[83] Interview, May 2011.

select populations with the composite policies and practices of *korenizatsiia* that played such a large part in "making" and sustaining national identifications in the Soviet Union. It is the location of many non-titular communities outside of this administrative system of nation-building—or on its extreme margins in the Christian Georgian-Ingilo case—that brings some coherence to the non-titular category and it is this notion that guides subsequent chapters, where I trace the trajectory and diversity of non-titular experience in the era of titular nationhood.

CHAPTER TWO

WHAT'S YOURS IS MINE: TERRITORY, WAR, AND NATIONHOOD IN TRANSCAUCASIA

The Soviet leadership employed the legacy of World War Two to reshape Soviet society and bolster the legitimacy of the regime against the backdrop of the turbulent 1930s and the trauma of wartime occupation, disorder, and violence.[1] Yet, despite the war's prominent place in Soviet historical memory, it still plays a comparatively limited analytical role in English-language Soviet historiography.[2] This is particularly the case for histories of nationality policy, where, excepting studies of national deportations and the western borderlands, the implications of wartime strategies and experiences on national identities and nationhood are relatively obscured.[3] The burgeoning study of salient national(ist) movements in the 1950s necessitates a deeper understanding of the relationship between global events such as World War Two and

[1] For example, Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), and Rebecca Manley, *To the Tashkent Station: Evacuation and Survival in the Soviet Union at War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

[2] The exception being a few authors, including Elena Zubkova, *Russia After the War: Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments, 1945-1957* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1998); Vera Dunham, *In Stalin's Time: Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990); and Nina Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead: the rise and fall of the cult of World War II in Russia* (New York: Basic Books, 1994).

[3] The homogenizing and nationalizing impulses of this region in the 1930s and early 1940s have been explored by, among others, Weiner (2002), Weiner, "The Making of a Dominant Myth: The Second World War and the Construction of Political Identities within the Soviet Polity," *Russian Review* 55, no. 4 (October 1996), 638-660, Brown, and Martin.

Soviet national politics.[4] Subsequent chapters explore how de-Stalinization fostered expressions of local particularism, but steps toward liberalization in the 1950s only partly explain the emergence of republican and sub-republican national movements at that time.[5] The next chapter aims to bridge the narrative divide between the late Stalin years and the Khrushchev period by advancing a deeper history of Khrushchev-era national relations and nation building on the republican level. This chapter explores how Soviet foreign policy during World War Two intersected with ethnic and border disputes in the Soviet Caucasus, and altered national consciousnesses, disputes, and landscapes in the region. More specifically, Stalin's wartime attempts to increase Soviet control over Iran and Turkey legitimated subversive discourses of nationhood that reverberated throughout the Caucasus.

Soviet nationality theories rejected national extraterritoriality in principle, but the Bolsheviks repeatedly created exceptions to this rule.[6] Terry Martin has detailed

[4] I use "national(ist) movements" here because demonstrations in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the Khrushchev era ranged across a spectrum from national (and anti-policy/Khrushchev instead of anti-Soviet) to explicitly nationalist. Rogers Brubaker draws a similar contrast between national and nationalist in his description of Soviet nationality policies, which he describes as "antinationalist" but not "antinational." Brubaker, *Nationalism reframed: Nationhood and the national question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 17.

[5] Jeremy Smith emphasizes the specificity of the 1950s in, "Leadership and nationalism in the Soviet Republics, 1951-1959," in *Khrushchev in the Kremlin: Policy and government in the Soviet Union, 1953-1964*, eds. Jeremy Smith and Melanie Ilic (Abingdon, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2011), 79-93.

[6] More specifically, in his 1913 treatise *Marxism and the National Question*, Stalin writes that, "*a common territory* is one of the characteristic features of a nation," but only when coupled with a common economic life facilitated by shared political borders. Thus, territorial continuity became a hallmark feature of the way in which Soviet nations were defined, most notably through the establishment of the ethnoterritorial units (such as the Azerbaijan SSR) that comprised the USSR. (J.V. Stalin, "Marxism and the National Question," in J.V. Stalin, *Works*, Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1954, 304-307). In this sense, up until Stalin's implicit redefinition of nationhood through his foreign interventions in the 1940s, conceiving of the Azerbaijani, Georgian, or Armenian nation as extending beyond the borders of the respective SSRs was politically unviable and, indeed, potentially dangerous. At the same time, however, this was a fine line as the Soviet leadership long used policies in border areas to propagandize among co-ethnics living on the other side of Soviet-international borders.

several examples from the prewar decades that illustrate how *korenizatsiia* policies in the western borderlands in particular were used to exploit cross-border ethnic ties and expand Soviet influence abroad. Cross-border national sentiments were sometimes sanctioned to achieve foreign policy aims, but the potential failure or reversal of this strategy was also a constant concern.[7] Martin argues that, in the late 1930s, this "Piedmont Principle" approach was replaced by a more defensive foreign policy that aimed to turn the Soviet Union into a "'fortress' against all foreign influence."[8] The coinciding contraction of non-titular national rights further deepened the linkages among territory, nationality, and power in the Soviet Union and, in turn, made territorial control all the more important to republican leaders and national actors.

Although national deportations became a hallmark feature of nationality politics in the 1930s and 1940s, this chapter shows that Soviet elites continued to cultivate select transborder ethnic ties during the war. Minority regions, particularly in Azerbaijan, emerged as sites where various actors battled to define the limits of their republics and reshape the balance of power in Transcaucasia. When Stalin sanctioned extra-republic Armenian, Georgian, and Azerbaijani nationalisms to try and extend his influence in neighboring Iran and Turkey, Transcaucasian elites strategically redirected this politics to try and acquire territory from one another. Some minority activists also participated in these territorial contests. The involvement of these politicized actors across various strata of Soviet society in Transcaucasian territorial disputes reveals the depth that geopolitics reached in the 1940s, but also how national

[7] Martin, 227.
[8] Martin 26-27 and 328.

discourses evolved and assumed new forms as they moved through different layers of society.

Stalin and his southern neighbors: the geopolitics of an emerging Cold War

In August 1941, Soviet and British troops occupied Iran to secure its oil fields for the allied cause, potentially use its transportation infrastructure to run supplies to Soviet forces battling the Nazi invasion of the USSR, and undermine German influence in Iran. Soviet troops took control of northern Iran, while the British troops invaded Iran from the south.[9] The positioning of Red Army troops external to the USSR's borders was by then becoming commonplace. Hitler created the impetus for the invasion of Iran in June 1941 by launching Operation Barbarossa and pushing Stalin into an alliance with the United Kingdom, but the earlier Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact had already enabled Soviet invasions of its western neighbors and the creation of the Latvian, Lithuanian, Estonian, and Moldovan SSRs.

The joint British-Soviet invasion of Iran manifested similar aims of influence and control on both sides. In the 1942 Tripartite Treaty among Iran, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union, the latter two agreed to withdraw from Iran six months after the war's end. Nonetheless, both the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union ultimately used the occupation to try to establish more permanent forms of economic and political influence in Iran. Reflecting genuine concerns about the political and economic balance of power with both enemies and new allies—and

[9] Nikki Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 105.

equating territory with security—Soviet leaders advanced economic, political, cultural, and social measures that would firmly integrate northern Iran into the Soviet sphere of influence.[10]

While Stalin intended to increase Soviet influence in Iran, as well as global prestige, though his wartime and postwar maneuvers there, the man he put in charge of building and enacting Soviet policy in Iran dreamed of creating an independent "Southern Azerbaijan."[11] Over the next five years, Mir Cafar Bagirov, the long-standing First Secretary of Azerbaijan's Communist Party, took every opportunity to fuse this goal with Stalin's interests. Months before the invasion of Iran in 1941, Stalin recognized that he had a better chance at building power there through the disaffected segments of society than through traditional political channels in Tehran.[12] He set about collecting information to develop this strategy and received a report from Bagirov emphasizing that "Southern Azerbaijan" harbored a wealth of natural resources, a disgruntled population prime for political agitation, and the physical infrastructure necessary for Soviet penetration of the region.[13] Bagirov must have been convincing because when the time came for invasion, Stalin put him in charge of Soviet operations and strategizing there.

[10] For example, in a 1944 report to Anastas Mikoyan, Azerbaijani Communist Party (AzKP) First Secretary Mir Cafar Bagirov argues that the Soviet Union must secure more control over the Iranian Caspian coast because of its proximity to Baku and due to German, British, and U.S. pretensions to the Caspian Sea. In the letter, Bagirov expresses specific concerns about American and British influence in Iran. ARDA 411.25.349.18a-19.
[11] Fernande Beatrice Scheid, "Stalin, Bagirov and Soviet Policies in Iran, 1939-1946," (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2000), 11.
[12] Scheid, 69.
[13] Scheid, 72-75.

Not long after Soviet troops entered Iran, Soviet scientists and politicians started to explore the economic and political potential of the occupied region. They were both excited by Iran's potential, and motivated to counter U.S. and British efforts to obtain power and oil concessions in Iran.[14] Soviet interventionist policies intensified after the fortunes of the Red Army began to improve in 1944. By the time Soviet troops marched into Germany in 1945, Soviet officials were aggressively laying the building blocks of long-term influence in Iran.

Reproducing a recurring pattern in Soviet strategizing, Bagirov exploited national grievances and aspirations in northern Iran to draw the local population into the Soviet network. The population under Red Army occupation included Persians, Azeris, Armenians, Shahsevan, Kurds, Talysh, and others, and many of these communities harbored both radical political traditions and resentment toward the central government in Tehran. Long-standing complaints in the region centered around disparities between the region's tax rate and received benefits, restrictions on the use of native languages in schools and governmental affairs, and Persian dominance in local government apparatuses. There was also a strong sense among many Iranian Azeris that the central government was pursuing a politics of forced Persianization of the Azeri population.[15]

Soviet appeals to ethnic groups in Iran were fashioned in the same language of national equality and national liberation that the Bolsheviks earlier employed to gain influence in neighboring Central Asia and the Caucasus. For instance, some of the

[14] Natalia Yegorova, "The 'Iran Crisis' of 1945-1945: A view from the Russian archives," *Cold War International History Project*, Working Paper 15 (May 1996), 2-3.
[15] Keddie, 111.

slogans used for Soviet-backed separatist candidates to the Iranian Majlis in 1945 supported equal rights for national minorities and tribes in Iran.[16] Others promoted the establishment of autonomous Kurdish and Azeri districts in northern Iran and agitated for Armenian, Assyrian, Azeri, and Kurdish native-language schools, publications, media, and local governance.[17]

Soviet authorities also took concrete measures to bring their propagandizing to fruition. Intellectuals, artists, and politicians from the USSR were mobilized to support their co-ethnics in Iran.[18] The Azeri State Opera Theater, for example, toured northern Iran for two months, showing off the elevated Azeri culture fostered by the Soviet system and "publicizing a revolutionary message in operatic disguise."[19] Soviet Georgians also participated in the Soviet effort, and worked to advance Soviet propagandizing among Georgians in the Fereydan region of Iran.[20] Throughout the war and into the immediate postwar period, the Georgian leadership sent cultural and political emissaries, propagandizing and educational reading materials in the Georgian

[16] New Majlis elections were held in 1943. There was a significant amount of political activity due to wartime disruptions, new political freedoms, and the agitation of Allied and German agents, but a large conservative majority was elected as a result of electoral dishonesty. A provincial assembly was also elected in Iranian Azerbaijan in 1945. Leftists from the Democrat party and their supporters won the majority of these seats. Keddie, 109-111.

[17] ARPIISSA 1.89.90.4-5, 9-15. Wilson Center Cold War International History Project's Digital Archive: http://www.wilsoncenter.org/digital-archive. This is particularly notable considering that Kurds in Soviet Azerbaijan and Armenia were deported to Central Asia in 1937 and from Georgia in 1944. It took awhile for Soviet agents to build alliances with Shahsevan and Kurdish elites because the latter feared that the communists would punish them for being elites. The Soviet strategy was to get the Kurds to move back to the northern tribal homelands from which Reza Shah had removed them. Once there, Stalin and Bagirov hoped that they would provide a defensive barrier should the Germans try to enter Iran from Turkey. Scheid, 136.

[18] The early 19th century Gulistan Treaty (1813) and Treaty of Turkmenchay (1828) settled the first and second Russo-Persian wars, respectively, and divided the Azeris, Talysh, Kurds, and others between the Russian and Persian empires.

[19] Scheid, 141.

[20] For example, in 1942, the Soviet embassy in Tehran requested from the GSSR historical literature and Georgian national musical instruments for the Fereydan Georgians. sšssa (II) 14.16.201.5. The Fereydan Georgian population was created in the early 17th century when Shah Abbas forcibly relocated thousands of Georgians from the Kakheti region to Iran.

language, and cultural resources such as Georgian musical instruments to the Fereydan Georgians.[21]

The Soviet occupation also generated a new print culture for Iranian Azeris. The Azerbaijani-language newspaper, *Vətən Yolunda*, was central to these efforts. Its editor, Mirza Ibragimov—the future chairman of the Presidium of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic (AzSSR) Supreme Soviet—relocated to Tabriz in the early 1940s to bolster and coordinate the national movement among Iranian Azeris.[22] Years later, he summarized his work in Iran: "Since there were a great many Azeri soldiers in the part of Southern Azerbaijan which we occupied, we were to conduct propaganda and agitation work with them, and help strengthen the friendly relations between the local population and our troops which had been established from the very first day."[23] The newspaper was key to these efforts and also helped to cultivate transborder national sentiment by printing contributions from both Iranian and Soviet Azeri intellectuals.[24] As Ibragimov reminisced in his memoir,

> for Southern Azeris for whom schools, the press and literature in the mother tongue was banned, and who had been exposed to oppression and persecution through the denial of their identity, nationality, history, culture and language under the severe social and national tyranny of Reza Shah's despotism for many years, *Vətən Yolunda* shone like a light in the darkness.[25]

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[21] sšssa (II) 14.19.209.45.

[22] At the start of the Soviet occupation, Mirza Ibragimov was known mainly as an Iranian-born writer, intellectual, and low-level government functionary, but his status rose quickly over the 1940s and 1950s. By 1942 he was the Azerbaijani Commissar of Education (Enlightenment) and playing a leading role in the Soviet national movement among Iranian Azeris in Tebriz. As I discuss in later chapters, from 1954-1958 he was chairman of the Presidium of the Azerbaijani Supreme Soviet. Ibragimov was a prominent proponent of Azerbaijani unification during the war and in the postwar period.

[23] Mirzə İbrahimov, "Ucalığın hikməti," *Azərbaycan* 5 (1983), 96, cited in David Nissman "The Origin and Development of the Literature of Longing in Azerbaijan," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 8 (1984), 200.

[24] Nissman, 200.

[25] Ibragimov (1983), 96, cited in Nissman, 200.

By 1945, Bagirov had spent years building Soviet influence in northern Iran, but was still far from achieving his goals. He was convinced that the Soviets needed to generate a new strategy and developed a plan, which he "defined loosely as the unification of 'southern Azerbaijan with Soviet Azerbaijan, or the formation of an independent southern Azerbaijani People's Republic, or the establishment of an independent bourgeois-democratic system or, at least, cultural autonomy in the framework of the Iranian state.'"[26] He also supported, though more reluctantly, aiding the Kurdish fight for autonomy.[27]

That summer, when the Soviet Union should have been gearing up for troop withdrawal from Iran, Stalin and the Politbiuro instead authorized oil prospecting in northern Iran, the creation of the Azerbaijani Democratic Party, other preparatory work to establish an autonomous Azerbaijan in Iran, and support for expanded national separatist movements in northern Iran (Gilan, Mazanderan, Gurgan, and Khorasan), as well as among the Kurds.[28] For these final aims, the Politbiuro sanctioned providing arms to Soviet allies in the region for the "self-defense [of] pro-Soviet people [and] activists of the separatist movement of democratic and Party organizations" and creating a "Society of Friends of Soviet Azerbaijan" to "draw the broad masses into the separatist movement."[29]

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[26] ARPIISSA 1.89.104.93-103, cited in Scheid, 254.
[27] Scheid, 254.
[28] Soviet geologists had been scoping out oil resources in Iran since the early days of the occupation, but this was a more definitive move toward cementing Soviet economic influence in Iran. ARPIISSA 1.89.104, ARPIISSA 1.89.90.9-15, and ARPIISSA 1.89.90.4-5. Obtained from Wilson Center Cold War International History Project's Digital Archive.
[29] ARPIISSA 1.89.90.4-5. Wilson Center Cold War International History Project's Digital Archive.

Bagirov was in charge of most of these measures, as well as supervising the Soviet Azeri officials, including Ibragimov, who were running Soviet operations on the ground in Tabriz. Among other tasks, these individuals supervised the creation and strategy of the Azerbaijani Democratic Party and helped pick Jafar Pishevari to lead it before the Party went public in fall of 1945.[30] Iranian Kurds also received material assistance, arms, and support from Baku, though much less than that offered to the Azeris. Within months, both the Azerbaijan People's Government and the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad declared their autonomy from Tehran.[31]

As with Xinjiang, where the Soviet Union supported nationalist movements connected to the Second East Turkestan Republic in the 1940s, the Azerbaijani and Kurdish separatist movements were legitimized by preexisting grievances with central authorities.[32] They were not simply puppet regimes. Nonetheless, Soviet support was essential for their survival, and Tehran overran both the Azerbaijan People's Government and the Republic of Mahabad soon after Stalin withdrew his troops from Iran in the spring of 1946. Economic and political pragmatism drove Stalin's support for Bagirov's proposals in 1945, as well as his decision to withdraw Soviet troops from Iran in the next year.

Natalia Yegorova argues that Stalin strategically delayed the Red Army's withdrawal and "activated" these national-liberation movements in order to achieve oil

[30] This was a delicate task because the Azerbaijani Democratic Party was meant to displace the already-existing communist Tudeh Party.
[31] Had it been up to Bagirov and Pishevari, the Kurds likely would have achieved cultural autonomy within Iranian Azerbaijan rather than declare their autonomy from Iran, but Bagirov could not always assert his own agenda. Kurdish autonomy fulfilled Kurdish and certain Soviet interests better than Kurdish autonomy under the Azeris.
[32] James Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 229.

concessions and to influence the formation of a pro-Soviet Majlis in Iran. In her reading of these events, the United States pressured Iran to appeal to the United Nations Security Council and force Soviet troops out of Iranian territory (and this might have prompted the Soviet side to renew negotiations with Iran in 1946), but the withdrawal agreement in March 1946 was more intimately connected to the provisional endorsement of a Soviet-Iranian oil concession in the north.[33] Soviet negotiators also extracted a promise from the Iranian side to avoid using force against the autonomous regimes after the Red Army left Iran, but the agreements were short-lived on all accounts. Soon after the arrival of the new U.S. Ambassador to Iran in November 1946, Tehran brutally put down the Kurdish and Azeri movements, and the Majlis rejected the promised oil concession.[34]

While fleeting, Moscow's support of Azeri nationalism and separatism in Iran greatly influenced Transcaucasian politics, and the AzSSR in particular. Not only did Bagirov, Ibragimov, Imam Mustafaev (Azerbaijan's AzKP first secretary from 1954 to 1959), and much of the rest of the Soviet Azerbaijani intelligentsia and political elite help to mold the independent southern Azerbaijani space in Iran, but Soviet Azerbaijan also served as ground zero for the intervention in Iran.[35] Soviet troops used the SSR as an entry point to northern Iran. Local residents from the Astara region on the Azerbaijan side of the Azerbaijan-Iran border still remember watching Red Army

[33] Yegorova, 19-20.
[34] Keddie, 112-114.
[35] During the war, Mustafaev worked in Iran on agriculture-related projects in southern Azerbaijan. In 1947, after Soviet withdrawal from the region, he was promoted to Minister of Agriculture in the AzSSR. From 1954-1959 he was first secretary of the AzKP.

troops move along the main road from Baku to the Iranian border, and army divisions being housed in and around area villages.[36]

The AzSSR also hosted Iranian Azeris, Kurds, and others both during and after the occupation. During the war, Iranian students and officers enrolled in universities and training institutes in Soviet Azerbaijan.[37] Later, political immigrants (including politicians, officers, soldiers, and intellectuals) fled to the AzSSR after Tehran reasserted military control in the north.[38] Pishevari was among those who sought refuge in the AzSSR, but he died in a car accident soon after his arrival in Baku. Some have asserted that his death was suspicious, given his tortured relationship with Soviet authorities.

Indeed, Pishevari and some of his compatriots arrived in Baku full of resentment about the circumstances of their defeat after the Soviet troop withdrawal. Just before Stalin withdrew his troops from Iran in May 1946, he sent a letter to Pishevari and made it clear that, despite Pishevari and his compatriots' possible assumptions about Soviet intentions, the USSR had no plans to foster a revolution in Iran.[39] Further, after Pishevari arrived in Baku, he engaged in numerous public clashes with Bagirov.[40] Reportedly, as he lay dying in a Baku hospital, Pishevari repeatedly muttered the word "treason" and said, "I stayed eleven years in solitary confinement in

[36] Interview conducted in Astara region, March 2011.
[37] ARDA 411.25.539 and 411.25.488.
[38] ARDA 411.25.588.
[39] Yegorova, 21.
[40] Likely adding to Pishevari's anger was the fact that this was the second time in about twenty-five years that he watched a revolutionary movement in northern Iran collapse after losing Soviet support. Pishevari also witnessed the destruction of the Soviet Republic of Gilan, which was defeated after the Bolshevik leadership signed treaties with Britain and Persia. The Soviet Republic of Gilan (also known as the Persian Socialist Soviet Republic) existed roughly from June 1920 to September 1921. Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russia and Azerbaijan: A Borderland in Transition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 163-165.

Iran. Neither Reza Shah nor Qavam could destroy me. Now, those people got me for their own ends."[41]

Although Stalin and other members of the Soviet leadership in Moscow were not as committed as Bagirov and other Azerbaijani elites to southern Azerbaijani independence (or to the unification of Soviet and Iranian Azerbaijan), they could not control how the public interpreted events unfolding there.[42] Indeed, Soviet involvement in northern Iran during the war spurred a deep irredentist and nationalizing trajectory in the AzSSR.[43] The literary movement "*hasrət ədəbiyyatı*" (the literature of longing), which cultivated sympathy for the idea of southern Azerbaijan and Azeri unification, was one of the main paths through which Azeri transborder bonds were promoted and transmitted long after the war ended. The movement developed from literary forums, such as *Vətən Yolunda,* which were created during and used in service of the Soviet occupation.[44] As will be discussed in the next chapter, this nationalizing movement was sparked by World War Two, but began to

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[41] *Mir Cəfər Bağırovun məhkəməsi*: *arxiv materialları*, (Baku: Yazıçı, 1993), 98, cited in Swietochowski, 164.

[42] The Soviet leadership was seemingly aware of this as it was unfolding. For example, in June 1945, articles in the Azerbaijani press prompted the USSR Vice Commissar of Foreign Affairs S.I. Kavtaradze to write to Molotov: "Despite the fact that we are interested in propagandizing the idea of the shared national characteristics of people from Iranian and Soviet Azerbaijan, it seems to me that renaming Iranian Azerbaijan into Southern Azerbaijan would be inexpedient and fraught with the risk of unwanted consequences." Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation [Arkhiv vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii], or AVP RF, 6.7.476.6. Cited in Yegorova, 12.

[43] Part of the conflict between some of the refugees and Soviet Azerbaijan was the fact that many of the revolutionaries in Iran viewed their struggle as one of Iran's peoples against the Shah's repression or for autonomy, and did not necessarily share the vision that others held of two Azerbaijans united by the Soviet Union. Swietochowski, 164.

[44] The "literature of longing" movement maintained prominence in the SSR until its end. Here is an example of one verse in a poem by Kamran Mehdi:
The Aras, nurturing us with sorrow,
Flows on, cutting like lightning.
True, the Aras divides a nation,
But…the earth underneath is one!
Kamran Mehdi, "Təsəlli," *Ədəbiyyat və İncəsənət* 12 (August 1983), 4, cited in Nissman, 199.

reach fruition among Soviet Azeri intellectuals and political elites only after Stalin's death, Bagirov's subsequent fall from power, and Khrushchev's reforms created new political possibilities in the 1950s.

The geopolitics of Armenian and Georgian foreign land claims

Soviet geostrategic interests in Iran, but also in Turkey, provoked and legitimized nationalizing trajectories in Armenia and Georgia that were similar to the processes slowly unfolding in Azerbaijan. Intrigue involving Turkey stopped short of military occupation, but otherwise reflected analogous ambitions and strategies. In 1945—nearly concurrent with the intensification of Soviet involvement in Iran—the Soviet Foreign Minister, Viacheslav Molotov, informed Turkish representatives that the USSR was withdrawing from the Soviet-Turkish neutrality pact and asserted a declaration of claims to Turkish territory.

Soviet politicians couched many of their territorial pretensions toward Turkey in national rhetoric, claiming that Georgia and Armenia held stronger historical, cultural, and ethnographic claims than Turkey to a number of Turkish regions. Armenian and Georgian politicians needed little encouragement to develop and invest in this projection of power.[45] In contrast with the example of Iran and Azerbaijan, however, these Soviet land claims set two republics against one another because

[45] Moscow did encourage them, however, and requested official reports from SSR leaders about the ethnographic, historical, political, and other arguments that the USSR could make for the desired territories. For an example with Armenia, see National Archive of Armenia [Hayastani Azgayin Arkhiv], or HAA, 326.1.100A.10, available in Arman Kirakosyan, ed., *Armeniia i sovetsko-turetskie otnosheniia v diplomaticheskikh dokumentakh 1945-1946 gg.* (Yerevan: Tigran Mets, 2010), 61.

Armenian and Georgian elites developed competing claims for some of the same parts of eastern Turkey.

Armenian claims were bolstered by diasporan Armenians, who interjected themselves into ongoing international debates about the postwar apportioning of territories and the territorial balancing of allied powers. Some of the diaspora petitioners implored Soviet and western governments to allow the USSR to annex historically Armenian regions of Turkey and let diasporan Armenians repatriate to the Armenian SSR (ArmSSR).[46] Responding to a request from the Soviet People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs (Narkomindel) in May 1945 for information about the Armenian position, the Armenian Narkomindel backed repatriation and offered three annexation variants to Moscow. The first called to restore the 1914 border between Turkey and Russia by transferring the Ardagan and Surmalin regions to the USSR, and the second suggested invoking borders delimited by the San Stefano treaty of 1878. The third, which was the most ambitious, called for the annexation of Kars, Surmalin, the Alashkert valley, and "three of six Armenian vilayets," namely Erzerum, Van, and Bitlis.[47]

Downplaying Armenian claims to Turkish territory, in the fall of 1945, G. Kinkadze from the Georgian Narkomindel petitioned Beria against a land proposal supported by USSR Vice Commissar of Foreign Affairs S.I. Kavtaradze. According to Kavtaradze's proposal, Turkey would transfer 26,000 square kilometers to the Soviet Union, with 20,500 adjoined to Armenia and 5,500 to Georgia. In contrast, Kinkadze

[46] Diaspora Armenians sent letters to this effect to world leaders attending a succession of international conferences in the 1940s, including the Potsdam Conference.
[47] Kirakosyan, 75-76.

asserted that 13,190 square kilometers comprised traditionally Georgian provinces, including the southern parts of Batumi *okrug* and all of the former Artvin, Ardagan, and Olti *okrugs*. Kavtaradze had apportioned Ardagan and Olti to Armenia, but Kinkadze argued that Armenia was obliged only to lands corresponding to the former Kars and Kagyzman *okrugs*, the Surmalin *uezd*, and Erivan *guberniia*.[48]

This implicit sanction of an extraterritorial Georgian nationhood was also a useful tool for ongoing Soviet pretensions toward Iran. In this case, Georgian intellectuals and politicians directed their efforts toward the Fereydan Georgian population, which Soviet politicians considered a propaganda target.[49] Georgian politicians, including Kinkadze, embraced Fereydan's new policy relevance by proposing expeditions to evaluate Fereydan Georgians' living conditions; provide "brotherly help" by sending doctors, teachers, historians, linguists to research their situation and promote Georgian-Iranian relations; and, ultimately, explore the repatriation option.[50] Although the Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs did send representatives to Iran in the 1940s, evolving Soviet interests and influence in Iran undermined the full realization of Georgian repatriation proposals.[51]

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[48] sšssa (II) 14.19.209.49-51.
[49] sšssa (II) 14.16.201.5, 14.19.209.43, and 14.20.253.43.
[50] sšssa (II) 14.19.209.45.
[51] sšssa (II) 14.45.388.10. Georgian leaders repeatedly revisited the issue in the following decades and some Fereydan Georgians did repatriate, though not at a level comparable to post-World War Two Armenian repatriation. The geostrategic aspect of Fereydan Georgian repatriation is clear, particularly when viewed alongside other population movements in the region and in Georgia during and immediately following the war. Had Fereydan Georgians repatriated in large numbers as the Armenians did in the mid-1940s, they would have added to the demographic upheaval initiated in the GSSR by the deportation of tens of thousands of Khemshils, "Turks," and Kurds from Georgian-Turkish border regions in 1944—about the same time that Soviet leaders were pressuring Turkey for its eastern regions. sšssa (II) 14.31.248.1-3.

The debate about historical-ethnographic rights to Turkish land spilled into the public sphere as well. At the height of Soviet claims against Turkey in November 1945, Stalin sanctioned the repatriation of diaspora Armenians to the ArmSSR. Between 1946 and 1949, more than 100,000 Armenians moved to the ArmSSR from the Middle East, United States, and Europe. Stalin approved this migration in part to reinvigorate postwar Soviet Armenian society,[52] but it was also aimed at buttressing political maneuvers against Turkey.[53] Repatriation helped to define the Soviet Union as a guarantor of Armenian rights on the international scene. As the Armenian Narkomindel argued to Kavtaradze in May 1945, repatriation was "intimately and inextricably intertwined with the question about the return to the USSR of former Armenian territories that have been ceded to Turkey."[54] With repatriation there would be problems finding enough housing for the expanded population in the tiny ArmSSR, but the implication was that the annexation of Turkish territories would help to solve that problem.

In Georgia, the intelligentsia and general population were introduced to the territorial debate through the print media. Corresponding with the Moscow Conference in December 1945, Beria and Stalin sanctioned two Georgian historians—Simon Dzhanashia and Nikolai Berdzenishvili—to publish an article, "Our lawful claims to Turkey," in Georgia's *Kommunisti*.[55] It was soon reprinted in *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*. The article argued in favor of Georgian acquisition of Ardagan, Artvin, Olti, Tortum,

[52] Joanne Laycock, "The Repatriation of Armenians to Soviet Armenia, 1945-1949," in *Warlands: Population Resettlement and State Reconstruction in the Soviet-East European Borderlands, 1945-50*, eds. Peter Gatrell and Nick Baron (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 143.
[53] Gasanly (2008), 278-279.
[54] Kirakosyan, 76.
[55] Gasanly (2008), 314-316, and Kirakosyan, 32.

Ispir, Baiburd, Giumushkhane, eastern Lazistan, Trapezund, and Giresun on behalf of historical/ethnographic claims and Turkish collaboration with the Nazis.

Thus, although the Soviet Union ultimately failed to make the territorial gains in the Middle East that it did Europe, Soviet geopolitical designs continually bled into domestic politics and society during and after World War Two. By sanctioning a redefinition of Armenian, Azeri, and Georgian nationhoods to legitimize claims to "historical lands" and co-ethnics located outside the Soviet republican homelands, the Soviet leadership set a precedent that was repeatedly manifested in unintended ways domestically. In particular, the swift coupling of internal land claims with external ones by the Armenian and Georgian leaderships set a new course for intra- and inter-republic national relations in the postwar years.

What's yours is mine: extra-territorial nationhood & keeping the peace in Transcaucasia

Stalin's pretensions toward Iran and Turkey lit a long fuse that smoldered in postwar Transcaucasia. New possibilities garnered by expanded conceptions of nationhood and border delimitation provided the impetus for republican elites and others to strategically redirect geopolitical discourses to further their own aims. Their pursuit of larger and more homogenized republics was channeled through three different paths: the above-described repatriation schemes, forced migrations, and renewed land claims against one another.

Population movements were one of the hallmark mechanisms used to homogenize, modernize, and pacify troublesome multiethnic spaces in the USSR. Some effects of the mass national deportations from the western borderlands and North Caucasus preceding and during the war have been well documented.[56] Azerbaijani, Armenian, and Georgian demographics also changed as a result of national deportations in the 1930s and 1940s, but these population movements are less well understood. In 1937, for instance, Kurds in Azerbaijan and Armenia were deported to Central Asia. However, in part because of the slow downgrading of the Kurdish autonomous region in Azerbaijan, also known as "Red Kurdistan," from a *uezd* to an *okrug* to a nonexistent entity between the late 1920s to the early 1930s, a lack of archival resources clouds explanations of this event and of the Kurdish population pre-deportation.[57]

If we couple the Azerbaijani and Armenian examples with a later deportation of Kurds from Georgia to Central Asia in 1944, the Kurdish case shows just how intimately Soviet foreign relations intersected with internal politics in the Caucasus. Several scholars have explicated the deep connections linking the fates of the Ottoman Empire/Turkey and the Russian Empire/Soviet Union in the early twentieth century.

[56] See, for example, Brown, Weiner, Martin, and Michaela Pohl, "'It cannot be that our graves will be here': The survival of Chechen and Ingush deportees in Kazakhstan, 1944-1957," *Journal of Genocide Research* 4, no. 3 (September 2002), 401-430.

[57] Although efforts to develop the cultural and economic spheres of Red Kurdistan are well documented in the 1920s (ARDA 411.1.287), as yet no one has located the documents that can accurately explain the eventual disappearance of Soviet Kurdish territoriality and the deportation of Kurds in the 1930s. I found reports from Azerbaijani inspectors arguing in favor of closing Kurdish-language schools in the late 1930s, but these are reminiscent of reports from other minority regions in Azerbaijan and fit within a broader discourse aimed at reducing minority language programming after the passage of the 1938 all-Union requirement for Russian language instruction in all Soviet schools (ARDA 57.1.1292.96). I also found a May 1930 decree from the Azerbaijan Central Executive Committee establishing a Kurdish *okrug* in 1930 to replace the previous Kurdish *uezd*, but no explanation of why the *okrug* was dissolved soon after and not replaced with another form of Kurdish territorial delineation in the Soviet Union (ARDA 379.1.3247.1).

Not only did models of governance, assistance, and intellectual thought travel across the political divide at various historical junctures, but governments on both sides also consistently crafted internal policies with the other side in mind.[58] This was certainly no less the case in the Caucasus, given its strategic location in the imperial borderlands.

Ismet Cheriff Vanly, for example, explicitly links the 1937 Soviet deportations of Soviet Kurds to developments in Turkey, where Kemalist officials were enacting similar policies against their own Kurdish and other minority populations.[59] Turkish resettlement laws in the 1930s aimed to assimilate Kurds and other minorities by dispersing them into "Turkish" towns and villages and repopulating strategic villages in eastern Turkey with Turk and Muslim immigrants arriving from the Balkans and other formerly Ottoman regions. In cases where the assimilation of Kurds and other minorities was troublesome or inadvisable from the Turkish government's perspective, the policy allowed for that population's deportation from the country.[60]

Similarly, the deportation of Kurds from Azerbaijan and Armenia to Central Asia in the late 1930s signified more than concern about "foreign" or diaspora

[58] For example, Adeeb Khalid, "Central Asia between the Ottoman and the Soviet Worlds," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 12, no. 2 (Spring 2011); Michael Reynolds, *Shattering Empires: The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires 1908-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Northrop, 70-71; and Samuel J. Hirst, "Anti-Westernism on the European Periphery: The Meaning of Soviet-Turkish Convergence in the 1930s," *Slavic Review* 72, no.1 (Spring 2013): 32-53.

[59] Ismet Cheriff Vanly, "The Kurds in the Soviet Union," in *The Kurds: a contemporary overview*, eds. Philip G. Kreyenbroek and Stefan Sperl (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 160. Vanly's speculative conclusion could explain why Kurdish territoriality was completely abandoned within the Soviet space. While Red Kurdistan may have served a propagandizing purpose in the early 1920s, reduced recognition of Kurdish territoriality in the 1930s better fit the evolving relationship between Turkey and the Soviet Union.

[60] Soner Çağaptay, "Reconfiguring the Turkish nation in the 1930s," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 8, no. 2 (2002), 67-82.

nationalities in the empire's borderlands.[61] On the one hand, the Soviet Union had long taken Turkey and the Middle East into account when formulating policies for Soviet Kurds. For example, in September 1926—a time in which successive Kurdish uprisings were breaking out in Turkey—1,422 Kurds arrived in the Soviet Union from Turkey. After a Zakkraikom decree in the spring of 1927, they were relocated to the Nukha region (now Shaki) in the interior of the AzSSR. They refused to stay there, however, and within two years had moved back to the Turkish border regions of Nakhchivan and Armenia and, as a result of their poor material conditions, started to make plans to return to Turkey. The Azerbaijan State Political Directorate (AzGPU) proposed blocking their repatriation, fearing that it would show the Soviet Union in a poor light and negatively influence Soviet relations in the Middle East. Based on experience, however, AzGPU officials also wondered whether it would be possible to stop the Kurds from leaving if they so chose.[62]

At the same time, however, the treatment of Soviet Kurds also echoed in a dark manner the nationalizing and modernizing strategies contemporaneously being enacted across the border in Turkey. The greater availability of information about the deportation of 8,000 Kurds, nearly 60,000 "Turks," [*turki*] and 1,500 Khemshils from Georgian-Turkish border regions to Central Asia in 1944 provides an opportunity to better explore republican strategizing during national deportations.[63] It also supports speculative links drawn between geopolitics and domestic policy in the case of

[61] The defensive nature of relocating "foreign" populations such as the Kurds, Turks, Poles, and Koreans from borderlands to Kazakhstan, Siberia, and other "internal" locations is frequently highlighted in discussions of these population movements. For example, Brown, 181 and Martin, 323.
[62] ARDA 411c.20.13.10.
[63] These "Turks" have a complicated ethnonym. They are called Turks, Meskhetian Turks, and Azerbaijanis at different times in Georgian and Azerbaijani documents. Those who chose to move to Azerbaijan from Central Asia in 1957 were categorized as members of the "Azerbaijani nationality" in the AzSSR (ARPIISSA 1.45.84).

Azerbaijani Kurds.[64] Georgian Communist Party (KPG) documents reveal that the Georgian Kurds, "Turks," [*turki*] and Khemshils were deported "for national reasons" (*po natsional'nom priznakom*), but the evolution of migration plans over the summer of 1944 reveals much about the role of Georgian officials in shaping the deportation conversation, and the seemingly haphazard way in which Kurds were swept into these plans.[65]

For example, in a letter written to Lavrentiy Beria by KPG First Secretary Kandid Charkviani and V. Bakradze from the GSSR Sovnarkom in May 1944, Charkviani and Bakradze discuss moving the "Turkish" [*turetskii*] population from border regions to eastern areas of the GSSR. At this point, they determine that Kurdish relocation is unnecessary.[66] By June, however, Charkviani, Bakradze, and A. Gapava reported to Beria that, since the deportees could be resettled outside of Georgia, it was "also necessary to evict" additional numbers of Turks, 1,030 Kurdish households from Akhaltsikhe, Aspindza, and Adigeni regions, and Kurds and Khemshils from Ajara. No explanation was given for the deportation of the 1,030 Kurdish households and the Turks [*turki*], but the authors framed the latter deportations in essentializing language reminiscent of deportation orders for Chechens, Ingush, and Balkars in the North Caucasus: the Kurds and Khemshils in Ajara avoided participation in kolkhozes, their cattle roamed in border regions, and they were often implicated in spying.[67] That is,

[64] sšssa (II) 14.31.248.1.
[65] sšssa (II) 14.31.248.1.
[66] sšssa (II) 14.18.266.3. Charkviani and Badradze thought it would be difficult to find room to resettle the deportees in eastern Georgia, but would do so given that there was "no other option." They wanted to resettle Georgians from other areas of Georgia to the border regions and use this as an opportunity to build new resorts in Borjomi, illuminating some of the economic interests involved in "national" politics. sšssa (II) 14.18.266.3-8.
[67] sšssa (II) 14.18.266.20. Chechens, Ingushes, and Balkars were deported to Central Asia and stripped of their autonomous republics earlier in 1944. Chechens and Ingushes were accused of collaborating

the option to deport evictees outside the borders of the GSSR seemingly sealed the Kurds' fate, and the worsening relations with Turkey made it all the more convenient for republican elites in Georgia to reshape deportation possibilities crafted in the summer of 1944.[68]

This was not the only instance when Transcaucasian politicians collaborated with Moscow officials to relocate minority populations. A qualitatively distinct and much larger migration scheme was enacted between Armenia and Azerbaijan later in the decade. With pretensions toward Turkey only the remotest of possibilities in late 1947, Bagirov and ArmSSR KP First Secretary Grigor Arutiunov proposed moving tens of thousands of Azeris from Armenia to Azerbaijan. Alongside other justifications, such as needing to populate cotton-producing kolkhozes and newly irrigated regions in Azerbaijan,[69] Arutiunov and Bagirov surmised in their letter to Stalin that the "resettlement [of a proposed 130,000] Azerbaijanis from Armenia to Azerbaijan would [also] significantly simplify conditions for the reception and establishment [*ustroistvo*] of Armenians returning to their homeland from foreign countries."[70]

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with the German fascist occupiers against the Red Army, being saboteurs and spies, and raiding and robbing neighboring farms rather than productively participating in kolkhozes (ARDA 411.25.335.5). Balkars were charged with German fascist collaboration against the Red Army and Soviet power (ARDA 411.25.335.9).

[68] Georgian Greeks were also deported in 1944 and in 1949. The later deportation was encompassed under "Operation Volna," which saw some Meskhetian Turks ("Turks") and repatriated Armenians resettled from Georgia to Central Asia as well. sšssa (II) 14.27.252. Laz were also deported from the Georgia-Turkey border region in 1949 and 1951 (Pelkmans, 33-36).

[69] Azerbaijan was one of many republics geared toward cotton cultivation in the USSR. The Azerbaijani Mingachevir Dam was under construction in the late 1940s (it opened in 1953) to create more arable land in the republic. Most of the relocated Azerbaijanis were moved to these as yet arid and inhospitable regions of the AzSSR.

[70] National Archives of Armenia Division of Socio-Political Documentation [Hayastani Azgayin Arkhiv Hasarakakan-Qaghakakan Pastatghteri Bazhin], or HAAHQPB, 1.27.47.137. Azerbaijani historians

For their part, many Azeris targeted for resettlement found the idea less than appealing, blaming Armenian repatriation, nationalism, and geopolitics for their plight. In their complaints—both those sent in letters to Stalin and those reported in classified *svodki*[71]—Azeris in Armenia revealed a generally astute understanding of their situation and geopolitical reverberations within Transcaucasia. In a 1948 letter to Stalin, for example, Ingilab Veliev wrote: "in Yerevan some people say that we are expelling the 'Tiurks,' [*tiurki*] yet we are not 'Tiurks,' [*tiurki*] but Azerbaijanis [*azerbaidzhantsy*]…We Azerbaijanis are proud that we live in the Stalin era and do not want to be moved from Yerevan. If this is a crowded territory, then let the Armenian comrades returning from abroad to their homeland create settlements in regions of Azerbaijan."[72] A report from the Armenian Ministry of Internal Affairs in 1948 documented many of the rumors flying around Azeri communities in Armenia. Some Azeris connected the migration order to tensions with Turkey, some to Armenian repatriation, and others to earlier deportations of "Azerbaijanis" from Georgia to Kazakhstan during WWII: "They say that migration will be voluntary in the beginning. This isn't true. With us they'll do it just like they did with Azerbaijanis [*azerbaidzhantsy*] in Akhalkalaki [Georgia]: they'll sit us in train wagons and take us

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have questioned and downplayed Bagirov's role in the proposal (Gasanly, 2008, 488-489; Əsad Qurbanlı, *Azərbaycan Türklərinin Ermənistandan Deportasiyası, 1947-1953-cü illər* (Baku: Monoqrafiya, 2004). The fact is that the plan was likely well underway by the time Arutiunov and Bagirov wrote the proposal in late 1947 given the speed with which relocations began in 1948. Furthermore, lacking any actual evidence of Bagirov's recalcitrance and, given his political record, it would be hasty to absolve him of complicity in this scheme.

[71] *Svodki* have been disputed as a problematic source of evidence for historians because police reports, as with other types of documents, have to be read keeping in mind the processes that produced them. In *Le goût de l'archive*, Arlette Farge discusses how police statements are articulated between "a power that obliges, a desire to convince, and a practice of words," as well as a legal procedure that structures these forces (Farge, *Le goût de l'archive* [Paris: Seuil, 1997], 39). Tracy McDonald provides a good overview of the debate about *svodki* in Soviet historiography in McDonald, *Face to the Village: The Riazan Countryside Under Soviet Rule, 1921-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 24-25.

[72] ARDA 411.26s.18.49-49a.

straight to Kazakhstan."[73] The report also documented instances of Azeris in Armenia destroying their orchards, homes, and other buildings to keep them out of the hands of repatriated Armenians.[74] Although the migration was labeled voluntary, a large gap developed between reality and rhetoric.

The enactment of this plan resulted in the relocation of tens of thousands of Azeris between 1948 and 1953. This event has generated an extremely contentious debate in Azerbaijani historiography, where historians argue that it was a deportation of Azeris, place it in a politicized context of Armenian aggression against Azeris, and shift blame from Bagirov to Arutiunov, Stalin, and, even, the Armenian nation.[75] Regardless of its similarities and dissimilarities to national deportations in the 1930s and early 1940s, the rumors that spread among Azeris targeted for relocation make clear that the effects of forced population movements reverberated throughout the region. The migration also had a homogenizing effect on both of the republics involved, particularly when coupled with the earlier repatriation of over 100,000 Armenians to the ArmSSR.[76] Alongside minority deportations from Georgia just a few years earlier, these demographic changes illustrate the intensity of nationality-based disruptions in wartime and postwar Transcaucasia, the active role that titular elites

[73] ARDA 411.26.34.67. The "Azerbaijanis" this individual refers to presumably are part of the same population described as "Turks," "Azeris," and "Meskhetian Turks" in different archival documents. The use of the term Azerbaijani is this document shows how that same word is often used for ethnic Azeri and civic Azerbaijani identifications in the Russian language (and in Azerbaijani language).
[74] ARDA 411.26.34.65.
[75] For example, Qurbanlı; Rena Pashabekova, *Bezhentsy: 1918-1920, 1948-1952, 1988-1989* (Baku: Gyandzhlik, 1992); and El'dar Ismailov, *Ocherki po istorii Azerbaidzhana* (Moscow: Flint, 2010), 348.
[76] The deportation plans called for over 100,000 Azeris to be moved from Armenia, but there does not seem to be agreement about how many were actually relocated, other than that the number was in the high tens of thousands.

took in reshaping the character and population of their republics, and the reverberating effect of Stalin's geopolitical schemes in the south.

The fight over Saingilo

The wartime legitimization of expanded conceptions of nationhood also breathed new life into dormant land disputes in Transcaucasia. Building on logic applied to Turkish territories, Armenian and Georgian elites turned their gaze inward and developed plans to alter domestic borders in the Soviet Caucasus. Arutiunov renewed contestation over Nagorno Karabakh in November 1945 by petitioning Moscow to adjoin the territory to Armenia on the basis of economic, ethnographic and political claims. In so doing, he invoked arguments similar to those used against Turkey.[77] That same month, Charkviani took the opportunity to rekindle Georgia's long-standing claim to the three regions of Azerbaijan that were home to the Georgian-Ingilo (as well as Avars, Lezgins, Azerbaijanis, and others).[78] Georgians, including Charkviani, and many Georgian-Ingilo, refer to these three Azerbaijani regions—Balakan, Qax, and Zaqatala—as Saingilo, or land of the Ingilo.

The acquisition of Saingilo would have added to the territories that the GSSR gained in 1944 after the Chechens, Ingush, and Balkars were deported and their

[77] ARPIISSA 1.169.249 (part 1), 7. I was not allowed to order this file so the reference is based on portions of the document that are available in Gasanly (2008), 450-451. It is unknown what is contained in other sections of the document.

[78] ARPIISSA 1.169.249 (part 1), 11. I was not allowed to order this file so the reference is based on portions of the document that are available in Gasanly (2008), 449. It is unknown what is contained in other sections of the document. Georgia also challenged Azerbaijan's control over Saingilo soon after the region was apportioned to the AzSSR in the 1920s. sakartvelos tsentraluri saistoris arkivi (Georgian Central History Archive), or STSA, 1833.1.903.

republics were divided among neighboring regions, including Georgia.[79] For his part, Bagirov vigorously rejected Armenian and Georgian pretensions to parts of the Azerbaijan SSR. He responded that if the transfer of Azerbaijani territories to Georgia and Armenia was under consideration then Azerbaijan had claims of its own—to the Azizbeyov, Vedi and Garabaglar regions of Armenia, the Borchali region of Georgia, and the Derbent and Kasumkent areas of the Dagestan ASSR in Russia.[80]

While no territories were transferred this time—externally or internally—the rich availability of records and oral histories concerning the Saingilo debate allows us to unpack some of the connections that developed across Transcaucasian elite politics, nationality policies, and geopolitics, but also the way in which some of these elite contests and international intrigues bled into and were stimulated by the minority populations at the center of republican power struggles. Historians debate whether Stalin meant to lay territorial claim to Iran, or aimed merely to increase his influence there and on the world stage. Many of his contemporaries, including Bagirov, Charkviani, and others, however, felt that there was at least a chance that the Soviet Union would expand its borders southward into the Middle East as it had westward into Europe.[81]

[79] The North Ossetian ASSR, Stavropol Krai, Georgian SSR, and Dagestan ASSR all gained land when the Kabardino-Balkar ASSR was converted to the Kabardin ASSR and the Chechen-Ingush ASSR was dissolved after the Balkar, Chechens, and Ingush were deported. ARDA 411.25.335.5-10.
[80] ARPIISSA 1.169.249 (part 1).8-12. I was not allowed to order this file in the archive so the reference is based on portions of the document that are available in Gasanly (2008), 456-457. It is unknown what is contained in other sections of the document. Gasanly argues that these land disputes and Stalin's designs on Turkey and Iran show that the Cold War began in the Caucasus. Gasanly (2008), 9 and 506.
[81] For example, Scheid and Yegorova argue in favor of the latter point, while Gasanly (2006) views Soviet policy in Iran in a more expansionist light.

In his memoir, Charkviani argues that Stalin's expansionist drive against Iran, and its potential benefit to the AzSSR, precipitated his (and assumedly Arutiunov's) annexation proposals.[82] Recalling that Stalin earlier denied requests to discuss Saingilo's placement in Azerbaijan for fear of setting a dangerous precedent, Charkviani felt that by 1945 this argument had been undermined by a multitude of wartime developments, including Soviet involvement in Iran and the reorganization of borders between Georgia and its North Caucasian neighbors. Charkviani claims that when he reignited the issue in 1945, Stalin told him that if southern Azerbaijan was resolved in the USSR's favor then "the issue of your Saingilo will also be resolved." Thus, according to Charkviani, "Saingilo's destiny remained unchanged" because the Soviet Union lost its contest for Iran.[83]

Soviet maneuvers in Turkey and Iran may have enabled Charkviani's annexation petition in 1945, but his claim built upon an impetus for power that, along with evolving and contentious nationality policies in disputed areas, continuously fed the long-standing disputes over Nagorno Karabakh, Saingilo, and other Transcaucasian minority regions. It is not incidental that, at the same time that Charkviani was complaining about Azerbaijani officials violating Georgian/Ingilo national rights, the Georgian Communist party was attempting to increase Georgian influence in Abkhazia and reorganize Abkhaz-language schools in Abkhazia into

[82] M.G. Seidov, an Azerbaijani KP Secretary in the 1940s, also explicitly drew this connection between geopolitics and internal Transcaucasian disputes in his memoir. There, he recounts a conversation among Bagirov, Beria, and Mikoyan in the Kremlin in 1945. According to Seidov, Beria and Mikoyan commented to Bagirov that the unification of southern Azerbaijan (Iran) and the AzSSR was nearly complete and jokingly asked whether it would now be possible to transfer Karabakh and Saingilo out of Azerbaijan. M.G. Seidov, *Obshchestvenno-politicheskaia obstanovka v Azerbaidzhane v 1940-e-nachale 1950-x godov,* book manuscript, 27, cited in Gasanly (2008), 458.

[83] Kandid Charkviani, *Gentsdili da naazrevi* (Tbilisi: Merani, 2004), 500-503. Relevant pages translated for the author from Georgian to Russian by Timothy Blauvelt.

Georgian-language ones.[84] This contradiction merely highlights how institutional incentives for titular populations to nationalize their republics (and expand their influence and territory by interfering on the behalf of kin populations in other republics) produced recursive national discord throughout the Soviet space.

Furthermore, Charkviani and Arutiunov's claims were encouraged and supported by minority activists from the disputed areas, who similarly invoked ethnohistorical discourses to dispute Azerbaijan's control over these regions. Charkviani was equally clear about this fact. As with Nagorno Karabakh, Azerbaijan's control over Saingilo was disputed from the start of Soviet power.[85] Activists from the Georgian-Ingilo minority frequently petitioned Charkviani, Stalin, and other officials about Georgian-language school closures in Muslim Georgian-Ingilo villages and the general abrogation of Georgian-Ingilo national and economic rights in Azerbaijan.[86]

As the previous chapter indicated, there has been little coherence to the categorization and treatment of the Georgian-speaking community in Qax, Balakan, and Zaqatala. From the imperial period to the present day, Russian- and Georgian-based ethnographies have tended to categorize the "Ingilo" as part of the Georgian people or nation. In 1901, P.P. Nadezhdin published *Kavkazskii krai: priroda i liudi* and placed the "Georgian-Engilo" in the Karvetlian group along with the Imeretians, Tushin, Ajar, Khevsurs, and others.[87] He noted that Zaqatala had once been a part of

[84] sšssa (II) 14.18.180.5-7. This is no small matter given that Charkviani was lodging a land grab against Azerbaijan on the basis of policies he himself was conducting in the GSSR, yet this fact is not addressed in archived discussions among Bagirov, Charkviani, and Beria. sšssa (II) 14.20.255.2.
[85] STSA, 1833.1.903.
[86] For example, sšssa (II) 14.18.180.31.
[87] P.P. Nadezhdin, *Kavkazskii krai priroda i liudi* (Tula: Tipografiia Vladimira Nikolaievicha Sokolova, 1901), 167.

Kakheti, but that the "Georgian-Engilo" population was comprised mainly of Muslims because they had been conquered and converted to Islam.[88] Another ethnographic report from 1902 reported that the "Engilo" were enumerated separately from Zaqatala Georgians in the 1897 census, but indicated that the "Engilos" of Qax (Christian and Muslim alike) both displayed Muslim influences and maintained Georgian cultural forms, such as the Georgian language and cuisine.[89]

Russian and Georgian Soviet ethnographic reports categorize the population in a similar manner. In 1924, for example the ethnographer and Caucasus specialist Grigorii Filippovich Chursin, classified the Ingilo, or "converts," as a part of the Kartvelian group and estimated their number at 15,000. He noted that most of the Ingilo lived in the Aliabad district, but that some also lived in the "Kakh" and "Dzharo-Mukhakh" districts of the Zaqatala *uezd*.[90] Further, Chursin argued that the Ingilo language was Georgian, but that they knew the "Azerbaijani dialect" (*azerbaidzhanskoe narechie*) equally as well since it was the language of inter-tribal communication.[91] In 1977, Moscow-based Academy of Sciences ethnographer Nataliya Volkova similarly defined "Ingilo" as the "auto-ethnonym and Azerbaijani

[88] Nadezhdin, 382.
[89] *Sbornik Materialov dlia opisaniia Městnostei i plemen Kavkaza,* 31 Tiflis: Izdanie Upravleniia Kavkazskago Uchebnago Okruga, 1902, 59-61.
[90] The Aliabad district was named after Aliabad, which is a large Georgian-Ingilo settlement in what became the Zaqatala region of Azerbaijan.
[91] Liaister and Chursin, 282. This book was co-written, but I expect that Chursin wrote the ethnographic descriptions based on his academic specialization. The "convert" reference ties into speculation about the origin of the "Ingilo" term. According to many people with whom I spoke in Qax and Zaqatala, the word "Ingilo" refers to "yeni" and "yol," which means "new path" in Azerbaijani and refers to their conversion to Islam when Shah Abbas controlled this region. N.Ia. Marr's report on the tribal structure of the population in the Caucasus in 1920 also categorized the Ingilo as part of the eastern branch of the Kartvelian group along with many others, including the "Kakhi" (kakhetintsy), N.Ia. Marr, *Plemennoi sostav naseleniia Kavkaza* (Petrograd: Rossiiskaia gosudarstvennaia akademicheskaia tipografiia, 1920), 43.

name for the Georgian population of three regions of northwestern Azerbaijan—Qax, Zaqatala, and Balakan."[92]

The Azerbaijani position frequently contrasts with this presumption of Georgian-Ingilo origins, however. In the mid-1920s, in a document about Azerbaijan's national minorities, the Christians and Muslims were both categorized as "Kartavel'tsy," but then disaggregated into two groups: a) "ingiloitsy (engiol'tsy) Georgian Muslims in the Zaqatala *uezd*, and b) "gruziny (kakhetichnskie)" (*sic*) in the Zaqatala *uezd* and Baku.[93] According to an Azerbaijani report from the 1950s, however, the "Ingilo" were not an ethnographic group of the Georgian nation, but one of the ancient Albanian tribes "Georgianized" by the Georgian church. From this perspective, the era of "Georgianization" [*protsess gruzinizatsii*] of the Ingilo ended in the 17th century, when they converted to Islam (under Shah Abbas) and Azerbaijani became the dominant language among the population.[94] Further, in line with Azerbaijani ethnogenesis theories that were developing in the postwar era, and described connections between Azeri origins and Caucasian Albanians, Ingilo descent from the ancient Albanian tribes was interpreted as meaning that the Ingilo and Azeris

[92] N.G. Volkova, "Ingilo," *Polevye issledovaniia Instituta etnografii*, 1977 (Moscow: Nauka, 1979), 87. Volkova's interpretation of the Ingilo as part of the Georgian nation squared with decades of writing about the Ingilo among Russian ethnographers.
[93] ARDA 57.1.297.125ob.
[94] ARPIISSA 1.48.405.38. This is closer to the opinion of Shirinbay Aliyev, who is from Aliabad and teaches at the Slavic University in Baku. In an interview, Aliyev argued that the Ingilo native language is part of the Kartvelian language family, but they are nonetheless distinct from Georgians. He asserted that the Ingilo are an ethnic group that could not develop into a *narodnost'* or *natsiia*, but by their roots have no connection to the Georgian ethnicity. According to Aliyev, the Ingilo developed from ancient Gels, and afterward lived under different political systems—that of the Albanians, the Arabs, Khazars, Georgians, and Persians. According to Aliyev, from the 12th to the 17th centuries, they were "forced to live under Georgian control" and this displaced a lot of the Ingilo "tribal language." See also, Şirinbəy Hacıəli (Əliyev), *Şimal-Qərbi Azərbaycan: İngiloylar* (Baku: Tehsil, 2007).

were ethnographically and historically closer to one another than the Ingilo were to Georgians.

These discursive and scientific disagreements were manifested in schizophrenic policies applied to the Georgian-Ingilo population. The only semblance of policy coherence split along religious lines. Part of the population—mainly those living in the Qax region—re-converted to Georgian Orthodoxy under the auspices of the Russian Empire and Christian missionaries in the 19th century.[95] This religious divide is significant because it means that the community straddled Soviet hierarchies of national categorization. Not unlike in Kemalist Turkey, in many ways the most meaningful marker of identity in Saingilo was religion instead of nationality, with Azerbaijani officials treating Muslim Georgian-Ingilo as more assimilable and similar to Azeris than their Christian Georgian-Ingilo neighbors.[96] The Georgian-Ingilo population in general, and its identity, were continually contested, claimed, and policed by competing local and outside actors seeking to mobilize cultural and political resources and power.

In this regard, the experience of Christian Georgian-Ingilo in Qax was in many ways similar to that of titular diasporas in the Soviet Union, like the Armenians of Azerbaijan, in that many Christian Georgian-Ingilo fairly consistently were able to access Georgian-language schools, kolkhozes, and other Georgian cultural resources. Further, in the Soviet period, Christian Georgian-Ingilo were counted as "Georgian" in censuses and registered as Georgian in their passports. Yet, their proximity to the

[95] Azerbaijan Republic State History Archive [Azərbaycan Respublikasının Dövlət Tarix Arxivi], or ARDTA 571.1.1 and 571.1.3).
[96] Çağaptay, 76.

Muslim Georgian-speakers, both ethnographically and in daily life, meant that many felt that their "Georgian" identification and cultural resources were insecure.[97] Muslim Georgian-Ingilo, in contrast, almost always were registered as Azerbaijani in passports and censuses and were more integrated into Azerbaijani educational, political, and other opportunities. In this regard, Azerbaijani authorities treated Muslim Georgian-Ingilo more like they did other non-titular populations, such as the Talysh, than as a titular community, like the Armenians and Christian Georgian-Ingilo.

From the Georgian perspective, Muslim and Christian Georgian-Ingilo comprised one ethnographic group of the Georgian nation. They therefore fell under the rubric of Georgian kin state interventionist politics and should have been afforded Georgian identification (whether or not individual Georgian-Ingilo desired it). Thus, although the Saingilo dispute in the Soviet period was fed by accusations of discrimination against all Georgian-Ingilo—and there were clear points of discontent in Christian communities—the main battles were fought over the orientation of Muslim villages, namely Aliabad, Engiyan, and Mosul in Zaqatala region, Ititala in Balakan region, and Zayam, Koragan, and Tasmally in Qax region.

This was certainly the case in the early 1940s, when some Georgian-Ingilos living in Tbilisi reached out to Charkviani after Georgian schools were closed in Muslim villages at some point in 1942. Georgian language schools were long available in some Christian villages, but expanded to cover most of the Christian and Muslim villages only in 1937, when an Azerbaijani Narkompros decree (*əmr*) ordered local schooling and governmental affairs to be switched from Azerbaijani to Georgian in

[97] Interviews, fall 2010 and spring 2011.

Ingilo villages.[98] School records from Georgian-Ingilo villages report steady enrollments in these Georgian-language schools and sectors, which were slated to remain open after the Union-wide contraction of minority language educational offerings at the end of the 1930s.[99] In 1941/42, for example, all of the students in the Balakan village Ititala were enrolled in the Georgian language sector through grade four.[100]

According to archival records from Georgia, activism on behalf of the Georgian-Ingilo population in the 1940s was largely driven by the Qax-born, but Tbilisi-based, academic Georgii Gamkharashvili.[101] Although Gamkharashvili declared that he had complained about the "injustice" of Azerbaijan's influence over Saingilo for decades, one of his earliest archived complaint letters dates to 1943.[102] The letter is addressed to Charkviani and Valerian Bakradze, the Chairman of the Georgian Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom). Here, Gamkharashvili seems

[98] ARDA 379.1.7047 and ARDASF 216.1.217.61.

[99] For example, 1938/1939 school records from Zaqatala. ARDA 57.11.332. Minority language educational resources contracted in the USSR at the end of 1938 following Stalin's decree that Russian should be a required subject for all students, regardless of their nationality. While one part of this policy certainly aimed to increase unity across the USSR, education inspectors for years had reported both difficulty funding the broad range of educational languages in Azerbaijan and protests from members of minority communities who wanted their children educated in Russian or titular languages rather than minority languages. In Azerbaijan, this meant that primary school education was reduced from more than a dozen languages of instruction to four at the end of the 1930s. In addition to Russian, only Azerbaijani, Georgian, and Armenian—the titular languages of the Transcaucasian republics—were retained.

[100] ARDA 57.11.650.26.

[101] Some other names are found in these archival files, but Charkviani and Gamkharashvili stand out. Archil Gavrilovich Dzhanashvili, like Gamkharashvili, was an academic from Qax who built his career in Tbilisi educational institutions and sent some lengthy reports to Georgian officials about Saingilo in hopes that Georgia would annex the regions. sšssa (II) 14.18.180.74. Grigorii Kutubidze is also found alongside Gamkharashvili and Dzhanashvili. He was a Georgian who was sent to teach in a Georgian school in Azerbaijan. sšssa (II) 14.24.296.34.

[102] He claims that part of this earlier activism succeeded in getting Georgian-language schools introduced to the region in 1935. The time reference is based on information that Gamkharashvili provides about complaints that he launched in the time of Noe Jordania, who chaired the Democratic Republic of Georgia and fled to Europe in 1921. sšssa (II) 14.18.180.30.

to be as yet unfamiliar with both men and validates himself by asserting that he is an acquaintance of Comrade S. Khoshtari (possibly he is referring to Semyon Khoshtaria, who was a deputy in the Soviet of Nationalities at this time). In this short letter, Gamkharashvili argues that Georgian-language school closures in Marsan, Ititala, Aliabad and other Muslim villages show that Azeri officials were trying to "Tiurkify" [*tiurkifitsiruetsia*] the region. He writes, "As in the past with the mullahs, now some employees of AzNarkompros exaggerate the affiliation of Georgian-Muslims and Turks and argue that there is no reason why Georgian schools should exist."[103] He closes by offering to supply Charkviani with informational reports about Saingilo's ethnography, history, economy, and culture so that Charkviani can acquaint himself with the region and better understand the injustice of Azerbaijani policies there. Gamkharashvili clearly considers Saingilo to be a natural part of the Georgian SSR and believes that all Georgian-Ingilos—regardless of religious orientation—are part of the Georgian nation.[104]

By the following year, Gamkharashvili and another Tbilisi-based academic from Qax, Archil Dzhanashvili, were submitting lengthy memorandums about Saingilo to the KPG.[105] Yet, they were not merely interested in expanding Georgian-language education in Azerbaijan or in highlighting acts of discrimination against Georgian-Ingilos; here, Gamkharashvili and Dzhanashvili openly state that Georgia, and not Azerbaijan, should administer the Saingilo region.[106] As Gamkharashvili put it

[103] sšssa (II) 14.18.180.31.
[104] sšssa (II) 14.18.180.30-31.
[105] sšssa (II) 14.18.180.34-41 (Gamkharashvili), 46-73 (Dzhanashvili), and 74-94 (Dzhanashvili).
[106] sšssa (II) 14.18.180.94.

in one letter, this was the only way for the population to reap the benefits and justice of Stalin's socialism.[107]

There is a clear shift between Gamkharashvili's somewhat tentative and vague letter in 1943 and the more assertive ones that he sent to Charkviani and Stalin just a few years later. In the 1943 letter, he passively mentions that Georgian-Ingilo have complained about Saingilo's placement in Azerbaijan since the early 1920s, but he claims that the topic of his letter is school closures.[108] By 1946—after Charkviani's annexation overture—Gamkharashvili is still highly deferential, but he opens and closes his letters with clear statements supporting Georgian annexation of Saingilo. For instance, in one letter to Stalin, he writes that, in order "to eradicate abnormalities [mentioned earlier in the letter], the Qax, Zaqatala, and Balakan regions immediately must be transferred to the Georgian SSR."[109]

In contemporary accounts, Georgian-speakers in Zaqatala and Qax valorize Gamkharashvili.[110] In one interview, a Muslim Ingilo described Gamkharashvili meeting Stalin on behalf of the "Saingilo cause":

> In 1944, in the 1944-45 school year, there was an old man from Qax region named Gamkharashvili. He was a professor reading lectures at Tbilisi State University. This man went in the Stalin period to Moscow and waited a week to meet with Stalin and was eventually given 15 minutes to speak with him. And he told Stalin that we are speaking Georgian language and we are Georgian, but we don't have schools, televisions, radio, and such kinds of things. At that time Stalin gave him an additional 15 minutes to hear about Saingilo. That year they reopened Qax, Zaqatala, and Balakan Georgian schools.[111]

[107] sšssa (II) 14.18.161.1-19**.** This plays into a Karabakh-style argument that Saingilo was incorrectly "traded" to Azerbaijan early in the Soviet period and the mistake needs to be corrected.
[108] sšssa (II) 14.18.180.30-31.
[109] sšssa (II) 14.18.180.125.
[110] Gamkharashvili was a popular and well-known subject in oral history interviews carried out in Zaqatala and Qax in the fall of 2010 and spring of 2011.
[111] Interview, December 2010.

In another interview, this man elaborated,

> Stalin said to Gamkharashvili that whatever he told him he would relate to the Politbiuro of the Soviet Union in order to open Georgian schools in the villages. He promised Gamkharashvili that Georgia would support the Ingilos. He also told him that he would contact Bagirov [on our behalf].

Indeed, in addition to continuously petitioning Georgian and Azerbaijani leaders,[112] available archival records show that Gamkharashvili traveled to Moscow several times in the 1940s and early 1950s to try to meet with Stalin.[113]

The evolution of Gamkharashvili's complaints and proposals over the 1940s indicate that he was encouraged by Charkviani's investment in the issue, as well as possibly inspired by the short window of territorial changes that was opened by the war. It is clear from Charkviani's memoir, however, that influences and ideas were circular rather than unidirectional. Charkviani both shared popular valorizations of Gamkharashvili and drew inspiration from his activism. In his memoir, he recalls that Gamkharashvili "worked all his life to have his native region returned to Georgia" and succeeded in his petitions to Stalin. Indeed, Charkviani claims that Gamkharashvili inspired Stalin to order Charkviani and Bagirov to meet in Saingilo and devise a plan for its Georgian schools in 1944.[114]

It was, thus, discontent from below as well as high-level geopolitics that played into Charkviani's involvement in Saingilo and petition for annexation.

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[112] I was not allowed to order a relevant delo in ARPIISSA (1.41.297), but this file was labeled as a letter from G.S. Gamkharashvili in 1955. It is expected that the contents are similar to those archived and available in Georgia.

[113] For example, sšssa (II) 14.20.271.2 and 14.24.296.1.

[114] Charkviani estimates that this was in 1947, but it more likely occurred in 1944. He notes that it was his first visit to the region, but archival documents reveal that he met Bagirov there for an investigation of the situation in 1944. Several decrees concerning Ingilo education were also issued in the summer of 1944, just after he would have visited. For example, sšssa (II) 14.18.180.3-10, Charkviani, 500-503.

Although Charkviani failed to gain Saingilo for his republic, there were concrete outcomes of Georgian interference in Azerbaijani affairs under his helm. In the post-trip report for Stalin that Charkviani co-signed with Bagirov in May 1944, the two first secretaries acknowledge that local officials, "motivated, supposedly, by the wishes of the population, and also by inadequate numbers of Georgian teachers in connection with mobilization for the army, incorrectly transferred instruction in schools from Georgian to the Azerbaijani language" in Aliabad, Ititala, and Mosul. Here, Bagirov and Charkviani propose that, starting with the 1944/45 school year, all schools in "Ingilo villages" would be Georgian schools, those schools would be renovated, and instructional resources provided.[115] Charkviani also promises to enroll 40 Ingilo students in Tbilisi higher education institutions every year.[116] This agreement effectively was the status quo until 1954, when, as is discussed in the following chapter, educational practices in the Georgian-Ingilo region changed once again.

Behind the scenes, neither the Azerbaijanis nor the Georgians were pleased with their "Saingilo" expedition. In a letter to Beria, Charkviani writes that he followed instructions and came to an agreement with Bagirov, but "everything that was written in complaint letters about national education in Saingilo was completely proven. From 17 schools functioning in 1937 (3 of them existing since 1920), only 7 are left…It is significant to note that Georgian schools were liquidated in all Mohammedan Ingilo villages, although the last-mentioned speak Georgian."[117] Charkviani complains that there was no existing central order to close the schools and

[115] sšssa (II) 14.18.180. 5-7.
[116] Charkviani, 500-503.
[117] sšssa (II) 14.18.180.3.

that it was carried out by local officials, "but, [he] believes, with silent agreement and support from the center, at least from the national enlightenment organs. Teachers at Azerbaijani schools and local workers carry out intense propaganda in favor of Azerbaijanization [*azerbaidzhanizatsiia*] among Muslim-Georgians, they hammer into heads that they are 'Tatars' and not Georgians."[118]

Azerbaijanis were similarly frustrated with the situation. In a draft Sovmin and Party decree from August 1946 about work among the Ingilo population, Azerbaijani officials complained about Georgian SSR interference in the three regions.[119] The section was ultimately crossed out, but the officials were less circumspect elsewhere. In multiple MVD and Party reports, and in at least one AzKP bureau meeting, Azerbaijani officials denounced the negative influence that Georgians had on the local "Ingilo" population, blaming the outsiders for fostering a rise in nationalist behaviors within the republic.[120] For their part, in December 1947, Azerbaijan's Ministry of Education sent a group of inspectors, including Deputy Minister D.A. Aleskerov, to Georgia to check on the conditions in Georgia's many Azerbaijani-language schools. Returning with a report full of instructional and material shortcomings and insufficiencies, Azerbaijan's Ministry of Education passed a decree outlining assistance plans for Azerbaijani schools in Georgia, and forwarded it to Georgia's Minister of Education.[121]

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[118] sšssa (II) 14.18.180.4. Georgian-speakers in Azerbaijan and Georgians in Georgia often refer to Azerbaijanis or Muslims in Azerbaijan as "Tatars," regardless of any ethnic differentiation. When used in this way, "Tatar" often carries a pejorative connotation.
[119] ARDA 411.25.521.156.
[120] Letter from S. Emel'ianov to Bagirov. November 10, 1947, ARPIISSA 1.226.54.27-37. Cited in Gasanly (2008), 461-464.
[121] ARDA 411.8.284.320-338.

Conclusion

Azerbaijani officials may have blamed Georgia for a perceived rise in nationalism among Georgian-Ingilo, but myriad forces were in play. The Second World War was disruptive for the Soviet Union, but it was also productive. It created opportunities—good and bad—for republican elites to advance the nationalizing, consolidating, and modernizing trends already underway by the time the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact came into being. In this sense, the narrative that emerged in Transcaucasia corresponds with similar ones in the western borderlands of Ukraine and Belarus, where competing forces—the Nazis, Soviets, locals, and kin state nationalists—pushed homogenization schemes through even more extreme practices and ideologies.[122]

The ways in which these tendencies were manifested during and after World War Two in Transcaucasia, however, were in many ways unique to that era and to this place. Stalin's geopolitical maneuvering in Iran and Turkey emboldened regional leaders on the national front and created opportunities for them to renew dormant internal land claims, such as the Georgian one to Saingilo. The perceived fungibility of borders at this time legitimized not only claims against foreign countries, but against Soviet brothers and sisters as well. Further, nationalizing elites were not the only political actors to recognize the opportunities created by the external land claims. Public discussions of geopolitics seemingly encouraged local activists to take up these discourses and refashion them to meet their own interests, after which they were reappropriated by elites like Charkviani.

[122] See, for example, Brown, Weiner, Hirsch, and Martin.

Moving into the postwar and post-Stalinist period, the range of possibilities continued to shift, contracting and expanding as broader contexts evolved. Extreme tools of nationality politics, such as forced migrations, lost favor under a changing Soviet leadership, just as the liberalizing tendencies of de-Stalinization generated new political avenues and sociopolitical behaviors. Despite these changes, the formative wartime period continued to influence Transcaucasian political elites as they worked toward consolidating their nations and republics in the 1950s. Tactics and discourses evolved, but experiences were not forgotten. As the following chapter will show, Azerbaijani leaders were dismissed in 1958 and 1959 on the basis of nationalism alongside economic charges, but the political consciousness that shaped their nationalizing politics in the 1950s was largely a product of the 1940s. De-Stalinization created new political possibilities, but the 1940s generated the national consciousness and agendas of the leaders who wielded republican power under Khrushchev.

CHAPTER THREE

NATIONALISM AND NATIONALIZING REPUBLICS AFTER WORLD WAR TWO

> "We will not only dismiss these Communists, we will bring the matter before the party organization so that these people get kicked out [*vygoniali v sheiu*] not only from the leadership, but also from the party. This is not a Leninist, not a Communist, this is a nationalist, an enemy who scaled the leadership…You are a questionable person yourself, you have a party card, but you are not a Communist."
> -*Nikita Khrushchev, addressing Azerbaijan's first secretary Imam Mustafaev and referencing Azerbaijan's chairman of the Presidium of the Azerbaijan Supreme Soviet, Mirza Ibragimov, in July 1959.*[1]

By the early 1950s, some of the consequences of Stalinist nationality politics were clear to the Soviet leadership. Elena Zubkova argues that 1953 marked the start of a "New Deal" because the post-Stalin elites in Moscow understood that they needed to address resentments and imbalances in the national sphere if they wanted to avoid destabilizing the USSR.[2] To this end, in 1953 Beria took the first steps toward liberalization by tying up both the anti-Semitic "Doctor's Plot" and the Mingrelian Affair.[3] Beria's political reversals on these two fronts were followed by personnel

[1] A.A. Fursenko, ed. *Prezidium TsK KPSS 1954-1964, Chernovye protokol'nye zapisi zasedanii. Stenogrammy. Postanovleniia*, volume 1, Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2004, 365.
[2] Elena Zubkova, "Vlast' i razvitie etnokonfliktnoi situatsii v SSSR, 1953-1982 gody," *Otechestvennaia Istoriia* 4 (2004), 4.
[3] Beria's interest in resolving the latter situation was fairly self-serving. The so-called Mingrelian Affair of 1951-1952 targeted Georgian Party members for allegedly forming a Mingrelian conspiracy and collaborating with western powers. Many of those accused were clients of Beria, who was one of the most likely successors to the aging Stalin. Timothy Blauvelt discusses Beria's patronage networks in Georgia in "March of the Chekists: Beria's Secret Police Patronage Network and Soviet Crypto-

changes in favor of the titular nationalities in areas where the national question was acute, such as the newly acquired western territories.[4] The following year, this agenda continued with the gradual rehabilitation of repressed peoples and nations.

As the Soviet leadership soon came to find out, however, the process of reversing problematic national policies sometimes engendered new complications. Severe disruptions developed, for example, when the Chechens, Ingush, and others began to move back to the North Caucasus both before and after they were officially rehabilitated. By 1960, 3,508 Chechen families had returned to Dagestan from Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Dagestani authorities tried to prepare for their return by determining which regions they could resettle in and creating a process through which they would be approved for resettlement to particular areas.

Many of the retuning Chechens, however, returned without permission and settled where they wanted to, without taking into account the passport regime. As a result, several areas in the region were becoming overpopulated, local residents were complaining about the Chechens, and a number of Chechens were left without homes and work.[5] By 1961, 5,066 families had returned and the Dagestani authorities were continuing to try and rectify the situation, but problems ranging from inadequate

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Politics," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 44 (2001), 73-88, and "Abkhazia: Patronage and Power in the Stalin Era," *Nationalities Papers* 35, no. 2 (May 2007), 203-232. Charles H. Fairbanks also analyzed late Stalinist Georgian cadre changes in Fairbanks, "Clientelism and Higher Politics in Georgia, 1949-1953," in *Transcaucasia: Nationalism and Social Change*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1983), 339-368.

[4] Zubkova (2004), 4.

[5] TsGARD AP 1.2.1686.131-132.

material conditions in returned Chechen communities to intra-communal conflicts between Chechens and others continued to fester.[6]

While the post-Stalinist leadership quickly identified and tried to reverse the consequences of events such as national deportations and wartime expansion into new territories, it took a few years for other trends set in motion by the war to rise to the surface. A duality was embedded in wartime nationality policies. The simultaneous promotion of Soviet and republican identities as a means of rallying support for wartime imperatives achieved this aim, but also stimulated the growth of national consciousness in the republics. After Khrushchev's Secret Speech in 1956, a cluster of popular nationalisms and elite-driven nationalizing politics launched into the public sphere and challenged where the line would be drawn between acceptably "Communist" national behaviors and inappropriately nationalist ideas and identifications.

Azerbaijan was not indifferent to this wave of local particularism. Between January 1958 and July 1959 the top three leaders in the republic—the chairman of the Presidium of the AzSSR Supreme Soviet, Mirza Ibragimov; head of the AzSSR Sovmin, Sadykh Ragimov; and first secretary of the AzSSR Communist Party, Imam Mustafaev—were implicated in nationalist politics and removed from office. Ibragimov's dismissal in January 1958 was orchestrated to appear as though he voluntarily resigned to focus on his literary career, but Mustafaev was publicly

[6] TsGARD AP 1.2.1894.141-142.

denounced in July 1959.[7] Front-page articles in local newspapers announced Mustafaev's dismissal and outlined his various economic, political, and ideological failings.[8] Ideological critiques clustered around the nationality sphere and accusations that Mustafaev lacked the resolve to struggle against manifestations of Azeri nationalism and to foster smooth relations among Azeris and others in the AzSSR.[9]

Mustafaev and Ibragimov's brief tenure at the helm of the republic (1954-1959) effectively ended with accusations of nationalism, legislative interventions by Moscow officials, and elite dismissals. Nonetheless, Azerbaijani historians portray this period as a sea-change for the AzSSR.[10] Camil Hasanli, for example, has used the language of national liberation to argue that it was only after Ibragimov introduced a controversial Azerbaijani language constitutional amendment in 1956 that the Azerbaijani nation, "long under the pressure of national discrimination, felt itself master of its own house."[11]

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[7] Both Ibragimov's personal file and the decree on his departure in Azerbaijan document that he chose to give up his governmental duties in order to focus on his cultural work (ARDA 2941.9.76.18 and 340.4.261.33-35). Similarly, paperwork archived at RGANI notes that Ibragimov's retirement from the Supreme Soviet was associated with health problems and his literary career (RGANI 5.31.101.3). Nonetheless, frank conversations about his "national deviations" are embedded in closed-door discussions about the AzKP among the Moscow- and Baku-based party hierarchies in 1959. Fursenko, 356-387, and ARPIISSA 1.46.87. For a similar interpretation of this dismissal see Balaev, 124, and Gasanly (2009), 445.

[8] In late 1959, after Mustafaev's dismissal, Ibragimov confessed to "several mistakes in the language field" in an article printed in *Bakinskii Rabochii* on 11 December 1959. Nonetheless, he never faced public censure similar to that of Mustafaev. Ibragimov maintained a public political profile as a deputy in the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and first secretary of the Azerbaijan Writers Union. Mustafaev, meanwhile, retired to largely academic pursuits at the Academy of Sciences in Baku.

[9] See, for example, *Bakinskii Rabochii*, 11 July 1959.

[10] For example, Ismailov (2010), 358.

[11] Gasanly (2009), 616. Hasanli (or Gasanly, as it is transliterated from his Russian-language publications) is referring here to the 1956 constitutional amendment, which made Azerbaijani the official language of the Azerbaijan SSR. The amendment will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

This chapter uses archival documents and oral histories to incorporate for the first time non-titular minorities into the history of Azerbaijan in the 1950s. Changes that occurred in this sphere help to clarify why this could be considered a successful period of titular nation building despite the quick and negative way in which it ended. Senior politicians such as Ibragimov and Mustafaev paid a professional price for their nationalizing politics, but they also oversaw a range of policies that cemented a previously inchoate republican identity and made Azerbaijan "Azerbaijani" after nearly four decades of Soviet rule. Non-titular populations are key to this story because republican elites strengthened the Azerbaijani identity of the AzSSR in part by weakening competing identifications and claims to the republic.

This string of elite dismissals at the end of the 1950s has launched the AzSSR into the center of historiographical debates about Khrushchev-era nationalism and center-periphery relations in the USSR. In 1962, Yaroslav Bilinsky used an example from Mustafaev's nationalizing politics to illustrate de-Stalinizing currents in Soviet politics and to argue that many Soviet citizens were resisting efforts to assert a linguistically cohesive (and Russian defined) Soviet nationhood over their national identities.[12] More recently, Jeremy Smith invoked Azerbaijan as the most "flagrant" example of republican elite nationalism at a time in which expressions of nationalism were on the rise in the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc.[13] In making his argument, Smith pointed to a structural contradiction in the Soviet system that became salient during the Khrushchev years—republican elites held divided loyalties because they

[12] Bilinsky, 138-157.
[13] Jeremy Smith, "Leadership and nationalism in the Soviet Republics, 1951-1959," in *Khrushchev in the Kremlin: Policy and government in the Soviet Union, 1953-1964*, eds. Melanie Ilic and Jeremy Smith (Abingdon, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2011), 85.

were simultaneously representatives of Moscow and leaders of titular national communities in the republics.[14]

Meanwhile, Azerbaijani historians write about this period from the vantage point of the republic, but employ a similar center-periphery framework of analysis. Hasanli and others make broad claims about the local contexts driving Ibragimov and Mustafaev's nation-building politics, but remain focused on Baku and on interactions among Azeri elites, Moscow-based officials, and the Russian-speaking residents of Azerbaijan, who symbolize the tension between national and republican loyalties in the republics.[15]

Center-periphery conflicts were important political flashpoints, but disputes among these actors were only a constituent part of a larger battle to define the republic. In the 1950s, nationalism assumed many forms in Azerbaijan. Like other republics in the Soviet Union, the AzSSR increasingly looked and acted like a nation-state under the shadow of a communist government. Discussing national conflict in East Central Europe, Rogers Brubaker observed that, "structurally similar conflicts were reproduced at successively lower levels of political space."[16] Structural oppositions in the AzSSR—and the Soviet Union more generally—fostered similarly nested nationalisms. Formal and informal nation-building practices that aimed to help the republics conform to their titular labels provoked unease and contestation among

[14] Smith (2011), 79.
[15] The one exception to this is Hasanli's attention to the motivations and behaviors of Armenians in Azerbaijan. This has its own particularities, however, because of the Karabakh conflict in Azerbaijan, deep animosities embedded in the Azeri-Armenian relationship, and the titular status of Armenians in the Soviet-era Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Oblast' (NKAO). See, Gasanly (2009) and El'dar Ismailov, *Vlast' i Narod, 1945-1953* (Baku: Adil'ogly Printers, 2003).
[16] Brubaker (2006), 39.

several Moscow officials, as well as among many Russian speakers and minorities in the republics.

Although the Azerbaijani leadership was denounced as nationalist at the end of the 1950s, nationalisms in the Soviet Union—whether Russian, titular, or minority—were mutually constituted and more often than not rooted in Soviet nationality theory, ideology, and practice. The guiding principles of Soviet nationality politics promoted a participatory, but also intensely contradictory, process of double assimilation that created and fed different nation-based interest groups. Policies were simultaneously enacted to organize the population of the Soviet Union into national units and to merge these nationalities into a supra-ethnic or non-ethnic communist people, a *sovetskii narod* bound together by the "international" Russian language.[17] This means that Azeri nationalizing officials function as a sort of linchpin in this chapter, pivoting to react against perceived challenges to their sovereignty by those "above" ("Russians"/*sovetskii narod*) and "below" (sub-republic minorities), and inciting responses from Russians, "Soviets," and minorities alike.

Because the Russian language and nationality became markers of assimilation into the *sovetskii narod*, the linguistic sphere was one of the primary channels through which contestations over this top-level process of assimilation were expressed. The center-periphery conflict between Baku and Moscow, as well as tensions between the

[17] Francine Hirsch describes Soviet nationality policy as the pursuit of "double assimilation," or an attempt by Soviet leaders to simultaneously organize the population of the Soviet Union into national units and assimilate those nationality categories into a non-ethnic Soviet nationhood. Hirsch, 14. My research shows that "double-assimilation" continued to undergird nationality theories and policies in the 1950s and early 1960s. On the debate about Russification and the promotion of Russian language and culture as symbols of Sovietness in the 1930s, see David Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917-1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 146-183; Hirsch; Martin; and Brandenberger (2002).

nationalizing government of the AzSSR and the Russian-speaking population of the republic, were in many ways a reflection of this conflict. On the other hand, the national units into which people were categorized conformed in large part to the ethnoterritorial architecture of the USSR, giving republican officials the wherewithal to assimilate many non-titular peoples while developing the power, identity, and resources of the titular nation. Although minority national actors were situated at the bottom of this practical hierarchy of nationalities, they nonetheless found cause for their complaints about assimilatory practices in the promise of Leninist nationality rhetoric and Soviet constitutions, where all peoples, regardless of national orientation, were promised protection from discrimination as well as access to equal economic, cultural, political, and governmental rights.[18] In order to elucidate the recursive nature of these relationships and to contextualize the successes of Azeri nation building in the 1950s, this chapter will explore in turn the conceptual, demographic, and linguistic spheres of nation-building politics in Mustafaev and Ibragimov's Azerbaijan (1954-1959).

From Bagirov to the post-Stalinist order in the AzSSR

To start, however, it is worth asking how Azerbaijan got to this point in the late 1950s and isolating some of the ways in which wartime influences carried over into the post-Stalinist era. Post-1956 nationalism in the Soviet Union is most often framed in the context of de-Stalinization and Khrushchev-era liberalization, implying a sharp break

[18] As an example see, *Constitution of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic of March 14, 1937 as Amended Through July 29, 1947* (New York: American Russian Institute, 1950), 19.

between Stalinism and post-Stalinism.[19] While it is true that Ibragimov and Mustafaev's political possibilities expanded after Khrushchev's Secret Speech in 1956, their political consciousness and agendas were deeply reflective of their experiences in the Bagirov era. Further, many of the transformations achieved in the late 1950s were set in motion as far back as the late 1930s.

Although the Azerbaijani national concept was generated much earlier, it was only after the Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (TSFSR) dissolved in 1936 that the term Azerbaijani as a form of categorization and identification gained popular and official resonance in the AzSSR, and in the USSR more generally. Until then, Soviet Azeris were more commonly categorized as Muslims, (Azerbaijani) Tiurks, Turks, or Tatars. For this and other reasons, Soviet officials, including Stalin, were concerned about Azeris' historical, religious, linguistic, and cultural connections to populations in Iran and Turkey. In the case of Iran, these ties were only enhanced by Stalin's wartime sanction of the Iranian Azerbaijan liberation movement.[20]

With relations between the Soviet Union and its neighbors Turkey and Iran worsening over the course of the 1940s, Bagirov was tasked with implementing policies to draw Soviet Azeris further into the Soviet fold and away from competing ideologies such as pan-Turkism and pan-Islamism.[21] In pursuit of this aim, Bagirov renewed *korenizatsiia* in the republic. This involved reducing perceived barriers to advancement for non-Russian-speaking Azeris in the AzSSR and replacing Russians,

[19] Smith (2011).
[20] Yilmaz argues that Soviet officials artificially created the term "Azerbaijani" to separate Azeris from these types of associations with Iran and Turkey. Yilmaz.
[21] Ismailov (2003), 277. For background information on pre-Soviet ideologies and orientations in Azerbaijan see, James Meyer, "Turkic Worlds: Community Leadership and Collective Identity in the Russian and Ottoman Empires, 1870-1914," (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 2007).

Armenians and Jews in leadership positions with Azeris. He also promoted the development of an ideological program and ethnogenesis theories that isolated Soviet Azeris from the "layers of Islam and Turkism" that connected them to Iran and Turkey.[22]

In the few years surrounding Stalin's death, several Transcaucasian political elites fell to attacks by Stalin and his successors on Beria's political networks in the Caucasus.[23] As one of Beria's oldest and most trusted clients, Bagirov's fate closely paralleled Beria's trajectory.[24] When Beria briefly rose to the top of the Soviet leadership after Stalin's death in March 1953, Bagirov was promoted alongside him from AzSSR first secretary to candidate member of the Politbiuro in Moscow.[25] After Beria's arrest in June 1953, however, Bagirov was summarily dismissed. A couple of months after Beria's execution in December 1953, Bagirov was expelled from the Party and arrested, charged with supporting anti-Soviet elements and condemned for his close relationship with Beria. Bagirov's network in the AzSSR was similarly targeted, clearing the way for a new leadership cohort, including Ibragimov, Ragimov,

[22] Ismailov (2003), 269-277.

[23] Stalin initially ordered an investigation of Bagirov in 1950 when he took aim at Beria's Transcaucasian fiefdom, but Beria managed to protect Bagirov (Amy Knight, *Beria: Stalin's First Lieutenant* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995], 157-167). Then, during the Mingrelian Affair in 1952, Stalin dismissed Charkviani, who was not one of Beria's clients, but became caught up in Stalin's attack on Beria through the Georgian Communist Party (O.V. Khlevniuk and others, *Politbiuro TsK VKP (b) i Sovet Ministrov SSSR, 1945-1953* [Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2002], 352-354). In the year and a half following Charkviani's dismissal in 1952, three different people rotated through the Georgian KP first secretary position—Stalin's choice (Akaki Mgeladze), Beria's patron after Stalin's death (Aleksandre Mirtskhulava), and, finally, Khrushchev's protégé following Beria's arrest (Vasil Mzhavanadze). Mzhavanadze remained in this position until 1972.

[24] Armenia's first secretary, Grigor Arutiunov, was an Armenian who rose to power as Beria's close associate in the Georgian Communist Party (KPG). Around the same time as Bagirov's arrest in 1954, Suren Tovmasian replaced Arutiunov as head of the ASSR.

[25] Bagirov also briefly became head of the AzSovMin at this time.

and Mustafaev, to assume control of the republic.[26] Finally, in 1956, Bagirov was put on trial in Baku for treason, terrorism, and participation in a counterrevolutionary organization. Coming on the heels of Khrushchev's Secret Speech, some of the evidence brought against Bagirov exposed his central involvement in the prewar purges and repression of the population.[27] Bagirov was found guilty and summarily executed that same year.

The elites who took charge of Azerbaijan in 1954 had a complicated relationship with Bagirov and his legacy. On the one hand, Mustafaev and Ibragimov's nationalizing politics can be read as a continuation of some trends set in motion during Bagirov's tenure in office. Both individuals spent extensive time on the ground in Iranian Azerbaijan during the war. They shared a deep sympathy for the united Azerbaijan cause and a belief that Azeris had not fully realized their national rights.

In late Stalinism, this was an approved, if sensitive, theme of cultural production in Azerbaijan. For example, even at the height of Zhdanovism in 1949, Ibragimov published the novel *Gələcək Gün*, which drew on his experiences in Iran to describe Azeris' struggle for national liberation from despotic Iranian overlords and

[26] When Mustafaev became first secretary in 1954, he replaced Mir Teimur Iakubov, one of Bagirov's clients who had taken over the AzKP when Bagirov was promoted to the Politbiuro. Similarly, Ragimov took control of the AzSovMin from Teimur Kuliev, who had been in charge since 1946 (with only a brief disruption from April to July 1953 when Bagirov replaced him). Iakubov, Kuliev, and other Bagirov clients later engaged in a power struggle with their successors in the AzSSR, but they were punished by the Plenum of the TsK KPSS in February 1955. In these documents, they were denounced for their association with Bagirov's anti-party activities. RGANI 5.31.25.1-2.

[27] Jörg Baberowski argues that Azerbaijan was a testing ground for Bolshevik policies, and that Bagirov was a sadist who mercilessly carried out Stalin's campaign of terror in Azerbaijan. Baberowski, *Der Feind ist überall: Stalinismus im Kaukasus* (Munich: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2003), 791-794.

Anglo-American capitalists.[28] The poet Suleyman Rustam was similarly celebrated in this period for contributions that he made to the "literature of longing." He received a State Prize in 1947 for a book of poetry, *İki Sahil* (referring to the Iranian and Soviet shores of the Aras River), and, in 1949, his poem Təbrizdə Qiş" (Winter in Tebriz) was selected as one of the best poems of the year in *Ogonek*.[29] Bagirov also reintroduced *korenizatsiia* after the war in the 1940s, and oversaw the development of many of the ethnogenesis theories and demographic upheavals that I describe below and that helped Azerbaijan's identity become more consolidated under Ibragimov and Mustafaev's watch in the 1950s.

On the other hand, many Azerbaijani elites blamed Bagirov for repressing the republic's titular development by destroying its cultural elite and political leadership during the purges. They also ran afoul of his interpretation of the republic's identity on numerous occasions. Ibragimov, for instance, was one of the intellectuals that Bagirov criticized for pan-Turkism and pan-Islamism at a 1950 meeting of the Baku intelligentsia.[30] After Ibragimov and Mustafaev came to power, Azerbaijani ethnogenesis theories were rewritten to indicate some degree of harmony with the Azeris' Turkic heritage. Thus, although the origin of many of the demographic, conceptual, and language policy changes of the 1950s can be traced to the Bagirov era, Mustafaev and Ibragimov—as well as Azerbaijani historians—emphasized differences between the two eras.

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[28] It was translated into Russian as *Nastupit Den'*. Ibragimov was awarded a Lenin Prize for the novel in 1951. Nissman, 204.

[29] Nismann, 201. Other publications on this theme at this time were the poetic cycle *Tabrizda* (In Tabriz) by Mammad Rahim, short stories and a play by Anvar Mammadkhali, and the Russian translations of two major novels about Tabriz with strong undertones of pan-Azerbaijanism. Swietochowski, 166-167.

[30] Ismailov (2010), 346-347.

The ideology of the republic: historicizing identities, sovereignty, and authority

It is worth revisiting Hasanli's argument that the Azerbaijani nation (*narod*) finally "felt itself master of its own house" in the latter half of the 1950s.[31] Others have described the Soviet Union as something akin to a communal apartment, as a place where each ethnoterritorial unit or titular nation was represented by its own room.[32] In Yuri Slezkine's formulation of this metaphor, he wryly notes that in this particular case the "communist landlords went on to reinforce many of the partitions and never stopped celebrating separateness along with communalism," but the rooms remained a constituent part of the communal apartment until, well, it was no more.[33] Hasanli's metaphorical house, meanwhile, conjures an image of a stand-alone house occupied by a sovereign nation, which contrasts somehow with the many nations that we imagine to be jostling with one another in Slezkine's cozy, subdivided unit.

Hasanli's turn of phrase raises another question: Who shared the Azerbaijani national consciousness fostered by nationalizing elites such as Mirza Ibragimov and Imam Mustafaev? As opposed to the English-language disaggregation of Azeri (which carries an ethnic connotation) and Azerbaijani (a civic or territorial descriptor), both Russian and Azerbaijani lack widely agreed upon and clear civic and ethnic complements.[34] In a 2007 article about ethnocultural identification and interethnic relations in post-Soviet Azerbaijan, for example, Tair Faradov writes that,

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[31] Gasanly (2009), 616. Hasanli is referring here to the 1956 Azerbaijani language constitutional amendment, which will be discussed in more detail later. *Narod* could also be translated as people.
[32] For example, I. Vareikis and I. Zelenskii, *Natsional'no-gosudarstvennoe razmezhevanie Srednei Azii* (Tashkent: Sredne-Aziatskoe gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1924), 59, cited in Slezkine (1994), 415.
[33] Slezkine (1994), 415.
[34] Azəri is used to refer to the ancient Azeri language, or, sometimes, to the Azerbaijani minority in Iran, but it is less commonly used in the context of Azerbaijan and the AzSSR.

"Representatives of all nations and *narodnosti*, Azerbaijanis (*azerbaidzhantsy*), Russians, Tatars, Ukrainians, Avars, Lezgins, Tsakhurs, Jews, Talysh, Tats, Ingilos, members of different ethnic groups, see themselves as part of a unified civil and ethnocultural community—the Azerbaijani people (*azerbaidzhanskii narod*)."[35] This one sentence captures, in the Russian language at least, how the same word is used to identify an ethnic group (*azerbaidzhantsy*) and to describe a purportedly non-ethnic community (*azerbaidzhanskii narod*).

Although this chapter does not speak to Faradov's claims about the present day, oral histories show that many minorities in Soviet Azerbaijan struggled with the concept of the "*azerbaidzhanskii narod*" and the Azerbaijani nationality that they were given in their Soviet passports.[36] Some recalled that "Azerbaijani" was a natural identifier for them. For example, Ingilo scholar Shirinbey Aliyev reasons that people from small ethnic groups in Azerbaijan considered themselves Azerbaijani because their own populations did not constitute nations (*natsiia)*: "Since the Ingilo are not a nation (*natsiia*), and not even a *narod*, but an ethnographic group, we consider that Ingilos participated in the process of forming the Azerbaijani nation (*natsiia*). Therefore, I think that I am an Azerbaijani whose roots are Ingilo. That's what I say. But there are also Azerbaijanis…the majority of Azerbaijanis, that is, are Turkic-

[35] Tair Faradov, "Etnokul'turanaia identichnost' i nekotorye aspekty psikhologii mezhnatsional'nogo obshcheniia v Azerbaidzhane," in *Aktual'nye problemy sovremennykh etnosotsiologicheskikh issledovanii v Azerbaidzhane (sbornik statei)*, ed. A. Mamedli (Baku: Elm, 2007), 54. *Narod* can be translated as people or nation.

[36] The article's findings are at least partly based on a survey conducted in the late 1990s. Various aspects of the reporting hint that methodological issues may have created bias in the survey results regarding minority experience and identification.

speaking, but I am not a Turkic-speaking Azerbaijani, I am an Azerbaijani with Ingilo ancestry."[37]

Others seemed to identify with the "*azerbaidzhanskii narod,*" but clarified that this was only if it was defined as a civic or territorial community rather than an ethnic or national one. This was the case in a conversation with a Talysh woman who struggled when trying to explain the Azerbaijani nationality listed in her Soviet passport:

> I am Talysh, I was born here, and my mother is Talysh. She spoke with us then in Talysh, and even now speaks in the Talysh language. But I studied in an Azerbaijani school, that is, we had to know Azerbaijani. But, this was not the Azerbaijani language; this was the "Turk" language. But "Azerbaijani Turk." That is, as far as I understand it, there is no Azerbaijani nationality (*natsional'nost'*), this is my personal opinion. Here there are nations (*natsiia*): there are "Turks," there are Talysh, like us, there are Ingilos, Lezgins, Udins…these are the nations (*natsiia*).

She explained that the Talysh are indigenous to Azerbaijan so they would never think to deny that it was their native republic. For this reason, and because they had no problems with their "Turk" neighbors, it did not occur to most Talysh to think twice about being labeled "Azerbaijani" in the Soviet period. Yet, she clarified, "if they had written "Turk," if they had registered me as a "Turchanka," or some Talysh man as "Turok," that would not have been good, but they didn't."[38] Another Talysh man clarified, "if a Talysh person says that they are 'Azerbaijani' this means that Azerbaijan is his or her motherland…Talysh never called them Azerbaijanis, for Talysh they were always 'Tiurks'. It's the same today."[39]

[37] Interview, December 2010.
[38] Interview, July 2008.
[39] Interview, May 2010.

Still others felt that ethnic particularism was too deeply embedded in the word "Azerbaijani/Azerbaidzhanets/Azerbaidzhanka" for it to be acceptable for them. They argued that the concept "Azerbaijani" was ethnically determined and, thus, not representative of the broader community of people living in Soviet Azerbaijan. Many of these individuals were classified as Azerbaijani in Soviet censuses and passports, but clarified that they never considered themselves to be Azerbaijani as they equated it with being a "Tiurk," "Tatar," "Turk," or "Muslim."[40] When asked whether or not he considered himself to be Azerbaijani, for instance, a Lezgin man responded that he was a citizen of the Azerbaijan SSR, but not Azerbaijani. He explained that Lezgins could not be Azerbaijanis because Azerbaijanis had "Turkish origins."[41] This was a particularly common response among Christian Georgian-Ingilo. They were adamant about being citizens of the AzSSR, but also equated the Azerbaijani nationality in Soviet passports with "Tatars."[42] A Talysh man similarly explained:

> We are all Azerbaijanis (*azerbaidzhantsy*). An Azerbaijani (*azerbaidzhanets*) should be identified with the place, but the state took this over for the nation. And when they said "Azerbaijani," they thought "Turk," that everyone was "Turk." This is not true. Azerbaijan is not made up only of "Turks."

In other words, many interviewees indicated that, at least from their perspective, Soviet Azerbaijan lacked a robust territorial or civic identifier unmoored from being ethnically Azeri. They may have been from Azerbaijan, but many hesitated to say that they were Azerbaijanis (and certainly did not want to be confused as "Tiurks," "Turks," or "Tatars").

[40] Interviews conducted between 2007-2013.
[41] Interview, February 2011.
[42] Interviews conducted between 2010-2012.

The AzSSR was not unique in this sense. The relationship between the development of ethnogenesis narratives and republican identities helps to illustrate the ethnicized contours of republics in the Soviet Union. Azerbaijani ethnogenesis theories started to develop in the late 1930s and by the late 1950s had helped to create a more cohesive titular identity for the republic. Historical narratives based on these theories were of central importance. After all, the foundation of Soviet nationality policy—*korenizatsiia*—translates as "nativization" or 'indigenization." How could Azeris be the titular population of Azerbaijan if they were not indigenous? In this way, ethnogenesis provided Azeris and other titular nations with ammunition for their claims to titularity and established legitimizing ideologies that could be used to support titular nationalizing politics.

At the same time, however, ethnogenesis erected conceptual barriers to the Azerbaijani idea for many non-Azeris in the republic because it conformed to the Soviet titular model, which did not necessarily help the residents of the republic cohere to one another. The ethnoterritorial structure of the Soviet Union encouraged the development of titular nationalities that derived their authority from indigeneity and ethnoterritorial delimitations. By rejecting or deemphasizing competing historical migration theories to locate the birth of a titular nation in its republican territory, ethnogenesis played an important role in the primordialization of nationalities and identities in the USSR.[43] Ethnogenesis provided "evidence" that rooted titular peoples in the ancient history of their republics, helping both to legitimize the ethnoterritorial

[43] Ronald Grigor Suny, "Constructing Primordialism: Old Histories for New Nations," *The Journal of Modern History* 73 (December 2001), 876.

structure of the Soviet Union and to undercut competing claims to republican territory or titularity by meddling neighbors and non-titular residents of republics.

Azerbaijani ethnogenesis theories largely followed all-Union patterns by evolving in response to both international and domestic imperatives. Anxieties about Azerbaijan's weak titular identity and long-standing sympathies among its population for pan-Islamism and pan-Turkism heightened after the mid-1930s, when tensions between the USSR and its southern neighbors began to escalate. This situation only worsened when Stalin attempted to extend Soviet influence to parts of Turkey and Iran during the war, but ended up renewing land disputes among Soviet republics in Transcaucasia instead.[44]

From the perspective of the Bolshevik leadership, ethnogenesis theories could help to achieve brotherhood, peace, and stability in Transcaucasia by establishing the Azeris as an autochthonous nation and removing Turkic ethno-linguistic components from the history of Azerbaijan. This goal was facilitated in part by the purges in Azerbaijan because, along with other groups, Bagirov persecuted the proponents of a Turkic ethno-linguistic explanation of Azerbaijani identity, history, and origins. Most of these victims represented an older generation of influential historians whose intellectually formative period was before the Bolshevik Revolution.[45]

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[44] On the nation-building part of this general summary, see Yilmaz. This replicates arguments made elsewhere about the interconnectedness of Turkish and Soviet policymaking. See, Khalid (Spring 2011), and Reynolds. Yuri Slezkine also speaks to the evolution of ethnogenesis in relation to World War Two in Slezkine, "N.Ia. Marr and the National Origins of Soviet Ethnogenetics," *Slavic Review* 55, no. 4 (Winter 1996), 852.

[45] Yilmaz argues that by the end of 1938 there were no experienced historians or Turkologists left in Baku. Yilmaz, 14-19.

Domestically, from the late 1930s onward it became increasingly common for titular nations in the Soviet Union to competitively invoke ancient genealogies in order to anchor themselves in their republics and to undercut claims that others could make to "their" territory.[46] Azeri ethnogenesis theories aimed to displace the notion that Azeris were latecomers to the Caucasus rather than indigenous to the area, and the claim that Azeris were a constituent part of another nationality (like the Turks) rather than an independent people with their own ancient history and traditions.[47] This was a common trend in ethnographic descriptions of the Azeris up until this point. For example, in 1924, the ethnographer Chursin published the following explanation of Azeri origins: "Azerbaijani Tiurks are the descendants of Turkish tribes that at different times penetrated the Caucasus and settled there: a large part of them settled in Transcaucasia in the 13th century, after the great Mongol-Turkish invasion. In 1258, Hulagu-Khan sent to Transcaucasia more than 150,000 families of Turkish *narodnosti* from Asia. The name "Azerbaijani Tiurks" refers to the fact that most of the Tiurks in Transcaucasia passed through the neighboring Persian province of Azerbaijan, where they even now comprise the bulk of the population."[48] Many Azeris worried that the pervasiveness of these migration narratives made them susceptible to forced migrations or to having parts of the AzSSR annexed by other republics.[49] There was also a shared concern among this population that the Azeri nationality and national

[46] Marlene Laruelle, "The Concept of Ethnogenesis in Central Asia: Political Context and Institutional Mediators (1940-1950)," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 9, no. 1 (Winter 2008), 181.
[47] Azeris have been classified by others, including the Georgians and Armenians, as late-comers because of historical explanations that link Azeri origins in the Caucasus to Oghuz Turkic migrations and the rise of the Seljuq dynasty.
[48] Chursin (1924), 329. Chursin also allowed for the assimilatory factors that brought other peoples such as the Tats, Kurds, Talysh and others into the Azerbaijani group.
[49] Victor A. Shnirelman, *The Value of the Past: Myths, Identity and Politics in Transcaucasia* (Osaka, Japan: National Museum of Ethnology, 2001),105.

narratives were not prestigious in the Soviet Union, and that they were less popular than their Armenian and Georgian neighbors.[50]

War-related events in the 1940s heightened these concerns. Armenian and Georgian petitioners writing against Azerbaijani national policies contrasted their "indigeneity" with Azeri "foreignness" at the same time that the Soviet-backed movement for Azeri national liberation in Iran was building Azeri self-awareness in the AzSSR. For example, at the core of Gamkharashvili's complaints was the notion that Qax, Balakan, and Zaqatala were unjustly adjoined to the AzSSR and should be transferred to Georgia for economic, historical, and ethnocultural reasons. In a letter to Charkviani in 1950, Gamkharashvili repeatedly discredited Azeri claims to indigeneity in this part of the AzSSR. He complained that Lezgins, Georgian-Ingilos (generally referred to in his letters as Georgians), and "Mugals" comprised 95 percent of the population in this area, but Azeri officials increased Azerbaijani numbers by, for example, recording "Georgian Muslims" as "Tiurks." He concluded this point by emphasizing that the "Azerbaijani Tiurks" were not indigenous to this region.[51] Whether purposefully or not, he also tied these officials to the foreign "others" with whom the Soviet Union was experiencing increasingly negative relations: "This is not Soviet politics, this is old Iranian-Turkish politics to Turkify the Georgian population…Azerbaijanis do not have any rights to this territory and this population.

[50] Ismailov (2003), 281.
[51] sšssa (II) 14.18.180.167.

There is no Azerbaijani Tiurk population there, except for abominable *chinovniks* sent from other regions of Azerbaijan."[52]

As ethnogenesis developed into an academic field of study from the late 1930s to late 1950s in Azerbaijan, republican officials and intellectuals continuously revised historical narratives about the indigeneity of Azerbaijan's titular population to fit evolving political imperatives and possibilities. In the late 1930s, Bagirov commissioned a systematic history of Azerbaijan. Revisions of this volume in the early 1940s emphasized the autochthonous origins of the Azeris in the AzSSR, distanced them from Turkic migration origin narratives, complicated their historical relationship to Islamic and Persian history, and established ancient Azeri traditions of statehood and writing to compete with Armenian and Georgian historical narratives.[53] Toward the end of World War Two, a new version of the history of Azerbaijan furthered Soviet territorial pretensions toward Iran by developing theories about the "early and continuous unity" of the northern (Soviet) and southern (Iranian) Azeris.[54]

These evolving histories reached a more authoritative form in the late 1950s with the 1958 publication of the first volume of a new comprehensive history of Azerbaijan. Azeri ethnographer Aliagha Mammadli argues that this iteration of Azeri origins, which was published under the aegis of Ibragimov and Mustafaev's government, reflected the agenda of the republican leadership because of weakened

[52] sšssa (II) 14.18.180.178.
[53] Shnirelman, 105.
[54] Shnirelman, 106-109.

central control over social science research after Khrushchev's Secret Speech at the 20th Party Congress.[55]

In this new and more authoritative history of the republic, Azerbaijan was portrayed as one of the earliest world civilizational centers, and a lineage of ancient Azeri political traditions was traced through early states in northern Iran, including Media Atropatene, whose population was said to be the core of the future Azerbaijani people. Strong ties were also asserted between Azeris and the history of ancient Caucasian Albania, while Armenian aspects of Albanian history and culture were downplayed. The Seljuqs, meanwhile, were portrayed as a disruptive force in terms of Azeri statehood, but validated for linguistically consolidating northern and southern Azeris through the Turkic Azerbaijani language.

Victor Shnirelman argues that this version of Azerbaijan's history was a significant change because it deviated from traditional Soviet linkages of language and identity: "primordial connections with the lands of Caucasian Albania and Atropatene proved to be much more important factors than language affiliation, although the authors recognized that the emergence of linguistic unity led to the formation of the Azeri people."[56] It was also noteworthy because it somewhat rehabilitated Azeris' relationship with their Turkic origins and became a new orthodoxy for history publications, including textbooks, which transmitted this interpretation of Azeri

[55] Mammadli, 181.
[56] Shnirelman, 109-111.

history to the masses.[57] In many ways, it was at this time that Azerbaijani ethnogenesis evolved from a political project into an established field of academic study.

Starting in the 1950s, we also see local officials and scientists beginning to write histories that slot other "indigenous populations" of the republic into this solidifying narrative of Azeri origins. This was a new mechanism through which republican elites asserted their authority over minority communities and attempted to preempt or defuse objections to assimilatory politics. For example, in a document produced in the late 1950s to support the Azerbaijan Communist Party's ongoing battle with Georgian-Ingilo national rights activists, an Azeri historian emphasized that the Talysh, Tats, Kurds, Udins, Lezgins, Avars, and Ingilos were, like the Azerbaijanis, descendants of the ancient peoples of Azerbaijan and thus had shared origins. Further, the author asserted that groups like the Lezgins and Talysh lived alongside ancient Azerbaijanis so the formation of the Azerbaijani "*narodnost*'" in these communities had been a centuries-long process and, therefore, was not the result of assimilationist politics by the AzSSR government.[58]

Ethnogenesis was a strategic discourse, but, like Stalin's geopolitical maneuvers in the 1940s, it too generated unintended and divisive consequences. As Bruce Grant argues, "descent-driven doctrines of firstness" are often actively exclusionary: "Nationalist ideologies in the Caucasus, as in so many parts of the world, with their tireless ambitions to lay claim to sovereign rule through historical record, have propelled such discourses of descent all the more. What gets sacrificed

[57] Shnirelman, 112, and Altstadt, 173.
[58] Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences [Arkhiv Rossiiskoi akademii nauk], or ARAN, 142.10.346.46-48 and ARPIISSA 1.48.405.31-39.

along the way is an attention, by contrast, to alliance, the means by which such pluralist societies bound themselves through rituals of recognition."[59] The evolution of Azeri ethnogenesis narratives over the course of the 1940s and 1950s helped to consolidate Azeri power in the AzSSR because titularity was justified by claims to indigeneity that were "proved" through origin narratives linking titular nationalities to republican territories. The use of ethnogenesis theories to undercut minority claims, however, was one of the reasons why some minorities became alienated from the Azerbaijani national idea.

Republican elites throughout the Soviet Union used ethnogenesis to discredit kin relationships between minorities and meddling neighbors and to construct ancient titular affinities with local minorities in order to justify politics that could otherwise be considered assimilationist. As a result of this practice, many minorities began to feel that their own historical heritage was being downplayed or misrepresented because it was subordinated to or only given meaning through narratives of Azeri indigeneity. Consequently, some came to believe that to be Azerbaijani was perhaps not to inhabit or be indigenous to the republic, but to assimilate into the titular nationality—to speak the Turkic Azerbaijani language, to attend Azerbaijani-language schools, and to identify oneself and one's native language as Azerbaijani at the expense of other identifications and orientations.[60]

[59] Bruce Grant, *The Captive and the Gift: Cultural Histories of Sovereignty in Russia and the Caucasus* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2009), 63-64.
[60] Interviews conducted between 2007 and 2013.

Consolidating republican populations: demography in the AzSSR

Demographic changes were also intimately intertwined with the politics that reshaped the republic and its image in the 1950s. Taking Soviet statistics at face value for the moment, the AzSSR appears to have become significantly more "Azerbaijani" between the 1939 and 1959 censuses. In the older census, 1,870,471 Azerbaijanis comprised 58 percent of the republic's population.[61] By 1959, however, the number of Azerbaijanis grew to 2,494,381. This also marked an increase relative to other nationalities in Azerbaijan as this new figure amounted to 67.5 percent of the population.[62] Baku city data also supports these changes. The capital city became majority Azerbaijani in the 1979 census (and even then just barely), but the gap between Azerbaijanis and Russians—the largest nationality represented in the city—had significantly closed by 1959. In this census, which was conducted under Mustafaev's watch, Azerbaijanis comprised approximately 33 percent of Baku's population and Russians—the largest national community—outnumbered Azerbaijanis by less than 12,000 people.[63]

Soviet censuses were an integral part of the power dynamic in republics because, like ethnogenesis, they were a tool of governance and power. By providing data about the linguistic and national composition of the republics, censuses facilitated the streamlining of the population along the lines of Soviet nationality theory and

[61] *Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleniia 1939 goda*, 71.
[62] Tsentral'noe statisticheskoe upravlenie SSSR (1963), 134-135.
[63] Azeris actually outnumbered Russians in Baku in 1959 when statistics for the city included the population areas around that city that were subordinated to the Baku gorsovet. Tsentral'noe statisticheskoe upravlenie SSSR (1963), 140.

documented "ethnohistorical progress" in the USSR.[64] Census data was also strategic because the ethnoterritorial structure of the empire incentivized linkages between nationality and territorial rights and, in turn, titular statistical majorities.[65]

Due to all of these reasons, changes to Azerbaijan's population in the 1950s were a significant development for the republic and have been credited to Ibragimov and Mustafaev's government in the latter half of the decade. Ismailov, for instance, finds that various natural and artificial population growth factors—including increased Azeri rural to urban migration after changes to Soviet passport laws, reduced immigration of non-Azeris into the AzSSR in line with changing Soviet economic priorities, and rising Azeri birthrates—altered the demographic composition of the republic in the latter half of the 1950s. He argues that these transformations strengthened Azeri national consciousness and precipitated the "Azerbaijanization" of the urban population and intelligentsia. This, in turn, required political attention to national development in Azerbaijan and provided an impetus for Mustafaev and Ibragimov's nationalizing politics.[66] Suha Bolukbasi, meanwhile, attributes greater Azeri rural to urban migration to Mustafaev's "catering to native interests" and "tipping the ethnic balance in favor of the natives."[67] Setting aside Bolukbasi's uncritical reproduction of the "native" category, and his obfuscation of the broader Soviet trends to which Ismailov is more attuned, demographic manipulations did help to reshape the image of the republic in the 1950s.

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[64] Hirsch, 14.
[65] Dominque Arel, "Demography and Politics in the First Post-Soviet Censuses: Mistrusted State, Contested Identities," *Population* 57, no. 6 (November-December 2002), 801-827.
[66] Ismailov (2010), 355-356.
[67] Süha Bölükbaşı, *Azerbaijan: A Political History* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd., 2011), 51.

In fact, Soviet censuses paint a picture of a rapidly consolidating Azerbaijani socialist nation in the 1950s while masking the complicated politics that contributed to "evolutionary progress" among the republic's population. Due to the twenty-year gap between the 1939 and 1959 censuses, for instance, some Stalin-era deportations and forced migrations of national populations were first accounted for in the 1959 census. This is certainly the case for Azerbaijan, which lost and gained entire communities as a result of national population movements. Regarding the former category, an unknown number of Kurds were deported from Azerbaijan in 1937,[68] and four years later, approximately 31,000 Germans were deported from Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. The majority of these Germans appear to have come from Azerbaijan.[69]

Further, between the late 1940s and late 1950s, tens of thousands of Azerbaijanis were moved from other republics to the AzSSR. The first wave (1948-1953) resulted from the before mentioned forced migration of Azeris from Armenia to

[68] 52,173 Kurds were enumerated in the 1928 Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic census, which covered the territory of the later Azerbaijani, Georgian, and Armenian SSRs. 10,878 Kurds were documented in the suppressed 1937 census of the AzSSR. "Iz arkhivov Goskomstata SSSR: Itogi Vsesoiuznoi perepisi nseleniia 1937 g.," *Vestnik statistiki* 7 (1990), 77. Daniel Müller specifies that there is no good documentation of the deportations or Kurdish population figures, but estimates that between 500-1000 (and a maximum of 5000) Kurds were deported from Azerbaijan in 1937. He posits that most of the remaining Kurds were assimilated into the Azeri population. Müller notes that afterward no attempts were made to rehabilitate the Kurds and Kurdish culture in Soviet Azerbaijan: "no Kurdish schools in any sense were ever reopened, no books printed. Even the very existence of Kurds in Azerbaijan was often deemed unmentionable. Azerbaijani scholars generally did not publish on the Kurds of their republic, and only scholars from Russia (but not Armenia) obtained permission to conduct their own research." Daniel Müller, "The Kurds of Soviet Azerbaijan, 1920-91," *Central Asian Survey* 19, no. 1 (2000), 62-65.

[69] Irina Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union* (Abingdon, Oxon and New York, Routledge, 2007), 46. Deportations of Germans from the Caucasus happened alongside German deportations from other parts of the USSR. In the 1939 census, there were 23,133 Germans in Azerbaijan. *Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleniia 1939 goda*, 71. Most of the Germans in Azerbaijan descended from migrants who moved there from German territories between the early 19th and early 20th centuries. The earliest settlements, like Helenendorf, were founded after the Treaty of Gulistan because the Russian Tsars wanted to populate and settle their new Caucasian territories.

Azerbaijan.[70] The second group consisted of those deported as "Turks" from Georgia to Central Asia during World War Two.[71] In 1957, after they were freed from the special settlement regime, some of these "Turks" relocated to the AzSSR, where they were re-categorized as "Azerbaijani." By 1958, 2,150 of these families had moved to Azerbaijan from Uzbekistan alone.[72]

Physical movement was not the only type of migration obscured by the data summaries provided in 1959 census publications. The growth of the Azerbaijani population also represented a conceptual migration of minority identification or categorization to the titular nationality line. In fact, tens of thousands of non-titular minorities were newly assimilated into the Azerbaijani titular nationality category in the 1959 census. In some cases, this reflected a trend shared with other Soviet non-titular minorities who gravitated toward Russian or titular nationality categories. Many minority respondents in oral history interviews reported that they did not think about their nationality in the period in question, and that it simply was not important to them whether they were labeled Azerbaijani or Talysh (or Lezgin, Udin, Tat, etc.) in their Soviet passports and censuses. Being from the Azerbaijani republic, they embraced that identification, or, at the very least, did not think about disputing it.[73] As one Talysh woman clarified: "We always lived peacefully alongside one another. We lived in Azerbaijan and were native to it so there was no separating us from Azerbaijan. In this period, we did not think that that we were not Azerbaijani. But this was also politics. Because I tell you now, if they had written there [in the passport] 'Tiurk,' this

[70] HAAHQPB 1.27.47.137.
[71] Khemshils and Kurds were also deported alongside these "Turks." sšssa (II) 14.31.248.1.
[72] ARPIISSA 1.45.84.16.
[73] Interviews conducted between 2007 and 2013.

would not have been ok. Maybe we would not have accepted this, but they wrote 'Azerbaijani' instead."[74]

Although many people were fairly indifferent about the state categorization of their nationality, or like this woman did locate a civic or territorial element in the Azerbaijani label, others took a more active interest in the way in which others perceived and ordered them—either to assert similarities to or differences from the titular nationality. Thus, some minorities changed their passport nationality to Azerbaijani for instrumental reasons, sensing that titular or Russian language fluency would not be enough to overcome the politics of *korenizatsiia*, which gave preference to titular persons in employment decisions and university admissions. As one Lak woman from Zaqatala reminisced:

> Sometimes you could change your nationality in your passport if you gave money or you knew somebody very well and he could do you a favor…I remember that…the head of the international department of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party was Lak, but for his promotion, to work in the Central Committee, he needed to write in his passport Azerbaijani, and he did that…and my sister was Lak and her husband was Kazan Tatar, and probably they gave money or they knew somebody…because how was it possible that the father is Kazan Tatar, the mother is Lak, and the son is Azerbaijani? It was important for jobs, mainly for jobs, and to become a member of the party…you know, as for me, I never felt that I was treated like the *other* nationality, but again the first positions were never occupied by minorities—maybe the second, but never the first.[75]

A Lezgin man similarly argued that nationality was often unimportant for ordinary people, but it became important to "be Azerbaijani" if you were involved in politics or

[74] Interview, July 2008.
[75] Interview, June 2008.

the Party, or if you wanted to assume an important position, such as the directorship of a large factory.[76]

The instrumentality of being categorized as part of the titular nationality was frequently discussed in interviews with individuals from the Talysh community, which was assimilated en masse into the Azerbaijani category in the 1959 census. A Talysh man explained that, had he been given a choice about his nationality after 1959, he would have chosen Azerbaijani nonetheless: "I wanted to be Azerbaijani, not Talysh…Nobody said that they were Talysh or Lezgin at that time. If I had said 'I am Talysh,' I would have been punished for this…I lived in that period and if somebody told me that I was Talysh I felt bad…We were brought up this way. The Talysh people did not have a developed culture and their customs were not promoted either. The Talysh were not a developed nation…at that time it was forbidden." This individual taught his children only the Azerbaijani language as he felt that the Talysh nationality was stigmatized and he feared that his children would be discriminated against if they spoke Azerbaijani with a Talysh accent.[77] Another Talysh man related similar motivations for preferring an Azerbaijani nationality, "If I went to the local authorities and said 'I'm Talysh, write Talysh in my passport'—had it even been possible—I wouldn't have had any opportunities in Azerbaijan. I had to work and there was nothing to being Talysh then, no schools, no alphabet, no books, no jobs."[78] These interview excerpts complicate the relationship between identity and nationality by illustrating how intertwined the categorization of nationalities became with institutionalized accouterments of nationhood in the Soviet Union.

[76] Interview, March 2011.
[77] Interview, July 2008.
[78] Interview, July 2008.

This subtle negotiation of nationality categorizations and incentives overlapped with more coercive assimilation politics, which played out in population fluctuations among several of Azerbaijan's non-titular communities between 1939 and 1959. Take the Talysh, for example. In the 1939 census, there were 87,510 Talysh, but only 85 individuals were registered as such in the 1959 census.[79] Available archival evidence does not document conversations that occurred among Azerbaijan- and Moscow-based census workers and government officials about this outcome, but the official narrative became that the Talysh nationality category was eliminated because Talysh persons voluntarily self-identified as Azerbaijani to census workers.[80]

Oral histories and Soviet ethnography records provide contrasting explanations of this public narrative. Many people in oral history interviews asserted that they became Azerbaijani in 1959 for lack of choice. As one Talysh man reported, "during these censuses [from 1959 to 1979] no one asked us about our nationality or self-identification. The census workers sat in the regional or village office and filled in the national composition of the population ahead of time based on orders from above. Then they asked us to fill in the other lines."[81] In other interviews, respondents recounted stories of census workers denying the existence of a Talysh nationality,

[79] RGAE 1562.336.1565.226.
[80] Document from TsSU to Talysh man in Lankaran explaining that the Talysh category would not be added to the 1979 census for this reason. Private archive. See also as a recent example of this cleansed assimilation narrative, James Minahan, *The Former Soviet Union's Diverse Peoples: A Reference Sourcebook* (ABC-CLIO, 2004), 303.
[81] By "fill in the other lines," he meant that he would be asked to provide information for the rest of the census form. Oral history interview conducted in March 2010.

writing Azerbaijani when they identified themselves as Talysh, and avoiding the nationality and native language categories while collecting census data.[82]

Members of other minority communities in Azerbaijan recalled comparable experiences. Muslim Georgian-Ingilo interviewees—as well as archived complaint letters—document difficulties registering as Georgian or Ingilo in censuses and Soviet passport records.[83] This issue similarly arose at this time in the Lezgin community, which, rather than reflecting growth over twenty years, instead declined from 111,666 persons to 98,211 between the 1939 and 1959 censuses.[84] While it is difficult to piece together what happened during the census collection process, complaints written by Lezgin activists after the census directly referenced the many cultural, economic, and political pressures that they felt to become part of the titular nationality in the inter-census period. One example was "Lezgi pulu," a tax that persons registered as Lezgin in passports paid for higher education under Bagirov's tenure.[85] One narrator recounted his memory of lezgi pulu as such:

> They assimilated us like this: from us they collected "lezgi pulu"—money for study from Lezgins, you understand? In our family, then, my older brother paid "lezgi pulu"…Look Lezgins paid in school 250 rubles, and in technical schools 400 rubles. In order not to pay, many

[82] Interviews conducted between June 2007 and July 2013.
[83] Interviews conducted between November 2010 and July 2013, as well as archived complaint letters in the Azerbaijan and Georgian Communist Party Archives. Ingilo would have been a difficult category of registration. Ingilo were considered by scientists in Moscow and Georgia to be an ethnographic group of the Georgian nation, but Muslim Georgian-Ingilo who preferred to be identified as Georgian were often denied, the right to register as such and instead were categorized as Azerbaijani.
[84] *Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleniia 1939 goda*, 71, and Tsentral'noe statisticheskoe upravelnie SSSR (1963), 134-135. In the 1970 census, the number of Lezgins was greater in comparison with the 1959 census (the number increased from 98,211 to 137,250), but the percentage of Lezgins relative to the population of Azerbaijan remained the same—2.7%. Tsentral'noe statisticheskoe upravelnie SSSR (1973), 263. This is lower in comparison with 1939, when Lezgins comprised 3.5% of the population in Azerbaijan. *Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleniia 1939 goda*, 71. By 1970, the Azerbaijani population accounted for nearly 75% of the AzSSR population and had more than doubled in numbers in comparison with 1939.
[85] ARPIISSA 1.56.38.372.

> Lezgins registered under different nationalities in passports, you understand?[86]

"Lezgi pulu" also arises in a lengthy complaint letter written by Lezgin activists in the early 1960s. In an effort to document their history of restricted national rights in the AzSSR, these activists recounted a story about Lezgins complaining to Bagirov that they had to pay for school, but Azerbaijanis attended for free.[87] According to their letter, Bagirov instructed someone else to let the Lezgin students know that they could avoid school fees if they changed their passport nationality to Azerbaijani.[88]

Mustafaev and Ibragimov have received credit for and been linked to these population changes because the outcomes of the 1959 census are read as a part of their nationalizing politics, which helped to make Azerbaijan more "Azerbaijani" in the latter half of the 1950s. The long-lasting success of the demographic consolidation of the republic, however, ultimately was due to the fact that it occurred over a long period of time and reflected the results of varied population movements and assimilatory politics. Further, all of these practices reflected rather than contradicted all-Union nationality imperatives. The growth of titular majorities at the expense of non-titular populations in Azerbaijan validated hegemonic notions of Soviet ethnohistorical progress and thus did not directly challenge the top-level process of building a *sovetskii narod* in the Soviet Union.

[86] Interview, March 2011.
[87] A Lak woman from Zaqatala recounted a similar story about informal taxes paid by non-Azerbaijani students to attend Russian-language school in Zaqatala in the 1940s. Interview, July 2007.
[88] ARPIISSA 1.56.38.372.

"Enemies scaling the leadership": language politics in the late 1950s

Developments in the demography and ideology of the republic successfully laid the foundation for the "Azerbaijani-zation" of Azerbaijan in the late 1950s—and the trajectory of majority and minority nationalisms within the republic—but the linguistic sphere represented the most dynamic and contested national politics at this time. There are several reasons why the symbolic uses of language superseded other markers of identity in national contests. First, a wide range of structures in Soviet society reinforced linkages between language and the long-term development of any given nationality. Second, changes in language politics were manifested not in abstract forms such as passports and censuses, but in practices that directly altered the daily routines and experiences of Russians, Azeris, and minorities alike. Third, the language reforms that Mustafaev and Ibragimov attempted to implement between 1956 and 1959 implicitly challenged the role of the Russian language in the republic and interfered with the creation of the *sovetskii narod*. In this way, these policies piqued the interest of central officials by going against the grain of accepted practice in the Soviet Union. Closed-door discussions of Ibragimov and Mustafaev's dismissals make clear that this was the main point at which Kremlin officials determined that Azeri elites crossed the line from nationalizing to nationalist.

Between 1956 and their respective dismissals in 1958 and 1959, Ibragimov and Mustafaev introduced a range of controversial laws and decrees governing language use and learning in the republic. Although nearly every language policy that they implemented was swiftly reversed, their attempts to steer their own course in this sphere has most defined their short-lived government in Azerbaijan. Structural factors

such as the liberalization of the Soviet system are important variables here, but it is also worth revisiting the personal experiences of these political actors.

The Azerbaijani elites who rose to power and influence in the late 1950s—including Ibragimov and Mustafaev—were part of a generation whose political consciousness was forged when passing "through the school of patriotism in southern Azerbaijan" during World War Two.[89] Mustafaev headed Soviet agriculture projects in Iran under the guise of Soviet occupation, while, by 1941, the Iranian-born Ibragimov was central to coordinating the Soviet agenda and shaping the southern Azerbaijan national movement. Furthermore, after the war, Ibragimov became a leading member of the "literature of longing" movement. The influence of the war has been documented extensively for Soviet Azeris who, like Ibragimov, contributed to this literary movement. For example, a critic reviewing the playwright Anvar Mammadxanli's work in 1983 wrote:

> He would never forget the day he left Tabriz, never forget the poem "Əlimi Əllərdən Üzən Ayrılıg" recited by the bard Huseyn Javan. The echo of this voice reciting this poem still resounds. Perhaps this voice was the only voice in the world whose echo is still heard. Perhaps it was the voice of the Aras striking its anger against the rocks and banks. This voice was the voice of the wound in the heart of a people divided in two; it was the echo of the pain of an open wound, because his memory of Tabriz was wounded...the Great Fatherland War and Tabriz were the beginning of a new creative period in Anvar Mammadxanli's life.[90]

Having spent years promoting and witnessing the movement among Azeris fighting for sovereignty and national rights in Iran, it is perhaps understandable that after the Soviet withdrawal from Iran these elites turned their gaze back to Azeri rights fulfillment in Soviet Azerbaijan.

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[89] Gasanly (2009), 11.
[90] Kamil Valiyev, "Öz Sözünün Sorağında," *Azərbaycan* 3 (1983), 183-184, cited in Nissman, 201.

When Ibragimov and Mustafaev attempted to codify an augmented titular identity in the AzSSR in the 1950s, they introduced various linguistic projects aimed at increasing the prestige and role of the Azerbaijani language vis-à-vis Russian and minority languages in the republic. This drew support and inspiration from some segments of the population, but provoked the ire of others—including local residents and Kremlin officials—who felt that these policies disrupted national relations in the AzSSR. Because of the dualisms embedded in Soviet nationality theory and discourse, however, both those in favor of and opposed to this nationalizing project were able to invoke the same discourse of Leninist nationality politics—and a return to Leninism under Khrushchev—to justify their arguments.

The most significant step in this nationalizing direction was the passage of a constitutional amendment designating Azerbaijani as the official language of the AzSSR in August 1956.[91] Coming only six months after Khrushchev's Secret Speech, the amendment was proposed at the Presidium of the AzSSR Supreme Soviet alongside draft laws extending more rights to the republics.[92] In his speech to the Supreme Soviet, Ibragimov stridently defended the amendment as the fulfillment of *korenizatsiia* in Azerbaijan:

> it is impossible to tolerate an indifferent attitude to the Azerbaijani language in any state, public or other type of organization, nor in any company. But, unfortunately this ugly fact exists…The conducting of affairs in the native language of the republic follows from principles of Leninist nationalities policy. All of us, every responsible worker must perfectly know his own native language. Shame on those of us who don't know the Azerbaijani language.[93]

[91] ARDA 2941.7.951.253.
[92] It was printed in the August 24, 1956 edition of *Bakinskii Rabochii*. ARDA 2941.7.951.252.
[93] Mirza Ibragimov, "Third Session of the Supreme Council of the Azerbaijan SSR: Speech of Deputy Mirza Ibragimov," *Bakinskii Rabochii*, 29 August 1956.

He carefully avoided criticism of the Russian language—in fact he closed his speech by reiterating by rote the responsibility of everyone to know this language of "brotherly communion in the USSR"—but Russian was clearly the foil against which Ibragimov judged Azerbaijani language proficiency and use.

A few months later, in October 1956, Ibragimov reinforced the language amendment by announcing in an Azerbaijani-language article in the AzSSR newspaper *Kommunist* that Azerbaijani should be used for all governmental business in the republic.[94] A raft of new measures was introduced to increase Azerbaijani language use in governmental and educational spheres. For instance, after an internal investigation revealed several "inadequacies" in various ministries, including low numbers of Azerbaijani speakers and non-Azerbaijani (ie. Russian) language use in answering complaints and issuing information, the Presidium of the AzSSR Supreme Soviet directed various ministries to increase the role of Azerbaijani in the republic and provide opportunities for non-Azerbaijani speakers to learn the language. Presidium members justified this decree by arguing that it would strengthen relations with workers and encouraged those workers, "who are always holding high the banner of Lenin's national policy and the brotherhood of nations, to assist government agencies in this great cause."[95]

Archival records and newspapers document the perspective of Azeri political elites vis-à-vis the Russian language in the 1950s, but sources about non-elites prove more elusive. Ismailov invokes changing population demographics to locate popular

[94] RGANI 5.30.60.16-20. The article was titled, "Azerbaidzhanskii iazyk v gosudarstvennykh uchrezhdeniiakh" and was printed in *Kommunist* on October 28, 1956.
[95] ARDA 2941.7.976.142-143.

support for Ibragimov's amendment,[96] but it is hard to establish a flow of political influence from the masses to the elites on the basis of Soviet statistics. Further, the effect of many of these demographic changes, including increased rural to urban migration, likely would have become significant factors only after the constitutional amendment and likeminded policies were put in motion in 1956.

There are other ways to extrapolate evidence of popular support and opposition to the amendment, however. Although Ibragimov and Mustafaev became the public face of titular nationalism in the AzSSR, various complaint records depict a burgeoning Azeri national consciousness in the republic. For example, a letter from Ia.A. Madat, who identified himself as Azeri, provides insight into why some Azeris might have supported the controversial amendment. Addressing Khrushchev in a letter since preserved in the Azerbaijani archives, he expresses frustration with the status of Azeris and the Russian language in the Soviet Union:

> all affairs, correspondence in institutions, and even all gatherings, meetings, and conferences are conducted solely in Russian language. And in Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine, Belarus and the Baltic Soviet republics [they are conducted] in their own languages. By the way, the national cadre in Azerbaijan in relative numbers is much larger than in Armenia and Georgia. And Azerbaijani language, literature, and culture are higher [more significant] than them.
> In 1936 in Baku out of 100 schools 90 were in Azerbaijani. And now in Baku only 3-4 schools are Azerbaijani schools. All the rest are Russian…What kind of politics is this if not chauvinist? Of course, Russian language is necessary to know…but does this [have to] mean the burial of the Azerbaijani language…[97]

[96] Ismailov (2010), 355.
[97] ARDA 411.35.22.231.

Madat's excerpt is useful here because it displays an inferiority complex similar to that which Ismailov references: Azeris felt that they were less popular or privileged than other nations in the Soviet Union, especially in comparison with their Georgian and Armenian neighbors.[98]

We can also find some evidence of popular support for the amendment in complaints about the measure. For example, R. Bagdasarov, a student at the Azerbaijani conservatory in Baku, complained to Khrushchev that non-Azerbaijani-speakers were becoming uncomfortable in the AzSSR because there was "a notable 'flourishing' of nationalism'" in connection with the constitutional amendment.[99] Bagdasarov referenced preferential treatment for Azeris in employment, university admissions, and party organizations, and argued that nationalism had taken off particularly among the intelligentsia. As evidence for this he described instances in which Azerbaijani composers failed to accommodate non-Azerbaijani speakers, even when hosting visitors from other republics.[100]

Similarly, during the Moscow meeting about Mustafaev's dismissal, Iosif Shikin**,** deputy head of the Department of Party Organs for Union Republics, recounted an anecdote that displayed popular support for the amendment. At a university event in Baku for the Turkish writer Nazim Hikmet in the mid-1950s, Ibragimov declared that intellectuals who did not know the Azerbaijani language, or knew it but could not speak in Azerbaijani, were scoundrels and traitors. Mustafaev

[98] Ismailov (2003), 281.
[99] RGANI 5.30.141.91.
[100] RGANI 5.30.141.91-93.

confirmed to the Moscow gathering that Ibragimov's speech was met by wild applause, indicating that others shared this view at the time.[101]

Central party bureaucrats in Moscow, namely Evgenii Gromov[102] and his colleague, Lebedev, also raised the alarm about the constitutional amendment and accompanying measures. As with Bagdasarov, they argued that Azerbaijani already was widely used in various governmental affairs. Further, they noted that transferring the language of all records and correspondence of "state institutions, social organizations, and industrial enterprises [negatively] affect the interests of a significant portion of the population of Azerbaijan." The report concluded that the provision fostered nationalism in Azerbaijan and included specific complaints in this direction. The amendment was rescinded within months of its passage.[103]

Ibragimov was the driving force behind the constitutional amendment, but other Azerbaijani politicians continued to introduce language reforms after his departure from the Supreme Soviet. In July 1958, for example, the Azerbaijani Council of Ministers established new orthographic rules to bring the Azeri alphabet more in line with Azeri pronunciation. They purged the Cyrillic letters "Ю" and "Я" from the Azerbaijani alphabet, replaced "Й" with the Latin letter "J," changed the function of "E," and introduced "Ə" in place of "Э."[104] Combined with the political trajectory that Ibragimov started in 1956, these orthographic changes were approved,

[101] Fursenko, 365.
[102] Gromov at this time was the head of a department of the TsK Secretariat that focused on dealing with the union republics.
[103] RGANI 5.31.60.10-11. Cited in Ismailov (2006), 293-294.
[104] ARPIISSA 1.45.101.7 and ARDA 3034.1.185.82-83.

but disquieted Moscow-based officials because they were perceived as a shift away from Russian influence and toward Turkish ties.[105]

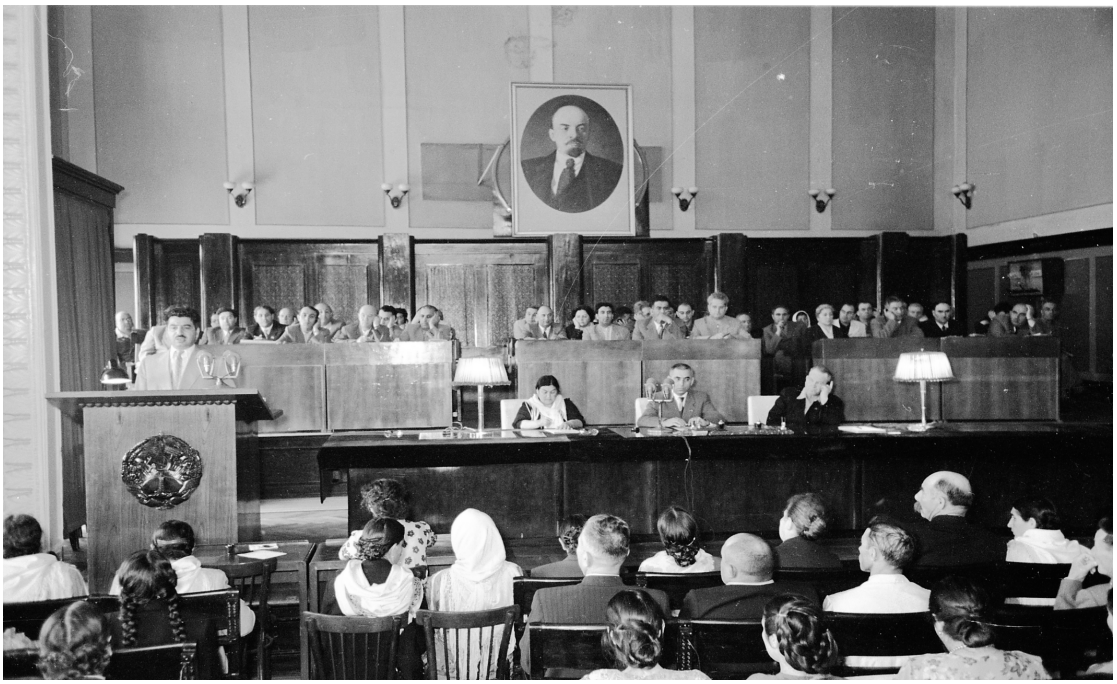

Photo 5: AzKP First Secretary Imam Mustafaev, standing at the podium on the left, addresses Ibragimov's forum, the Azerbaijan Supreme Soviet in 1957. Although Ibragimov receives much of the credit for making Azerbaijan "Azerbaijani" in the 1950s, Mustafaev was also intimately involved in nationalizing politics.[106]

A series of Azerbaijani-language learning policies were also created—and swiftly overturned—between 1956 and 1959. The most significant ones came in late 1958-early 1959 when there was an open clash with Moscow over the language(s) taught in schools. At the close of 1958, the republics were directed to codify a KPSS thesis specifying that parents should be able to choose which language of education they preferred for their children, whether it be Russian, their native language (in

[105] Balaev, 124.
[106] ARDKFSA, May 6, 1957, photo reference number 8161.

Azerbaijan this was limited to Georgian, Russian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani schools), or the titular language of the republic in which they lived.[107]

National communists throughout the USSR expressed concern that this thesis discouraged titular language learning, but Azerbaijan was one of only two republics where officials significantly deviated from the KPSS thesis. In Riga, the Latvian KP opted against accepting the Moscow draft. In Baku, officials decreed that both Russian and Azerbaijani would be mandatory languages of study regardless of which school students chose to attend.[108] After a series of Moscow interventions in AzSSR governance (including the revocation of the constitutional amendment in 1956 and Ibragimov and Ragimov's dismissals in 1958), this revision of the KPSS thesis provoked a swift and definitive response from Moscow: Mustafaev was dismissed as first secretary of Azerbaijan's Communist Party and the Azerbaijani article was revised to correspond to the original KPSS thesis.

In the summer of 1959, KPSS Secretary Nuritdin Mukhitdinov and Shikin flew to Baku to investigate the Azerbaijan Communist Party Central Committee and to draft the decree announcing Mustafaev's dismissal. During the meeting, members of the Central Committee debated which members deserved to be blamed for the Committee's mistakes. Many of those who came under attack argued that they thought what they were doing was approved because they had checked in with Moscow while drafting the

[107] Russian remained a required subject regardless of the primary instructional language.
[108] During closed-door discussions over Mustafaev's departure in the summer of 1959, AzKP secretaries argued that they followed the precedent set by Latvia when they introduced their version of the thesis. ARPIISSA 1.46.87. See also ARDA 57.14.99.238 for evidence of local discussions and measures related to this issue.

Photo 6: Mustafaev, on the far left, meeting with workers in March 1959, shortly before his dismissal.[109]

decree in Baku.[110] Others took the opportunity to attack one another, but the decision to allow Ibragimov to quietly step down provoked the most contentious debate and clarified Moscow's serious concern about nationalism among Azeri officials.[111] Vali Akhundov, Mustafaev's successor, and Mukhitdinov both emphasized that the Central Committee had to be very careful while resolving the situation so as to avoid encouraging nationalist supporters of Ibragimov, Ragimov, and Mustafaev.[112] Akhundov further explained that they should leave Ibragimov out of the Mustafaev

[109] ARDKFSA, March 23, 1959, photo reference number 1645.
[110] ARPIISSA 1.46.87.30.
[111] ARPIISSA 1.46.87.37-40.
[112] ARPIISSA 1.46.87.50-52, 67-68.

announcement because focusing on the national question instead of deflecting to economic issues would feed nationalist discourses in the republic.[113]

In fact, this was a very real concern. There was clear support for nationalizing politics among Azeris, but a range of formal and informal policies regarding minority education were also generating nationalism and grassroots activism in non-titular communities. Two Baku-decreed decisions directly targeted minority populations. First, during the constitutional amendment debate in August 1956, Mustafaev authorized the re-introduction of Azerbaijani language instruction to Armenian, Georgian, and Russian schools.[114] Russian had been a mandatory subject for all students in the Soviet Union since 1938, but the requirement for titular language learning was more variable. Azerbaijani previously was taught in Georgian and Armenian schools, but the requirement was reduced—and then eventually eliminated—in 1953 because students already had to study Russian, their native language, and a foreign language.[115]

Then, in 1958, Azerbaijani- and Russian-language preparatory language classes were created in Avar, Lezgin, Tat, Talysh, and other minority communities, where students frequently arrived in school lacking the necessary language skills to study in Russian- and Azerbaijani-language classrooms. Ultimately, both decrees were challenged. As in 1953, the new Azerbaijani instruction requirement for minority schools lasted only a few months before being rescinded due to congested class

[113] ARPIISSA 1.46.87.50-52.
[114] ARPIISSA 1.43.91.135.
[115] Azerbaijani was also taught in Russian schools, but class hours were only reduced when they were eliminated in Armenian and Georgian schools (ARPIISSA 1.43.91.141). In concert with a SovMin SSSR order, in 1955 it was decided that only Azeri students in grades 5-10 in Russian schools would be required to study Azerbaijani language (ARPIISSA 1.43.91.151).

loads.[116] Georgian-Ingilo activists, meanwhile, succeeded in challenging and reversing the pre-school instruction classes in their communities after Mustafaev was deposed.

As will be discussed in the next chapter, minority activists were inspired by Khrushchev's liberalization of the Soviet Union, as well as increasingly concerned about the fulfillment of their national rights vis-à-vis the expanding role of the Azerbaijani language in their daily lives. Activists in both the Lezgin and Georgian-Ingilo communities formed cohesive grassroots movements to agitate for national rights fulfillment in the late 1950s. While Azerbaijani officials challenged the veracity of Georgian-Ingilo and Lezgin complainants in the Ibragimov-Mustafaev era, the tides seem to have started to turn after Mustafaev's dismissal in 1959.[117] At this time, Azerbaijani government representatives began to acknowledge both local interest in minority schools and mistakes made in minority communities. Political elites in Baku often deflected blame for controversial policies to local officials, but they also began to respond to minority complaints in the early 1960s.[118] Thus, inroads in Azerbaijani language promotion can be seen as both provoking Ibragimov and Mustafaev's dismissals, and altering the expectations of several non-titular minority communities in the republic.

[116] ARPIISSA 1.43.107.258.
[117] For example, ARPIISSA 1.48.405.4.
[118] ARPIISSA 1.48.405.27, ARDA 411.8.536.58, ARPIISSA 1.48.40.58-59, ARPIISSA 1.56.38.359-360.

Conclusion

The national imbalances and frustrations displayed in 1950s Azerbaijan blend into a broader Soviet narrative. Zubkova invokes the example of Kazakhstan to argue that targeted efforts to pacify restive nationalities in the western republics had the unintended effect of renewing *korenizatsiia* politics elsewhere in the USSR.[119] The case of Azerbaijan, meanwhile, provides examples of some of the ways in which attempts to satisfy titular demands in the republics could disrupt various registers of national relations and belonging. By injecting non-titular minorities into the history of the mid-century consolidation of the Azerbaijani republic and nationality, we gain a clearer understanding of the recursive relationship between majority-minority nationalisms in the Soviet Union. The Azerbaijanis could be defined as a minority on the all-Union level, but they were in a position of power over non-titular peoples, who were the minorities on the republican scale. Thus, although Azerbaijani elites were motivated by complaints about the retarded realization of Azeri *korenizatsiia*, their nation-building policies infringed on the national rights of minorities living in the AzSSR.

The ethnoterritorial structure of the USSR sanctioned uneven rights fulfillment and, in so doing, fed conflicts among different types of national communities. The trigger points for problems with Moscow, however, were policies that encroached on the role of the Russian language and Russian-speakers in the republic. Nationalizing titular politics that infringed on the national rights of non-titular communities, meanwhile, met with a more unpredictable response from both central officials and

[119] Zubkova, 5.

local populations. Some Georgian-Ingilo and Lezgin areas produced national activists who went to great lengths to agitate for recognition of their national rights in the face of rising Azerbaijani awareness. Other non-titular populations, such as the Talysh, failed to generate clear opposition to the republican elites' nationalizing trajectory, and instead were swept en masse into the expanding Azerbaijani nationality at the end of the 1950s. The reasons why varied responses emerged in different communities, and what they symbolized about social and political relations in Khrushchev's Soviet Union, are the focus of the next two chapters.

CHAPTER FOUR

"WHY NOT LOVE OUR LANGUAGE AND OUR CULTURE"? PETITIONS, RIGHTS, AND CITIZENSHIP IN KHRUSHCHEV'S SOVIET UNION

> We love the languages of all the republics of our Soviet Union and their culture, why not love our language and our culture…Why with such bitterness do they forbid us from studying in our native language…Why do they close our schools and if someone dares to protect the native language or native school he suffers persecution and all sorts of coercion?
>
> -*Anonymous Georgian-Ingilo petitioner from Azerbaijan addressing Nikita Khrushchev in 1962*[1]

Over the course of Khrushchev's term as First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), a number of nationality-based grassroots movements pressured his administration to honor ascribed, but long unfulfilled, rights. Chechens and Ingush used letter campaigns, work stoppages, demonstrations, and unauthorized migrations to demand that they be allowed to leave their places of exile and return to their homes in the Caucasus.[2] Crimean Tatars also petitioned Khrushchev for permission to leave exile and regain the rights that were stripped from them when they were deported. When their collective letters with hundreds (and sometimes thousands)

[1] ARPIISSA, 1.48.405.90.

[2] Work stoppages and other acts of protest occurred in the Stalin era as well, but they evolved over the years. By early 1957, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Central Committee approved the repatriation of exiled Chechens, Ingush, Balkars, Karachays, and Kalmyks and restored their national autonomy. Pohl (2002). Further, as Vladimir Kozlov shows, disorder and mobilization continued after repatriation. Vladimir A. Kozlov, *Mass Uprisings in the USSR: Protest and Rebellion in the Post-Stalin Years* (London and Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002).

of signatures failed to achieve the desired results, Crimean Tatar activists channeled their frustrations into further mobilizations within the community and into public acts of protest.[3]

The Chechen and Crimean Tatar movements have attracted scholarly attention, but, in the early post-Stalin years, nationality-based activism extended beyond the unique exile paradigm that their stories represent.[4] This indicates that the extreme conditions of the special settlement regime were not the only factors emboldening grassroots mobilization and national contention at this time. More specifically, as the epigraph above indicates, Azerbaijan was another site where organized national movements displayed dissatisfaction with both contravened national rights and the use of intimidation as a tool of social control. This chapter looks at two communities in Azerbaijan—the Georgian-Ingilo and Lezgins—to argue that Khrushchev's "Thaw" had real meaning in terms of how Soviet citizens conceptualized their rights, expressed demands, and engaged with the state.

I foreground the Georgian-Ingilo example in this chapter because of the history of Georgian interventionism in Georgian-Ingilo affairs in Azerbaijan. This lends a unique element to this case study, but it also provides me with opportunities to complement the oral history interviews that I gathered in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Makhachkala, and Moscow with archival materials. I was allowed to work with relevant sources at the archive of Azerbaijan's Communist Party for a few weeks in

[3] The Crimean Tatars succeeded in meeting with Anastas Mikoyan in the late 1950s, but were unable to secure the right of return to Crimea at that time (State Archive of the Russian Federation, or GARF, r-5446.58.92.889).

[4] See, for example, Kozlov; Pohl; Fisher; Edward A. Allworth, *The Tatars of Crimea: Return to the Homeland* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); Brian G. Williams, *The Crimean Tatars: the diaspora experience and the forging of a nation* (Leiden: Brill, 2001); and Greta Lynn Uehling, *Beyond Memory: The Crimean Tatars' Deportation and Return* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

2008 (in 2010 and 2011, I was informed that research about Soviet nationality policies was "not permitted"). I also found additional sources in Georgian archives, which similarly document agitation for national rights in Azerbaijan's Georgian-Ingilo communities. Due to the lesser involvement of Dagestani officials in Azerbaijani Lezgin affairs, the Lezgin case is not as richly documented outside of Azerbaijan.[5] It is used here to broaden the significance of the Georgian-Ingilo movement and to highlight the importance of kin state relationships in contests over non-titular national rights.

Many of the arguments in this chapter rely on interviews as well as petitions found in the Azerbaijani and Georgian archives. Petitioning assumed a commonplace role in Russian administrative and legal cultures long before the Soviet period. In the imperial period, the differentiated rights regime fostered a type of citizenship in which petitioning was an unexceptional part of the relationship between society and the state, and individuals were both entitled to negotiate with the state and empowered to help shape the meaning of their rights.[6] Perhaps because literature about Soviet citizenship is most developed for the Stalin era, Soviet historiography is often implicitly at odds with this approach to citizenship and instead displays a bias toward explicating the

[5] The Lezgin question in the post-World War Two period is occasionally addressed in ARPIISSA files, but not on the scale of the Georgian-Ingilo population. A search of the state and Communist Party files in the Central State Archive of the Republic of Dagestan (TsGARD) turned up very few documents about the Lezgins in Azerbaijan. This indicates a lower level of kin state support for the Lezgins and is in line with statements made by Azerbaijani Lezgins in oral history interviews conducted in Azerbaijan and Dagestan between 2010-2013.

[6] For the imperial period, see Jane Burbank, "An Imperial Rights Regime: Law and Citizenship in the Russian Empire," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 7, no. 3 (Summer 2006), 397-431, and Burbank, *Russian Peasants Go to Court: Legal Culture in the Countryside, 1905-1917* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004). For the Muscovite period, see Valerie Kivelson, "Muscovite 'Citizenship': Rights without Freedom," *Journal of Modern History* 74 (September 2002), 465-489, and Nancy Kollmann, *By Honor Bound: State and Society in Early Modern Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).

many ways in which citizenship was used as a weapon of repression and fell short of universalized measures of citizenship.[7]

As with the previous chapter, here I reach back to the 1940s to avoid viewing 1950s national movements in an historical vacuum, and to more clearly map shifts in legal consciousness and state-citizenry relations. I generally do not consider Georgian-Ingilo and Lezgin petitions to be evidence of non-violent resistance to the Soviet regime or of the failure of Soviet citizenship.[8] Rather, the activists represented here used petitions and other means of protest to challenge internal borders of citizenship and to gain observance of constitutionally guaranteed national rights that were violated by everyday practices.

Although branded nationalists and hooligans by local officials, they employed sanctioned channels to agitate for the realization of Soviet principles and displayed a contractual understanding of political life in the USSR.[9] As Alexei Yurchak found for

[7] Golfo Alexopoulos, for instance, uses T.H. Marshall's study of England to define citizenship as the marriage of civil, political, and social protections (T.H. Marshall, *Class, Citizenship, and Social Development* [New York: Doubleday, 1964], 71-72). She juxtaposes Soviet citizenship with this triad and finds that only social citizenship (or "the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security") was meaningful in the USSR since economic rights were "reasonably protected" (Alexopoulos, "Soviet Citizenship, More or Less: Rights, Emotions, and States of Civic Belonging," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 7, no. 3 (Summer 2006), 495). Alexopoulos also notes that the failure to achieve social and legal equality is a marker not only of the Soviet system, but of modernity in general. (Alexopoulos (2006), 487). Christine Varga-Harris also uses Marshall to define citizenship. Varga-Harris, "Forging citizenship on the home front: Reviving the socialist contract and constructing Soviet identity during the Thaw," in *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization: Negotiating cultural and social change in the Khrushchev era*, ed. Polly Jones, 101-116, Abingdon, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2006.

[8] In keeping with the temporal focus on the late 1920s and 1930s, Soviet-era petitions frequently have been used to document resistance among the peasantry. For example, Chris J. Chulos, "Peasants' Attempts to Reopen their Church, 1929-1936," *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 24:1-2 (Spring-Summer 1997), 203-213; Lynne Viola, *Peasant rebels under Stalin: collectivization and the culture of peasant resistance*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996; and Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village After Collectivization*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

[9] This resonates with Vladimir Kozlov's (2002) argument that moments of disorder in the post-Stalin years often reflected popular investment in the regime rather than conscious political dissent or

the Brezhnev period, "the fundamental values, ideals, and realities of socialist life…were of genuine importance [to many Soviet citizens], despite the fact that many of their everyday practices routinely transgressed, reinterpreted or refused certain norms and rules represented in the official ideology."[10] Acts that could be framed or understood as resistance by historians or, indeed, by Party officials, were often more anti-policy than anti-Soviet.

Further, rather than measure Soviet citizenship as real, handicapped, or fictive in contrast with other models, I strive to judge it on its own merits.[11] Constitutional guarantees of economic, cultural, social, and political equality for all citizens irrespective of their nationality, as well as affirmations of these rights in revered tracts written by Soviet leaders, may not have always been upheld, but their existence created possibilities for rights negotiation and contention. Through the disputes

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disillusionment. Kevin O'Brien formulated the notion of "rightful resistance" in his work on China, but it is also helpful for thinking about the Soviet case. According to O'Brien, rightful resistance "entails the innovative use of laws, policies, and other officially promoted values to defy 'disloyal' political and economic elites; it is a kind of partially sanctioned resistance that uses influential advocates and recognized principles to apply pressure on those in power who have failed to live up to some professed ideal or who have not implemented some beneficial measure." Kevin J. O'Brien, "Rightful Resistance," *World Politics* 49:1 (1996), 33.

[10] Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005, 8.

[11] I find social theorist Margaret Somers's approach to defining citizenship to be more helpful than studies that use Marshall or other universalized measures to judge the Soviet context. In her work, Somers acknowledges the localized and uneven nature of rights regimes everywhere, and encourages exploring citizenship formation through the "relational settings of contested but patterned relations among people and institutions…to see that citizenship identities and practices developed in analytic autonomy from the bundle of attributes associated a priori with the categories of feudalism and capitalism." Somers, "Rights, Relationality, and Membership: Rethinking the Making and Meaning of Citizenship," in *Public Rights, Public Rules: Constituting Citizens in the World Polity and National Policy*, ed. Connie L. McNeely, New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998, 161. Somers further defines citizenship as "the *right to have rights*," with access to enjoy political and social membership serving as baseline parameters. (Somers, *Genealogies of citizenship*: *Markets, Statelessness, and the Right to Have Rights*, Cambridge University Press, 2008, 5). James Holston also offers a productive critique of the universalizing uses of Marshall's theories in his study of citizenship nd modernity in Brazil. Holston argues that Marshall is helpful for "pointing the way to expand the analysis of citizenship beyond political institutionalization," but, like Somers, Holston emphasizes that the "spread, timing, and substance of citizenship vary substantially with historical and national context." James Holston, *Insurgent Citizenship: Disjunctions of Democracy and Modernity in Brazil*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008, 317.

described in this article, Lezgins and Georgian-Ingilo testify to their investment in the rights of citizenship. Soviet citizenship was not a zero sum game in which rights were or were not fulfilled, but a productive space that facilitated myriad social possibilities.

Conceptualizations of Rights from the 1940s to the 1960s

Stalin-Era Activism

The Soviet nationality question was reportedly "solved" in the 1930s, but local residents, activists, academics, politicians, and others continuously negotiated national rights in subsequent decades. Looking across political eras allows us to see change over time and to adopt a more nuanced understanding of rights and, more importantly, conceptualizations of rights. Thus, in order to clarify the specificities of the grassroots movements that emerge in the late 1950s, it is important to begin with a brief exploration of Stalin-era Georgian-Ingilo and Lezgin rights negotiations.

An important differentiating variable between Georgian-Ingilos and Lezgins in Azerbaijan is that Georgian-Ingilos shared a kin state relationship with the neighboring Georgian SSR, whereas the much larger Lezgin population experienced a more muddled connection to the Dagestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, where the Lezgins were but one of several privileged national populations.[12] Kin state relations complicated minority affairs in the Soviet Union and created an informal hierarchy of non-titular populations. In comparing the Lezgins and Georgian-Ingilo, it appears as though kin state support could result in more traction with rights complaints

[12] On kin states, see Brubaker (1996).

and in better access to institutional cultural support, such as native-language schools. The special relationship that Georgians and Georgian leaders enjoyed with Stalin also markedly advanced the claims of some Georgian-Ingilo activists in the 1940s.

The greatest divergence between the Georgian-Ingilo and Lezgin experiences came at the close of the 1930s. When Union-wide education reforms in 1938 precipitated the closure of many non-titular schools, primary school instruction in the AzSSR was reduced from over a dozen languages to Russian, Azerbaijani, Armenian, and Georgian.[13] Lezgin schools, meanwhile, were closed even though there were vastly more Lezgins than Georgian-speakers in the republic.[14] This highlights how Lezgins occupied a middle ground between statuses. Considered one of many titular peoples in neighboring Dagestan, they often failed to be treated as such in Azerbaijan.

When many of the Georgian schools in Muslim Georgian-Ingilo communities were turned back into Azerbaijani language schools in the early 1940s, incited Georgian-Ingilo activists and Georgian politicians fought for redress. From the 1940s through the early 1950s, Charkviani and Gamkharashvili generated the most complaints about this issue.[15] From his base in Tbilisi, Gamkharashvili sent letters to Stalin, Charkviani, and other Georgian politicians complaining about the Georgian-

[13] As shown in chapter two, Azerbaijani authorities managed an extremely complicated system of national minority education in the 1920s and 1930s. In the 1932/33 school year, for example, primary school education in Azerbaijan was conducted in the Azerbaijani, Russian, Armenian, Talysh, Tat, Lezgin, Georgian, German, Greek, Assyrian, Kurdish, Avar, Uzbek, Tatar, Tsakhur, and Udin languages. ARDA, 57.5.326.67.

[14] According to the 1939 census, only Azerbaijanis, Armenians, and Russians outnumbered Lezgins in Azerbaijan. (*Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleniia 1939 goda*, 1992, 71).

[15] There were a few other individuals whose efforts can be found in the Georgian archives. Archil Gavrilovich Dzhanashvili, like Gamkharashvili, was an academic from Qax who built his career in Tbilisi educational institutions and sent some lengthy reports to the Georgian government in hopes that Georgia would annex the regions. sšssa (II) 14.18.180.74. Grigorii Kutubidze is also found alongside Gamkharashvili and Dzhanashvili, yet he was a Georgian who taught in a Georgian school in Azerbaijan. sšssa (II) 14.24.296.34.

Ingilo situation in Azerbaijan, and asking for the regions where the Georgian-Ingilo lived to be transferred to Georgian control. He also traveled to Moscow on several occasions to try to petition Stalin in person.[16] Charkviani, meanwhile, attempted to annex Saingilo. When this initiative failed, he met with Bagirov in Saingilo and negotiated promises from the Azerbaijani side to improve Georgian education and conditions in "Ingilo" villages.[17]

Charkviani certainly helped support the Georgian-Ingilo complainants, but chapter two also illustrates the privileged relationship that Georgians and Georgia enjoyed with the Kremlin during the Stalin years. Stalin failed to transfer Saingilo to the GSSR and alter the formal position of the Georgian-Ingilo, but he did allow Georgian elites to play a disruptive role inside Azerbaijan. This unique degree of postwar inter-republic interference understandably engendered frustration among Azerbaijani officials, who complained about Georgian meddling and the negative influence that Georgians had on the "Ingilo" population.[18]

This pattern of cross-republic meddling largely closed out the Stalin era for Georgian-Ingilos, while the Lezgin story simmered until the late 1950s. Available archival records in Dagestan, Moscow, and Azerbaijan, as well as oral history interviews, indicate that some Lezgins did petition to improve Lezgin national rights in the Stalin era, but it appears that their complaints found less traction than Gamkharashvili's. In 1936, for example, a group of Lezgins from Khachmas sent a letter to *Pravda* proposing that an amendment for the new constitution include a

[16] See, for example, sšssa (II) 14.18.180.94, 14.18.161.1-19, and 14.24.296.1.
[17] sšssa (II) 14.18.180. 5-7.
[18] ARDA 411.25.521.156 and ARPIISSA 1.226.54.27-37. The latter document is cited in Gasanly (2008), 461-464.

provision to unify Dagestani and Azerbaijani Lezgins as a means of furthering their economic and national development. The letter was forwarded to the Central Executive Committees of Azerbaijan and Dagestan. Both were requested to inform the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet Union about the merits of allocating Lezgins a separate *okrug* or *oblast'*, but nothing came of the proposal and the Lezgin population remained divided between the Dagestan ASSR and AzSSR.[19] In the 1940s, a separate group complained to Bagirov about "lezgi pulu," the so-called informal tax levied against Lezgin students.[20]

The Lezgin case thus provides some examples of sporadic small group organizing in the Stalin era, and the willingness of some citizens to engage in rights negotiations with the state, but no concrete examples of improved national rights attainment among Lezgins. The Georgian-Ingilo examples, meanwhile, show that individuals could be successful in these negotiations when they were able to trade on personal relationships and kin state connections.

Khrushchev-era grassroots campaigns

By the end of the 1950s, national movements were forming not only among minorities in Azerbaijan, but among titular elites as well. De-Stalinization created new opportunities for both minorities and titular peoples to push for the realization of ascribed national rights. The primary focus here is on the Georgian-Ingilo and Lezgin movements, but in the background are important changes in republican governance, which seem to correspond with the failures of minority activists between 1954 and

[19] GARF 3316.29.576.1-3.
[20] Interview, March 2011.

1959, and relative successes from 1959 to 1966. Further, looking at non-titular rights claims we see that grassroots movements begin to emerge in both the Georgian-Ingilo and Lezgin communities in the 1950s. How did we get here from the more dispersed kin-state nepotism that defined the late Stalin period?

The relationship between Georgian-Ingilo activists and the Georgian SSR leadership appears to have become more distant after 1952, when Charkviani was deposed as a consequence of the Mingrelian Affair.[21] Charkviani's dismissal, Stalin's death the following year, and the rise of a new Azerbaijani leadership cohort in 1954 precipitated changes in the local power dynamic.[22] In his memoir, Charkviani alludes to a dark trajectory for the Georgian-Ingilo after his dismissal. As evidence for this sentiment perhaps, the Georgian-language schools that he helped to reopen in Muslim villages were converted to Azerbaijani over the course of Ibragimov and Mustafaev's tenure in office—in Tasmaly and Zayam in 1954, in Aliabad in 1957, and in Ititala the following year.[23]

There was also an attempt early in 1959 to introduce Azerbaijani instruction to Georgian schools in Qax-Ingilo (then called Qax-Gurcu after the Azerbaijani word for

[21] Charkviani was demoted early in 1952 as part of the fallout from the Mingrelian Affair. He was accused of failing to detect and prosecute the conspirators, not of being a member of their circle. Changes in the architecture of the Georgian-Ingilo/Georgian leadership relationship seem to play out in the archives as well. In the Georgian Communist Party archive (sšssa (II)), there are numerous files about the Ingilo issue between 1944 and 1950. After 1950, there is a precipitous decline in Ingilo files. This archive does not reflect Azerbaijani archive records, which show that Georgian-Ingilo activists were sending numerous letters to the Georgian leadership in the 1950s and 1960s.

[22] A couple of months after Beria's execution in December 1953, Bagirov was expelled from the Party and arrested, charged with supporting anti-Soviet elements and condemned for his close relationship with Beria. Bagirov was executed in 1956.

[23] ARPIISSA 1.46.110.324-325.

Georgian).[24] The request originated with the village soviet in July, concurrent with a visit from Baku inspectors investigating petition complaints. It was based on the argument that Georgian-Ingilo students could neither read nor write in the Azerbaijani language and desired to learn it because they lived in the Azerbaijan SSR and needed to be functional residents of the republic.[25] Although it was precisely this sort of policy change that provoked petitions from some members of the community, a Georgian-Ingilo woman who was present at the meeting in Qax-Ingilo recalled in an oral history interview that the decision to add Azerbaijani to Qax-Ingilo Georgian school curriculums made sense to her at the time because most Georgian-Ingilo could not express themselves at the soviet or in other official settings.[26]

Despite Charkviani's bleak assessment and the undeniable change in regional power politics after Stalin's death, Georgian school closures and other "Azerbaijanization" moves in the 1950s provoked a strong and, in contrast with earlier efforts, widespread and varied response. Azerbaijan Communist Party records indicate that Baku officials began to receive complaint letters soon after Georgian instruction ended in Zayam and Tasmaly.[27] In fact, the archive is littered with petitions and government reports about the closure of Georgian schools in the 1950s and concomitant economic and cultural complaints such as the lack of Georgian radio

[24] Shaki Filial of the Azerbaijan Republic State Archive [Azərbaycan Respublikası Dövlət Arxivinin Şəki filialı], or ARDA SF, 201.1.202.286. The name Qax-Gurcu was changed to Qax-Ingilo in the 1960s or early 1970s. I heard different dates in oral histories and did not find clear archival documentation. Respondents fairly universally blame the local administration for the change, but it appears to be a controversial topic as when one man was starting to explain who executed the change a woman who was also part of the conversation whispered to him in Georgian to stop talking. Oral history interview collected in Azerbaijan in October 2010.
[25] ARDA SF 201.1.201.286.
[26] Interview, March 2011.
[27] ARPIISSA 1.53.36.123.

broadcasts, newspapers, and movies in Azerbaijan; delayed electrification of Georgian-Ingilo villages (which one petitioner pointed out was shameful given all the oil in Baku); poor access to employment opportunities for Georgian speakers; complications in acquiring passports to travel to Georgia for higher education opportunities; limited access to food staples such as butter, cheese, meat and sugar; poorly trained teachers in the Georgian schools and sectors; and Georgian-Ingilo underrepresentation in local political structures.[28] According to government reports, activism extended beyond petition writing at this time. For example, local officials in one of the reports claimed that some Georgian-Ingilo students who were studying in Georgian universities had entered a school in Aliabad and tried to move Georgian-Ingilo students from the Azerbaijani sector to the Georgian sector.[29]

In contrast with Gamkharashvili's lonely letters in the Stalin era, several dozen Christian and Muslim Georgian-Ingilo collectively signed some of the petitions that were sent them from student dormitories in Tbilisi and villages Balakan, Zaqatala, and Qax. In a collective and anonymous letter posted to Moscow from Zayam in the early 1960s, the authors write that they had requested access to Georgian schools since 1944 because they are Muslim but consider themselves to be a part of the Georgian nation.[30] The authors also attack government claims about the voluntary nature of Georgian school closures: "Regional leaders didn't like the functioning of Georgian schools and

[28] ARPIISSA 1.48.405.89-93, 100-103, 117, 119, 123-126, 141-144, 145, 146-151.
[29] ARPIISSA 1.48.405.72.
[30] ARPIISSA 1.48.405.89.

Undated list of questions for brigade to investigate in Qax, Balakan, and Zaqatala
[estimated date of 1959]

(brigade members included an AzKP secretary, the editor of *Bakinskii Rabochii*, the head of the Azerbaijan Statistical Adminstration, and others from the Ministry of Agriculture, committee on radio and television, Ministry of Culture, and Minstry of Education)

1. Do the Georgian collective farms and collective farmers in Kakhi have the best-cultivated lands occupied by perennials: vineyards, orchards, and hazelnuts, and are these areas inhabited by people who come from other regions and do not work in the collective farms?
2. Did the regional executive committee in Qax region by decree take land away from Georgian collective farms in 1957 and 1958, and was it suggested that Georgians move to other regions?
3. Is it true that executive committees in these regions do not allow Ingilo to be nominated to leadership positions in regional organizations?
4. Did it happen that when the local population was banned from breeding pigs, the "surplus" pigs were taken away without the collective farmers being paid (supposedly this was done in 1958 on the orders of the head of the Qax regional executive committee, Shikhi Mamedov)
5. Is it a true statement that, when constructing a new highway from the Qax bazaar to the village Ilisu, collective farmers' fruit trees and vineyards were cut down and they were not paid?
6. Under what circumstances over the past five years in Balakan, Zakatala, and Qax regions were eight Georgian schools closed entirely and transferred to the Azerbaijani language of instruction?
7. Is it true that local authorities in these regions carry out agitation among Ingilo and with force closed Georgian schools in villages, where the native language is Georgian?
8. Are bookstores in Qax, Aliabad banned from selling schoolbooks in the Georgian language?
9. What is the situation in these regions with radio broadcasts in Georgian, are there lectures and concerts in Georgian, are there books, magazines, and newspapers in the Georgian language in libraries?
10. In what condition are historical monuments in these regions?
11. Have mistakes been allowed in the determination of Ingilo national belonging?
12. Verify a few issues connected with the history and ethnography of the regions.

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This list provides a sense of what accusations Georgian-Ingilo were making in their complaints. As I note below, however, government commissions like this did not start to verify problems in Georgian-Ingilo areas until late 1959-early 1960s. Until then, government reports seem to dismiss of Georgian-Ingilo complaints or label them as the ramblings of problem members of the community. The list is from ARPIISSA 1.45.405.13-14.

they forced residents of these villages to sign a complaint letter about changing[31] Georgian to Azerbaijani. As a result of this lawless action of the indicated leaders, in 1954 the Georgian schools were closed and Azerbaijani ones opened in their place."[32]

This general sentiment was frequently reiterated in oral history interviews with Georgian-Ingilo who remembered the school closures of the 1950s. Some interviewees agreed that support could be found for either side, but others emphasized the way in which local officials would apply pressure to expand Azerbaijani instruction. Many explained how kolkhoz brigade leaders would be told that they could keep their position only if they sent their kids to the Azerbaijani sector and ensured that other kolkhozniks followed suit.[33] A man from a Muslim village in the Zaqatala region recalled that stories about school closures traveled between regions, and highlighted Moscow's influence:

> Azerbaijanis agitated among people in those villages [Zayam, Tasmaly, Marsan], saying: Why do you study Georgian if you don't live in Georgia? You live in Azerbaijan and you have to become Tatars. One man who worked here [in Zaqatala region] came from Zayam and told us about what was happening in Zayam, Tasmaly, and Marsan…[people] saw what happened elsewhere so [they] created problems for them. [The local officials] were afraid of Moscow and when [people] wrote something to Moscow they could be punished. If [people] hadn't written those letters no one [from our village] would speak Georgian now.[34]

A different interviewee from a Muslim village in the Qax region argued that schools were closed in Zayam and Tasmaly so quickly after Stalin's death because of pressure applied both by the Qax regional committee and by Baku. When asked whether the

[31] The authors of the text write "о перелке." I assume they meant «о переделке» and for the purposes of this sentence translated it as "changing."
[32] ARPIISSA 1.48.405.90.
[33] For example, interview, November 2010.
[34] Interview, December 2010.

school closures were voluntary, he responded, "that's a lie, it all came from above. Imam Mustafaev was the Secretary of the KP and he was from Qax. He fought so that Georgian schools would close. It wasn't hard for him to find facilitators who would write petitions, collect signatures from a few people, and maybe then some of them would write themselves that they want Azerbaijani schools instead of Georgian ones. That's it."

Mustafaev's name came up in several conversations. Some Georgian-Ingilo felt that because he was from Qax he was personally invested in closing Georgian schools. This was a sensitive topic for some, however. For example, in one long conversation, the person with whom I was speaking at first claimed that Mustafaev was just an agronomist and had no involvement or interest in Georgian-language schooling matters. More than an hour later, the conversation cycled back around to school closures and I asked whether they were effected by the local government or with Baku's involvement. Then, the respondent answered, "I do not want to return to this question, you said the surname, he knew, he was aware that all this was done, he led, in the truest sense, he led all of these issues. You know, right, who this was? The surname?"[35]

In fact, Khrushchev-era petitioners both encountered resistance from local officials and generated controversy on a more popular level. Many Georgian-Ingilo supported, or at least were indifferent to, enrolling their children in Azerbaijani school sectors.[36] Preference among minorities for titular- or Russian-language learning existed throughout the Soviet territory because native-language education in minority

[35] Interview, December 2010.
[36] Interviews, 2007-2011.

communities could make it more difficult for minorities to integrate into broader social contexts. For example, one Georgian-Ingilo woman linked Azerbaijani-language knowledge to status: "Every population has an elite group. My father's family was considered among this group and they always spoke Azerbaijani even though they were natives of Aliabad. I thus was sent to Azerbaijani school, although I learned Ingilo too because my mother would use it when she was upset with us kids."[37] Other interviews drew attention to different issues related to the Georgian-language sectors and schools. One woman described various situations, such as local government meetings, in which she struggled because there were no accommodations for Georgian-speakers. Another woman discussed how students who were educated only in Georgian-language schools could not find work because there were limited employment opportunities for non-Azerbaijani speakers.[38]

In Azerbaijan, local officials often used the argument of Georgian-Ingilo preference for Azerbaijani-language education to justify Georgian school closures and counter national rights claims.[39] For example, when responding to a petition in 1959, Azerbaijan Communist Party Secretary Bairamov reported to Moscow that, "[R]esident Ingilos of the villages…in an organized meeting with the commission, in conversations in kolkhoz fields, and in camps, were outraged by the behavior of the petition authors."[40] This echoed a letter from the Secretary of the Balakan Regional Committee, A. Mansurov, who wrote to Baku that residents and teachers from Itital a demanded "the unmasking and punishing of the people who signed the provocative

[37] Interview, July 2008.
[38] Interviews, 2008-2011.
[39] ARPIISSA 1.48.405.40-42.
[40] ARPIISSA 1.48.405.4.

anonymous letter," in reference to a complaint that schools in Ititala were illegally and forcibly switched to Azerbaijani.[41]

Nonetheless, the tone and content of the government's stance on Georgian-Ingilo issues began to shift in the summer of 1959. After Mustafaev's demotion, the Qax-Ingilo (then called Qax-Gurcu after the Azerbaijani word for Georgian) decision to introduce Azerbaijani language instruction to the village's Georgian schools was swiftly reversed. The Azerbaijan KP Central Committee in Baku rejected the decision as "incorrect both in form and substance" and the local secretary was censured for his "irresponsible" decision.[42] Government reports also became more critical of national relations and informal politics in the region in the early 1960s. In 1961, Azerbaijan's Minister of Education M. Mexti-zade and R. Balayan from the Azerbaijan Communist Party, reported to the Azerbaijan Central Committee that a director of one of the schools in Aliabad had falsified numbers of Georgian sector students in reports to Baku, resulting in an inadequate number of teachers at the school. According to Mexti-zade and Balayan, the local government also supported the director when he recommended "inappropriate proposals to convert all classes of the school to the Azerbaijani language of instruction."[43] Other government inspection reports from this time acknowledged inadequate Georgian teaching aids and cadres, as well as some parent interest in re-opening Georgian schools. In an indication of how widespread discontent had become in Georgian-Ingilo communities, new commissions were

[41] ARPIISSA 1.48.405.138.
[42] ARPIISSA 1.46.110.318-319.
[43] ARPIISSA 1.48.405.27. There is no date on this draft document, but references in the letter indicate that it was written in 1961.

formed in both Azerbaijan and Georgia to inspect the schools and "remove existing resentment" in the area.[44]

After visiting the regions in February 1961, Mexti-zade reported that measures needed to be taken in order to satisfy parent demand and calm the situation. He proposed opening a Georgian sector in the Zaqatala *internat* (boarding school), offering parallel Azerbaijani and Georgian classes in Itítala, and closing Azerbaijani preparatory classes for children preparing to enter Itítala's school. Mexti-zade closed his recommendations with the hope that if they sent an authoritative and productive commission to the regions then this would finally put an end to "unhealthy conversations on this issue."[45] That same year, a new Azerbaijan Communist Party decree—"About measures to improve the work regarding the coverage of schools of children of Ingilos in the Zaqatala, Belokan, and Qax regions"—officially initiated a reversal of the 1950s trend to close Georgian schools. The decree apportioned additional support for these schools and assured Georgian-Ingilo parents of their right to choose the language of education for their children.

By the following year, the Ministry of Education (MinPros) had opened new Georgian sectors in Muslim Ingilo villages, increased access to Georgian-language teachers, and sponsored Georgian cultural events such as movie screenings.[46] A letter from MinPros to the Azerbaijan Central Committee in 1962 declared that, "the apparent inadequacies in the work of local organs on the question of the allocation of cadres, creation of groups and schools in the Georgian language, provision of teaching

[44] ARDA 411.8.536.58.
[45] ARDA 411.8.536.60-61.
[46] ARPIISSA 1.48.40.58-59.

aids, etc. have been liquidated."[47] In fact, between the 1960/61 and 1965/66 school years, the number of students studying in the Georgian language reportedly increased from 1113 to 2479.[48]

Yet the central committees of the CPSU and the Azerbaijan Communist Party continued to receive requests from Georgian-Ingilo for the improvement of Georgian-Ingilo business and trade, electrification of their villages, assistance for their kolkhozes, and access to Georgian-language radio transmissions. As before, petitioners argued that decrees were short-lived or undermined by local officials. Some letters told of Muslim Georgian-Ingilos being denied the right to enroll in Georgian language schools in the Zaqatala region, "wandering groups of fanatically minded Muslims" disrupting the re-Georgianization of the schools, and Party and government representatives in Zaqatala and Balakan pressuring villagers to enroll their children in the Azerbaijani language school sectors.[49]

Although an Azerbaijani government report in 1962 dismissed ongoing problems on "an insignificant group of Ingilo students studying…in the Georgian SSR," every indication is that tensions continued to simmer.[50] In February 1966, another government report by R. Radzhabov and Balayan informed the Central Committee that contemporary complainants were many of the same people who were petitioning in previous years. Out of twenty people whose signatures were identified in

[47] ARPIISSA 1.48.405.6-8.
[48] ARPIISSA 1.53.36.115.
[49] ARPIISSA 1.48.405.129 and ARPIISSA 1.48.405.123-128. This was a very common narrative in oral history interviews, including one conducted with a former RONO school inspector, who offered several concrete examples of the ways in which parents were pressured to enroll their students in the Azerbaijani sector.
[50] ARPIISSA 1.48.405.8. No date is given on the document, but the content suggests it was written in 1962.

these new letters, 14 were studying at higher education institutions in Georgia, two were teachers at a secondary school in Aliabad, and one was serving in the army.

The report authors further linked the appearance of these complaint letters to visits of the "Shefskaia" commission to Ingilo villages, continuing the pattern of Azerbaijani officials blaming Georgians for stirring up nationalism in the Georgian-Ingilo communities. The Shefskaia commission was comprised of intellectuals from various institutes at the Georgian Academy of Sciences. They would visit Georgian-Ingilo villages to distribute notebooks, textbooks, and other Georgian-language materials to Georgian schools and Georgian sectors.[51] The report did also note, however, that many parents and teachers were complaining about late-arriving Georgian-language textbooks and literature from Georgia, and concluded that this and several other aspects of Georgian-language education were insufficient in the Zaqatala, Qax, and Balakan regions.[52]

The Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party swiftly adopted the recommendations of the report authors and drafted another formal decree in March 1966 about the Georgian-Ingilo communities. The new decree announced the Party's intention to strengthen the material conditions in Georgian-Ingilo schools; acquire textbooks and other literature in Georgian from the GSSR for the region; provide opportunities for Georgian-Ingilo to enroll in post-secondary educational institutions outside of the normal competition structures because of language difficulties during the exams; honor the Qax-Ingilo Georgian middle school and some teachers with a

[51] ARPIISSA 1.53.36.126.
[52] ARPIISSA 1.53.26.127-128.

diploma from the Supreme Soviet of the Azerbaijan SSR; and pay more attention to the ideological-political agitation being carried out in the community.[53]

Azerbaijani officials were right that Georgian-Ingilo students in Tbilisi assumed a conspicuous role in national rights agitation after the 1961 decree, but these individuals were building on a movement that formed in the 1950s. Letters sent during this post-Stalin period of rights negotiation originated from multiple villages in Azerbaijan and were signed by locals both in Azerbaijan and those studying at Tbilisi universities and institutes.[54] In the course of a decade, Georgian-Ingilo activism transformed from a project of elites (Charkviani) and lone individuals (Gamkharashvili) to broader action on the grassroots level.

Furthermore, it would be a mistake to dismiss the university petitioners as agents of Georgian nationalists because of their connections to the Georgian SSR. To be sure, students in Tbilisi were introduced to a new environment rich in Georgian cultural resources and people who supported their activism, including Gamkharashvili and others.[55] When asked whether experienced people would advise them in Tbilisi, one of the Muslim Ingilo petitioners, lowered his voice and responded "that big man, you know, he was the main organizer of all these things there."[56] Yet, even this "big man," was a fellow Muslim Ingilo villager who had made his way in Tbilisi and was more broadly involved in Georgian diaspora affairs, including simultaneous efforts to

[53] ARPIISSA 1.53.36.123-134.
[54] Government reports from the 1960s hint at the widespread nature of agitation about Georgian-Ingilo national rights after school closures began in 1954, but the archive also preserved petitions sent in 1961-1962 from Tbilisi student dorms, Zeyam, Mosul, Qax-Gruzin (Gurcu), and Aliabad. See, for example, ARPIISSA 1.48.405.80, 89-93, 116b, 117, and 130.
[55] Interviews, October 2010-March 2011.
[56] Interview, December 2010.

extend cultural resources to Fereydan Georgians in Iran. Gamkharashvili's name at the bottom of a 1959 census complaint indicates that he also remained involved in the Tbilisi milieu, though he perhaps played a quieter role than in previous decades.[57]

Georgia may have given these students an environment in which to gather and organize, but they were not mere puppets of Georgian actors. As one petitioner recounted in an interview, he believed in the ascribed national rights articulated in *Marxism and the National Question* and the Soviet constitution. To this day he freely quotes specific sections of the text and constitutional articles relevant to the Georgian-Ingilo case. According to him, it was through a language of legality and rights—borrowed from the Soviet constitution, "Leninist nationality policy," and Khrushchev's call for a "return to socialist legality" in 1956—that he learned how to articulate his own beliefs.[58] Displaying reverence for the center and engagement with Soviet ideology, he blamed errant local officials for proscriptions of national rights and was convinced that Moscow officials would intervene as soon as they found out what was happening.[59] The routine transgression of minority rights in his daily experience had failed to destroy the centrality of Soviet ideals in his understanding of the way that things should work.

The evolution of activism in Georgian-Ingilo communities bore a striking resemblance to that which developed among Lezgins in the late 1950s. In 1959, Zabit Rizvanov, a Lezgin poet and native of the Qusar region, organized a movement in

[57] sšssa (II) 14.34.242g.9.
[58] Khrushchev called for a return to socialist legality in his Secret Speech. It was a euphemism for due process, stronger legal institutions, and better adherence to laws and legal norms.
[59] Interview, December 2010.

Qusar called RikIin Gaf (РикIин Гаф), or Serdechnoe Slovo.[60] Serdechnoe Slovo was comprised mainly of writers, poets, musicians, and teachers who would gather in Qusar to discuss one another's creative works. Their first meeting was on October 18, 1959. Afterward, the circle quickly grew from nine to 64 members. In 1960, members turned their attention from discussions of Lezgin culture to the rehabilitation of Lezgin language and culture in Azerbaijan.[61] As one former participant reminisced, however, eventually they decided that it was "necessary to re-establish their forfeited national rights."[62] Like Gamkharashvili, they traveled to Moscow to present their demands to central authorities in person. They also circulated collective petitions outlining their requests to officials in Moscow and Baku. Serdechnoe Slovo was not an isolated movement in Qusar, however. Lezgin petitioners from other parts of Azerbaijan also advanced claims and demands similar to those of Serdechnoe Slovo members.[63]

Just one year after the decree on Georgian-language schools in May 1961, a parallel, but scaled down, decree—"About the improvement of cultural and everyday conditions for the population of Lezgin nationality, living in Qusar region of the Azerbaijan SSR"—was adopted for the Lezgins: AzMinPros was ordered to organize Lezgin-language sectors in Qusar for grades 1-4 by September 1, 1962; the Ministry of Culture and publication agency were ordered to begin printing some pages of local newspapers in the Lezgin language and distribute others from Dagestan; and the Ministry of Culture was directed to create Lezgin ensembles and a theater in Qusar.[64]

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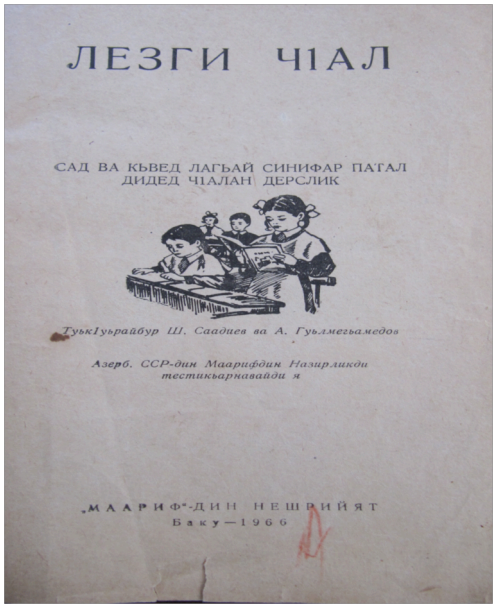
[60] In Lezgin, RikIin Gaf/Serdechnoe Slovo is often referred to in shorthand as KIvatIal (circle, society). It first met on October 18, 1959 and functioned until 1988. Rizvanov (undated), 115.
[61] Rizvanov (undated), 115-116.
[62] Interview, May 2011.
[63] ARPIISSA 1.56.38.
[64] ARPIISSA 1.56.38.357-360. The Lezgin decree was adopted on August 25, 1962.

Photo 7: Serdechnoe Slovo member Bairam Salimov is pictured here in 1958 with national (nardonyi) poets from Dagestan and Azerbaijan. From left, Dagestani Dargin poet Rashid Rashidov, Azerbaijani poet Suleyman Rustam (a famous Azerbaijani poet who contributed to the "literature of longing"), Bairam Salimov, Dagestani poet Abdutalib Gafurov, Shah-Emir Muradev, and the poet Zhamidin.[65]

Given that previous Lezgin-language schools had closed more than two decades earlier, AzMinPros confronted several logistical problems, not least of which were finding qualified Lezgin instructors and textbooks. Materials were acquired in Dagestan at first, but Serdechnoe Slovo members later helped to produce local Lezgin learning resources.[66] Another problem was fitting new class hours into an already busy schedule. Two hours per week for grades one through four were set aside for Lezgin language learning. Students in those grades at Azerbaijani-language schools studied Azerbaijani for between twelve and nine hours per week, and Russian for five to six

[65] Photo from anonymous private archive.
[66] ARDA 57.13.141.2-3.

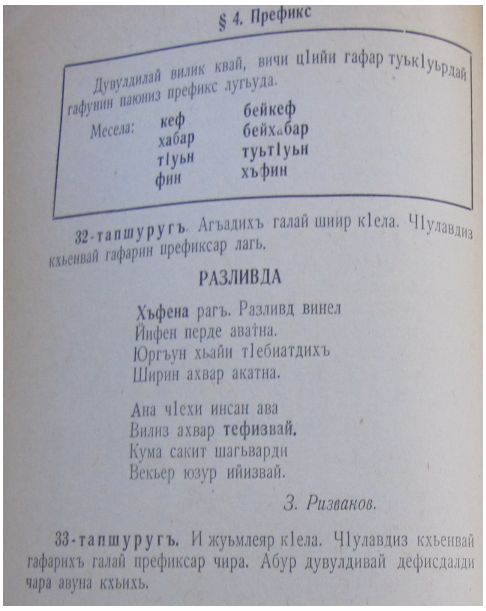

ЛЕЗГИ ЧIАЛ

САД ВА КЬВЕД ЛАГЬАЙ СИНИФАР ПАТАЛ ДИДЕД ЧIАЛАН ДЕРСЛИК

ТухкIурайбур Ш. Саадиев ва А. Гьялмегьамедов

Азерб. ССР-дин Маарифдин Назирликди тестикьарнавайди я

„МААРИФ"-ДИН НЕШРИЙЯТ
Баку—1966


§ 4. Префикс

Дувулдилай вилик квай, вичи цIийи гафар тухкIуьрдай гафунин пайниз префикс лугьуда.

Месела: кеф, бейкеф; хабар, бейхабар; тIуьн, туьтIуьн; фин, хъфин

32-тапшуругъ. Агъадихъ галай шинир кIела. ЧIулавдиз кхьенвай гафарин префиксар лагь.

РАЗЛИВДА

Хъфена рагъ. Разливд винел
Йифен перде аватна.
Юргъун хьайи тIебиатдихъ
Ширин ахвар акатна.

Ана чIехи инсан ава
Вилиз ахвар тефизвай.
Кума сакит шагьварди
Векьер юзур ийизвай.

З. Ризванов.

33-тапшуругъ. И жуьмлеяр кIела. ЧIулавдиз кхьенвай гафарихъ галай префиксар чира. Абур дувулдивай дефисдалди чара авуна кхьихь.

Photo 8: Members of Serdechnoe Slovo in Azerbaijan collaborated on this Lezgin language text for primary school students in 1966.[67]

hours per week. Lezgin students in Russian-language schools studied Russian for ten to twelve hours per week and started Azerbaijani instruction only in grade five. According to these new schedules, which were drawn up after the Lezgin language decree, mathematics and negligible amounts of arts and physical education provided the only real variation in the academic week for students in these lower grades.[68]

Two months after the decree was signed, the first secretary of the Azerbaijan Writers' Union informed the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party that he would take measures to incorporate more Lezgin writers into the Union, open a filial in Qusar, and support the publication of poems, prose, and stories written by Lezgins (though the language of publication was unspecified).[69] In 1965, A. Abu-Bakar from the Dagestan Writers' Union, responded to a request from the

[67] Photo by Krista Goff.
[68] ARDA 57.13.141.4-5.
[69] Azerbaijan Republic State Archive of Literature and Art, or ARDAIA, 340.1.990.39-40.

Azerbaijan's Writers' Union to review the Lezgin-language materials of five Serdechnoe Slovo members, including Rizvanov, for admittance to the Azerbaijani Writers' Union. The Dagestani representatives recommended all but one for admittance to the Union and for publication of their literary works. Rizvanov was among those approved.[70]

As in the case of the Georgian-Ingilo, the decree seemed to encourage Lezgin complainants. After it was adopted, Lezgins from other regions of the AzSSR submitted requests to gain access to Lezgin-language newspapers, radio, literature, theater, and schools throughout Azerbaijan. For example, in a handwritten note from Siazan, a town roughly equidistant from Baku and the Dagestan border, a Siazanneft worker wrote that he could receive radio transmissions in Russian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani. He continued, "this is very good and makes us happy, but we would like it if it was possible to listen to transmissions also in our native Lezgin language, and to read newspapers [in Lezgin], which would be printed in Baku."[71] In February 1963, a new commission was sent to Qusar to investigate the ongoing Lezgin claims. The commission concluded its visit by ordering local Party officials to conduct political work among the Lezgin population, and to write proposals to improve the cultural and economic life of Lezgins.

It is productive to contrast the Lezgin experience with that of the Georgian-Ingilo because when viewed alongside one another these two cases complicate charges of exceptionalism. The nearly simultaneous, yet autonomous, Serdechnoe Slovo and Georgian-Ingilo movements illustrate that new forms of social organization gained

[70] ARDAIA 340.1.1141.1-7.
[71] ARPIISSA 1.56.38.348.

currency in the Khrushchev era. Salient differences between the two cases also are productive. For example, although the Lezgin population far outnumbered that of the Georgian-Ingilo, their activism achieved more limited results. One key explanatory variable is the kin-state factor. Lezgin co-ethnics in Dagestan were one of several groups considered "titular peoples" in the Dagestan ASSR, but Georgians were the single titular population of the Georgian SSR. Thus, Lezgin activists sometimes relocated to Dagestan for political or other reasons, but they never cultivated the level of political interventionism that someone like Charkviani brought to the Georgian-Ingilo case in the Stalin years.[72]

The language of dissent

The shift from fairly autonomous individuals to popular movements in the 1950s is one indication of how activism among Lezgin and Georgian-Ingilo activists changed over time. New relations between state and society in the Khrushchev era are also represented in the language that Khrushchev-era activists invoked in their petitions. The intention is not to imply that there was a linear progression of writing styles, or to assert a sharp break between Khrushchev-era petitions and those that came before. Writing styles carried over from one political era to the next, and contemporaneous petitioners often invoked different styles and strategies when appealing to the authorities.[73]

[72] Interview, July 2013.

[73] For example, Emily Pyle shows that peasants seeking state assistance during World War One sometimes invoked legal rights and other times appealed to informal rules or moral principles. Pyle, "Peasant Strategies for Obtaining State Aid: A Study of Petitions During World War I," *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 24: 1-2 (Spring-Summer 1997), 60.

Nonetheless, there are some marked differences between the examples that we have here from the late Stalin era and the Khrushchev years. Letters written by Gamkharashvili and his contemporaries mirror many of the pre-Soviet tropes that scholars have identified in supplicant letters from the 1930s. Although his or her language might be deceiving, a supplicant's relationship to power also implied the conception and expectation of a social contract. Alexopoulos argues that officials made clear a formula for rehabilitation at this time—demonstrate one's dedication and usefulness to the regime—but many ignored it in favor of a non-Soviet lamentation style of the "pathetic self," which also met with success.[74] Sheila Fitzpatrick similarly analyzes 1930s letter writing to define what it meant to be a supplicant (versus a citizen). According to her, supplicants performed as subjects, construed authority figures as beloved fathers, and appealed for justice rather than rights.[75] Another tendency in such letters was for the writer to emphasize his or her "Soviet credentials" through an expository biography.

Gamkharashvili's numerous examples neatly fit into this classification. His primary goal was to convince Moscow and Georgian authorities—and Stalin in particular—that Azerbaijan unjustly controlled the Georgian-Ingilo territories and discriminated against that population. However, rather than invoke specific laws to argue why Georgian schools should be opened, Georgian-Ingilo kolkhoz lands kept separate from Azeri kolkhozes, or territories transferred between republics,

[74] Golfo Alexopoulos, "The Ritual Lament: A Narrative of Appeal in the 1920s and 1930s," in *Russian History/Histoire Russe*, 24:1-2 (Spring-Summer 1997), 119.
[75] Fitzpatrick, "Supplicants," 91. In contrast to supplicants, Fitzpatrick also identifies a citizen type who invokes a language of rights; criticizes policies, officials, or miscarriages of justice; and claims to act in the public interest (or conceals private motives for writing), but this type is underdeveloped in comparison with her supplicant profile.

Gamkharashvili settles on vague pronouncements about "injustice" and "prejudice" directed toward Georgian-Ingilos and the "rightness" of Georgian territorial annexation of Azerbaijani lands.[76] He occasionally references "Soviet law," the spirit of "Lenin and Stalin's teachings," and the "foundations of the Soviet constitution," but he fails to elucidate any specific policies or laws.[77]

Further, he positions himself—and his former neighbors—as supplicants begging for merciful help from the protectors of Georgian justice. In one passage he writes: "Only my sincere desire to help my suffering countrymen, and to fulfill my duty to them, makes me again raise this tragic question of Georgians, who have mistakenly and wrongly found themselves outside Georgian Soviet control."[78] He addresses Charkviani and others for assistance by appealing to them as the people "leading the lives of the Georgian tribe [*plemen*]."[79] His letters to Stalin reinforce this approach:

> Knowing the exceptional burden of your varied and difficult government affairs, and given your extreme lack of free time, nevertheless please allow me to appeal to you with the request to set aside 20 minutes to acquaint you with the accompanying memorandum…The memorandum concerns the extremely abnormal and difficult life of Azerbaijani Georgians (Ingilo). The intolerableness of their situation deserves your attention…In the present historical period, only your personal intervention can correct their fate.[80]

[76] sšssa (II) 14.18.161.12.
[77] sšssa (II) 14.18.161.19 and 14.20.271.5.
[78] sšssa (II) 14.20.271.13.
[79] sšssa (II) 14.18.180.30.
[80] sšssa (II) 14.20.271.2.

Gamkharashvili also frequently describes his biographical appropriateness for the task at hand, asserting that he is a native of Qax, graduated from an institute in Moscow, and has worked as an agronomist and university lecturer in Georgia for a long time.[81]

His style is echoed by the authors of other Georgian-Ingilo complaints preserved in Georgian archives from the 1940s. For example, Archil Dzhanashvili also presents his biography and justifies his qualifications as a petitioner—he is an "Ingilo" from Qax who works as an academic in Tbilisi, but regularly visits Saingilo for research and personal reasons. Praising the Stalin constitution and the successes of Soviet power, he assumes a deferential attitude in his lengthy appeals to Charkviani and other Georgian officials. For example, in one letter to Charkviani he writes,

> In the past I wanted to raise the question of the difficult life of the Ingilos to you, but I thought that maybe it was just my opinion and I was mistaken…but [given the situation] I decided to bring to your attention the factual material that I have in my possession and personal observations in the hope that this material would attract the attention of the heads of government organs to the intolerable situation of the Georgian population of Saingilo and would help create the type of environment in which cultural-economic prosperity realistically would be possible.[82]

Noting that Soviet power has brought improvements to the entire Soviet Union, he raises the situation of Saingilo, where he argues that Ingilos experience myriad economic and cultural shortcomings at the hands of Azerbaijani officials.

Petitions written by Georgian-Ingilo and Lezgins in the late 1950s and 1960s display some continuities with late Stalin era efforts, but also reflect shifts in tone and argumentation. Available documents indicate that these later writers regularly

[81] sšssa (II) 14.18.180.31.
[82] sšssa (II) 14.18.180.75. Saingilo is the term that Georgian-Ingilo and Georgians use to describe the three regions where Georgian-Ingilo live in Azerbaijan.

emphasized the legal baseline of their claims to equality and invoked a direct, confident, and authoritative tone. Some of the phrases and words that appear across multiple letters and petitions include "illegal;" "right/law" [*pravo*]; references to violations of specific decrees and constitutional articles; examples of anti-Soviet and anti-Leninist nationality politics; the "legality" of writing petitions; and behaviors akin to the cult of personality recently denounced at the Twentieth Party Congress.

In one petition sent to the Soviet Minister of Culture in 1962, signatories from the Muslim Georgian-Ingilo village Aliabad cite the 1961 decree and argue that local officials incorrectly balked at re-opening Georgian schools: "The current head of the [regional executive committee], Madiashov, strongly hinders the development of Georgian schools in our region. Despite the fact that there is a decree of the TsK AzKP [Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party] from 19 May 1961 about the restoration of Georgian schools in the villages where Georgian-Ingilo live, the regional leadership does not comply with this ruling. To this day, there is agitation against the admission of Georgian Muslim Ingilos to Georgian schools."[83] In another long, collective complaint letter from 1962, the petitioners write, "We…call for the establishment of Leninist norms in both schools and in many other issues. Our demand is fully legal and one cannot consider it a dishonor or call it demagoguery."[84] Another individual petitioner from Aliabad requested that Azerbaijan's First Secretary, Vali Akhundov, help the Ingilo population and informed him that if he sent a commission

[83] ARPIISSA 1.48.405.79-80.
[84] ARPIISSA 1.48.405.100.

and the commission found inconsistencies between his claims and the "facts," then he was prepared to answer the commission with all of the applicable legal articles.[85]

These writers employed a legal language, and were prepared to invoke specific decrees. They also occasionally denounced local officials by name, and never bothered to define their subject position or explain why their biographies made them compelling petitioners.[86] In further contrast with Gamkharashvili and his contemporaries, they addressed Khrushchev, Georgia's First Secretary Vasil Mzhavanadze, and Akhundov not as modern-day "benevolent tsars," but as "comrades," who were duty bound to protect the laws of the land. Here there is a distinct lack of fawning supplicant language; in one petition, the writer goes so far as to call Akhundov to attention in the middle of a letter with "RESPECTED COMRADE V. AKHUNDOV!"[87]

These discursive patterns are echoed in the Lezgin case. The demonstrative use of appropriately "Soviet" biographies is similarly absent in archived Lezgin letters, and these writers also invoke specific laws and decrees to buttress their demands. In a 19-page Serdechnoe Slovo letter, the authors cite multiple legal provisions, including an article from the AzSSR constitution, which ensured national minorities in the republic "the right to free development and the use of their native language in their cultural and government activities."[88] Yet, the tone employed toward Akhundov in

[85] ARPIISSA 1.48.405.144. Akhundov replaced Mustafaev in 1959.
[86] In her study of housing petitions in Khrushchev-era St. Petersburg, Varga-Harris similarly argues that a new mode of negotiation developed during the Thaw. She finds, however, that complainants in her study often blurred the lines between supplicant and citizen "types" by invoking rights while seeking justice. The autobiographical forms of the "supplicant type" also remained prominent in this collection of letters. Varga-Harris, 111.
[87] ARPIISSA 1.48.405.143.
[88] ARPIISSA 1.56.38.373.

these letters is sometimes softer.[89] One writer thanks Akhundov for his kind intervention with the 1962 decree, before launching into an explanation of why he considered it insufficient.[90] Similarly, in a group letter sent from Baku, the authors refer to Akhundov in the middle of the letter as "dear Veli Iusopovich," which is a far cry from the call to attention that indignant Georgian-Ingilo offered him.[91] Counterexamples from the Lezgin case display more continuity with supplicant styles of writing and diversify the formula that emerges from Georgian-Ingilo records at this time.[92]

Definitions and uses of the concept of legal consciousness have been quite varied. Some have defined it narrowly as something that characterizes people in the legal profession who engage with legal theories and jurisprudence.[93] Others have invoked it to explain how law builds its own hegemony, that is, why people acquiesce to laws without experiencing overt violence forcing such compliance.[94] Still others focus on the courts, judicial processes, and other legal institutions to describe the belief that a judicial system will defend citizen rights and assist when violations of the law and its protective powers occur.

In the framework of these cases, legal consciousness relates to how people interpret and use the law when they act (for example going to courts) as well as when they speak (talk about rights and entitlements). Soviet legal institutions were limited in

[89] ARPIISSA 1.56.38.344.
[90] ARPIISSA 1.56.38.333.
[91] ARPIISSA 1.56.38.344.
[92] Interviews between 2010-2013.
[93] Richard Wortman, *The Development of a Russian Legal Consciousness* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976).
[94] Patricia Ewick and Susan S. Silbey, *The Common Place of Law: Stories from Everyday Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

scope, but this did not necessarily retard the development of legal consciousness among Soviet citizens. Not unlike lawyers in courtrooms, these Georgian-Ingilo and Lezgins used legal arguments (i.e. arguments based on constitutional articles, decrees, and precedent) to argue their case in political spheres and to try and produce new legal norms and configurations through informal mechanisms. In so doing, they challenged the practices of local officials, who they understood to be in violation of both Soviet law and Soviet ideology. To them, the legal and the political systems equally produced expectations of meaningful and stable national rights. Perhaps uniquely, they also believed that legal complaints could be challenged through the political hierarchy rather than needing to be filtered through the courts.

Campaigns and the Thaw

Why did Georgian-Ingilo and Lezgin grassroots movements emerge at nearly the same time and display such similar characteristics? To some degree, Georgian-Ingilo activism can be explained as a reaction to local events, such as school closures after Stalin's death in the 1950s, but this would not necessarily explain why broad-based activism was a possible response. Further, if we view the Georgian-Ingilos alongside the Lezgins, then this explanation is even more incomplete. Lezgin petitioners and interviewees assert that Serdechnoe Slovo was organized when the republican leadership was attempting to nationalize the republic (some recalled in particular the Azerbaijani language constitutional amendment), but also that nothing had really changed for them since Lezgin schools had been closed since the 1930s. Cross-

pollination between the movements is also an unsatisfactory explanation. The Lezgins and Georgian-Ingilo that I spoke with, including many who had written some of the archived petition letters, knew little to nothing about one another's situation until I broached the topic in conversation.[95]

On the other hand, the transformative influence of World War Two again should not be overlooked. The war inculcated a sense of pride in the Soviet Union, but also a growing rights consciousness among the population.[96] According to Elena Zubkova, Soviet social psychology changed drastically during the war. While expectations of political liberalization were dashed afterward and political consciousness may not have necessarily changed right away, she argues that the population emerged from the war no longer as cowed as it once had been.[97] This is the time in which many of the Georgian-Ingilo and Lezgin activists were reared. It was also the environment into which Khrushchev's reforms were introduced, launching at least these activists out to test the limits of the regime's forbearance.

Respondents also often referenced Khrushchev when they spoke about why they or their neighbors decided to write complaints about proscribed national rights in their communities. General impressions of Khrushchev tended to be negative in oral history interviews, with most respondents recalling harsh food shortages during his tenure. For example, when I asked one respondent in Qusar whether Khrushchev had helped to build communism, he replied, "He became obsessed with that corn and at

[95] Interviews, 2010-2013.
[96] Benjamin Nathans argues that the growth in postwar Soviet rights consciousness was part of a broader global phenomenon. Nathans, "Soviet Rights-Talk in the Post-Stalin Era," in *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, 166-190 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
[97] Elena Zubkova, *Russia After the War: Hopes, Illusions and Disappointments, 1945-1957*, Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1998.

the end of the day everyone was hungry. You can't imagine the fight that would develop here over one sack of flour! They would give four families one bag of flour. I remember well that hard period."[98] An interviewee from Lerik similarly responded to a question about Khrushchev: "He messed up. In the Khrushchev period, the Soviet people starved…when I think of those years, I wonder how did we endure it? You've never seen such hunger. We never experienced such hunger, well during the war, but in wartime…in war, everything is done for the war. And then when the war was over, then we said that we were advancing and developing, we talked like this. And then, all of a sudden, hunger! You understand? And we all suffered: not only the Talysh, not only Azerbaijanis, we all suffered."[99]

At the same time, however, many others—and particularly those who participated in grassroots activities—acknowledged that Khrushchev's denunciation of both Stalin and the worst excesses of the regime fostered an environment that favored more open and direct engagement with the state. In this vein, one former participant in Serdechnoe Slovo spoke to the strategic approach of group organizers:

> When I joined the circle our goal was to establish lost rights, Lezgin language, culture, literature, and so on. But, well, when I joined I was very young, you understand? And Rizvanov, the others, they were older, they had finished the party school…We didn't discuss Khrushchev or ideological things, but they knew that the time was softer. After Stalin it was good. At the time of Stalin nothing would have been possible."[100]

A leading figure in Serdechnoe Slovo confirmed this impression:

> In the Khrushchev period there was a little leverage (*rychagi*), leverage that brought some release. If it had been the Stalin period they would have put us all in jail in one day! And in the Khrushchev period they

[98] Interview, May 2011.
[99] Interview, March 2011.
[100] Interview, May 2011.

> didn't bother us as much, it was a bit more free…democracy developed a little bit…well, a type of democracy, which we used.[101]

A Muslim Georgian-speaker in Zaqatala similarly explained the rise of activism among Georgian-Ingilo in this period:

> "Then people could talk about their problems. There was a system like this: If people from my village wanted to express their opinion, they would write a letter to Baku. Then if there was no answer or reaction they would address Moscow. If the letter would get to Moscow a special commission would be formed and would contact [them] via telephone or some other way. They were interested in our problems."[102]

These sentiments are strikingly similar to the recollection of a Chechen speaking about unauthorized Chechen migration from Kazakhstan to Chechnya in 1956: "You have to grant it to Khrushchev, he didn't follow the old Russian policy of force, there was a real move at that time to get rid of the memory of Stalin, and we exploited that."[103]

This is not to say that there were no repercussions for national agitation or to deny the ambiguity of the Thaw's contours. When asked whether it was dangerous to agitate as they did in the late 1950s and early 1960s, many former participants responded, "no." Yet, archives and oral histories are littered with evidence of low-level repression and arrests.[104] One indication is the fact that some people left their petitions and complaint letters anonymous or openly noted their fears. For example, in the anonymous letter used to open this article, Georgian-Ingilos asked, "Why do they close our schools and if someone dares to protect the native language or native school

[101] Interview, April 2011.
[102] Interview, December 2010.
[103] Pohl, 424.
[104] Of course, it is possible that some of them answered in the negative because they did not consider post-Stalinist forms of repression dangerous in comparison with Stalinist norms. Another possible reason for this answer is that most of the minorities that I interviewed stated that post-Soviet life is much more uncertain for them because they cannot appeal for help from Moscow.

he suffers persecution and all sorts of coercion?"[105] Other letters claimed that people had been detained for trying to enroll their children, or in some cases a neighbor's children, in Georgian schools in the Zaqatala region.[106]

Concrete examples of repression are also evident among Lezgins. In interviews, several people declined to discuss Serdechnoe Slovo because even now they consider it to be a dangerous topic. One individual who was close to Rizvanov would not speak about Serdechnoe Slovo, but did say that Rizvanov isolated himself from relatives and friends to protect them from his activities.[107] Another individual, who characterized the Khrushchev period as being softer, later in the interview related how he felt that his association with Serdechnoe Slovo had derailed his career. That disclosure prompted a more serious reflection. He elucidated, "There was, eh, repression did happen in 1962…we wrote to Moscow several letters with requests for help, help in the sphere of supporting Lezgin culture, development of the national culture and literature of Lezgins. But several people didn't like this, you understand. Therefore, there were some difficult years then. I…I myself lived through a lot then."[108]

Archival sources provide additional examples, such as telegrams sent to Moscow in 1963 asking for protection from repression of Serdechnoe Slovo members.[109] According to oral history sources, several members also chose to leave Azerbaijan, including Rizvanov who "was forced to run to Dagestan," where he stayed

[105] ARPIISSA 1.48.405.90.
[106] ARPIISSA 1.48.405.141-144, 119.
[107] Interview, March 2011.
[108] Interview, May 2011.
[109] ARPIISSA 1.56.38.364-366.

for a period.[110] Rizvanov also addresses the question of repression in his written account of Serdechnoe Slovo:

> There were opponents to this process [of Lezgin national rights expansion]…All the participants were taken under control, their biographies were studied, quiet surveillance was established. Partly they…tried to find in [participants'] creative works, in their actions, in their conversations elements contradicting Soviet morality. They thus infringed on their rights as citizens…After interviews with workers from the KGB, many talented poets stopped their participation in "KIvatIal" meetings and several were completely scared off...[111]

Accounts of repression tend to blame local officials and place Moscow politicians in the role of arbitrators and guarantors of stability. This is a common trope in Soviet letter writing.[112] Petitioners long recognized that pitting officials against one another and exploiting divisions among the powerful were effective strategies. In the Lezgin and Georgian-Ingilo campaigns this strategy appears to have worked, as there are concrete examples of Moscow-based officials intervening on the side of petitioners.

Variable politics and experiences muddle the legacy of the Thaw. Evidence of this is abundant in these case studies. Even though they experienced low-level repression under Khrushchev's tenure, minority interviewees explicitly cite the Thaw as the reason why it became possible for them to assume activist roles and for their activism to assume the forms that it did. Azerbaijani officials—perhaps taking advantage of somewhat relaxed central control in the 1950s—implemented a series of

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[110] Interview, May 2011.

[111] Rizvanov (undated),116. The specific examples of Lezgi Niamet and Bagishev were echoed in multiple oral history interviews, but here Rizvanov gives the most complete accounting.

[112] Christine Varga-Harris also found this reliance on Moscow in her study of housing petitions in the Khrushchev period. Varga-Harris, "Forging Citizenship on the Home Front: Reviving the Socialist Contract and Constructing Soviet Identity During the Thaw," in Jones, *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization*, 109. Daniel Peris linked this pattern to an historical belief in the benevolence of authority figures, but found in his case that senior officials and central ministries often just forwarded complaints back to the local level instead of dealing with them directly. Daniel Peris, "'God is Now on Our Side': The Religious Revival on Unoccupied Soviet Territory during World War II," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 1:1 (Winter 2000), 110.

measures promoting the role of the Azerbaijani language in the lives of all residents. Their attempt to strengthen the titular identity of the republic and to fulfill Azeri national rights was at odds, however, with the interests of those minority residents who wanted to hold officials accountable for their simultaneous celebration of Soviet diversity and proscriptions of national rights. We see both sides play out in the 1950s and early 1960s because the opening of Soviet society after Stalin's death had real meaning in everyday lives.

Conclusion

This chapter tells many stories. On the one hand, it offers a deeper glimpse into the history of the Georgian-Ingilo and Lezgin communities, which illustrate how national rights continued to evolve in the post-World War Two period. It also explicates the underlying role played by kin states, which could influence the trajectories and experiences of communities inside of Azerbaijan. Of broader concern here, however, is what the Georgian-Ingilo and Lezgin hard-fought rights contests relate about the promise of citizenship and the path of rights consciousness in the Soviet Union.

Recent publications have challenged glorifications both of the Thaw and of Khrushchev as a halcyon figure in the Soviet storm. Polly Jones, for instance, questions depictions of the era as a "turning point" in Soviet history and highlights significant policy fluctuations between traditionalism and iconoclasm, indulging public desires and suppressing them, practicing Stalinist mindsets and enacting post-Stalinist norms. She recasts the word "Thaw," using it not to describe a definitive

decline in Stalinist practices, but to capture the fragility of the period, "the potential for reversal (or 'freeze'), which each tentative step forward carried."[113]

This chapter embraces this ambiguity, but also emphasizes that Soviet citizens located changing possibilities for social mobilization and rights negotiation in the process of de-Stalinization. Time and again respondents criticized Khrushchev, until it came down to explaining their decision to challenge local rights norms. One Serdechnoe Slovo member, for instance, recalled that he was terrified when someone asked him to help write a complaint letter about "lezgi pulu" in the 1940s, but recognized that something had intangibly shifted when he stepped into the complainant role in the late 1950s.

There is no doubt that the Soviet system failed to realize equal and full rights for its citizens, whether Georgian-Ingilo, Lezgin, or Azeri. Nonetheless, the existence of constitutionally guaranteed national rights for Soviet citizens created the possibility for people to contest informal practices that proscribed their rights in this sphere. The examples of Gamkharashvili, Dzhanashvili, and anonymous Lezgin petitioners shows us that the late Stalin period was not devoid of citizenship ideas, but we can also identify a shift in the methods and results of subsequent challenges to the boundaries of Soviet citizenship.

Minority activists in the late 1950s and early 1960s were part of broader movements that displayed a sense of strength and confidence that was absent in earlier

[113] Polly Jones, "Introduction: The dilemmas of de-Stalinization," in *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization: Negotiating cultural and social change in the Khrushchev era*, edited by Polly Jones, Abingdon, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2006, 14. Stephen Bittner employs a similar approach to Khrushchev's "Thaw" in *The Many Lives of Khrushchev's Thaw: Experience and Memory in Moscow's Arbat*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2008.

efforts. They also relied less explicitly on the clout of sympathetic elites in the kin states of Georgia and Dagestan to give meaning to ascribed rights. Charkviani's interventions on Gamkharashvili's behalf resulted in an inter-republic agreement and temporary reversals of informal policies (and Lezgin contemporaries achieved no such promises), but the Azerbaijani Communist Party issued official decrees in 1961, 1962, and 1966 in direct response to grassroots rights activism in the Georgian-Ingilo and Lezgin communities. The decrees may not have stuck, but in this sense these activists managed to succeed in a rights negotiation with the state during Khrushchev's tenure in office.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE VANISHING MINORITY: SOVIET SCIENTISTS AND THE PRODUCTION OF SOVIET ASSIMILATION NARRATIVES

"Soon after Stalin made the historical report "On the draft Constitution of the USSR" at the Extraordinary Eighth All-Union Congress of Soviets, the Talysh were no more [ne stalo]. No, they were not evicted, nor executed. They just forgot about them! Just as they forgot about other peoples of Azerbaijan—the Kryz, Budukh, and Khinaliq. It was all done quietly, without shots.

They organized one census of the population, then another. No one remembered about the Talysh. "They existed sometime ago, but not now," one Bakinets [Baku resident], who, by the way, had a direct relationship with the All-Union population censuses of the past and today, told me. "Why?"—"They dissolved"—he answered without joking. And this was the totally official story!

…Can it be that really and truly there is nothing to talk about? Or, rather, no one? Can it be that the entire people [narod] actually dissolved?

--Murad Adzhiev, "Skazhi Svoe Imia, Talysh," Vokrug Sveta *7 (1989), 13.*

The ethnic hierarchy that determined recognition of national rights—and, in turn, the visibility of a minority population—within the USSR was subjective and incorporated more than official categorization on the List of Nationalities that was used to guide census categorization and collection. In the previous chapter, I argued that the ability to exploit kinship ties to neighboring titular populations was a critical variable emboldening and empowering Georgian/Ingilo and Lezgin activists, who displayed an expanded understanding of state-citizen relations when agitating for the restoration of their national rights during the Thaw. This chapter showed that nationality politics in

sub-republic minority communities continued to evolve after the 1930s, and isolated a link between titular kinship and power at the sub-republic level.

The absence of the Talysh population was unavoidable in the previous chapter. The Soviet Talysh ethnonational kin lived in the Gilan and Ardebil provinces of Iran rather than in another Soviet republic, and similarly lacked state recognition and cultural support. Further, no oral history or archival sources indicate that there was a grassroots movement for national rights among the Talysh in the 1950s or document a corresponding restoration of national-cultural rights in Talysh communities at this time. Furthermore, while the Georgian/Ingilo and Lezgin populations make cameo appearances in the Azerbaijani archives after the 1930s (thanks to the "troublemakers," or activists highlighted in this narrative), the word "Talysh" is almost entirely absent from state archives after the 1930s.[1]

After 1959 there is something of a practical explanation for this documentary lapse. It was at this point that the state stopped categorizing the Talysh as a separate nationality in Azerbaijan. In fact, according to Soviet census records, the Soviet

[1] After working for more than a year in Azerbaijani state and party archives, I located the word "Talysh" only three times in documents produced after the 1930s. In 1958, for example, Azerbaijani officials created Azerbaijani language preparatory courses for non-titular children and Talysh children were among those included. (ARPIISSA 1.45.84.1 and 1.48.405.71). Although oral history sources reinforce the idea that no real grassroots movement existed among the Talysh in the 1950s and no national cultural rights such as native-language schools were restored at that time, there were vague recollections about a secret organization among Talysh students in Baku in the Khrushchev period. Unfortunately, this was only mentioned in two interviews and neither of the informants was able to provide information beyond imprecise information that they had heard about "something" going on among Talysh students in Baku at that time. It is possible that affairs or disturbances in Talysh communities would have been siphoned into the archives of security organs (where I was not admitted to work) or into classified files in the archives where I did work since the Talysh-occupied regions of Azerbaijan were put inside a special border security zone in the 1940s.

Talysh population fell from nearly 90,000 persons in 1939 to 85 individuals in 1959.[2] This result was no doubt surprising to some Moscow-based Central Statistical Administration (TsSU) officials and academics, who had included the Talysh on the List of Nationalities meant to guide the categorization and enumeration of the Soviet population in the 1959 census. Reports out of Azerbaijan indicated that the drastic decline of this large population occurred because the Talysh identified themselves as Azerbaijani to census workers.[3] In subsequent years, their assimilation became about much more than the "dissolution" of a minority population straddling the Soviet-Iranian border. At the height of the Cold War, the story of Talysh assimilation was transformed into a master narrative of Soviet modernity and example of the ethnohistorical advancements that the Soviet communist model afforded its population.

This idea—that the Talysh naturally, voluntarily, and en masse assimilated into the Azerbaijani nationality—became so hegemonic that it obtained despite indications and claims to the contrary. For instance, in 1978 several Talysh individuals from the Lankaran region wrote to the TsSU and *Pravda* to complain that census workers were not allowing them to register as Talysh.[4] A.A. Isupov, the head of the TsSU department of the all-Union population census, responded that they technically were free to register as part of any nation, *narodnost'*, or ethnographic group they preferred,

[2] RGAE 1562.336.1565.226. I use the phrase Soviet Talysh here because this paper is about the Talysh in Soviet Azerbaijan, and not about the Talysh who live in nearby regions of Iran.

[3] I based my conclusion that the Talysh were supposed to be enumerated in the census on available documents in RGAE, ARAN, and Azerbaijani party and state archives. I was not admitted to the archive of the Azerbaijani statistical administration. See, for example, ARAN 142.1.980.62 and RGAE 1562.327.1002.38-43. See also, S.I. Bruk and V.I. Kozlov, "Etnograficheskaia nauka i perepis' naseleniia 1970 goda," *Sovetskaiia etnografiia* 6 (1967), 8, (also cited in Hirsch, 321).

[4] A.A. Isupov, Central Statistical Administration letter number 32-02-1/i-3-1, January 17, 1979, from private archive, and A.A. Isupov, Central Statistical Administration letter number 32-01-9/kl-16-1, March 27, 1979, anonymous private archive.

but reiterated that the Talysh category would not be included in census reporting. Isupov then invoked an ethnographic description of Talysh assimilation to explain to the Talysh petitioner that the Talysh had become Azerbaijanis.[5]

A few decades later, James Minahan offered the following explanation of why the Talysh category was finally reintroduced in the 1989 Soviet census:

> Soviet authorities, convinced that the Talysh in southern Azerbaijan had disappeared, did not try to count them in the censuses of 1970 or 1979… in the late 1980s, during the liberalization of Soviet society, it became clear that at least a core of Talysh continued to cling to their ancient language and culture and refused to assimilate. The Gorbachev reforms allowed the Talysh to organize and recover their national identity…the local Soviet authorities, forced to count the Talysh as a separate ethnic group in the 1989 census, were surprised to find that 21,914 people in the region still stubbornly registered themselves as ethnic Talysh.[6]

My point in using Minahan here is not to analyze this "Sleeping Beauty" variant of Talysh nationalism. Others have convincingly critiqued that discourse in the Soviet context.[7] Rather, the notion that local officials were "convinced" that the Talysh had "disappeared" and thus were "surprised" to find them in 1989 is more relevant to this paper, which uses the Talysh and other examples to unpack the messy architecture of the cleansed assimilation narratives that were applied to myriad sub-republic minorities in the USSR.

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[5] Isupov, letter number 32-02-1/I-3-1, January 17, 1979, anonymous private archive.

[6] James Minahan, *The Former Soviet Union's Diverse Peoples: A Reference Sourcebook* (ABC-CLIO, 2004), 303. Qəmərşah Cavadov presents an alternate approach to Minahan's attempt to explain the inexplicable. In his ethnographic study of the Talysh, Cavadov analyzes the modern demographic history of the Talysh population at length, but simply avoids offering any explanation of why the Talysh were absent from the 1959, 1970, and 1979 all-Union censuses. Cavadov (2004), 109-112. By the time Minahan's book was published in 2004, the 1999 census had recorded 77,000 Talysh in Azerbaijan. The 2009 census, meanwhile, enumerated 112,000 Talysh individuals. The State Statisical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, "Population by ethnic groups," http://www.stat.gov.az/source/demoqraphy/ap/indexen.php, accessed 28 May 2013.

[7] Suny (1993), 3.

With this interpretation of contemporary Talysh history, Minahan inadvertently helps to reify a type of "public secret" about the efforts that were made in the Soviet Union to assimilate non-titular communities into titular nationalities. Michael Taussig argues that public secrets—"*that which is generally known, but cannot be articulated*"— bind together those who understand what is and is not to be known or spoken about openly.[8] As the journalist Murad Adzhiev noted, when he traveled from Moscow to Azerbaijan in the winter of 1988-1989, people in Azerbaijan repeatedly told him that the Talysh were "no more." He began to question this assertion, however, as soon as he boarded the train from Baku to the Talysh-populated city of Lankaran and heard his seatmates speaking what he presumed to be Talysh to one another. After a few days in Lankaran, Adzhiev realized that the totalizing assertion that the Talysh *narod* had dissolved was obscuring demographic processes that were still underway. He found evidence contradicting the master narrative of assimilation, but also observed that many people *had* assimilated and recognized this readily enough in the individuals who identified themselves to him as Azerbaijani but called their parents Talysh.[9]

In the fervor of *glasnost'*, Adzhiev used his platform at *Vokrug Sveta* to unmask the public secret of the natural assimilation of the Talysh. In his first article in 1989, and in another that followed it two years later, he communicated signs of Talysh cultural revival and exhorted the Talysh to embrace their Talyshness. He also articulated the channels through which the Soviet system promoted the assimilation of

[8] Michael Taussig, *Defacement: Public Secrecy and the Labor of the Negative* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 6. Italics in the original.
[9] This is not to say that Talysh and Azeri identifications were mutually exclusive, but, rather, to juxtapose the latter category of persons with those who would explicitly not identify themselves as Talysh. Adzhiev, "Skazhi Svoe Imia, Talysh," 11-15.

the Talysh: namely, the census, the school system, the print media, and the cultural sphere.[10] In Taussig's formulation, however, public secrets can be reinforced by their visibility because they function as a tool of social cohesiveness. Similarly, while Adzhiev and the 1989 census publicly exposed the artificiality of Talysh assimilation in 1959, Minahan's more recently published book represents the power and persistence of this myth.

This chapter uses the example of the Talysh and other non-titular populations in the Caucasus to explore how master narratives of non-titular assimilation came together in the Soviet Union. In a practical sense, denying a people categorization in the census was meaningful because census recognition was intimately intertwined with national rights fulfillment and, in turn, communal vitality. Yet, the assimilatory theories and interconnected narrative strategies that ethnographers and linguists invoked and generated were equally important parts of this process and are my focus here. After non-titular peoples were declared assimilated, they became obscured in the Soviet landscape. They continued to be superficially celebrated as evidence of Soviet diversity, but they were no longer countable or knowable because they were not in the census. The main places where assimilated non-titular peoples continued to be visible were ethnographic publications, exhibits, and photographs. Through these mediums, ethnographers and linguists kept the name Talysh alive in Soviet discourse, but also produced narratives that inculcated the pervasive sense that titular nations were an evolving part of Soviet modernity, but many non-titular peoples and self-understandings belonged to the past.

[10] Adzhiev, "Skazhi Svoe Imia, Talysh," and "Talysh, Charuzh i Drugie," *Vokrug Sveta* 11 (1991), 38-43.

At the same time, however, Adzhiev was not the only non-Talysh person to publicly dispute assimilation narratives in the Soviet period. The archives of the Institute of Ethnography at the Academy of Sciences, as well as outlier publications, show that the public secret emerged from contestation rather than from agreement. Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper have argued that contradiction should be put "at the center of the colonial state's operative mode, rather than as an episodic manifestation of its reaction to crisis."[11] Similarly, Soviet nationality theory—what Francine Hirsch has termed the theory or policy of "double assimilation"—was irreconcilably contradictory, and was invoked to support arguments both for and against narratives of non-titular assimilation.[12] This chapter maps the paradoxical uses of Soviet nationality theories to interrogate the origins of myths of non-titular assimilation, and to argue that they ultimately obtained because of political mechanisms that sustained analogous secrets across the Soviet empire. I will first describe the theories supporting the assimilation of non-titular communities like the Talysh before turning to some of the oppositions embedded in these master narratives.

Nationality theories under Khrushchev, or building communism at the height of the Cold War

Sblizhenie—the brotherly drawing together of Soviet nations—and *sliianie*—a more developed and definitive fusion of those nations—have become the catchwords most

[11] Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, edited by Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 20.
[12] Hirsch, 14.

commonly used to summarize post-Stalin nationality politics. This is due in no small part to the Twenty-Second Party Congress Program (1961), which definitively declared that the Soviet Union had achieved socialism and was embarking on a new era of building communism [*stroitel'stvo kommunizma*]. If Lenin was to be remembered for organizing the socialist revolution and Stalin for building socialism in one country, then building communism was the intended foundation of Khrushchev's legacy.[13]

Directives for nationality policy in the Program accompanied those for the economy, ideology, society, and politics. Tapping into the argument that national distinctions would lessen the closer the Soviet Union drew to communism, Khrushchev declared at the Twenty-Second Congress that, "people are to be encountered, of course, who complain about the effacement of national distinctions. Our answer to them is that communists are not going to freeze or perpetuate national distinctions. With uncompromising Bolshevik implacability we must eradicate even the slightest manifestation of nationalist survivals." Although his spoken language here was rather strident, the Program itself reflected a more circumspect tone: "the large-scale building of communism signifies a new stage in the development of national relations in the USSR, characterized by the further *sblizhenie* of nations and the achievement of their complete unity."[14] The original draft of the Program had used

[13] Alexander Titov, "The 1961 Party Programme and the fate of Khrushchev's reforms," in *Soviet State and Society Under Nikita Khrushchev*, edited by Melanie Ilic and Jeremy Smith (Abingdon, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2009), 10.
[14] "Materialy XXII s"ezda KPSS," 405.

the language of *sliianie*, but the edited version excerpted here perhaps reflects the leadership's awareness that this was a sensitive agenda.[15]

The raging Cold War added extra weight to the Program's ideological significance as it was aimed at least in part at promoting the Soviet Union and the Communist Party abroad.[16] Under Khrushchev's leadership, the Soviet Union made a serious play for influence in the Third World. Academic institutions played a key role in this effort. The Academy of Sciences opened institutes that produced knowledge about Africa and Latin America (in 1959 and 1961, respectively), and Soviet intelligence institutions were reorganized so that they too helped Soviet leaders get to "know" these contested parts of the Cold War map.[17]

The People's Friendship University was similarly founded in 1960 to provide educational opportunities to students from decolonizing countries and to symbolize the USSR's commitment to the struggle for freedom from oppression. Renamed the Patrice Lumumba People's Friendship University after the Congolese independence leader's execution in 1961, the university enrolled and provided for thousands of students from Third World countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The expectation was that these students would help to spread the Soviet communist model and influence when they returned home.

Foreign relations events were also based at the People's Friendship University. For example, in 1965, the university hosted the International Conference on the

[15] Titov, 15.
[16] Ibid., 8.
[17] Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 68.

Historical Relations of the Peoples of the Soviet Union and Africa. The conference was part of a UNESCO initiative to prepare a ten-volume history of Africa, and aimed in particular to produce a volume about African relations with other countries and contributions to world culture. From the perspective of V.G. Solodovnikov, one of the founders and directors of the Africa Institute at the Academy of Sciences, the conference would clarify the long history of Russian relations with African countries in order to "help to strengthen the friendship and fraternal collaboration between them" and refute "the thesis advanced by imperialist propaganda to the effect that the present interest of the U.S.S.R in Africa stems exclusively from the current situation."[18]

Solodovnikov further clarified in his opening address that, unlike the U.S. and Britain, the long history of Russian and Soviet relations had never been rooted in extracting profit from the continent, whether through the slave trade or uranium ores. In fact, he emphasized that Russian progressives from tsarist times to the present—including Marx and Lenin in his formulation—had protested the colonial policy of European powers and the racialized exploitation that they produced in Africa and the United States. The spread of socialist ideas and the repudiation of capitalism in various African countries were similarly celebrated.[19]

Another element of this developing Cold War informational bureaucracy involved the publication of scholarly works criticizing U.S. racial and ethnic policies in comparison with the benefits of the communist model. Popular themes in

[18] V.G. Solodovnikov, "Opening Address at the Conference on the Historical Relations of the Peoples of the Soviet Union and Africa (May 19, 1965)," in A.B. Davidson, D.A. Olderogge, and V.G. Solodovnikov, eds., *Russia and Africa* (Moscow: Nauka, 1966), 8.
[19] Solodovnikov, 7-15.

ethnographic articles of the 1960s highlighted ongoing discrimination against African-Americans and Native Americans. In the case of the former, ethnographers promoted the liberation movement of "Negroes in the USA" and discussed how racism and discrimination prevented the United States from embarking on the "path of progress."[20] Regarding the "indigenous peoples," Soviet scholars showed how capitalist colonization had drastically reduced the numbers of "aboriginal peoples" by destroying self-sustaining "native economies" supplanting healthy diets and sturdy clothing with cheap imports, and spreading disease.[21] The implicit contrast to the capitalist U.S. model was found in ethnographies of the non-Russian peoples of the Soviet Union, where changes in diet, clothing, and housing were portrayed as helping different peoples overcome past inequalities to reap the benefits of socialism. Descriptions of the steady and irreversible merging of Soviet peoples further cemented the notion that the Soviet model was most effective for vanquishing ethnic inequalities and spurring national development.[22]

Soviet leaders tried to advance their interests abroad by promoting knowledge about how the Soviet system supported non-Russian nationalities, but historians have claimed that both Khrushchev and Brezhnev pursued Russification policies in the

[20] For example, V.P. Murat, "Novyi etap v osvoboditel'noi bor'be negrov SShA," *Sovetskaia etnografiia* 2 (1962), 51-59.
[21] G.A. Agranat, "Polozhenie korennogo naseleniia krainego Severa Ameriki," *Sovetskaia etnografiia* 4 (1961), 100-113. See also, I.A. Zolotarevskaiia, "Nekotorye materialy ob assimiliatsii indeitsev Oklakhomy," *Kratkie soobshcheniia Institut etnografii im. N.N. Miklukho-Maklaia AN SSSR* 33, Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1960, 84-89, and B.G. Gafurov, "Stroitel'stvo kommunizma i natsional'nyi vopros," in *Voprosy Stroitel'stvo Kommunizma v SSSR: Materialy nauchnoi sessii otdelenii obshchestvennykh nauk Akademii nauk SSSR* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1959), 88-104.
[22] Another point of distinction is present in discussions at the Institute of Ethnography in 1964 about opening an outdoor ethnographic museum in Moscow. Here, it was argued that these museums in capitalist countries focused on displaying cultural remnants of the past, while the Soviet museum would propagandize the progressive traditions of Soviet peoples. ARAN 142.10.307.1.

midst of this Cold War moment. Azerbaijani historian Aidyn Balaev, for example, argues that Khrushchev's move against Ibragimov returned the Russian language to its dominant role in Azerbaijan's governmental affairs and reversed the nationalizing trajectory that Mustafaev and Ibragimov launched in the republic.[23] Evidence for this argument about Russification in the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras has also been drawn from Khrushchev's decision to assert control over rogue republics at the end of the 1950s (Azerbaijan included); the 1958 education decree, which made native-language education voluntary for titular students in the republics; increased use of Russian and Russian terminology in non-Russian vocabularies and dictionaries; the migration of Slavic populations to non-Russian republics for various economic initiatives; and the Twenty-Second Party Program's articulation of *sblizhenie*. In Balaev's formulation, however, it was not until the mid-1960s—that is, after Khrushchev's dismissal—that the attempt to supplant non-Russian languages with Russian reached its apogee.[24]

Balaev and others are correct to draw attention to moments at which the pendulum swung in more of a centralizing and unifying direction in the Soviet empire. Yet, after Stalin's death, Soviet leaders continued to try and balance the promotion of Russian-defined Soviet ethnohistorical advancement with the ethnoterritorial architecture of titular republics and *korenizatsiia* politics. The ethnohistorical evolution of the Soviet population—including the theories of *sblizhenie* and *sliianie*—had long been on the agenda of politicians and scholars and, just as in the Stalin era, postwar nationality politics promoted the "double assimilation" of the Soviet

[23] Aidyn Balaev, *Etnoiazykovye protsessy v azerbaidzhane v XIX-XX vv.* (Baku: Nurlar, 2005), 124.
[24] Ibid., 125.

population. Further, Khrushchev's own push toward building communism began several years prior to the Twenty-Second Party Congress. He initially declared a new era of building communism at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956, and it was at this point in 1956 that scholars began organizing a series of expeditions, meetings, and interdisciplinary theoretical conferences to discuss the transition to communism (and their role in that development).[25]

The seven-year plan outlined at the Extraordinary Party Congress in 1959 similarly moved toward the goal of building communism and spurred academic initiatives based on the Party's ideological mandates. For example, in a meeting of the Institute of Ethnography after the Congress, V.K. Gardanov, B.O. Dolgikh, and T.A. Zhandko proffered a summary of contemporary ethnic processes in the Soviet Union. They celebrated the role of the Russian language in promoting the *sblizhenie* of both socialist nations and small peoples of the USSR, and its displacement of native languages, particularly in Kabardino-Balkaria, Dagestan, and the Far North.[26]

The discussion at this meeting is little changed from conversations held after the Twenty-Second Congress, which focused on the need to identify the commonalities—rather than dissimilarities—in the new culture and ways of life of Soviet peoples in the period of building communism and national *sblizhenie*.[27] Thus, while the Twenty-Second Party Program seems novel for its elaboration of the *stroitel'stvo kommunizma* and *sblizhenie* agendas, it called attention to and built upon processes already well underway both prior to and after de-Stalinization. What did

[25] ARAN 142.1.957.31 and 142.1.953.
[26] ARAN 142.10.21.13-16.
[27] ARAN 142.10.119.9

change after the Twenty-Second Congress was that the emphasis on building communism increased both rhetorical conversations about the higher processes of double assimilation—that is, the *sblizhenie* of titular nationalities (the so-called socialist nations)—and the work already being done on lower level assimilatory processes in the Soviet republics.

Nicholas Dirks has argued that, "Colonial knowledge both enabled conquest and was produced by it; in certain important ways, knowledge was what colonialism was all about."[28] This was no less the case for the Russian Empire and its successor the Soviet Union, where languages, borders, maps, censuses, the arts, museums, and other forms of informational and bureaucratic knowledge were used to make sense of, reorder, and rule the Soviet population. In Dirks' formulation, these technologies created and perpetuated the oppositions between colonizers and the colonized that sustained colonialism in British India.[29] Francine Hirsch argues that these technologies were meant to produce the opposite effect in the Soviet empire, where the intention was "to 'modernize' and transform all the lands and peoples of the former Russian Empire and bring them into the Soviet whole."[30]

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[28] Nicholas Dirks, "Forward," in Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knoweldge: The British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), ix.
[29] Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).
[30] Hirsch, 13. This has become a sticking point for scholars who debate whether or not the Soviet Union was a modern colonial empire like that of the Dutch, French, and British. Adeeb Khalid, for instance, argues that the Soviet Union was more akin to modern mobilizational states that "tended to homogenize populations in order to attain universal goals" than empires based on what Partha Chatterjee calls the "colonial rule of difference" in *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (19). Khalid, "Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization: Early Soviet Central Asia in Comparative Perspective," *Slavic Review* 65:2 (Summer 2006), 233 and 236. Douglas Northrop, meanwhile, argues that the USSR was more similar to the colonial model. In his formulation, it was perhaps not a classic overseas empire, but nonetheless relied on geographic, ethnic, political, economic, and cultural hierarchies that caused similar differentiations among places and peoples in the empire. Douglas

While the architects of the USSR may have intended to create an equal, unified, and modern Soviet socialist nation, layers of national oppositions and hierarchies obtained—and in fact were reformed and re-entrenched—throughout the Soviet period. Non-titular minorities in particular occupied an at once strategic and tenuous position in the axis of Soviet nationality policy and ethnography.[31] Double assimilation was intended to move all Soviet peoples—titular majorities and non-titular minorities alike—toward communism, but most critiques of Khrushchev and Brezhnev's support for *sblizhenie* (and *sliianie*) are, like Balaev's, motivated by the intrusion of Russian culture and language into titular spheres of influence and thus elide the decades of studies and celebrations of non-titular assimilation.

Dagestan provides useful examples of the extended historical lineage of Khrushchev-era assimilation studies. Dagestan was a primary research site (along with the Far North) for scholars who studied the ethnohistorical evolution of the Soviet population. As Comrade A.D. Danialov from Dagestan declared at the Twentieth Party Congress, "The most noteworthy result of Soviet rule in Dagestan is the process of consolidation of tribes and ethnic groups…On the basis of the growth of the national economy and culture the small ethnic groups are consolidating around the larger nationalities of Avars, Dargins, Kumyks, Lezgians and Laks. In turn the process of increasing rapprochement of these peoples is going forward. They now form a

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Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 19-24. See also, Yuri Slezkine, "Imperialism as the Highest Stage of Socialism," *Russian Review* 59:2 (April 2000), 227-234.

[31] Hirsch, 14.

single fraternal family of Dagestanians, builders of a communist society."[32] From 1950-1960, scholars in the Caucasus sector at the Academy of Science's Institute of Ethnography in Moscow concentrated on two main projects—publishing *Narody Kavkaza* and studying the processes of national consolidation in Dagestan. In this period, every ethnographic expedition to Dagestan—of ethnographers, economists, cartographers, artists, photographers, and others—researched national processes among Dagestani peoples.[33]

The decade began with a two-year (1950-1952) investigation of Dagestani national consolidation, but numerous other studies followed.[34] The field notes of Leonid Ivanovich Lavrov, an ethnographer who headed the Caucasus sector from 1957-1961, reveal why Dagestan became a central ethnographic site for assimilation studies. In contrast with most other ethnoterritorial units in the Soviet Union, there was no one titular nationality in Dagestan. Rather, several of the more "significant" *narodnosti*, including the Avar, Lezgin, Dargin, and others, enjoyed political representation and national cultural support in the republic. Smaller "ethnographic groups" were said to be merging with them—the Andiitsy, Akhvakhtsy, Bagulaly, Botlikhtsy, Godoberintsy, Karatintsy, Tindaly, Chamalaly, Bezhtintsy, Tsezy, Khvarshiny, and others with the Avar; the Aguly, Rutul'tsy, Tabasarantsy, and Tsakhury with the Lezgins; and so on.

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[32] A.D. Danialov, "Speech by Comrade A.D. Danialov, Dagestan Autonomous Republic," *Pravda* (21 February 1956), 7-8, reprinted in *The Current Digest of the Russian Press*, No.8, Vol. 10 (18 April 1956), 27-29.

[33] N.G. Volkova, ed., *Stranitsy otechestvennogo kavkazovedeniia* (Moscow: Nauka, 1992), 32-33.

[34] ARAN 142.1.324.48. The initial proposal was for a five-year research program, which would culminate in 1955 with the publication of a book about the consolidation of *narodnosti* in Dagestan.

The diversity and mixedness of the Dagestan ASSR's population was extraordinary, even for the Caucasus region. This made it a good field site for studying assimilatory processes, but also for recognizing that Soviet categorizations and theories did not always cleanly map onto reality. During a trip to Dagestan in 1952, for example, Lavrov recounted the following anecdote in his field notes:

> In Akhty, waiting for a lift to Rutul, I spoke with a teacher from the Rutul village Khnov. From him I heard that Khnovtsy use the bazaar more in Nukha than in Akhty, which is 50 kilometers from them on a difficult pack trail [*v'iuchnaia tropa*].[35] 90-95 percent of the population in Khnov knows Azerbaijani language, around 30 percent—Lezgin, and no more than 20 percent—Russian. Although it is written in passports that Khnovtsy are Lezgins, upon meeting with a real Lezgin they converse, as a rule, in Azerbaijani. Khnov belongs to Akhty region, [which is] populated almost entirely by Lezgins, and therefore Lezgins from the regional center often speak at meetings in Khnov. In these situations their speech is translated into Rutul language. Only a few in Khnov can read the regional newspaper, which is issued from Akhty.[36]

Rutul were classified as an ethnographic group of the Lezgin and thus recorded as Lezgin in their passports because the Rutul language is part of the Lezgic group of the North Caucasian languages. As Lavrov indicates in this anecdote, and as other ethnographers elaborated in later studies, the "Lezgin group" was one of many *narodnosti* in the Soviet Union more ethnically consolidated in theory than in daily life.[37]

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[35] Lavrov is probably referencing Shaki, a town in Azerbaijan, which was known as Nukha at the time of this expedition. Although Nukha was in the Azerbaijan SSR, it historically was part of a regional world comprising parts of Georgia, northern Azerbaijan, and southern Dagestan. The path between Nukha and Khnov was well traveled and in past centuries formed an important trade caravan route from Tbilisi to the Caspian coastal settlement of Derbent through the Caucasus mountains.

[36] L.I. Lavrov, *Etnografiia Kavkaza: po polevym materialam 1924-1978 gg.*, (Leningrad: Nauka, 1982), 140-141.

[37] M.M. Ikhilov, *Narodnosti lezginskoi gruppy: Etnograficheskoe issledovanie proshlogo i nastoiashchego Lezgin, Tabasarantsev, Rutulov, Tsakhurov, Agulov: Avtoreferat*, Moscow, 1968, 42-43.

Dagestani ethnographer Mikhail Matatovich Ikhilov also joined in these expeditions.[38] In a publication based on research that he conducted in Dagestan between 1950-1962, he uses the Dagestani case to explicate the theory of double assimilation. Here, Ikhilov explains that, between 1926 and 1959, closely related ethnographic groups in Dagestan consolidated with "core" [titular] *narody*. For example, the Kubachi and Kaitag—two ethnographic groups of the Dargin—were disaggregated in the 1926 census, but by 1959 they were classified simply as Dargin. Then, all of these titular *narodnosti* were blending to create a single Dagestani nation, which, with the help of the Russian language and Soviet culture, was merging with other Soviet nations.[39] The process that Ikhilov describes was simultaneously occurring throughout the Soviet Union, including in the AzSSR, where smaller populations like the Talysh and Ingilo were said to be assimilating or consolidating into the Azerbaijani socialist nation, which, in turn, was merging with the Dagestanis, Georgians, Armenians, and others into a unified Soviet people.

Soviet nationality theorists increasingly disaggregated lower level non-titular assimilatory processes into distinct phenomena: consolidation (*konsolidatsiia*) and assimilation (*assimiliatsiia*). In 1961, Viktor Ivanovich Kozlov, a prominent Soviet ethnographer and demographer, described consolidation as "the process of the *sliianie* of several *narody* (or significant parts of *narody*) into one *narod*."[40] Consolidation fit

[38] Ikhilov worked in the Institute of History, Language and Literature in the Dagestani filial of the Academy of Sciences.
[39] M.M. Ikhilov, "K voprosu o natsional'noi konsolidatsii narodov Dagestana," *Sovetskaia etnografiia* 6 (1965), 101.
[40] V.I. Kozlov, "K voprosu ob izuchenii etnicheskikh protsessov u narodov SSSR (Opyt issledovaniia na primere mordvy)," *Sovetskaia etnografiia* 4, 1961, 59. Kozlov was a demographer and ethnographer based at the Academy of Sciences in Moscow. He published extensively on nationality theory and ethno-demographic processes.

the developments that Ikhilov described in Dagestan because groups who traveled along this path of ethnohistorical development were said to enjoy close territorial, economic and cultural connections, as well as shared linguistic and cultural descent. It was this last point that distinguished consolidation and assimilation from one another. Assimilation was understood to develop out of the "ethnic interaction of population groups, [that were] usually very different [from one another] in their origin, language, and culture."[41] As such, assimilation—the route that the Talysh were said to experience with the Azerbaijani nation—was a rare and more difficult historical achievement for the Soviet state.

The Talysh case: survivals in Soviet modernity

The Soviet communist and U.S. capitalist models were diametrically opposed during the Cold War, but shared practices of modernity transcended political polarizations. As Bruno Latour argues, "'modern' is…doubly asymmetrical: it designates a break in the regular passage of time, and it designates a combat in which there are victors and vanquished."[42] American Indians, the Talysh, and other assimilated populations can be considered among those who were "vanquished" in the respective U.S. and Soviet contests.

In her study of Indians in New England, Jean O'Brien shows how locally produced histories helped to convince New Englanders that New England Indians had

[41] Kozlov (1961), 60.
[42] Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 10. Cited in Jean M. O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 4.

become extinct when they had not. She argues that narrative strategies used in these texts constructed Indians as unchanging symbols of the past that could not evolve to be a part of the modern present: "Even though non-Indians had Indian neighbors throughout the region, and even when they acknowledged that these neighbors were of Indian *descent,* they still denied that they were authentic Indians. A toxic brew of racial thinking—steeped in their understanding of history and culture—led them to deny the Indianness of Indians."[43]

The 1959 disappearance of the Talysh had its own particularities, but was similarly understood and explained through a complex web of theories about ethnohistorical progress and modernity. Talysh people who "clung" to the Talysh culture and language use were portrayed as "survivals" of the past, while those who began to prefer Azerbaijani identification and/or language use were exalted as young, modern, and progressive.[44] In this way, Talyshness and other non-titular identities became foils against the perceived modernity of the Soviet Union and socialist nations such as the Azerbaijanis.

Imperial and Soviet Ethnographic Categorizations of the Talysh prior to 1959

Certain tropes about the Talysh population—that they were a peace-loving people and that Talysh women enjoyed a significant amount of freedom, for instance—are present in both late imperial and Soviet ethnographic descriptions of the

[43] O'Brien, xv.
[44] *Kandidatskaiia* dissertation defense of Azerbaijani ethnographer Atiga Ismailova, 1963. ARAN 142.10.346.

population. Conceptualizations of Talysh categorization, nationhood, and identification, however, reflect more significant change over time. With the 1828 Treaty of Turkmenchay, the Persian Empire definitively renounced its claim to the Talysh Khanate.[45] The Talysh population was subsequently split between the Russian and Persian Empires. Afterward, a handful of Russian scientific and travel narratives conveyed statistical, linguistic, geographic, cultural, economic, ethnographic, and religious knowledge that touched on—or foregrounded—the newly secured Lankaran uezd (also sometimes called Talysh) and the Talysh people.[46]

Scientific and travel narratives about the Talysh areas of the Russian Empire are broadly similar over the last century of the imperial period. The Talysh are portrayed as a distinctive people and there is little to no speculation about Talysh assimilation into neighboring Tiurk populations. Rather, authors more often focus on Talysh classification in the Iranian language family and other signs of Persian cultural and religious influences in the Talysh region. For example, in the late nineteenth century, L.I. Zagurskii, a Russian linguist and ethnographer from the Kavkaz section of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society, classified the Talysh as part of the Iranian branch of the white race, and noted some of the unique characteristics of their branch of the Iranian language family.[47] E. Veidenbaum, meanwhile, place the Talysh

[45] Persia ceded part of the Talysh Khanate to Russia in the 1813 Treaty of Gulistan after the first Russo-Persian War, but soon after re-engaged with Russia. Persia's resulting defeat in this second war (1826-1828) resulted in the more severe Persian territorial losses outlined in the 1828 Treaty of Turkmenchay.
[46] In addition to Russian publications, were a few by foreigners, including Gustav Radde, *Reisen an der Persisch-Russischen Grenze. Talysch und seine Bewohner* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1886), and Gustav Radde, *Talysch, das Nordwestende des Alburs und sein Tiefland*, (Petermanns Mittheilungen XXXI, 1875).
[47] L.I. Zagurskii, *Etnologicheskaia klassifikatsiia kavkazskhikh narodov (Izvlecheno iz rukopisnago truda L.I. Zagurskago): Prilozhenie k Kavkazskomu Kalendariu na 1888 g.*, Tiflis, 1887.

Map 1: The map depicts the Lankaran region probably between the years of 1846 and 1859, when the Shamakha guberniia existed. It shows pockets of Russian settlements in the Lankaran uezd, as well as lightly shaded Azeri ("Tiurk") communities mainly near towns, to the north, and to the west. The Talysh populate the slightly darker shaded areas. Map from private archive of Atiga Izmailova.

alongside the Tats, who were another Persian-speaking population living in what is now Azerbaijan. While Veidenbaum debates whether the term Tat was a descriptor of a type of lifestyle or social status rather than a *narod* or ethnicity (and whether it was given to the Iranian population of eastern Transcaucasia by the "Tiurk tribes"), he seems to take Talysh distinctiveness for granted.[48]

As is to be expected, discursive changes begin to enter into the conversation in the early 1920s. Apart from the post-1959 census period, when the Talysh become a symbol of Soviet progress, the 1920s are the only other time in which Soviet linguists and ethnographers published reports about the Talysh. Between 1920 and 1926, the linguist Nikolai Iakovlevich Marr, the ethnographer and Caucasus specialist Grigorii Filippovich Chursin, and linguist Boris Vsevolodovich Miller all published their research findings about the Talysh of Azerbaijan. Marr's two publications in 1920 and 1922 were the first. In the 1920 publication, a study of the Caucasus in general, he classifies the Talysh as one of the indigenous Japhetic/Indo-European populations in the Caucasus and emphasizes their high level of "Iranization."[49]

Two years later, Marr published a short piece on the Talysh, where he again emphasized that the Lankaran region was more oriented toward Iran than the Caucasus.[50] Here, however, he hedged when defining Talysh national self-determination. Finding significant linguistic and religious similarities with the Persian "orbit," he nonetheless notes that the Talysh had relations with local "Azerbaijani-Turks" and shared traits with other Japhetic peoples of the Caucasus. In this sense,

[48] E. Veidenbaum, *Putevoditel' po Kavkazu* (Tiflis: 1888).
[49] N.Ia. Marr (1920), 25.
[50] N.Ia. Marr, *Talyshi* (Petrograd: Rossiiskaia gosudarstvennaia akademicheskaia tipografiia 1922), 1.

Marr felt that the Talysh might also harbor a national psychological orientation toward the Caucasus or even some degree of Turkification.[51]

Chursin published on the Talysh in 1924 and 1926, but both of his publications seem to be based on a trip that he took to Lankaran in 1916. As with Marr, the first publication was a volume about the Caucasus, while the second focused on the Talysh. In his section on Lankaran and the Talysh in 1924, Chursin similarly classified them as part of the Japhetic/Indo-European group alongside the Armenians, Kurds, Tats, and Persians. He estimated their number at 70,000 in the "Talysh *krai*" of Azerbaijan and noted that the Talysh were the oldest inhabitants where they lived. He further argued that the Talysh gradually were assimilating with the "Azerbaijani Tiurks" due to their close proximity and the prominence of the "Azerbaijani dialect of the Turkish language" in inter-tribal dialogue.[52]

By 1926, Chursin seems to be more critical of these assimilatory processes and substitutes the word "Turkification" for assimilation. He argues that "Turkish" influences started when the Seljuks appeared on the shores of the Caspian Sea in the 12th century, but that older people remember Talysh being spoken much further north than Lankaran in their lifetime.[53] Chursin reiterates his earlier observation about the use of the Tiurk language for inter-tribal communication (especially in the Talysh

[51] Marr (1922), 2 and 22.
[52] Liaister and Chursin, 315. This book was co-written, but I expect that Chursin wrote the ethnographic descriptions based on his academic specialization.
[53] G.F. Chursin, *Talyshi* (Izvestiia kavkazskogo istoriko-arkheologicheskogo instituta, Tiflis, 1926), 15.

lowlands), but finds that Tiurk influence also spread because the Tiurk *narodnye* masses had constrained the distribution of the Talysh *narod* in Azerbaijan.[54]

Photos 9 and 10: These photos of Talysh women in Xamusham village, Lankaran date to the 1920s, a period in which a number of ethnographic and linguistic studies were published about the Talysh.[55]

In conversation with Boris Vsevolodovich Miller, whose work is discussed next, Chursin then launches into a critique of Talysh statistics, labeling them "inaccurate and unreliable" from 1897 onward. Starting with population figures from the mid-19th century, Chursin identifies a "strange phenomenon" in which the number of Talysh in censuses from 1897, 1914, and 1921 varies widely and departs from natural growth estimates for populations not experiencing mass death or dislocation.[56]

[54] Chursin, 16.
[55] Photos from Atiga Izmailova private archive.
[56] Indeed, there are large variations in estimates about the Talysh population from the 1890s to the early Soviet period. In 1901, Nadezhdin noted that 88,449 Talysh were enumerated between 1890 and 1892

Further, Chursin finds that when the number of Talysh declines, the number of "Tatars" or "Azerbaijani Tiurks" increases and sometimes even outnumbers that of the Talysh (1897 and 1921). At the close of this discussion, Chursin endorses Miller's estimate of around 80,000 Talysh in Soviet Azerbaijan.[57]

Boris Vsevolodovich Miller, a recognized expert on the Talysh, is the only scholar whose work on the Talysh bridged the pre-revolutionary and post-Stalin periods.[58] Differences in the way in which scientists write and talk about the Talysh between Miller's last publication in 1953 and works in the late 1950s and 1960s are quite significant. In 1926, Miller published a description of his travels among the Talysh the previous summer. From that point until his last Talysh report in 1953, Miller remained critical of census reporting on the Talysh population. In 1926, he labeled pre-revolutionary (1915) and post-revolutionary (the 1921 Azerbaijan TsSu report cited by Chursin) statistics "extremely imperfect," arguing that many Talysh villages were either not included or were mislabeled as Tiurk villages. Miller proposed that many Talysh, especially those along trade routes, were misidentified as Tiurk because they used the Tiurk language in public spaces. He estimated that the ratio

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in the Bakinskaia *guberniia* (Nadezhdin, 244-245). In the general census that Chursin cites from 1897, the Talysh in the Lankaran *uezd* were identified by language and numbered 34,991 (and "Tatars" 84,725). In the 1914 Baku-Dagestan Department of Government Agriculture and Government Assets "Essay on the Agriculture and Forestry of the Lankaran District," Chursin found 77,066 Talysh and 63,060 "Tiurks." Then, according to him, the 1921 Azerbaijani agricultural census identified 66,206 Talysh and 78,380 "Azerbaijani Tiurks" in the *uezd* (Chursin, 16-17). Marr, meanwhile, declared that there were 75,824 Talysh in his publication on the Talysh in 1922 (Marr, 2).

[57] Chursin, 16-17.

[58] Miller was a linguist at the Academy of Sciences Institute of Linguistics and specialized in studying languages in the northwestern branch of the Iranian language family, such as Talysh, Tat, and Kurdish. He began his field research among these groups around the turn of the 20th century (in approximately 1902). He was also the scholar to whom government officials turned in the 1920s when they were establishing a literary basis for the Talysh language. Miller, for instance, reviewed the Talysh language textbook that Ahmadzade co-wrote and was involved in crafting a Talysh grammar and dictionary. ARDA 57.1.1222 and ARDA 57.11.7.30-31.

between the Talysh and Tiurks had, in fact, not changed in the region, despite "involuntary Tiurkification" brought about because the Talysh did not have a written language and had to use the Tiurk language for school and administrative purposes.[59]

In 1953, Miller published the last substantive scientific account of the Talysh written before the 1959 census (and the first one after his and Chursin's publications in 1926). In this book, *Talyshskii iazyk*, Miller describes the Talysh as an "Iranian *narodnost*'" and continues to criticize census reports. He references the 1931 Azerbaijani census, which registered 89,398 Talysh, but argues that, "to this figure must be added the large population of Lankaran city, in which many Talysh live, but whose population (11,688) was indiscriminately attributed to the "Turks," that is to the Azerbaijanis."[60] Further, although Miller acknowledges that many Talysh people (especially men) knew the Azerbaijani language because they had participated in an "intensive process of socialist construction," he does not attribute further significance to this fact.

Miller's narrative is devoid of any language about the Talysh merging into the Azerbaijani nation, and makes clear that he considered the Talysh and Azerbaijanis to share cultural and linguistic features as neighbors often do, but to otherwise comprise

[59] B.V. Miller, *Predvaritel'nyi otchet o poezdke v talysh letom 1925 g. (Doklad, chitannyi na zasedanii Istoriko-Etnograficheskoi Sektsii Obshchestva 14-go sentiabria 1925 goda)* (Baku, 1926), 5. Regional officials involved in national minority development in the Caucasus reiterated Miller's point in some of their evaluations of national minority programming in the Talysh region. In his 1931 evaluation of Azerbaijani national minority work, Instructor Alimadatov from the Zakkraikom cricized the underdevelopment of the Talysh, writing, "Until 1928 the Talysh had no alphabet, and studied in the Tiurk language. This led/forced (*zastavilo*) them to assimilate." (sšssa [II]) 13.9.195.58.

[60] B.V. Miller, *Talyshskii iazyk* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1953), 9. In the Georgian archives, the 1931 census is reported as documenting 87,991 Talysh (3.4 percent of the population), and a later document from 1934 registers 93,009 Talysh in the Azerbaijan SSR. Central Archive of the Contemporary History of Georgia [sakartvelos uakhlesi istoriis tsentraluri arkivi], 607.1.2404.104 and 106.

distinct national communities.[61] Up until 1959, then, we can see that scientific descriptions of the Talysh identify shared linguistic and cultural practices among the Talysh and local Azeris, as well as demographic fluctuations, but fail to map a definitive ethnohistorical model onto the Talysh population. If we recall the Dagestani case, this is not because of a lack of scholarly interest in or theories about the ethnohistorical assimilation and consolidation of sub-republic minorities in the Caucasus.

The assimilation of the Talysh after the 1959 census

After the Talysh were assimilated in the 1959 census, a standardized description of the population began to emerge. In 1962, the well-known ethnographer of the Caucasus, A.G. Trofimova, published the first post-Miller, post-census ethnographic description of the Talysh for the 1962 publication *Narody Kavkaza*. When it came to the 1959 census she wrote simply that the Talysh were "not enumerated/singled out" (ne

[61] Miller (1953), 11. Although it could be said that this language of ethnohistorical progress was absent here because Miller was a linguist and not an ethnographer, linguistic descriptions of the Talysh after 1959 often included this language. The exception is Liia Pireiko's work. Pireiko studied under Miller. She conducted linguistic fieldwork among the Talysh from the late 1950s to the early 1970s and published a Talysh-Russian dictionary in 1976 (Pireiko [1976]). In oral history interviews conducted in Moscow in 2010, Pireiko admitted that she was aware of assimilationist pressures in Talysh communities, but chose to avoid discussion of this in her work because she was a linguist and not an ethnographer. She also asserted agreement with Miller's general take on the relationship between the Talysh and Azerbaijani populations. For example, in her entry on the Talysh in *Iazyki narodov SSSR*, Pireiko avoided any discussion of Talysh identification and noted simply that a significant amount of Talysh knew Azeri because it was the language of school, print, radio, and governmental affairs in the AzSSR. Pireiko (1966), 302.

vydeleny), but took care in the rest of the description to emphasize the close cultural, spiritual, economic, and linguistic ties between the Azeris and the Talysh.[62]

Subsequent publications generally reflected two standard practices. First, although scientists identified the process that the Talysh were going through as assimilation, the term "assimilation" itself was rarely used. Instead, the Talysh were described as merging into or having merged with the Azerbaijani nation (*sblizhenie*). Second, ethnographers and linguists who mentioned Talysh population figures continuously reproduced the stock explanation that the Soviet Union stopped categorizing and counting the Talysh because they en masse self-identified as Azerbaijani in 1959. For example, in a 1970 publication touting the diversity of languages spoken in the USSR, M.I. Isaev included the Talysh in the Iranian language section, but also clarified that, "The Talysh consolidated with the Azerbaijanis into one socialist nation (*natsiia*). They are entirely bilingual and at the time of the census in 1959 called themselves Azerbaijani."[63]

The most detailed scientific explanation of Talysh assimilation is found in transcripts about Azerbaijani ethnographer Atiga Izmailova's 1964 dissertation, "The Socialist Transformation of the Economy, Culture, and Way of Life of the Talysh." In a March 1964 meeting of the Caucasus Sector of the Institute of Ethnography in Moscow about Izmailova's dissertation, the ethnographer Veniamin Pavlovich Kobychev, who specialized in ethnogenesis and ethnic history in the Caucasus among

[62] A.G. Trofimova, "Talyshi," *Narody Kavkaza*, B.A. Gardanov, A.N. Guliev, S.T.Eremyan, L.I. Lavrov, G.A. Nersesov, G.C. Chitaia, eds. (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1962), 187-194.
[63] M.I. Isaev, *Sto tridtsat' ravnopravnykh (o iazykakh narodov SSSR)* (Moscow: Nauka, 1970), 61.

Photo 11: Much of Izmailova's ethnographic work reflected studies of national dress, as well as labor and housing specificities. Her photographs and articles about various populations in Azerbaijan generally depict similarities in contemporary dress practices across the republic, but she also took care to document traditional forms of "national dress," as she did here in Astara in the 1960s. Photo from Atiga Izmailova private archive.

other scholarly pursuits, advised Izmailova that the most fundamental thing that she needed to do was strengthen the theoretical discussion of Talysh *sliianie* with Azerbaijanis."[64] V.K. Gardanov, who led the Caucasus sector at the Institute of Ethnography in Moscow from 1961-1985, similarly remarked that the main theme of the dissertation should be the *sliianie* of a small *narod* with a big one, and that Izmailova needed to underline that "the process of the *sliianie* of the Talysh with the Azerbaijanis began before the revolution and continued more intensively in the Soviet period."[65] In conclusion, the members of the Caucasus sector recommended Izmailova's dissertation for the defense and advised that she more clearly identify in her work the historical stages of the *sliianie* of the two populations in question.[66]

At Izmailova's November 1964 *kandidatskaia* defense in Moscow, her examiners enthusiastically received her ethnography of the Talysh. Trofimova, for example, remarked excitedly to the gathered colleagues that the dissertation illustrated how the "very interesting process of the peaceful, voluntary, and quite natural" *sliianie* of the small Talysh *narodnost'* (who she describes elsewhere at the defense as "a backward and ignorant *narod* lost in a forgotten corner of Tsarist Russia") and the great neighboring Azerbaijani nation was occurring "literally before our very eyes."[67] Izmailova, meanwhile, noted that although many people could as yet be considered bilingual because they still spoke the Talysh language, "they [nonetheless] consider themselves to be part of the Azerbaijani *narod*."[68]

[64] ARAN 142.10.386.19.
[65] ARAN 142.10.386.20.
[66] ARAN 142.10.386.21.
[67] ARAN 142.10.346.24 and 30.
[68] ARAN 142.10.346.40.

Talysh bilingualism was one of the primary reasons why the scholars at the defense found the Talysh case to be so intriguing. Gardanov commented that the Talysh provided one of the most interesting and important research sites in the Soviet Union because they represented the *sliianie* of *narody* belonging to completely different language families: Turkic and Iranian.[69] Thus, the Talysh were not just an example of consolidating ethnographic groups, but of *assimiliatsiia* itself, which was considered a more difficult and rare process to achieve. In fact, Gardanov argued that researchers like Izmailova had to explain very carefully the fast pace with which the Talysh had "completely disappeared" between the 1930s and 1959 because otherwise it could be confusing to observers.[70]

The influential Azerbaijani historian Aliovsat Guliev, stepped in at this point and injected evolving Azerbaijani ethnogenesis theories into the conversation as an answer to Gardanov's challenge.[71] Guliev explained that the ancient southern core of the Azerbaijani nation had spoken Azari (*Azəri*), an ancient northwest Iranian language similar to the Talysh language. Then, after the Seljuk migrations, Turkic language influences began to spread in Talysh communities, drawing the Talysh and Azerbaijani cultures ever closer to one another. Thus, according to Guliev, Talysh assimilation into the Azerbaijani nation was possible because it began long before the

[69] ARAN 142.10.346.41.
[70] ARAN 142.10.346.42.
[71] Azerbaijani ethnogenesis took a great leap forward in 1959, when the first volume of the three-volume *History of Azerbaijan* was published (*Istoriia Azerbaidzhana* [Baku: Azerbaijan Academy of Sciences, 1959]). This book argued that the ancient origins of the contemporary Azerbaijani nation were rooted in both Media-Atropatene and Caucasian Albania. This narrative argued that Azeris were indigenous to the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic and countered competing historical narratives that located Azeri origins in comparatively late Seljuk migrations. Similar ethnogenesis narratives and strategies were developed for titular nationalities throughout the Soviet Union. Laruelle, 175.

Bolshevik Revolution, although it had, he admitted, gained great steam under Soviet power.[72]

At different points of her defense, Izmailova mentions various ethnographic specificities that continued to distinguish the assimilated Talysh from the Azerbaijanis. This is an important point. Although one could assume that the 1959 assimilation depended on the erasure of all differences between the Talysh and the Azerbaijanis, the removal of the Talysh category from the census did not require all traces of the Talysh to disappear. Talysh assimilation was predicated on the notion that the Talysh no longer constituted a separate nationality because they had been subsumed by the modern Azerbaijani socialist nation. In this sense, a person (or their ethnic origins) could still be Talysh, but his or her *nationality* was Azerbaijani.[73] Further, the leftover aspects of Talysh culture that were portrayed as being on the precipice of fading away, as well as the people who still used the Talysh language, were valuable. They spoke to the complexity of Talysh-Azerbaijani *sliianie* and could be upheld as evidence of the changes that Soviet modernity had brought to the Talysh people.

As Izmailova asserted toward the end of her defense, "The Talysh absolutely voluntarily called themselves Azerbaijani in the census. They consider themselves to be part of the Azerbaijani *narod*. Representatives of the younger generation even call themselves Azerbaijanis." She pointed out that the older generation—those who might still call themselves Talysh—were more easily confused about their national consciousness and could just as easily consider their national identity to be "Muslim."

[72] ARAN 142.10.346.46-47.
[73] I have also had Azerbaijani scholars argue to me that the Talysh were never advanced enough to be a nationality (*natsional'nost'*) and thus assimilated into the Azerbaijani nationality because they did not constitute their own nationality. Conversation with Azerbaijani historian, March 2012.

Here we get a sense of how "survivals" could discursively be employed to illustrate the disjuncture between the "Talysh" who had difficulty being modern and the more progressive Azerbaijanis of Talysh descent.[74]

Ethnographic narratives about "survivals," of course, were not isolated to non-titular communities, but there were differences in the way in which they were applied to non-titular and titular peoples in late socialism.[75] National customs and traditions that were deemed "survivals" could be overcome with the help of Soviet scientists and policies, and were valuable because they helped to document ethnohistorical progress among Soviet peoples.[76] The distinctiveness of ethnographic discourses about non-titular peoples in late socialism is that by this point titular nationalities were "modern" and "socialist," while some non-titular peoples themselves (and not just their customs or cultural characteristics) became the "survivals."

Talysh customs were considered outdated, but culture change also came to be understood in a way as non-normative for the Talysh. Thus, when the Talysh adopted "modern" dress and other cultural forms this was read as a sign of ethnohistorical progress not just of the Talysh, but of the Talysh toward a shared Azerbaijani identification. An article that Izmailova wrote in 1964 about Talysh national dress can be taken as one example of this genre. On the one hand, Izmailova's ethnographic dedication to the Talysh is one of the few reasons why we have ethnographic material about the Talysh in this period. After they were removed from the census and the List

[74] ARAN 142.10.346.40.
[75] The term *otstalye* (backward) is applied to the Tiurks as a people in the 1920s by some critics of the slow progress of *korenizatsiia* in Azerbaijan, but that descriptor is bound by that particular time. sšssa (II) 14.4.131.
[76] Julie Fairbanks, "Narratives of Progress: Soviet Ethnographic Discourse and the Study of the Caucasus," Workshop paper (University of Michigan: Eurasia Collective Workshop, 2013).

of Nationalities, hers were the only publications about the Talysh, other than brief mentions of them in collected edited volumes such as *Narody Kavkaza* and the Great Soviet Encyclopedia.

On the other hand, in her pre-dissertation defense meeting, dissertation defense, and her ethnographic publications we can clearly see the ideological architecture that was incorporated as a matter of course into Soviet ethnographic publications (whether or not by the author's own design). In the 1964 article, Izmailova provides a detailed and productive examination of pre- and early-Soviet dress habits among Talysh women, men, and children, and contrasts these customs with the dress practices that she observed during her fieldwork with the Talysh. Subtle statements of ethnohistorical progress bookend the rest of the article.

In the introduction, Izmailova describes her work as providing a description of old and "modern" clothes and how Talysh dress practices have changed as a result of Soviet influences.[77] The concluding sentence, meanwhile, argues that the principal elements of Talysh national dress are the same as those found in other regions of Azerbaijan, thus illustrating the close ties and mutual influences of the Talysh and Azerbaijanis. In this way, Talysh dress culture is subtly integrated into the narrative of Talysh-Azerbaijani *sblizhenie* that Guliev and others produced at Izmailova's dissertation pre-defense and defense meetings. The Talysh adoption of more modern dress forms is representative not of Talysh progress on its own, but of *sblizhenie* and

[77] A.A. Izmailova, "O narodnoi odezhde naseleniia iugo-vostochnykh raionov Azerbaidzhana," *Izvestiia Akademii nauk Azerbaidzhanskoi SSR* 4 (1964), 93.

movement toward a shared and modern Azerbaijani community, culture, and identification under the auspices of the Soviet regime.

Photos 12 and 13: Although Izmailova uses a photo from one of the early Soviet expeditions in her 1964 article on Talysh national dress, her private photo collection includes photos of Talysh in both national dress and modern dress. In the photo on the left is a woman in "national dress" from the Astara village of Palikesh in the 1950s. On the right, is a 1960s photo from Xolmili village in Lankaran region.[78]

In other words, just as many New Englanders thought that Indians could only be ancients, the modern Talysh person became Azerbaijani in the Soviet imagination.[79] Talysh national identities were destined to merge into a higher order nationality either by fading away naturally or through the efforts of people who were

[78] Photos from Atiga Izmailova private archive.
[79] O'Brien, xxii.

dedicated to effecting socialist progress. This was not only the case with the Talysh and the Azerbaijanis, but was a model of ethnohistorical development reproduced throughout the Soviet Union. For example, in an Institute of Ethnography meeting in 1965 about the Pamiri peoples of Tajikistan, the consolidation of these cultural "survivals" with the "modern national Tajik and all-Soviet socialist culture" was similarly celebrated.[80]

The private debate about non-titular assimilation

Although the myth of Talysh assimilation eventually became hegemonic, it emerged from a fair amount of contestation and debate among ethnographers who were involved in studying Soviet ethnohistorical progress. In fact, we can best understand the Talysh case if we place it in a broader all-Union context. The 1950s gave rise to a cohort of ethnographers who were inspired by the Thaw, identified with the groups that they studied, had trained in the era of fieldwork, and were sensitive to "national particularities."[81] For them, and others, the 1959 census assumed great ideological and practical significance because, as the first all-Union census in twenty years, it documented the human cost of World War Two in a stark statistical manner.

It also manifested some de-Stalinizing political currents. Many of the scientific experts who helped to formulate the census viewed it as an opportunity to reincorporate groups that Stalin "wrongly" expunged in 1939.[82] For Caucasus

[80] ARAN 142.10.432.69-70.
[81] Slezkine (1994), 341.
[82] Hirsch, 320.

specialists, 1956 was a moment of rebirth for the field. Some of their number had been swept up in the Stalinist purges with other Eastern specialists.[83] Others watched as the groups that they studied were labeled traitors, loaded into trains, and deported. In 1956, however, ethnographers from the Caucasus Sector were finally allowed to resume their studies and return to their fieldsites when populations such as the Chechen and Ingush were freed from the special regimes and allowed to move back to the Caucasus.[84] Finally, the census was an important tool in these scholars' obligation to help "build communism" in the USSR and to fulfill the ideological challenge that Khrushchev that initially issued at the 20th Party Congress.[85] As philosopher Ivan Petrovich Tsameryan argued at a 1959 conference about theoretical issues related to building communism, "...there can be no transition to communism in the presence of small *narodnosti*. The process of consolidation, it would seem, must be completed in the period of the building of communism."[86]

Thus, although the census represented seemingly contradictory impulses of reversing Stalin-era corruptions of scientific knowledge and documenting the same progress toward ethnohistorical evolution that was used to justify those perversions, many of the Moscow-based ethnographers and linguists involved in census construction managed to fold both imperatives into a decisive methodological framework. The records that these ethnographers left behind expose more clearly the political architecture of assimilation myths. This cohort believed that incorporating

[83] A.N. Genko, for instance, a prominent ethnographer who specialized in the North Caucasus, was arrested in 1938 for anti-Soviet propaganda, released the following year, then rearrested in 1941for slandering the government and praising the fascist army. He died in custody that year.
[84] Volkova, ed., 32.
[85] ARAN 142.1.1050.67.
[86] ARAN 142.1.1050.57.

some previously expunged peoples into the new census would help to clarify, rather than obscure, progress made toward assimilation and consolidation by providing more accurate details about the depth of national processes in the Soviet Union.[87] This approach inevitably set them in intellectual opposition to scholars, politicians, and others who purposefully or inadvertently were building narratives of sub-republic assimilation.

Over the course of 1957 and 1958, experts at the Institutes of Ethnography and Linguistics at the Academy of Sciences worked with the TsSu to compile a new list of nationalities to guide census collection. This list was then shared with republican, *krai*, and oblast' Communist Party central committees throughout the Soviet Union. During this process the ethnographers encountered opposition from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Georgia, and Azerbaijan, where republican officials disputed the reintroduction to the census of the Ajar, Laz, Mingrelian, Svan, and Tsova-Tush in Georgia; the Airum, Karapapakh, Padar, and Shahseven in Azerbaijan; the Kypchak, Kuram, and Tiurks in Uzbekistan; and the Pamiri peoples in Tajikistan. All of these groups had been merged with the titular nationalities in or before the 1939 census. The republican officials argued that these "ethnographic groups" had assimilated into the titular nationalities and would say as much if asked.[88]

In a cautionary letter to Secretary Brezhnev, Africanist Ivan Izosimovich Potekhin and ethnographer Liudmila Nikolaevna Terent'eva argued against the SSR officials, asserting that the artificial consolidation and assimilation of population

[87] ARAN 142.1.980.63-64, 90.
[88] Contrastingly, the Mordovia regional committee requested to delineate the ethnographic groups of the Mordvin group—the Erzia and Moksha—even though they were not enumerated in the 1926 and 1939 censuses. RGAE 1562.327.1002.38

groups could damage interethnic relations.[89] They advised Brezhnev that, only if the census was conducted correctly, would the Party and government have the requisite knowledge to craft the kinds of policies that could shape ethnohistorical processes without provoking unintended consequences.[90] The eminent ethnographer and director of the Institute of Ethnography Sergei Pavlovich Tolstov supported this position, pushing census authorities in mid-1958 to include the Pamiris in the census and label them Pamir *narody* rather than Pamir Tajiks for fear that the latter label could bias results during census collection.[91]

Despite these ethnographers' best efforts, republican leaders largely succeeded in their lobbying efforts with central authorities and the TsSU. At the end of 1958, the head of the TsSU, V. Starovskii, invoked the republican perspective in his submission to the TsK KPSS of a revised list of primary nationalities and *narodnosti* and a secondary list of ethnographic groups and small-numbered peoples. In comparison with 1939, this list featured more highly disaggregated nationality categories in Crimea and the RSFSR, namely in Dagestan and the Far North. Groups consigned to the secondary list, including most of the contested populations such as the Pamiri peoples, were to be counted only in republican regions where they resided en masse. Starovskii's single holdout against republican lobbying appears to have been the Ajar

[89] Potekhin was a prominent scholar working on processes of ethnic consolidation and national studies, though focusing on the African context. In the late 1940s he was deputy director of the Institute of Ethnography. By 1959, he was director of the Institute of African Studies. Terent'eva specialized in the Baltic regions of the USSR and ethnic processes there. At one point she served as deputy director of the Institute of Ethnography.
[90] ARAN 142.1.980.91.
[91] ARAN 142.1.980.74.

population, which he kept on the main list of nationalities on account of the autonomous status of Ajara in Georgia.[92]

While there clearly was much debate between Moscow-based census organizers and republican leaders about the list of nationalities, there is no available evidence that the Talysh were ever a topic of discussion at this stage, nor that they were removed from the list prior to the census.[93] Talysh appears as a separate category on all draft lists of nationalities through the end of 1958 that are available in the archives of the Institute of Ethnography and TsSU.[94] Further, unlike the Pamiri people, Ajars, and others disputed by republican officials in 1958, the Talysh had been enumerated in every previous all-Union census. In fact, the Talysh were the only non-"foreign" nationality expunged from a Soviet census for the first time in 1959.[95]

The Talysh case, however, dovetailed with that of the Pamiri peoples and Ajars once the census shifted from Moscow to the republics during the census taking and reporting stages in early 1959. It was at this point that republican officials, who, according to available documentation, had TsSU instructions to enumerate all three groups in their respective republics, reported that Ajar, Talysh, and Pamiri peoples en

[92] RGAE 1562.327.1002.38-43.
[93] This is based on available documents in RGAE, ARAN, and the Azerbaijani party and state archives. I was not admitted to the archive of the Azerbaijani statistical administration.
[94] For example, ARAN 142.1.980.62 and RGAE 1562.327.1002.42.
[95] The other possible exception is the Oirot, but this is a qualitatively different case. The Oirot category was included in the 1939 census and, like the Talysh category, removed in the 1959 census. The difference between the two, however, is that the Oirot category survived in some form in the 1959 census. In 1948 the word "Oirot" was deemed counter-revolutionary following charges that Altai nationalists were pro-Japanese. The name of the Oirot Autonomous Oblast' was thus revised in 1948 to the Gorno-Altai Autonomous Oblast'. This lexical change is elucidated in documents generated by the Institute of Ethnography, where the "Altai" category of 1959 is listed as replacing the "Oirot" category of 1939. ARAN 142.1.980.39. There is no similar renaming of the Talysh category in 1959. At this time, persons previously counted as Talysh were no longer considered to be part of a distinct people that should be counted.

masse identified themselves to census takers as members of the titular nation in the republics where they were living. In other words, Ajars identified themselves as Georgian, Pamiri as Tajik, and all but 85 Talysh as Azerbaijani.[96] Archived Azerbaijani census records from Talysh regions likewise support this outcome. More than 2000 census forms from Lankaran are available in Azerbaijani archives and each page documents between one and six members of a household. Out of all of these thousands of people—including those in Talysh villages such as Kargalan—not a single individual was recorded as Talysh by nationality *or* as a native speaker of the Talysh language.[97]

Available sources show that many Moscow-based scientific experts challenged both perceived census manipulations and the idea that statistical declines of groups such as the Talysh accurately documented historical progress among Soviet peoples. For example, at a 1959 conference on building communism, ethnographer and statistician T. Terletskoi invoked the Pamiri and Mingrelian cases in a condemnation of nationalism at the highest levels of republican governance. According to his analysis, the number of Mingrelians declined drastically between the 1920s and 1959 (they were not delineated in the 1939 census) thanks to "high powered pressure" placed on statistical organs. He concluded, "I, as a statistician and ethnographer, ask myself this question: what sort of process is occurring, can this process be subsumed under the concept of the assimilation of Mingrelians with Georgians or under the concept of the consolidation of the Georgian nation? It seems to me, that this process is nonexistent…I cannot imagine that the number of Mingrelians has declined like

[96] For example, ARAN 142.10.346.40, 5.
[97] ARDA 2511.8.27, 2511.8.29, 2511.8.30.

this." Then, calling on Tolstov who worked in Central Asia and was present at the meeting, Terletskoi announced to the room his skepticism of Tajik authorities as well: "I cannot imagine that [the Pamiri] presented themselves as Tajiks."[98]

The Talysh case reiterates the fact that scientific experts who observed inaccuracies or problems on the ground were not always able to or interested in rectifying the situation. Assimilatory pressures in sub-republic ethnic communities were commonly addressed in interviews and conversations with the few linguists and ethnographers from Moscow who have conducted research in the AzSSR.[99] For instance, an interview with Liia Pireiko, a linguist from the Academy of Sciences who specialized in the Talysh and began her fieldwork in Astara in 1958, unfolded in the following way:

> Author: After the 1959 census the Talysh population was listed as Azerbaijani.
> Pireiko: Well, so…yeah, they assimilated. But there was always a policy there of assimilating the Talysh.
> Author: Really?
> Pireiko: Well, yes.
> Author: And you…well what was it like?
> Pireiko: Well, you felt it all the time. It just did not require any sort of special acknowledgment. Yes, all the time Azerbaijanis were inspired by this fixed idea that their *narod* was larger, that everyone was to assimilate…

Pireiko said that she never engaged with this issue because she was interested in abstract linguistic matters instead of ethnography, but at least one scholar has

[98] ARAN 142.1.1050.67-68.
[99] Interviews with members of the Otdel Kavkaza.

documented an account of local Soviet authorities interfering with his scientific work among the Talysh.[100]

Terletskoi, Tolstov and the others who lodged complaints about the handling of the census or pushed to expand the list of official nationalities did not challenge or even necessarily disagree with the ideological or theoretical frameworks of Soviet nationality policies. Rather, they engaged with the census outcomes on the basis of competing understandings of Soviet nationality theories, what constituted ethnohistorical progress, and how it could be measured. Although the atmosphere at Izmailova's defense was supportive of her findings, one ethnographer, Iakov Romanovich Vinnikov, who specialized in studying the Turkmen, questioned how Izmailova could both assert that the Talysh were basically linguistically assimilated and reaffirm their orientation toward the Iranian language group.[101] Gardanov mocked Vinnikov's question, replying for Izmailova that the ancient ancestors of some Azeris were also Iranian-speaking (the Azari), but everyone would still call them Azerbaijani.[102] In this understanding of the question, the fact that many people preserved Talysh as their native language did not preclude them from considering themselves Azeri. That is, linguistic assimilation was not a prerequisite of assimilation.[103]

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[100] Alexander Formozov, "Azerbaidzhanskij "dikii zapad" v seredine 1980-x: Vzgliad Moskovskogo Etnosotsiologa: Viktor Karlov v besede s Aleksandrom Formozovym," *Laboratorium* 1 (2010), 230. Although the anecdote is from the 1980s it reinforces stories told in interviews about the 1970s as well. Interview with Pireiko, 2010.

[101] ARAN 140.10.346.35-36. Vinnikov was born and raised in Kazakhstan, but joined the Institute of Ethnography at the Academy of Sciences in 1946.

[102] ARAN 142.10.346.41.

[103] ARAN 142.10.346.40. This debate also unfolded at a meeting about G.A. Guliev's dissertation defense. Guliev's dissertation was titled "Socialist culture and lifestyle (*byt*) of collective farmworkers (*krest'ianstvo*) of Azerbaijan (Based on materials of the Kuba region). At the December 1953 meeting, the ethnographer P.I. Kushner criticized Guliev's dissertation, arguing that Lezgins and Tats also lived

This exact point formed the theoretical basis of the only challenge to the Talysh assimilation narrative that seems to have been published prior to Adzhiev's journalistic article in 1989. In a 1967 article in *Sovetskaia etnografiia* about the upcoming 1970 census, Solomon Il'ich Bruk and Kozlov, who were intimately involved in the formulation and analysis of Soviet censuses, denounced the "disappearance" of the Talysh in Azerbaijan and the Pamiri peoples in Tajikistan.[104] More specifically, they argued that the erasure of these groups displayed little coherence with Soviet theories of ethnohistorical evolution. Bruk and Kozlov felt that neither consolidation nor assimilation were viable explanations. According to them, assimilation begins with changes in language use, but in the 1959 census more than 10,000 people were documented as native Talysh-language speakers and more than 40,000 as Pamiri-language speakers. Consolidation, meanwhile, was an ill-fitting paradigm for the Talysh because the Iranian-based Talysh language and Turkic Azerbaijani language were in different language families.[105]

Bruk and Kozlov concluded that the exclusion of the Talysh and Pamiri categories from the census was evidence of census workers' accidental and calculated manipulations of the findings. Some mistakes with the census were attributed to various terminological and instructional misunderstandings. In other cases, however, Bruk and Kozlov concluded that census workers may have assimilated distinct

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in the Kuba region and that, although they used the Azerbaijani language alongside their Lezgin and Tat languages, they were still separate *narodnosti*. According to Kushner, it was incorrect for Guliev to say that only Azerbaijanis lived in the Kuba region and not to take into account the culture and lifestyle of the Tats and Lezgins. Kushner suggested that his dissertation would be more properly titled the "Socialist culture and lifestyle of collective farmworkers-Azerbaijanis of the Kuba region." Guliev responded that his material showed that there was a shared culture and *byt* in the region and that this spoke to the sliianie of Lezgins, Tats, and Azerbaijanis in ethnographic terms. ARAN 142.1.520.32-43.

[104] Bruk and Kozlov (1967), 8.

[105] Ibid.

narodnosti in the census because they wanted to "portray their region as more ethnically homogenous, and their *natsiia* or *narodnost'* more consolidated than it actually is."[106] The oppositions among ethnographers involved in census debates and at dissertation defenses make clear how different interpretations of the same contradictory theories and ideologies reinforced both sides of the opposition that sustained the public secret about Talysh assimilation.

Conclusion: Political mechanisms sustaining the public secret?

Although published ethnographic descriptions of the Talysh after 1959 portrayed Talysh assimilation as a natural symbol of Soviet progress, the broader picture reveals a more contested framework. Given the formidable debates described in this chapter, what tipped the scale in favor of myths of assimilation? Why did Bruk and Kozlov's public critique of Talysh assimilation in 1967 not result in the reintroduction of the Talysh category in the 1970 census?

Keeping in mind that ethnographers critical of the 1959 census tended to assign blame to the republics for perceived errors, can the assimilation of the Talysh population be explained at this level of analysis? On the surface, the nationalizing atmosphere of Azerbaijan in the 1950s supports the charges from Moscow-based scientists that republican interests corrupted census outcomes. At the same time, however, there does not seem to be evidence that republican officials had the power to autonomously assimilate a population like the Talysh without impunity. Khrushchev's

[106] Bruk and Kozlov (1967), 8.

administration kept a tighter leash on Ibragimov and Mustafaev than might be apparent. As the case of the 1956 Azerbaijani language amendment shows, Azerbaijani political elites under Khrushchev had the space to make bold political moves, but they also faced repercussions when they acted too independently from Kremlin interests. Further, the long, closed-door meetings held in both Moscow and Baku to discuss Mustafaev's dismissal in the summer of 1959 exposed myriad political sins and charges of nationalism, but made no mention of the Talysh or the census.[107]

Although there are noted differences among the Talysh, Pamiri, and Ajar—namely that archival records show no contestation over the Talysh category until after the census was already over and that the Talysh were enumerated in the 1939 census—there are also significant similarities. One point of convergence is that republican officials reported all three groups as having obviated their assigned nationality categories by self-identifying with the titular nation of their republics during census collection. Further, ethnographers in Moscow expressed disagreement about this development in all three cases.

Another noteworthy shared variable—and one that has been understated until now—is that all three populations were located along sensitive international borders and had co-ethnics living across those borders. The Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province, which was home to the Pamiri peoples, bordered China, Afghanistan, and was only narrowly removed from Pakistan by the Afghan Wakhan corridor. By the late 1950s, the Sino-Soviet divergence was intensifying, China still laid claim to parts

[107] ARPIISSA 1.46.87, and Fursenko, 357-87.

of Gorno-Badakhshan, and Cold War competition was thriving in both Pakistan and Afghanistan.


Photos 14 and 15: These two pictures taken in the summer of 2007 along the Astara, Azerbaijan and Astara, Iran border clearly show how the international border cleaves once united villages into two, and how closely people still live to the border on the Iranian side. This is less common on the Azerbaijani side as many people were moved away from the border after World War Two.[108]

The Talysh and Ajar experienced similar tensions on the borders where they lived due to Soviet relations with Iran and Turkey during World War Two and close postwar U.S. relations with Turkey and Iran. The Turkish-Soviet border in Ajara was sealed in the late 1930s and was an impermeable special border zone by the mid-1950s.[109] The Talysh-occupied regions in the Azerbaijan SSR—Masalli, Lerik, Lankaran, and Astara—were also enclosed inside a large border security zone. This one was established along the Azerbaijani-Iranian border in the wake of World War

[108] Photos by Krista Goff.
[109] Pelkmans, 27-37.

Two and required everyone entering and leaving the area to obtain a *propusk* approving their travel plans.[110]

Pulling back from the Talysh case study to place it in an all-Union context lends more clarity to this story. There are different voices emerging from among ethnographers and linguists, but the line that many pushed behind the scenes in the 1950s was one of higher disaggregation than assimilation, and concern for methodological caution rather than presumed ethnohistorical advancement. Further, although many scientists blamed republican nationalism for errant assimilations—and titular elites certainly did have an interest in creating more demographically consolidated republics—there was also a steady pattern of Moscow officials checking Azeri elites when they acted too independently on the nationality front, but no evidence that this is what happened in this case.

Had the assimilation of border populations like the Talysh simply been a case of republican overreach, it could have been reversed in the next census. The fact that the Talysh were not returned to the census until 1989, however, indicates that Khrushchev's administration may have sanctioned republican officials to assimilate sensitive border minorities, like the Talysh, in order to isolate them from their co-ethnics across the border and to strengthen Soviet border security. The master narrative of Talysh assimilation that became ubiquitous in the Soviet Union did not go uncontested in academic circles (or among the Talysh), but it likely obtained because

[110] I have yet to find documentary evidence of this security zone; thus far, it lives on only in stories related through conversation and oral history. Although it no longer exists, in 2007 I was approached by a security officer, who requested to see a *propusk* giving me permission to be in Lankaran.

it reflected a legitimate school of ethnohistorical theorizing and—knowingly or not—complemented Cold War political imperatives.

CONCLUSION

WHAT MAKES A PEOPLE?

There was no uniform nationality policy or trajectory for non-titular populations in the Soviet Union. The ideological and political underpinnings of official and unofficial nationality practices in non-titular communities show that local and central officials reacted to a variety of variables, including the relationships that different minority communities held with titular populations in neighboring republics and the willingness and ability of minorities to organize and agitate for the realization of their national rights. The question to some extent remains, however, what were the consequences of these nationality policies?

The act of framing a dissertation around state-defined national categories runs the risk of reifying those same categories and overlooking their more problematic characteristics. As Frederick Cooper and Rogers Brubaker argue, "the formal institutionalization and codification of ethnic and national categories implies nothing about the *depth, resonance,* or *power* of such categories in the lived experience of the persons so categorized."[1] Because national and ethnic categories obscure human agency and tend to homogenize "ethnic" experiences, they reveal little about the

[1] Frederick Cooper and Rogers Brubaker, "Identity," in *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History,* ed. Frederick Cooper (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 82.

fluidity of identification and individual self-understanding in the communities that they are describing. Keeping this in mind, throughout this dissertation I have tried to portray as best I could the nuances embedded in communities categorized as being of one national orientation or another.

An associated challenge is recognizing that people do not necessarily order themselves and their lives in national ways. As Tara Zahra illustrates, indifference to nationalism itself can be both a central category of analysis and a factor of historical change.[2] The nationalized actors who are highlighted in this narrative—Ibragimov, Mustafaev, Gamkharashvili, Rizvanov, Charkviani, and others—had an interest in nationalizing those around them in order to form cohesive groups and demands. In those cases where the broader population did not respond in predictable ways to their campaigning, they often were willing to employ other means to shape community self-understanding.

Take the Georgian-Ingilo example. When it became clear that not all Georgian-Ingilo wanted Azerbaijani schools introduced to their communities, local officials conducted agitation in local villages, intimidated *kolkhozniks* who wanted to send their children to Georgian schools, and even tried removing the Georgian school option altogether. Similarly, activism among nationalized Georgian-Ingilo community members increased social pressure among Georgian-Ingilo to stay oriented toward the Georgian language, culture, and identification. When Gamkharashvili wrote to Stalin,

[2] Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped souls: national indifference and the battle for children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

for example, he made claims in the name of all Georgian-Ingilo and not just himself, his family, or his native village.

Despite these campaigns against national indifference in minority communities, it is nonetheless clear that many people gravitated toward alternate or complementary ways of ordering themselves and their communities, whether by religion, status, region, or some other classification. In fact, when asked whether nationality was important in the Soviet period, many people in oral history interviews would reflexively answer "no." By way of explanation, they would point out that they were all Soviet citizens.

World War Two was also frequently invoked in these conversations as an example of Soviet togetherness. For example, one Talysh man responded, "for the people (*narody*), nationality was not important because we went together to fight the Germans. We went together and everyone shared in this, in defending the Soviet land. You understand how this was? And therefore, we all thought: Russia is ours, we are citizens of Russia, of the Soviet state. That's how we understood ourselves and therefore no one was interested in this [national] question."[3] A Talysh woman similarly argued, "If there had not been friendship, if every people (*narod*), every nation (*natsiia*) thought only about themselves then there would never have been such a great victory…probably you understand what kind of an army the Germans had! Hitler conquered all of Europe and then the Soviet Union conquered him."[4] The war was proof enough to these individuals that nationality was unimportant in the Soviet

[3] Interview, March 2011.
[4] Interview, June 2008.

Union—had it been then the USSR would never been strong enough and united enough to beat the fascists.

Many people in interviews also argued that nationality held meaning in political rather than personal terms, that neighbors were neighbors regardless of their native language or national orientation, and that Soviet people of different nationalities even married one another as proof of how little nationality mattered.[5] As a Lezgin man explained, "nationality—this was a government matter but I'm speaking about the people (*narod*)…in the Soviet Union with regards to the ordinary people, everything was the same for everyone. I, for example, traveled to Moscow without a passport. Without a passport! And no one asked me where I was from, why I had gone there. That is, no one bothered you. For the simple people it wasn't important, but when you dealt with political or official affairs then it became important."[6]

While these voices caution us not to assume that life was always oriented around nationality and national belonging, the personal could also be political. Indeed, difference and belonging were often complementary. Soviet citizens for the most part got along with their neighbors, fought alongside one another in wars, and carried the same Soviet passport, but through a deeply political process that passport also assigned them to a particular national group. National categorizations in passports and other official documents influenced personal experiences because nationality had

[5] It eventually became clear in many of these interviews that religious and national identifications were layered onto one another. As one man clarified, "In the Soviet Union, all people, all nationalities were very close to one another. You understand? They communicated with one another, they created families together. So many of our people married Russians, Georgians, Ukrainians, Belorussians. But! But it was the women who were from the other nationality. Not one of our Talysh women married into another nation (*natsiia*). Pay attention to that. Religion is another matter." Interview, July 2008.
[6] Interview, April 2011.

many instrumental purposes in the Soviet system, including in terms of academic, professional, and Party advancement.

Precisely because the nationality architecture was deeply embedded in Soviet society, it sometimes took time for the significance of these categorizations to become clear in conversations. Take the example of a Talysh man who was born in the early 1950s. In response to a question about whether or not nationality was important in the USSR, he responded that in the Soviet period no one would have said that they were Talysh. At that time, he personally never questioned why he was categorized as Azerbaijani. One could assume that this was because, like some of the other Talysh with whom I spoke, he interpreted his Azerbaijani nationality as indicating that he was from Azerbaijan rather than reading into it any assimilatory significance. As he continued to talk, however, it became clearer why it was that he felt that no Talysh man or woman would have thought to challenge his or her Azerbaijani categorization: they lacked the national consciousness to do so as a consequence of nationality practices in their communities. That is, the Talysh could not have been classified as Talysh because there was no Talysh nationality. In his mind, nationalities had certain resources, including an alphabet, a national literature, native language schools, and native language economies.[7] As another Talysh woman said, there was no point to teaching children the Talysh language because the Talysh had no national infrastructure or future.[8]

[7] Interview, July 2008.
[8] Interview, March 2011.

In these sorts of remembrances we can see that there were many ways in which Talysh historical experiences spurred people toward assimilation, whether consciously or not. For instance, ethnographic descriptions of the Talysh had meaning beyond academia because many Talysh internalized the assimilatory narratives that they read about themselves. As one Talysh man from Masalli recalled, "in the Azerbaijani encyclopedia and in the Great Soviet Encyclopedia, they wrote that we were all one nation (*natsiia*), one people (*narod*), and that the Talysh had merged with the Azerbaijanis. They wrote this because they had to, because Stalin had said that we were building socialist nations, but we believed what we read back then about ourselves."[9]

The generations born after the 1940s had different experiences than those who came before because they did not personally remember a time in which the Talysh had access to some of the Soviet symbols of nationhood. Their historical consciousnesses were shaped by the older generations around them and, as we can see above, many did not pass down knowledge about Talysh national development in the 1930s. Two explanations were offered for this in oral history interviews: fear and stigma. Many Talysh spoke about a collective fear that fell over their communities after the purges in the 1930s. For example, a woman from Astara explained that, "earlier there were Talysh classes and schools, but in 1937 they shot these teachers and poets. They shot them all as though they were nationalists, you understand. For this reason, everything was destroyed, everything!"[10] Ahmadzada's name in particular was passed down as an example of what had happened to "people who had been Talysh." One man recalled

[9] Interview, March 2011.
[10] Interview, July 2008.

that in the post-Soviet years he asked an old man who had known Ahmadzada why he was against any sort of Talysh revival and the man replied: "They [the purges] scared me so much that I never again said the word 'Talysh.'"[11]

A pervasive stigma also seemed to develop around the Talysh culture and identification. This also helped to cloak it in the public sphere. Several people from later Soviet generations said that they did not teach their children the Talysh language or identification because they did not want others to think of them in those terms. They worried that if their children spoke Talysh then they would speak Azerbaijani with an accent and be easily identifiable as something other than Azerbaijani. This was particularly the case among those who lived in the "city," i.e. Lankaran. As one man recalled, "We did not want to be separated from the Azerbaijanis, from Azerbaijan, but according to socialist revolution theory we should have been treated equally…instead, when someone told me that I was Talysh in that period I did not feel good about myself." Although he was raised speaking Talysh at home in the 1950s and 1960s, he did not teach his daughter the Talysh language and she does not like it when someone tells her that she is Talysh.[12]

In other cases, the experiences of Soviet informal and formal practices and policies generated mechanisms of cultural reproduction in these minority communities. Although some people turned away from minority identification in the wake of the purges of national community leaders, others reacted against assimilatory politics or drew on the memory of national cultural development in the 1920s and

[11] Interview, April 2010.
[12] Interview, July 2008.

1930s to perpetuate national identifications in their communities. Lezgins and Georgian-Ingilo activists, for example, were inspired by the national rights that their co-ethnics enjoyed in Dagestan and Georgia, but they also invoked the example of pre-World War Two national rights in their petitions and complaints to Soviet authorities.

Similarly, as much as Ahmadzada's fate scared some Talysh, it inspired others. The Talysh could not look to the Talysh situation in Iran for inspiration, but they could draw on their own past to envision an alternate present. Long after Ahmadzada was repressed and the Talysh language was taken out of the schools, many people from the generation that attended those schools passed Ahmadzada's poems, his story, and their experiences down to their children. In the privacy of their homes, they taught their children the Talysh language and recited Ahmadzada's poems when they were going to sleep or doing chores around the yard.[13] Lacking state support for national cultural development, they took it upon themselves to guard the cultural boundaries of their own communities.

In the late 1970s, a group of Talysh eventually formed and pushed the state to recognize the Talysh nationality in the census. They did not achieve census recognition until 1989, but they did manage to form national dance ensembles that performed Talysh songs translated into the Azerbaijani language. When some of the members of this group were asked why it occurred to them that the Talysh should have some sort of public recognition or cultural support, they explicitly cited Ahmadzada as their inspiration. They recalled hearing old men in their village speak about

[13] Interview, July 2008.

Ahmadzada and the Talysh schools in the 1930s so they knew that a precedent existed for the Talysh to be recognized as a separate nationality in the Soviet Union.[14] Yet, even when these people perpetuated a Talysh self-understanding, they still remained hidden from view. As one man argued, "They could never *see* us. When ethnographers came to Lankaran they had to say that we all called ourselves Azerbaijanis, but they never looked beyond that. They said that we had passed through one era and all that remained was to Russianize us. If everyone called himself or herself Azerbaijani then that meant that we were on the right path. There was no other way for us to be back then."[15]

Another consequence of Soviet nationality categories was that they made it more difficult for people to situate themselves in the in-between spaces. Throughout this narrative, for instance, I have hinted that the Georgian-Ingilo "community" may have lacked much of the coherence that Georgians and others tried to read into it. It is difficult to know how divided the Christian and Muslim communities were before local officials pursued differentiated policies in these places, but the effects of these practices are clearer. Georgian-Ingilo activists came from both Christian and Muslim communities and embraced unity in their advocacy. Gamkharashvili, for instance, was Christian, but in his activism he subordinated religious differences in Saingilo to other shared characteristics among the Georgian-Ingilo population. Further, in the 1950s, the leading local activists were themselves Muslims from Zaqatala, but both Muslim and Christian Georgian-Ingilo signed the archived petitions and complaint letters.

[14] Interviews, March 2011.
[15] Interview, May 2010.

While we can find these examples of coherence across the Georgian-Ingilo community, there were also very real divisions and pressures to "pick a side." Georgian-Ingilo from Muslim villages, for example, often felt as though Georgian-Ingilo Christians looked down on them and thought of them as Ingilos or Muslims, but not Georgians, because of their failure to re-convert to Christianity.[16] Indeed some Christians interviewed in Qax confirmed this uneven relationship. One man explained that he did not get involved in Georgian-Ingilo advocacy in the Soviet period because the authorities did not hassle the Christian communities as much, and he felt as though the Georgian-Ingilo in Muslim villages were not really Georgian. He elaborated, "how could I consider them Georgian if they had mosques?"[17] Another man with a similar viewpoint called the Georgian-Ingilo in Aliabad, "Muslims who two or three centuries ago used to be Georgian."[18]

A former teacher in one of the Qax Georgian schools confirmed that many Christian Georgian-Ingilo rejected the "Ingilo" label, preferring to be known simply as "Georgian." She argued it was not necessarily that they would deny being "Ingilo" to one another or reject the notion that Muslims could be Georgian, but that accepting an Ingilo public identity or being affiliated too closely with the Muslim Georgian-Ingilo communities would expose them to the assimilationist politics that existed there. Nonetheless, she pointed out that these same "Georgians" had no problem "becoming

[16] Interviews, November and December 2010.
[17] Interview, October 2010.
[18] Interview, November 2010.

Ingilo" in Georgia, where Ingilos were allowed to enroll in universities without going through the usual qualifying exams.[19]

The triangulation of oral histories and archival documents with another source, a Georgian-Ingilo newspaper published in 1990, creates an even more detailed picture of the doublings and treblings of difference in Soviet nationality practices. *Moambe* was published for a few months by the Mose Janashvili Society, which Georgian-Ingilo established in 1990 to improve relations both with Azerbaijanis and within the Georgian-Ingilo community.[20] Antagonisms within the Georgian-Ingilo "group" were prominently discussed in the few editions of *Moambe* that were published. In an article from one of the first editions, for example, one of the newspaper editors writes,

> Among our numerous problems, the most noteworthy is the issue of relations among Georgian villages in Saingilo. In fact, our future depends on solving it. There are literally no relations that serve the mutual interests of Georgian villagers in Saingilo. On the contrary, we have a lot of demands against one another. This is strategically used by the government to make hostile relations even worse…[and] relations between Qax and Zaqatala-Balakan are even worse.

The article then reprints letters written by people from various villages in all three regions—Zaqatala, Balakan, and Qax—about Georgian-Ingilo relations.

These letters show that antagonisms existed not only between Christian and Muslim Georgian-Ingilo villages, but between Christian ones as well. For example, the respondents debate developments in Qax, where villagers in Kotoklu asked local officials to take them out of another Georgian-Ingilo village's kolkhoz so that they

[19] Interview, December 2010.
[20] *Moambe*, July 1990, 1. Mose Janashvili was born in Qax in 1855 and was a historian at Tbilisi State University. Georgian-Ingilo commemorate him for his work to reintroduce Christianity to their communities.

could gain more economically. They also address relations across Saingilo. For example, a teacher in Kotoklu argued the following:

> Regarding relations between Qax and Zaqatala-Balakan inhabitants, I don't consider them normal. In my opinion this is our fault [Qax region]. There are occasions when the acts of humiliation and insult come from us [as opposed to from Azerbaijanis]. These acts shouldn't take place, and we should befriend them. The more we help them and support them, the friendlier they will be.

A teacher from Aliabad weighed in on both the Muslim/Christian dichotomy and problems within Qax region,

> I don't think that the only confrontation is between Qax and us. Unfortunately, there is a noticeable rivalry among Christian villages…[also] some Georgians from Qax don't know anything about the problems in Aliabad and sometimes make the situation worse (by calling us Tatars).[21] These people should understand that if they don't want to help us then they should at least stop hindering us.[22]

The fact that these additional layers of identification emerge in the newspaper in 1990 does not mean that these issues did not exist earlier. Rather, it is likely that, given Christian Georgian-Ingilo relations with the local officials, many people would have avoided turning to the state for help within their community, thus keeping intra-community affairs out of the archive. At the same time, relations in these communities did evolve over time. Decades of divisive policies and practices, and the varied experiences that accompanied them, likely deepened differences that were long in play.

There are many reasons why it makes sense to view these three case studies alongside one another. Parts of the Georgian-Ingilo community may have experienced fairly consistent access to national cultural development and kin state support from the

[21] In this context, the ethnonym "Tatar" is used to insult Muslim Georgian-Ingilo.
[22] *Moambe*, July 1990, 12.

Georgian elites, but there were also pervasive insecurities in this community. The many layers of political, cultural, regional, and religious differences that existed in these villages in northwest Azerbaijan were exploited politically by Azerbaijani and Georgian officials and played back into the communities. The stakes of belonging and difference were much higher in non-titular communities like the Georgian-Ingilo, Talysh, and Lezgin in Azerbaijan, than in national communities where access to native-language schools and national identifications were less dependent on the actions of people in the communities themselves. This intersection between the personal and the political created dynamics in non-titular communities that reflect the specificity of the non-titular experience and the influence of contested state support for particular nationalities and *narodnosti* in the Soviet Union.

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ARMENIA

National Archive of Armenia [Hayastani Azgayin Arkhiv], or HAA

National Archives of Armenia Division of Socio-Political Documentation [Hayastani Azgayin Arkhiv Hasarakakan-Qaghakakan Pastatghteri Bazhin], or HAAHQPB

AZERBAIJAN

Archive of Political Documents of the Administrative Department of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan [Azərbaycan Respublikası Prezidentinin İşlər İdarəsinin Siyasi Sənədlər Arxivi], or ARPIISSA

Republic of Azerbaijan State Archive [Azərbaycan Respublikası Dövlət Arxivi], or ARDA

Republic of Azerbaijan State Archive of Film and Photo Documents [Azərbaycan Respublikası Dövlət Kino-Foto Sənədləri Arxivi], or ARDKFSA

Republic of Azerbaijan State Historical Archive [Azərbaycan Respublikası Dövlət Tarix Arxivi], or ARDTA

Republic of Azerbaijan State Literature and Art Archive [Azərbaycan Respublikası Dövlət Ədəbiyyat və İncəsənət Arxivi], or ARDAIA

Lankaran Filial of the Republic of Azerbaijan State Archive [Azərbaycan Respublikası Dövlət Arxivinin Lənkəran filialı], or ARDA LF

Qax Region State Archive [Qax rayon dövlət arxivi], or QRSA

Shaki Filial of the Republic of Azerbaijan State Archive [Azərbaycan Respublikası Dövlət Arxivinin Şəki filialı], or ARDA SF

GEORGIA

Central Archive of the Contemporary History of Georgia [sakartvelos uakhlesi istoriis tsentraluri arkivi], or SUITA

Central Historical Archive of Georgia [sakartvelos tsentraluri saistoris arkivi], or STSA

The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia Archive II [sakartvelos šinagan sakmeta saministros arkivi II], or sšssa (II)

RUSSIA

MAKHACHKALA, DAGESTAN

Central State Archive of the Republic of Dagestan [Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Respubliki Dagestan], or TsGARD

Former Archival Depository for Party Records [Byvshee Arkhivokhranilishche partdokumentov], or TsGARD AP

MOSCOW

Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences [Arkhiv Rossiiskoi akademii nauk], or ARAN

Russian State Archive of Contemporary History [Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv noveishei istorii], or RGANI

Russian State Archive of the Economy [Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv ekonomiki], or RGAE

Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History [Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii], or RGASPI

State Archive of the Russian Federation [Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii], or GARF

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Photo of Serdechnoe Slovo member Bairam Salimov.

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